



My Funnest Summer

WHEN I WAS

FOURTEEN

AND IN

PUBERTY

Richard Carlson

**My Funnest Summer When I was
Fourteen and in Puberty**

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About the story: Rich is a shy, sensitive, imaginative, and awkward fourteen-year-old nerd experiencing puberty. One summer day, he gets the surprise of his life at his friend's house. Based on a true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, USA, in 1985.

Recently, in 2023, a TV show said that most people's favorite summer was when they were fourteen years old, and, for me, that is true.

I was a young teenager living in the southwestern desert of the United States in 1985. One early afternoon over the summer, I rode my bicycle to my buddy Sean's house. His parents both worked during the week.

A kind and considerate zephyr cooled my sweat-soaked body as I rode up Sean's driveway.

I knocked on the front door.

"Hi," he said, opening the door. His winsome personality shone brighter than the Arizona sunshine as he ushered me inside.

"How's it going?" I replied.

"Hurry!" he shouted, pulling me by the arm and then shoved me toward the kitchen and pointed out the kitchen window into the backyard.

His younger sister, Susan, and her friend, Jennifer, were skinny-dipping at the pool. Petite and beautiful: I smiled, and my chest and stomach tingled. Even once we went outside, the girls continued to swim. Susan and Jennifer were dark haired, both had long hair.

“Hi,” Susan said as she got out of the shallow end and hurried toward the diving board.

Jennifer said, “Howdy,” and jumped off the diving board into the water.

“Howdy.” I gave her a smile when she surfaced.

I settled myself on a lawn chair under the shade of a behemoth lawn umbrella. Sean went back inside for a moment.

The girls continued to take turns jumping off the diving board.

It bugged me—because of my shyness, I was uncomfortable about people seeing me naked. I wished I wasn’t so shy. I thought about how, in the fall, as a freshman in high school, I’d have swimming class, and I would have to change into a swimsuit in the boy’s locker room. I cringed at the thought. I quickly chased the thought away. I’d resolve the issue when it happened.

Sean came back out with his gigantic radio and cassette music player and played Madonna’s latest album *Like a Virgin*. Sean took off his shirt, put it on the lawn table, and lay on a reclining lawn chair, sunning.

“Getting a tan makes it where you don’t get zits there,” he said with his eyes closed.

“I didn’t know that,” I replied. I was too shy to even just remove my shirt to sun. Like a lot of teenagers, self-conscious about my body, I wondered: Is my chest handsome? What about my arm muscles and my stomach? If I wore my swimsuit, I’d swim with the girls—but I would want to wear a T-shirt, too, to cover my body.

I wanted today to last forever, just watching the girls continue to run around the pool and dive into the water. After a while, Sean turned to sun his back.

The girls got out and stood in front of me.

“Let’s go inside,” Susan said. I couldn’t help but smile, thrilled because the girls wanted me to go with them.

“Come with us,” Jennifer added, making my chest tingle.

“Okay,” I said, following them.

Sean stayed sunning and listening to Madonna.

The girls and I sat in the living room and watched MTV. The music video of Prince and the New Power Generation’s “Let’s Go Crazy” came on. I sat right in between them on the love seat. My insides tingled with delight to be sitting in

between two nude girls. Jennifer crossed her leg, so her foot was toward me. Her feet were beautiful! I admired their beautiful bodies, and already started looking forward to my future wife and losing my virginity when we were married. I would never take advantage of these girls, as I planned to lose my virginity after marriage. Besides, I didn't want to be someone's dad at fourteen.

Sean came inside with his radio and cassette player turned off and set it on the side of the recliner.

"It's going to storm soon," he said. I looked outside and saw that a fierce wind was blowing and the sky was overcast. During the monsoon season in Arizona, thunderstorms caused flooding in the washes from the mountains surrounding Tucson, which were dry most of the year, and violent winds caused destruction. Monsoons struck during the hottest time of the year, in June, July, and August. The cactus got watered, sucking up and storing the water to hydrate throughout the rest of the year. Soon, buckets of huge raindrops were pouring down and the violent wind was howling and cursing as it hurled the raindrops in different directions.

