

The Best Summer I Ever Had

Great memories from Carolina Country's younger set

With the boy from Belarus

Growing up in Carolina country I experienced some summers full of mischief, laughter and some downright good times. One summer I had the privilege to view that excitement of summertime through someone else's eyes. That summer my family had a 13-year-old boy from Belarus come and stay with us.

We learned to appreciate the little things, like fishing at Cane Creek Park and playing baseball in our front yard. We took him to the beach for the first time and introduced him to McDonald's "Happy Meals." He came to experience the culture, but we experienced more than he did. A 13-year-old boy from Belarus taught me more about where I lived than I could have ever taught him, and he made that summer the best ever!

Beth Godfrey, Monroe | Union Power Cooperative

With my hero

The best vacation I ever had was the summer of 2005 when my parents let me invite a friend to go on vacation with us. We spent a week in the mountains at a place called Banner Elk. That week we went to Tweetsie Railroad, Dollywood, Grandfather Mountain and the Linville Caverns. Sometimes we would stay at the condo and go fishing, boating, swimming or we'd play golf.

My favorite thing was when we drove to Tennessee and went to Dollywood, a great big amusement park. When we got there, we had to ride a train from our car to the front gate to get our tickets. We spent the whole day riding rides. We saw shows. We played in the water park and ate some really great food. We stayed there until it got dark and a bad storm came up. We stood in line in the rain waiting for the train to pick us up and take us back to our car.



At Merrells Inlet, S.C., are Charlie Godfrey, Evgeni Staneslavorich (our friend from Belarus), Andrew Godfrey and Daniel Godfrey.

When the train started moving, I dropped my bag with a t-shirt in it that I had bought. I started yelling for them to stop the train, but they didn't. My daddy asked me what was wrong and I told him I dropped that bag outside the train. He jumped out of the moving train and ran all the way back across the parking lot in the pouring rain, thunder and lightning to get my bag. My daddy ran as fast as he could to catch up with us. He finally reached us, and when the train stopped again to let some people

off, he jumped on. Everyone started clapping for him, and I hugged him and told him he was my hero. We were all soaking wet when we got to the car, but we had a great day. It was the best day out of the entire vacation.

Kaitlyn Hodges, Grantsboro | Tideland EMC

With the all-star team

Have you ever seen two girls play baseball on an otherwise all-boys baseball team? Well, this was my best summer.

We all traveled over to the Down East area to play our game against the Smyrna team. We were the Pamlico Babe Ruth Baseball all-star team, and this year Pamlico had two girls representing them as part of the team.

The other girl, Kara, got to hit in the lineup before I did. We were all cheering and screaming, having the best time ever when she got a hit. During my second at bat, I swung the bat as hard as I could. The ball came off my bat and went speeding toward the second baseman. Pop! It hit him right in the shin, and he started crying. It was so much fun because Kara was yelling in the dugout that girls can play baseball just as well as boys can.

The whole all-star team had such a fun, enjoyable summer that I will never forget it.

Katie Lachman, Arapahoe | Tideland EMC



Thanks to all the young people who sent in stories and pictures about the best summer you ever had. You can see more at our Web site. Next month we'll publish your reasons why "I'll never eat that again!" (Deadline was May 15.) For more themes and the rules of this series, see page 24.

The summer of 2005

The best summer I ever had was the summer of 2005. I went on a vacation, and it was so great. I went to Grandfather Mountain and Tweetsie Railroad. I got to hike on Grandfather Mountain and ride the train at Tweetsie Railroad. We stayed at a hotel that had a gigantic swimming pool. We went to a nature park and saw red wolves. Before we left on vacation we won a backyard barbecue party from a TV station. The TV people came to our house, and I was on TV. I also enjoyed jumping off our pier into the lake last summer.

Walker Winslow, Grifton | Pitt & Greene EMC

At the assisted living center

Most teens don't have to be pushed into their first jobs. All it takes is the call of money or a car to have us jumping out of the "birds' nest." I didn't need much persuading either. The best summer I've ever had was spent working my first job at an assisted living center. I know it doesn't sound like the ideal job for a teenager, but it was the most fun I've had "working" (if you can even call it that) in years. Every day was different; there was something new to learn, someone new to meet. The residents were so full of interesting stories and life. I befriended so many of the employees and residents, and I'm still in close contact with most of them. I can't wait to go back to work.

Chelsea Bailey, Charlotte | Butler High School

When Uncle J.R. died

My best and worst summer was when my uncle J.R. died. I came home after school one day, and my mom and grandma were there waiting for me. They told me the news. At first I thought they were joking. So I asked if they were kidding, but they weren't. I was devastated. I cried for hours. But through the summer, I realized something. My Uncle J.R. wouldn't want me to be sad. And even though he died, my memories of him will last forever.

It was the worst summer I ever had because he died. But it was the best summer ever because in that year I changed in my heart and soul. Even three years later, he continues to live on in my heart and my memories. I just hope one day I can be like him.

