

Ice cream at the center of tradition and memories

We used to walk a few blocks on a hot summer evening to a neighborhood store to buy ice cream. My husband Larry's favorite was Orange Pineapple while I preferred Death by Chocolate.

Marissa's favorite was cookie dough, Andrea preferred Death by Chocolate while Laura did not have a favorite, rather picking a flavor depending upon the day we went to get ice cream.

To save a few calories I would get my ice cream in a dish, while the rest of the family got homemade waffle cones, made right there in the small corner ice cream store.

It was a seasonal shop, open Memorial Day weekend and usually closing right around Labor Day weekend.

When we first moved to our home the Gustafsons, a couple who lived in the neighborhood owned the ice cream store called Gus's Dairy. The tradition of going to Gus's started shortly after we moved in. Then, when we started a neighborhood association, the owners of Gus's donated ice cream as a treat after our annual clean up.

Gus's Dairy offered all kinds of ice cream, as you would expect. They had the traditional soft serve vanilla, chocolate, and twist ice cream that you could watch swirl out of the machine and into a cone. As well as various varieties of hard ice creams, slushies, banana splits, shakes, malts, and an array of toppings.

The small corner ice cream store did not have any seating inside. It was strictly a walk-up



A SLICE OF LIFE

Linda Wilk



store where you ordered from one window and watched as the worker made your favorite treat and then handed it to you from another window. They always kept the windows closed and would slide a screen open just long enough to take your money or give you your order, trying their best to keep those pesky flies out.

Most times we simply walked back home, eating our ice cream along the way, sometimes having a few bites left to finish while sitting on our front porch swing.

Other times, we sat on one of the picnic tables behind the ice cream store. There was also the time Larry's sister and family came for a visit. We of course had to take them to Gus's where all five of the girls sat on a curb marker, each eating their ice cream as the adults stood and watched.

Eventually the Gustafson's retired and sold the ice cream story to a man named Monty and then Jack Marshall bought it and then a man who renamed it Shelby's Ice Cream. Thankfully, each time a new owner took over, the variety of hard ice cream was maintained. Larry would joke with the owners that they needed make sure and keep a supply of

Orange Pineapple for him at all times.

At the end of the season, we would go one last time, hoping our favorite ice cream was still available, sometimes having to settle for another because it was like a close out sale, where the ice cream owner was just trying to close out his inventory.

Then one Memorial Day weekend, the neighborhood ice cream store at 298 S. "F" St., Marion, closed, never to open again.

A sad day in our household and the neighborhood.

There is just something about walking to an ice cream store that makes it that much more special. So, we were excited to start up the tradition again learning of a new ice cream store in Ridley Tower in downtown Marion called Ashley's Ice Cream Cafe.

So, not wanting to lose out on a family tradition before Laura moved, we walked downtown two days before we took Laura to Austin Texas.

As we walked, we reminisced about how much fun it was to walk to Gus's all those summer nights. In asking for specific memories of the days we went to Gus's, Marissa commented the time her cousins all went with us to have ice cream and then a true confession.

"The times we rode our bikes to Gus's," she said, which were times I was not aware of and learned that was because it was when they were old enough to be at home alone while Larry and I worked. Apparently, there were many bicycle rides with neighbor



Marissa (from left), Laura and Andrea Wilk at Ashley's Ice Cream Café.

friends to the ice cream store.

While walking to Ashley's is a bit farther than our original ice cream store, we can still walk there. And, while we needed to eat the ice cream there, to keep it from melting before we got

home, the atmosphere of the lobby made up for it, as did the variety of options to choose from.

And, as I struggled to decide what kind of ice cream to get since Death by Chocolate was not an option that

evening, I did learn that Ashley's was expanding their freezer space to go from 12 to 24 various kinds of ice cream – reason for a few more trips down the hill for ice cream.

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