



## Family Vacations & Outings

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My family enjoyed day trips and a few week-long vacations during the post-war years. We did not take many trips, yet each proved fun plus educational. In my early years in Arlington, Dad often lead us to Washington DC to visit museums, galleries, and the Smithsonian. Statues, buildings, landmarks, and Dad proved an accomplished/knowledgeable guide. The dinosaurs at the National Science exhibits captured my youth's fascination. Old machinery at the Smithsonian remains my favorite museum destination. The best ever trips bar none: first, take off my shoes, next roll up the britches, then hunt for millions of years old sharks' teeth.

Shallow marine seas between 8 and 23 million years ago left shallow water deposits of sand, silt, and carbonate that are natural traps for dying life. The Calvert Cliffs, host to three known Miocene geologic formations, record warmer than seas today. Plants, fish, and whale fragments in the rocks preserve the history and conditions. Collecting Shark's teeth, even the big dudes, the Megatooth sharks, and the major attraction to The Calvert Cliffs area. The climate was warmer than it is now, so on the shore, a diversity of plants grew here, from Cyprus trees to Oak trees. The best-known area is The Calvert Cliffs, which runs roughly 24 miles from Chesapeake Beach to Drum Point on the western shore of

the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland in Calvert County. These cliffs contain an amazing Miocene fauna. More than 600 species of fossil plants and animals exist here. Among these countless species are many marine animals, such as porpoises, whales, seals, sea turtles, sea cows, and crocodiles. Also preserved are parts of land mammals, the most common being the peccary, a pig-like animal. The deposits contain fragments of mastodons, woolly rhinos, camels, and highly diverse sea life, from countless genera of sharks and rays to many kinds of fish. The amateur's best chance is pocketing a shark's tooth. I kept them in my desk as reminders of what the earth holds for us to discover. I would return there anytime.



Holidays in the 1950s always included a week at the New Hampshire of Tolman Pond. Along the way, we visited civil war fields, the World Fair, local landmarks, old family homes, and even Atlantic City. Who knew how they found a rental cabin on a small pond? Today, an internet search finds a body of water but no cabins. I learned to swim that first summer by finally making it from the dock to the floating platform in the lake's middle. It seemed like miles, but I am sure it was only 100 yards. We had a row boat and fishing gear, providing a few free fish dinners. The cabin had an old, quaint cobblestone fire-

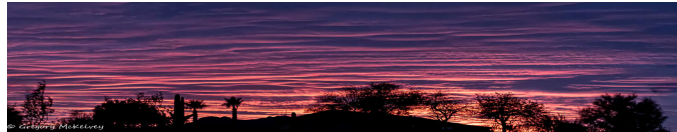
place—a tranquil room. Mom would always be the one to find a garter snake slithering out of the fireplace. Lung testing screams likely still echo around New Hampshire. Dad even set up an easel and started to do a few oil-painted landscapes. His mother, Eva, began painting at 80 and lived to 104. Her fall season renditions of covered bridges and flowing water are still hand-held in our family home.

After moving to Palo Alto in a new 1953 Studebaker with a standing-room-only back seat, the rare holidays naturally explored western venues. For spring trips, we rented a cottage on Pismo Beach. Mom and Dad honed in on the famous clam dishes. I recall other USGS families there, kids my age learning to fly standard kites, graduating to more complex box kites. Launching and reeling out two or three balls of string was fun until we had to rewind them. When the truth is told at my wake, I could dance with kites significantly better than with a beautiful girl on any dance floor. I bought my dad a baseball glove for Father's Day, hoping we might sometimes play catch. Well, Pismo Beach proved home to an automatic outfielder who always sends the ball back to me. I would pitch it to Dad, who walloped that ball far into the surf. Wave outfielders always returned the ball. It worked well, except when my pitch back to the mighty dad flew off course just enough for Dad to take an awkward swing at a well-off-the-mark pitch. The vacation ended with Dad in a leg cast after twisting and breaking his leg in two places. Ouch.

In other years, we took trips from Pismo to Mexico, which was easier in the 1950s than today. Shopping, good food, so much color, a different language, base guitar-driven music, and junk jewelry for me. My first introduction to a different culture remains an appreciation I value today. We learned more about ourselves later living in someone else's culture. So valuable for the rest of my life. That ugly silver

and turquoise ring on my desk reminds me of the beauty and value of other people's traditions, teachings, points of view, and traditions. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for that, despite breaking my dad's leg on Father's Day.

Naturally, a geologist, Dad made many trips centered on unique geologic features. Collecting 30 million-year-old fish from Fossil Wyoming (a town of 4 plus or minus 2 boasts the sign), visiting the west Yellowstone earthquake and slide area two days following the event, backcountry visits to Yellowstone, visiting Meteor Crater with the Apollo Astronauts with Gene Shoemaker leading the trip and days helping Dad in the field. I don't think I helped much in his efforts to map the Southeastern Idaho phosphate deposits. Along the way, we visited every state in the union. Spare family vacations are not the number but rather the quality.



I never learned much about Dad's military work, which was still largely classified, nor when he came home. Mom was a school teacher and likely lived at her family home until Dad returned.

Memories fade with time or are buried deeper with few pathways to wake them conscious. The family trips, vacations, and outings rise more frequently than the family routines. I am so thankful for those times.

### **Ink Free**

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