Ashley Shaw, Grantsboro | Tideland EMC

In Little Rock with my father

The best summer I ever had was back in 1997 when the second grade was becoming a memory. I stayed with my father for the month of June. A family friend drove me half-way through Tennessee to a meeting place where my father



would pick me up. I remember driving past rocky hills and boulders of various sizes and colors and waiting anxiously in the parking lot that was the meeting place. After about 30 minutes a silver minivan pulled into the lot and out stepped my father. It was extremely exciting to look up into his face and see an image of what I would become.

We drove to Little Rock, Ark., where he lived on an Air Force base with a wife, a teenage stepdaughter and a son about 3 years old. Most days we spent playing outside or at some neighbor friend's house. When it was too hot outside I would play video games or do some activity with Missy or Isaiah. When my stay in Little Rock ended, I was sad that I had to go home, but proud that for a few weeks I had been my father's son.

Courun Williams, Charlotte | Butler High School

On the riding mower

Last year was my best summer. Every year before this I had to use a push mower to mow our lawn. Then my Grandpa, who lives down the road, told me I could use his riding mower to mow our lawn. The only condition was I had to mow his lawn, too. I could enjoy this job every week. Now mowing is less than half the work and twice the fun.

Wendell Gascho, 11, Rutherfordton | Rutherford EMC

In Germany

My favorite summer is when my family and I went to Germany to see my grandparents. My Grandpa was over there because he is in the army. I liked it the most because of all the fun we had spending time with my grandparents. We went to all kinds of fun places like water parks, fishing and Volksmarches. My grandma took us to a water park. The fishing in the Black Forest was the best because of all the fish we caught that day. Volksmarches were very fun, too, because of the walking we did. (A Volksmarch is a community sponsored hike.) A lot of people in Germany do not drive cars or trucks. Some ride on the mass transit, and others ride on mopeds or bikes. We had a lot of fun with our grandparents going to see castles there. It was the best summer I have ever had in my entire life.

Ethan White, 11, Spring Lake | South River EMC



This is a picture of my grandpa, Dad, little brother and me, fishing in the Black Forest.



Sea World and Busch Gardens

My favorite summer was an exciting one. My mother, father and three brothers accompanied me on our vacation. We went to Sea World and Busch Gardens. Busch Gardens was great fun, and so was Sea World. Mom, Dad, Daniel and I went on our first water rollercoaster. In the beginning I was excited. By the end, I was shaking. Once we got off I liked it, though I was still shaking.

Dolphins, whales, sharks and sting-rays are the things you find at Sea World. Busch Gardens is like a jungle in Africa. At Busch Gardens we met a bird that tried to say hello. The bird was yellow and blue.

Victoria Cook, 9, Spring Lake | South River EMC

On the road with dad

The best summer I ever had was last year's. While on summer break, I traveled the roads of the eastern United States with my dad. I had the opportunity to see many things North Carolina has to offer, like Black Mountain and Kings Mountain. I loved traveling on top of Black Mountain.



We were so high that we were in the clouds. My dad rolled down the window so that I could smell the mountain's air. It smelled like flowers. I really loved looking at the mountains right beside the road. I also saw Kings Mountain. Even though we did not travel on it, I still loved looking at it. I am looking forward to seeing it the next time I travel with my dad. Last summer I saw many mountains in other states, but the mountains in North Carolina were the prettiest.

I loved riding with my dad because it was a special time just between him and me. I cannot wait to go back on the road with my dad again this summer.

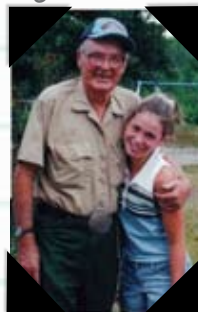
Kayla Hill, Goldsboro | Tri-County EMC

With Granddaddy

The best summer I ever had was when I was 12 years old. I was going to my first year of church camp with my youth group in Tocca Falls, Ga., where I gave my life to Jesus Christ. My birthday was coming up and I was soon to be a teenager.

On June 7 my birthday rolled around, and I had a bunch of my friends over. We camped out. My friends, family, and my Granddaddy, who I loved very much, attended that day. We shared many memories.

Later on in the month of June my Granddaddy became very sick. My birthday was the last time we ever got



to really see Granddaddy act his ol' crazy self and hear him talking about things in the old days. He passed away on July 17, 2002. This was a very sad day, but we rejoiced also because he went to be with the Lord. This is not why it was my best summer ever, but because it was the last summer I would ever have with him. I dedicate this story to my grandmother because I know she misses him also. 📧

Bobbie Martin, 16, Rockingham | Pee Dee EMC

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

August 2006

How I Almost Flunked
What were you thinking.

Deadline: June 15

September 2006

My Finest Sports Moment
Send pictures, too.

Deadline: July 15

October 2006

My Favorite Halloween Costume
Send the story and photo.

Deadline: August 15

November 2006

My Favorite Photo
North Carolina people or places.
If they are digital: 300 dpi and actual printing size.

Deadline: September 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com