

# *Imagination Summer*

*By: Sharon Blevins*

“What a day,” my mother said when we returned home from an afternoon of shopping. As we put our things away, I noticed the blink, blink, blink of the flashing red light on the answering machine. I pressed the button that would retrieve the message and ultimately change our lives. My Uncle Raymond’s voice came on loud and clear and from his tone it was obvious something was wrong. I returned the call immediately. My mind conjured up all sorts of possible scenarios. The phone rang once, then again, and finally an answer. I was right, it was bad news, but never could I have expected to hear those words. They rang through my ears, “Your cousins, Debbie and Brenda, have been killed in a car accident.” I sat down, stunned, unable to process what I’d just heard. With a quick explanation, I gave the phone to my mother. Through tears I wondered, “How could this be, they’re so young.” My mind instantly drifted back to an earlier time, to childhood days, to a summer of imagination.

I remember it well. It was the summer right after I turned ten. My mother could often be heard saying, “she’s 10 going on 24.” I considered myself to be quite grown up.

It was time for a family road trip, and not just any trip, a trip to see the relatives. We were headed to a quaint little town by the name of Massillon, Ohio. I was very excited. You see, these weren’t just any relatives, this was my mother’s youngest sister and her family. That meant one thing- cousins! There would be kids my age to play with, not too young where all I could do is watch from afar, not too old where they wouldn’t want me hanging around, but just the right age. The trip seemed to be taking forever. I felt like I would explode if we didn’t hurry and get there. Finally I saw it, the street where my family lived. I barely let the car stop before I jumped out and hollered my greetings. There were hugs all around and then everyone settled in for a nice visit.

My aunt and her family lived in an older, large, white, two-story house situated on a hill overlooking Oak Street. It was a warm and inviting place to spend time.

We would stay the entire weekend. However, only this one day, this one glorious summer afternoon, would remain in my memory. This was the day that my cousin Debbie and I planned the rest of our lives.

Debbie was a beautiful little girl with blonde hair and sparkling eyes. She was about my age and also suffering from the “she’s too grown up for her own good” syndrome. We felt much too mature to play with the slightly younger kids and her older sister, Brenda, had gone to a friend’s house. Debbie went into the storage room and brought out two child sized lawn chairs and we carried them to a private spot under the large shade tree that graced the back yard. I remember thinking out loud, “My feet touch the ground.” This made Debbie giggle. We crossed our legs, as we were sure all of the older, sophisticated, grown up

ladies did and began to talk. We decided to talk about our futures. After all, we were nine and ten years old now.

First on our agenda was marriage. Every girl dreams of and plans for this day, and we weren’t getting any younger. After much discussion and debate it was decided that I would marry Donny Osmond, (I was, of course, his biggest fan), and she would marry Davy Jones. We would each

have at least two children, a boy and a girl. We even chose names, though I don't remember what they were. We had that part of our lives settled.

Next we talked about our careers. I would be a teacher as it was in my blood and had been decided at age three. Debbie's job list was as long as her arm. I said, "You can be all of those things, just on different days." Our career goals were decided.

We talked about where we would live. I would live in cold, snowy Utah (Osmond country), and she would live across the ocean in England.

My home would be an enormous brick mansion with large white columns and a huge wrap-around porch. There would be bay windows with cushioned window seats to enjoy the scenic beauty. A long, circular driveway would lead the way to this piece of paradise. Inside would be no less lavish. There would be a large formal living room, a family room, a grand formal dining room, and a bright, open eat in kitchen with many windows to allow natural light in and an incredible view of the outdoors. There would be at least ten bedrooms on the upper floor to accommodate the many guest who would visit, including Debbie and her family from England. Out back there would be a large covered porch with a terra cotta red tile floor, white columns, and bannisters. There would be a flower garden that was second to no other bearing red, white, and yellow roses as well as many other fragrant blossoms to perfume the air as we sipped tart lemonade and watched our children play as we did when we were young.

Debbie and Davy would live in a large, lovely English castle complete with towers and all that a castle entails. It too would have many rooms very elegantly done in beauty and English charm. We would enjoy tea and crumpets in the light and airy sitting room. Gone would be Debbie's "Ohio" voice replaced instead with a prim and proper British accent and words that I would have to have explained like bobby and plaster. It was our fairy tale and we would live happily ever after.

All too soon the day came to an end, all too soon we put away the chairs where we had shared our deepest secrets, vowing not to tell the others.

I thought back on that day and smiled through my tears. None of our fantasies came true, short of my becoming a teacher, but we had the dream.

Debbie married, not Davy Jones, and became the proud mother of four boys. Suddenly I was brought back to reality. I turned to my mother and asked, "What about the kids?"