Jennifer continued crossing her leg facing her beautiful foot toward me. Her beautiful feet: I wished I could be barefoot with them. I wanted to rub and massage the girls' beautiful feet and for the girls to massage my feet.

Jennifer went to the kitchen to get sodas for everyone. I followed. She hurried back into the living room, and I followed, carrying the sodas.

We handed the others a refreshing Coca-Cola and sat back down. I kept the ice-cold soda can closed and held it against my chest to help cool my body down.

We continued to watch music videos, and I eventually cooled down and drank the soda. It was almost time for Jennifer's mom to pick her up, so the girls got dressed. We played the card game *Uno* at the dining room table and listened to music videos until her mom arrived in her Ford LTD station wagon. Jennifer won both games. Then after Jennifer went home, the three of us played three more games. Sean won twice, and I won the last game. Mom phoned: Now, it was time for me to go home.

Thankfully, it had stopped pouring. It was humid because of the monsoon storm, but the Arizona desert was so dry, the humidity wouldn't last for too long.

The next day, in the hot early afternoon, I raced my bicycle to Sean's house, wearing my swimsuit and a white T-shirt, hoping to see the girls again. And they were there!

I Turned Thirteen Today

I was a happy teenage boy
Admiring the hair on my arms
As my family and I
Rode up the escalator
At the mall.

I AM A MAN.

I smirked, feeling happy,
Carrying the action-figure superhero playset
Mom and Dad got me.

Teenage Mustache

I was fourteen,
And sparse hair was growing above my upper lip.
Dad showed me how to shave
With shaving cream
And my own razor.
I felt very, very, very weird
About shaving my mustache.
My upper lip was super smooth.
I am a man.

I Turned Fifteen Today

Standing naked

In front of the mirror

In my room,

I admired the hair

On my body.

I lifted up my arms

And flexed my arm muscles.

I am a man.

I smiled.

Teased by Boys

Two younger boys

Were teasing a thirteen-year-old

About having hair

Under his arms.

The boys laughed and laughed and laughed.

"I'm a man," the older boy said,

Slowly patting his chest.

"I am a man, but

You two are mere boys," he said.

Underarm Hair at Fourteen at Junior High School

Before P.E. and
Outside the basketball courts,
A teenage boy, Brett,
Held my arm up
And inspected under my arm,
Looking for hair.
“You are *not* a man,” Brett declared.
I was silent, looking at him.
Then, he turned away and
Started talking to his buddy
About a popular music band.
He was wrong. *I am* a man.
And hair will grow there soon, I hoped.

Two Boy Spies

From a second-story bedroom window,
Two young brothers
Spied on a teenage girl
Who was swimming nude
In her backyard pool next door.
Their mom found out
What her boys were up to,
And they got in big trouble!

Sixth-Grade Camp Showers

The showers at sixth-grade camp

Were communal.

I was too shy

To be naked with the other boys.

Five days later,

When camp was over,

I immediately took a shower

When I got home—

Finally.

Swimming at Sixth-Grade Camp

I waited for most of the boys

In my cabin to leave

Before I put on my swimsuit.

I hurried and pulled off my underwear—quick—

And slid on my suit—quick!

Phew!

After swimming,

I got to my cabin before most of the other boys

And changed back—QUICK.

Phew!

Whiskers in High School

I was a freshman in high school.

Roy, who sat next to me in drafting class,

Said, "You have whiskers on your chin.

You need to shave."

I used one of Dad's razors

And shaving cream

For the first time

As soon as

I got home.

Have You Ever Peed Out of Two Places?

Were You Circumcised?

About the story: Rich, a shy sensitive, imaginative, and awkward fourteen-year-old high school freshman nerd is asked personal questions by the girl he loves. Based on a true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, USA, circa 1986.

