

Beach Time

We all need memories of beach time.

Summer was fast approaching and Bernie knew his family would want to go to the beach. Bernie remembered beaches as a child. His memories started when he was five, in 1950, in Brooklyn. Summers were hot. The white sand was hot. The Atlantic Ocean was a strong draw but the beaches and ocean were only part of the allure, especially for a child.

The three ocean beaches near Brooklyn boasted individual characters. Jones Beach tilted towards adults. It was a long drive to reach it (originally, buses did not go there, only cars) and a long walk from the huge parking lots. The ocean was mild, the beach boring, the boardwalk plain, plain sand on either side. There were squash and racquetball courts and an elaborate restaurant which served regular food. The best part were mello rolls, ice cream in a wrapper which you inserted into the cone. In the lagoon across from the beach, a boat hosted adult musical shows.

Far Rockaway catered more to kids. The waves were large, he rode them—rip tides could sweep you into the ocean. There was a large, elevated boardwalk, beach on one side, shops on the other: hot dogs and hamburgers and fries. A few blocks down the boardwalk, there was Rockaway Playland: two square blocks carved out of the area, with a decent small roller coaster, rides and games. The waves were great.

Coney Island was the glittering jewel.

Great waves, wide white sand, elevated boardwalk with the beach on one side and *everything* on the other. Great hot dogs, fries, onion rings, any junk food. Small machines you put a nickel into, turned a crank and watched a silent movie made from flip cards. Bernie saw the magician as many nickels as he had. And the Steeplechase, a huge indoor and outdoor play area, with racing tracks around the outside. Bernie remembered strapping himself onto one of the wooden horses and then holding on as it raced on tracks around the building, other racers on either side. There was also the Parachute Jump and roller coasters, including the Cyclone, with big drops, and the Tornado, with wild, sharp turns.

Occasionally, Bernie watched 8mm silent colour films his father took of the beaches and drifted with the memories and imagined sound.

We all need memories of beach time.