



Color blind

Not long ago I was throwing out some of the debris of my life when I came across some boxes of photographic slides from my childhood. The slides of life showed a real slice of life in the 1950s and '60s, and as I went through them two things jumped out at me.

First, that I was an awfully cute kid. Secondly, that we were a much more colorful people back then. We live in a more black and white world now, it seems, and I think it says a lot about our society that Kodak no longer makes Kodachrome film.

Whatever happened to avocado- and banana-colored appliances and green shag carpeting, and why did anyone think that looked good? Our walls back then were covered in multicolored wallpaper that had a lot in common with our Christmas trees in that they were both flocked.

As if pink and blue Christmas trees weren't bad enough, we shined a revolving color wheel on the trees that brought out shades of color seldom seen now days. My box of 128 different colored Crayolas® was far more diverse than the palate today's kids have to work with.

Back then we went beyond the pale. Our floors were covered in multihued linoleum, kitchen tables and chairs were red, yellow or gray and our upholstery matched the flocked wallpaper. We even painted our furniture in colors so loud they'd wake the dead.

I suppose you could say that it was our "Victorian era" and both we and our surroundings were loud, proud and enjoying probably the best days in America.

Henry Ford once said you'd could have any color of car you wanted as long as it was black, but on Ford's car lots today you'll see nothing but white. When I was a kid I wanted my mom to buy a two tone '56 Chevy in red and white, even if it would clash with our gold pickup.

Today we are awash in blue denim jeans and dark conservative suits. Goth kids routinely dress in all black and you can't tell by looking if you're at a wedding or a funeral by the various shades of dark in attendance. I hate to admit this, but I got married in a jacket of yellow and white and yet our marriage has managed to survive despite my bad taste.

I haven't seen a rainbow colored tie-dyed shirt in ages.

Miss Tennyson, my seventh-grade Spanish teacher, dyed her hair a different color every week, and I'm not talking about the pink and purple highlights kids now wear. I'm talking an entire head of green hair! Women wore more attention-getting makeup, with darker blue eye shadow and redder lips. I had a distant relative who wore more makeup than Bozo the Clown. And don't tell me you don't know who that is.

Even our animals were more colorful. The cattle weren't all black, you saw more Appaloosas, and we raised more multicolored parakeets than monochrome canaries. Since our dogs were more interracial they were also more kaleidoscopic.

As I recall, our food was also more vivid. Our garden corn was more yellow, the beets were redder, and we ate Neapolitan ice cream with three different colors all in one box. You didn't see fake cheeseburgers with ugly tofu and white cheese, and we carried our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to school, not in brown bags, but in graphic lunch boxes. We had much more colorful childhoods.

I have a theory that our parents wanted more color in their lives after surviving the depression and the dust bowl. They were weary of dreary browns and depressing grays, and that's why one of the biggest events in my life was when we got a color TV on which we watched Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color every Sunday night.

These days I think NBC's peacock is missing a few of its colorful tail feathers. Even our writing was more colorful in that we used more effervescent adjectives, but that was before political correctness removed half our vocabulary.

It's the Pitts

Written by Lee Pitts

Now we live in a color blind society in which everything is more uniform, modern and proper.

And much more boring.

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