

23. FLASHBACK

If I could relive any day, I would choose to relive a day late in August of 1970. I had temporarily dropped out of college and was working as a secretary in the Sociology Department at OU. I made little money, but I also had few responsibilities. That particular day someone had organized a pig roast picnic at what we called the Pink Pavilion out near Lake Thunderbird. Times were informal, free and easy, and word of mouth invited everyone to the picnic.

When my closest friends, Jackie and Martha, and I arrived at the lake that afternoon, someone asked us to donate whatever we could, a couple of dollars, to help pay for the party. The pig had been roasted whole overnight in a pit and, though a gruesome sight, smelled and tasted wonderful. People brought other food as well -- potato salad and baked beans, homemade bread, fresh organic vegetables. The Library Bar had donated several kegs of beer, so the mood was festive. Local bands like Green Corn played, poets read aloud, political activists pontificated, and frisbees flew. There were over a hundred of us, and everyone laughed and sang and talked into the darkness. As we sat on blankets under the stars, dogs and children played around us.

I would choose to relive that day because at the time I did not realize how special those lost carefree days would become in retrospect. Idyllic and unappreciated, that day typified the best of the era that had just passed. The friends I loved were all there that day, and the time and tragedies that would separate us over the years were unanticipated. Talking earnestly late into the night, none of us thought to hold those moments precious.

If I had the day to live over, I would hug Monty and Ronnie, who would die soon. I would take special time to talk with Martha and Earl and James, who would have such terrible experiences that they would become people I no longer recognized. I would take time to say goodbye to Ted and Jackie and Bob, who would move elsewhere, until we lost touch over the years. Since I know now how the intervening years have passed, I would try to capture every moment of that last perfect day.