

BACK WHEN WE WAS ROBBED

June 21, 1932. After Max Schnelling loses a 15-round heavyweight boxing title fight by a decision to Jack Sharkey, Schnelling's manager, Joe Jacobs, makes grammatical history by exclaiming, "We was robbed!" In considering the New Year, "we was robbed" verbalizes some of my sentiments.

Robbed not of money, but of the touch and feel of an earlier age of simplicity and innocence many of us knew. Affluence and technology have added years to our lives but have also robbed us of much of the pleasure of living.

Having grown up in town in the 1950s, I recall numerous simplicities we accepted as part of life's routine. How many of these can you remember?

When tearing into an oatmeal box and digging to find a drinking glass or saucer to add to your everyday dishes brought a tingle of excitement.

When going to the city dump assured marveling that anyone would toss out such good stuff. And then you hauled a few irresistible prizes back home.

When carrying out the trash meant toting it to the back yard to burn in an old barrel with air vents cut into the bottom with a cold chisel.

When jeans and shoes with holes weren't tossed out, but actually repaired, sometimes repeatedly.

When an afternoon was devoted to pasting a drawer full of S&H Green Stamps into booklets for redemption. When communities sometimes pooled green stamps to buy school buses, fire trucks and, on one occasion, a gorilla and an elephant for a local zoo.

When overnight trips in the family sedan were transformed into an adventure by orange crates trimmed to fill the space between front and back seats so the kids could sleep, play and picnic.

When a radio the size of a small refrigerator drew the family together in hushed silence, waiting for the next thrilling installment of Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos and Andy or The Shadow.

When putting up a fence to contain the family pet meant digging holes for smelly creosote posts, stringing wire with a borrowed stretcher and hammering staples (and fingers) by hand.

When fast food meant picking up five BBQ sandwiches for a dollar from the Minit Shop.

When watching Saturday morning cartoons meant waiting for the TV test pattern to disappear and actual broadcasting to begin.

When Winky Dink was more exciting than any of today's flying, killing superheroes.

When houses and cars weren't locked because trust and respect were words of real clout.

When loose pieces of string were methodically added to a growing ball of twine--just in case.

This golden age is decidedly past, and with it a particular way of life. But since today is the yesterday my grandchildren will speak about tomorrow, should I not view this New Year as an opportunity to thank God for letting me be a part of it? Then if they look back and complain that "we was robbed," they won't be blaming me.