Walking was a way of life.

Nothing took us by surprise. We saw the first leaves of Autumn fall and examined the colorful tracery which the season had impressed upon them. Later we cruunched through a carpet of leaves whose falling had left the branches bare. But there was beauty in those branches starkly etched against an Autumn sunset.

A variety of chrysanthemums bloomed along our route to school and gave off a spicy aroma. The Autumn air had a quality all its own and we took deep draughts of the chilled delicacy again and again. Day by day we noted the dwindling of the grass. One of our great thrills was hearing the hoarking of wild geese and looking upward to see them flying in V-formation toward warmer climes.

Mornings we left early for school. As winter became entrenched we were treated to magical sights, like a rosy reflection of the sun shining on frosty lawns. Or, the droplets from front yard faucets frozen into prisms to various designs. Those mornings were shivery cold and our lips and cheeks were chapped by the time we arrived at school.

Dinner Time

At noon we usually made the trek back home for dinner. We had a choice of one or two things if we remained at school for dinner. We either ate cold bagged lunches or we bought a bowl of hot bean or vegetable soup for a nickel in a combination classroom - soup kitchen. The soup kitchen was the brainchild of a school teacher, Miss Marie Himel, who not only knew her subject matter but felt compassion for the children who lived "in the country" and could not get back home for a hot meal. The country children brought their vegetables in return for soup, and a local meat market (run by the Louis Dubernard family) generously aided with meat. The soups, particularly the bean soup, (I wish I had had that recipe) was so delicious that many townspeople arrived with containers to purchase some.

More often than not, though, we walked home for dinner for the family was large and nickels were rare. Our mother began serving our plates sometime before we arrived famished from the long trek.

Immediately after eating we took to the sidewalks again and after afternoon classes were over we ambled back home.

I remember owning only one raincoat in my childhood and that one was a gift from my godfather. It was a trench coat (I felt like Mata Hari when I wore it.) But, of course, I outgrew it. We didn't carry umbrellas, so if it rained while we were walking, we just got wet. Once, when I returned home, I put my squishy wet shoes in the oven to dry. They turned into two pieces of burnt leather and I hated to tell my mother. She had so many pairs of shoes to buy.

Night Walks

Unafraid, we walked in thick fog. We walked at night and saw the moon — full, half and sickle — and the stars studding the sky.

You would think that with all the walking we did during the week we'd shy away from it on weekends. But, we didn't. We walked through the early morning darkness to St. John's Cathedral on Sundays. After Sunday dinner we set out on whatever route struck our fancy. We never knew quite where we would end and we felt like explorers. It was fun to follow the bayou, sometimes clinging to trees to keep from falling in, and we ended up at Chargois Springs (in the vicinity of what is now Beaver Park.)

One time we got lost and had to follow the bayou back to our house, and another time we headed toward town and we ended up at what is now Beaver Park where we searched for an abandoned car, just for the sake of it.

A friend of mine says that the law should require that all automobiles be left home at least one day a week. He believes it would encourage the dying art of conversation on the street, it would aid in maintaining good muscular health and would temporarily restrain air pollution.

He might have a point there. If you value your life, you sure can't muse on cloud formations while you're driving a car.

Each barnacle, parasitic sea creature, is both male and female, but cannot fertilize itself.