Before freshman P.E., third period, I stood on the volleyball courts inside the south gym at Canyon Del Oro High School, talking with friends. Sandie and my friend Sean were on my team. I loved Sandie but felt like a hapless teenage Romeo because she wasn't interested in dating me. I know this because, about two months ago, another friend had asked her if she was interested in dating me, and she had said *no*. After that, Sandie had started dating my friend, Gene who had spoken to her for me and, later, another buddy of mine Steve. I wasn't bitter about it, though; each friend had considerably asked me prior to them dating Sandie.

We were informed that the P.E. teacher, Mrs. Smith, was delayed in arriving, so the students began sitting on the bleachers to wait.

Sandie suddenly turned to me and asked, "Do you ever pee out of two places?"

I furrowed my eyebrows, frowning, as I wondered what Sandie was talking about. Then I realized that the other students were watching us and waiting for my reply.

Sean and Sandie started to giggle. I felt my face turn red. I was acutely uncomfortable, talking about something private like my penis.

How could a guy pee in two places? I wondered, puzzled.

"No," I finally answered, shaking my head.

"Were you circumcised?" Sandie quizzed me again.

I thought for a moment.

"No."

The students burst out laughing.

My face felt even hotter. I did not know at the time that I had been circumcised as a baby. The only penises I had ever seen looked like mine, and I didn't know the difference.

Why would I be circumcised? I pondered. Only Jewish boys are circumcised, I thought incorrectly.

Mrs. Smith arrived and started class, thankfully ending the embarrassment and awkwardness for me. Our team won all three volleyball games. I felt safe, at least for the moment.

I eventually figured out that some men do pee out of two places, when debris at the opening of the slit of the

penis causes two streams of urine to come out. To my surprise, years later, I also figured out that I had been circumcised.

Years after that embarrassing moment, when I was almost twenty-one years of age, a psychiatrist diagnosed me with paranoid schizophrenia. I assumed the reason Sandie had shown no interest in dating me in high school was because my mental illness had been adversely affecting my decisions and actions to a certain degree. My friends had probably been as unaware of my mental illness as I had been; otherwise, I could have gotten help at a younger age.

Cute

At summer camp,
My buddy Steve and I
Headed toward our cabin.
Jennifer,
A blonde babe with long hair,
said, "You're cute."
My face turned red.
I looked away silently.
Steve and the other campers
Broke out laughing.
She was popular—
And I wasn't.
"Are you shy?" She chuckled and smirked.
(silence)
"You've got chubby thighs," she said,
Making me smile.
Embarrassed, I slinked away,
Looking at my sneakers.
My buddy laughed and laughed.
I wished and wished and wished and wished

I wasn't so shy.

If I wasn't so shy,

Jennifer could be my girlfriend.

You're Cute

About the story: Rich, a shy, sensitive, and imaginative twelve-year-old boy experiencing puberty is embarrassed by a babe at camp. Based on a true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, USA, in 1983.

My buddy Steve and I were at sixth-grade camp in mid-April. We were walking across a short bridge over a dry wash when Jennifer, a babe standing against the side railing, complimented me: “You’re cute.”

My face turned red, and my gaze dropped to my sneakers. She had never complimented me before.

Steve and the other campers broke out laughing.

“Are you shy? You’ve got chubby thighs,” she added, making my face flush even hotter.

Not knowing what to say or do, I slinked away, looking at the ground. Steve laughed again as we headed to our cabin.

A babe thinks I’m cute and that I have chubby thighs, I thought again and again and again.

“Lucky dog; You’re too shy to get a girlfriend,” Steve said.

I shrugged and continued walking, staring at my sneakers.

I wished and wished and wished and wished Jennifer was my girlfriend.

Steve was right. I was too shy. But maybe, someday, I wouldn’t be shy. Someday, I’d find a girlfriend—I hoped.

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Have You Ever Peed Out of Two Places? Were You Circumcised?

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true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, USA, circa 1986.

About the author: Richard Carlson is an author of children's and coming-of-age books. He is a highly sensitive person, or HSP. You can learn more about him at www.richardcarlson.com.

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