

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

By Larry Bruce

It was a school break and we had our grandchildren staying with us. But as we only had a television, they would bring their own X box so they could play their 'war games' and although i must admit it – i did enjoy looking at them but after a short time i got fed up, and i thought to myself it would be much better outside playing games, and then it got me thinking, and remembering all the games that we played all those years ago.

We played outside on the road with all my friends. We played marbles, they were cheap to buy so we all had some. We also played card games for buttons, we all had some but my ma was always taking them from me. Army buttons were the best you could get ten buttons for one army button, and then there was a game called Jack Stones maybe you remember playing those games. I think everyone had a spinning top, my sister would also tie two tin cans onto her feet and make stilts, i would hear her walking around the road 'clink clonk' but it was great fun.

Me and my pals also had loads of toy soldiers (lead) we would have our war games, we had toy tanks and artillery that could shoot match sticks they were really good.

And then there was ball games, we would make up two teams and play on the road, but we mostly only had a tennis ball a proper ball cost too much. But i do remember their was one boy on the road, his family was a bit well off' what ever that ment' but he always had a proper football so he always had to pick the teams. But if he was losing he would get the hump take up the ball and run home. We would be left with just a tennis ball "what a creep"

Saturday morning was great we all went to the pictures, four pennies into the Saturday matinee. My picture house was the Incheore can you remember your favourite. We also had the Rialto or the Pheonix, Marie's favourite was the Broadway. And the pictures Tarzan and the cowboys Roy Rogers or Hoppa-along Cassidy with Gabby Hayes. Running home we would be shouting "i'm the chap" or "i'm the head crook", it was all great fun.

My sisters loved the pictures as well Laurel and Hardy and Old Mother Riley. I remember when i was young my sister and her friend would have shows in our back yard and lots of children would come. A penny to see the show, they would dress up as Old Mother Riley and other shows – they were really good. They would make toffee and they had a barrel for lucky dips, my sister later went on to work in Butlins as a red coat.

I also remember once when my mother was ill and my sister Margaret had to take me with her to school, it was an all girls school but the teacher let me stay. "We have a little boy with us today" she said "and if he sings a little song for us ill give him some sweets", but i had a sulky face and wouldn't sing. I just sat there but my sister Margaret stood up "please miss ill sing a song" but the teacher shouted "sit down, no one wants to hear you sing" everyone just laughed.

Another time when my other sister Tess had to mind me, they brought me with them in a pram but when they came to this mucky stream and saw some of their other friends on the other side – well there was a big pipe over the stream so they decided to push the pram over it, but half way over it the pram slipped and i was tossed into the muck. Well covered in muck they had to get me home so they put a blanket over me to cover me up and they sneaked me around the back of the house. They got a bucket of water to scrub me down and clean me up – my mother never found out, lucky for them.

Another game was hop scotch, hopping on one foot and pushing a polish tin that was filled with muck to make it heavy. Over scotches marked with chalk on the ground, but if it landed on the line you were out.

And then they would juggle with three balls throwing them into the air and singing
"One two three O'Leary,
Four five six O'Leary,
Seven eight nine O'Leary,
Ten O'Leary catch the ball".

And they would bounce a ball off the palm of their hand and they had this rhyme

*Little Nellie in her tent
she cant afford to pay her rent
the landlord came to put her out
and this is what the landlord shouts
Get out get out get out
it's not because your dirty
it's not because your clean
it's because you have the hooping cough and eat margarine.*

They would sing that while bouncing the ball. The girls always had big skipping ropes across the road and they would skip for ages – if the rope hit them they were out.

Do you remember playing leap frog a game in which each player jumps with legs apart over the bended backs of all the others. And holding hands in a circle and singing "ring a ring a rosy, a pocket full of posies, atishoo atishoo we all fall down".

In the summer we would all go down to the canal, that's where we all learned how to swim. We all started with the doggie paddle and then when we got good we would swim across to the far bank. It was great but sad to say that a lot of children drowned, but my brothers always looked out for me.

We would also go to the mountains just outside Dublin, we would collect blackberries and my mother would make jam with them – but coming home we would eat most of them.

In those days young girls all wore dresses with ribbons in their hair. We all had short trousers, i didn't like them and when i got older i would tell my mother to get long ones but “no you are too young” that's all i would hear. Most of the time we never wore shoes – that was the way it was then.

With porridge in the morning, and during the day a cut of bread and butter. My mother would always be calling me in to go down to the shops “a half ounce of tea” or “half pound of sugar” or “a loaf of bread” and she would shout after me “don't pick a hole in the bread”.

The winters were always a lot colder lots of snowfall that lasted for ages. We would have big snowball wars and make up big big snow men. But the clothes that we had then were very light, no padding like the ones today, so it was great when my mother would light up the fire. You would get right beside it but my mother would shout at me “get out, and don't be hatching at that fire” so out again i would go.

At night someone would always throw out some water on the road and when it froze we all had a great slide, but again mother would be out “you will wear out your shoes” - they always had a hole in them, we would cut cardboard and put them into our shoes.

Christmas was magic everyone would get excited, my mother would bring me downtown, O'Connell Street would be packed everyone running for their last bits. Moor Street was the best all the dealers shouting their wares “Get your Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Pinocchio, balls balloons and tinsel” - it was a real wonderland.

I remember one Christmas my brother Jer had come home from England and he brought me and my brother Paddy downtown to the pictures 'King Kong', i still think that it was the best picture i ever saw. After he took us to Moor Street to buy us both a toy, when we got there i ran to the first stall and got this big gun – i was thrilled, but Paddy he went up and down the street till he saw what he wanted 'a big fire engine'. Well i was sick i put on one of my sulky faces but 'too bad'.

I also remember another Christmas my sister Tess came home and had a present for me it was a book 'A Christmas Carol' i remember thinking to myself that my sister must think im really brainy. I remember showing it to my friends, they only had toys but i had a book – i felt really special, and it started me reading. Funny how a thing like that can make you feel so important.

Waking up on Christmas morning and looking into our stockings at the back of the bed to see what we got, what was in the stocking – it didn't matter, every kid on the road would be out 'toy guns, dolls, skipping ropes, skates' and then their was the Christmas dinner, well my Aunties in the country always sent us a turkey. I was so lucky to have such lovely Uncles and Aunties.

Yes we were poor, we may not have had much money but we had lots of love in our home – i hope more than anything that this show up in this writing.

Lets finish with our favourite sweets 'Bulls eyes' 'Bonbons' 'Liquorice pipes' 'Fizz bags' 'Cleaves Toffee' – you would be chewing for hours 'Lucky bags'

What was your favourite?.