



*Cook-Em-Ups
And other fond memories*

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Born in Montpelier, Idaho, I never lived there. Dad, part of the World War II military geology branch, worked in Southeastern Idaho, securing critical minerals for the war efforts. During the summers, we visited Bear Lake and Caribou County for the next 15 years. My earliest memories, essentially bleeding together pastels, include the Quail Appartements, kids next door, a kitten, dimes marching along Main Street, mountains of sawdust hiding ice, a ranch, losing my appendix, 10-cent movies, jukebox in a local café, jeeping up M Hill, and Bear Lake. After the family moved from Arlington, VA, to Palo Alto in 1953, my memories cleared up only slightly.



Bear Lake is an emerald-blue green tributary to the Bear River, and it resides half in Utah and half in Idaho. First, the sacred lands of the Shoshone tribes, then home to trapper rendezvous, later became an essential stop along the Oregon Trail. The pause after one of the most challenging passages along the trail, the lake earned its name for the abundance of black bears. As in many western towns, the name changed numerous times in the early settlements. First, it was known as Clover Creek by Oregon Trail travelers. Later, it became Belmont and was finally given the name Montpelier by Brigham Young, one of the early leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), after the capital of his birth state of Vermont.

In the 1940s, ranching, farming, and phosphate mining fueled the town. Visitors, like those folks, dedicated to the critical minerals program, Bear Lake was essentially a beautiful curiosity, host to some fishing, but not much more. The USGS families often trekked to the north shore for family picnic times. Remarkable is how far out the shallow water extends. Hundreds of yards out, the water is still only to your knees. What a great place to bring kids, build a fire, roast marshmallows and hot dogs, load plates with homemade potato salad, and slice fresh watermelon to eat without a fork. No doubt the adults consumed some beer and swapped stories. I always looked forward to spending hours blowing up old-fashioned air mattress, floating out on the lake, and whipping melon juice off my shirt. No doubt I slept most of the way home.



Stock photos of north shore 2024

Today, the Northshore is a state park with fees, restrooms, and more. Then, cars needed to park half on the road to avoid the deep sand, hike for almost a quarter of a mile to build their own fire ring and haul all the stuff back at the end of the day. One dark memory, a life lesson, burns still of that day; a high school buddy and I almost did not make the swim across the deep outlet channel near the Lofton power station. My dad often said that times will change when the locals discover the lake. Those were the days I value; progress is not a word to describe 2024. Longboat launching roads, ski dos, fast boats, and darn few just bathers. Dad was right

Before heading to the lake, Dad often stopped at the Ice House for a block to keep the libations cool. A heap of sawdust, the ice house stored the winter-frozen ice from a local pond. One several feet thick, ice was collected for homes, restaurants, and personal needs. A stop at the Texico station for gas and the cleanest windshields in the world. Trademark of one of the four Michelson brothers working in a full-service station.



The best memory remains the Georgetown Canyon Cook-Em-Ups. Several times a season, local rangers, town folks, geologists, and others drove up the Canyon to a large campfire ring to cook local recipes, sip suds, talk, and sing.

Yes, sing by the campfire. The specialty is Dutch oven chicken, salads, foil-wrapped buttered whole potatoes stuffed under the fire coals, homemade chips, and desserts, all on a crisp night—the local Cook-Em-Up. Filled with food, libations, and good old small-town values, they started to sing. Voices sound better with beer, but these folks did sound better.



The Michelson Barber-shop Quartet leads with their crystal clear four-part harmony. "I have been working on the railroad," "Someones in the Kitchen with Dina," "Yellow Rose of Texas", and so many more I no longer recall. What a treat, even for a young boy.

Many of those local lads were hunters, too. In Palo Alto, my mom, showcasing her humor, purchased a ragged, stuffed full-size mountain lion. Old crooked tail hidden behind the shower curtain sourced many a gasp laugh from party guests, but none more than when Reid Crane brought him to the fall hunting camp in Idaho. We never saw Crooked Tail again, yet the stories of how many men's lives were saved on the way to the latrine grows embellished to this day.

Small-town values, homemade parades, community projects, and social events feature people, not spectacles; oh, how I miss those days. Cook-Em-Up, not many people even know what this is. Lucky me

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