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[I Sing Of Summer](#)

The liberation of the solstice is a fleeting freedom — so enjoy it while you can!

by [Paul Moore](#)



“I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers ... of June and July flowers.”

— Robert Herrick, 17th century poet

The great poets loved “singing of” things both lofty and mundane. But when you’re a kid, there’s nothing that resonates louder than the song of freedom. The freedom that comes when the clock strikes 3:00 on the last day of school. I have an indelible image planted in my brain from my last day of seventh grade at Valley View Junior High in Edina. The final bell has just rung, students and papers are flying through the halls, and a waif-like girl named Jean Johnson is standing by her locker, her fist thrust in the air, letting out a scream of pure joy like she’s just won the lottery. Which of course she has. She’s a seventh grader with nothing but unadulterated freedom staring her in the face for the next three months.

Here in Minnesota, much has been made of the fact that summer is extra satisfying because of what we have to endure the rest of the year. You slog through January and February, and you get the big payoff in June. But you can’t be late and miss it. One of my colleagues used to surreptitiously check her watch on windy days, waiting for just the right moment to slip out and go windsurfing. She was no doubt heeding another great poet, Joseph Addison, who wrote, “The woman that deliberates is lost.”

It seems our lakes are the focal point of our liberation. A journey I often took to a lake cabin to celebrate Independence Day was always punctuated by that classic query, “Are we there yet?” Getting to this place was a major endeavor. Put simply, it was a haul. But as everyone who has studied history knows, with freedom comes sacrifice. Cabin or lake home owners will readily give up those two or three or five hours it takes to get to the promised land for the rewards that await. This particular cabin had the best of everything, from watercraft to accommodations, but still managed to maintain that air of simple liberation that comes from being in Minnesota in the summer. A friend of mine, frustrated in that northern Minnesota lake town, complained to one of the locals that he couldn’t get a cell phone signal. “Exactly,” was the reply.

You don’t have to head North to enjoy this glorious season. In my house, summer means opening up the screen porch and barely closing it until October. That’s where we eat our meals, where the kids and pets hang out and where the mosquitoes buzz wistfully by, forlorn that their meals sit mere inches away, untouched. Not that we all have to go to the extremes of the Los Angeles movie producers who were filming in Stillwater one summer. They showed up wearing pith helmets with mosquito netting.

On that same movie set, the crew built the façade of an outdoor restaurant. It was just a pretend location, but one after another, people would come to ask for a table. When they found out they couldn’t eat there, they were angry. Because eating outdoors is just another way we break free from our winter chains. Most of the year, it’s not an option. In summer it’s almost a requirement. It’s amazing the number of Twin Cities restaurants that manage to create outdoor dining in spaces foreigners (people not from Minnesota) would never dream of. Have a little swath of land over there where the lawn meets the parking lot? That will seat eight. A restaurant that knows its business knows you have to make hay (or perhaps veal medallions in a reduction sauce) while the sun shines.

Let’s face it — winter in Minnesota isn’t that bad. We all complain, but we manage to make the most of it. Summer isn’t restitution for winter — it doesn’t have to be the season that sends us to our knees to thank the lord for deliverance. It’s glorious enough on its own. Our summers start as emancipation from school and just keep getting better, right on through the small town Fourth of July celebrations that you have to arrive at three hours early if you want a parking space within two miles. But we can’t take summer for granted. It’s something special that must be cherished and doted on. Because while the 17th century poets may wax eloquent on the merits of the season, perhaps the 20th century poet Shel Silverstein best captures summer’s impermanence:

*“Here comes summer,
Here comes summer,
Chirping robin, budding rose,
Here comes summer,
Here comes summer,
Gentle showers, summer clothes,
Here comes summer,
Here comes summer —
Whoosh — shiver — there it goes.”*