

**Stayin' Alive, Boomer Version**  
**Poem**  
**Barbara D. Parente**

### **Stayin' Alive, Boomer Version**

Bologna, Wonder Bread, peanuts galore,  
Smashed into peanut butter from the store.  
Or jarred with a sea of salt.

Dad smoked a Chesterfield on every Chevy drive  
I fidgeted, beltless in the back seat  
Hostess cupcakes may have been my treat.  
How did I ever stay alive?

Canned peas for dinner, potatoes were mashed  
With lots of milk and butter, all that dairy was rash!  
Back when milk was a health food, and dessert was nightly,  
After gravy covered beef, I could still move sprightly  
And passed school tests brightly.  
I started with a good breakfast, it's true.  
Sometimes a pop tart with my orange juice.

Dad smoked a Chesterfield on every Chevy drive.  
Beltless in the back seat, I stayed alive.

Way back when there was no electronic device  
Playing outside would have to suffice  
Red Rover, Red Light, and we rode our bikes far  
We skinned our knees and came back by dark.  
The house phone was one phone attached to the wall,  
We'd better not get lost since we sure couldn't call.  
We did our homework solo, or phoned a friend for help,  
Unless it was in the World Book Encyclopedia, we'd never heard of kelp.  
And we certainly didn't eat it.  
Salad was iceberg before the "nutritional value" label  
With a big glob of mayo or the jar was on the table.

Dad smoked a Chesterfield on every Chevy drive.  
Windows closed in winter, and I'm still alive.

We watched family TV in a hundred shades of gray  
Maybe for an hour nearly every day  
Tightly grasping our change we listened for the sound  
Of the ice cream truck, and outside we would bound.  
We'd eagerly check out the artificially dyed confections  
And make a chocolate, unnaturally colored selection.  
Today I love fruit and fish and watch my intake of beef  
But knowing I survived all this is somehow a relief.  
Or beyond belief.

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Dancing alone in our garden, Nana spun and laughed as her feet darkened from the rich, wet soil. Dropping my school bag, I raced to her, throwing off my shoes and socks. My smile reaching all the way to my toes.

We clasped hands as we spun endlessly. Falling to the ground, laughter filled the air, mingling with the sweet perfume of the wildflowers. Speaking quietly as she held my face, “This, my dear, is what life is about. It isn’t lived in books; it’s lived in little moments like this.”

I sat up and glanced at my bookbag. Torn. She turned my face to hers. “Release your soul for a little longer. Feel the sunlight on your face, inhale this moment in time,” she said as she gently lay me down again.

In time, my head cleared as I tilted it ever upward. “Don’t be confined by books and four walls, sway with the gentle breeze. Greet the buzzing bee. Touch the flowers as their petals open, ever reaching for the sun. Hear the songbird’s lament. Smell the rich soil. Feel the warmth of the sun. They have all been waiting just for you.” Silently, hands held tight, we lay as time seemed to slow.

As I sat up, the air around me swirled, tickling my nose. It was then that I realized Nana had gone. Soaring amongst the clouds, arms flung wide. Her curly hair swaying this way and that while she laughed with boundless delight. No doubt, greeting birds as they passed. Taking in the sun, as long as it lasted.

Smiling wryly, I watched a bee wiggling with delight for its sweet nectar treat. Listening to the chatter of the songbirds, I realized that I had never heard anything so lyrical before. Smelling the richness of the soil mixed with the sweet perfume of the flower bed, I took a slow, deep breath.

With my senses now truly awakened, I stood. Arms stirring the soft, gentle breeze as my face soaked in the sun's rays. Swaying with the tall wildflowers, breathing in my surroundings, I smiled.

And yes, I thought everything else could wait as I savored my moment in time.

Mama's Down The Dirt Road  
Sherry Strickland  
Poem

Mama's Down The Dirt Road

Mama's down the dirt road  
In the *mem'ries* in my mind  
She's just stepped off the tailgate  
Toward the field peas on the vine  
We're in the truck together  
Brown dirt beneath our feet  
*Sittin'* on the tailgate  
F O R D as our seat  
In the pea patch peas are hangin'  
And Sunday there'll be guests  
Mama wants her table laden  
She'll set it with her best  
We're on a row together  
*Purdy* peas hangin' by the cluster  
Mama's *pickin'* in her straw hat  
And a frock she calls a duster  
We've just set down our buckets  
A rusty foot tub is my seat  
But mama bends and picks her peas  
Always picks them on her feet  
Mama steps wide and over the row  
Must see some *purdier* peas  
*Crossin'* over bees and blossoms  
Lady fingers mean to please  
She stands up tall to take a rest  
And smiles a *knowin'* smile  
*Thinkin'* bout her dinner table  
A *givin'* hostess all the while  
We gather up our buckets  
Enough peas to cook a mess  
And step back upon the dirt road  
Mama *smoothin'* out her dress  
She turns and looks right at me  
With her bucket in her hand  
But clouds roll up from under foot  
And dust swallows up our plans  
I didn't expect to lose her  
Never dreamt that she would leave  
*Sittin'* on that tailgate

Never *spectin'* we would grieve  
My mama lived with honor  
A woman that did provide  
For family friend or stranger  
From the big heart she had inside  
Now mama's down the dirt road  
In the *mem'ries* in my mind  
And that dirt's plowed in down deeper  
With the *passin'* away of time  
Mama's down the dirt road  
In the *mem'ries* of my...