

Games We Play---

by Melanie Grillo

CAN TOMMY
COME OUT AND
PLAY?

Hide The Thimble - "We used to always play this on a Sunday afternoon when our relatives came over." One person hides a thimble and everyone tries to find it. The one to find the thimble hides it next. In grandma's day the prize possession was the sterling silver thimble that could not remain unfound.

Comedy Come - This is a describing game. A person chooses an object to describe. The people playing the game try to guess what the object is. The person choosing says, "comedy come", and the others reply, "What do you come by?" A clue is given to the color, name, place, size or any other information which can help in the guessing. For example, if the object is a table, you may say "I come by the letter T", and after a few guesses they may ask again what you come by, and you must give them another clue. This was a popular game with grandmothers and grandchildren to help with learning the alphabet.

Drop The Handkerchief - This game was also called Cat and Mouse, and was played by many old timers. Everyone stands in a circle joining hands. One person walks around the outside of the circle. The mouse, or the person walking around the circle drops a cloth behind one of the players. The cat who finds the hanky behind him must chase the mouse around the circle trying to tag him before he reaches his empty space. If either of them don't think they will make it, they can yell "cut the butter" and everyone has to drop hands to let them chase through.

Duck Duck Goose - Everyone sits in a circle. One of them goes around the outside of the circle tapping each one on the head calling out duck. If he says goose when he touches your head, you must chase him around trying to tag him before he sits in your seat. If you tag him, then he's "it", but if you don't get him before he sits in your seat, then you are "it" again.

Stilts - Another pastime for kids was home-made stilts. A slender 2x4 board approximately 4'-5' is used. Perpendicular and on the inside of each a 2x2 block is nailed. A piece of leather is used to secure the block for leverage to hold the block onto the long stilt. A hand strap may also be made out of leather on the tops of the poles which may be sanded smooth for holding. The object of the game is to spend as little of the day as possible walking around at least two feet off the ground. This created many pleasurable moments for children and perhaps some pride for grandfathers.

Over-And-Under - Two or more teams line up. The first one in each line holds a ball which he must pass on to the player behind him. He passes it over his head without turning around. The second player in line, now in possession of the ball, passes it to the third person through his legs. The ball continues to be passed over the head and through the legs to the end of the line. By this time the first person in line has moved to the end of the line. When he has reached the front again before the other team they are the winners.

Spud - First give all the players a number. The one who is "it" throws the ball up calling out one of the numbers. The owner of this number runs toward the ball saying "spud" when he has grabbed it. Everyone else must run as far away from the ball as possible but must stop when the one in possession of the ball says spud. He chooses which person he can get closest to with three big steps. The object is to throw the ball at this person who is "it" next, hitting him, and giving him the letter S, spelling s-p-u-d. If he misses, the letter goes to him. The first one who has spelled "spud" goes through the paddy wack.

Paddy Wack - Everyone lines up with their legs spread. The loser must crawl through everyone's legs as they spank his bottom. "This was one of our favorite ways to punish a loser."

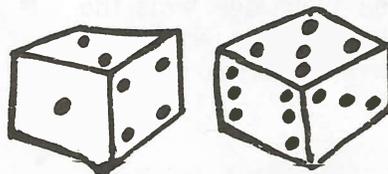
Fox and Geese - "One of the winter games we would always play, was fox and geese. You make a big circle with the spoke in the center, like a wheel. One of the kids is the fox, and the rest of the kids are the geese. As long as you were in the center, you were free. If the fox caught you anywhere out or around that spoke or wheel, then you'd have to be the fox and chase the others."

Duck on a Rock - This is a game that was used to improve young boys throwing skill. A small rock would be placed on top of a bigger rock, then from a set distance you would throw rocks at it and try to knock the little rock off. Points can be given for hitting the rock so a winner can be acknowledged.

Flying Dutchman - All the players stand in a circle, boy-girl, etc..., holding hands. One couple walks around the circle and picks another couple by breaking their hands free from the other players. These people must run around the opposite way racing to the empty space. The couple to get there last is "it" the next time.

Annie Over - This game was commonly played by two or more persons standing on opposite sides of a wall, house or barn. A rubber ball is used to pitch back and forth. The person starting the game says "Annie". The partner responds by saying "over" meaning that he is ready. The ball is thrown. The object is to catch the ball before it touches the ground, then holler "Annie" to the unseen person on the other side, and toss it back. Many times a youngster might try to claim catching the ball since the opponent can't see for sure. A hazard of this game could entail a broken window, or a loosened roof slat. The game was really popular with boys and girls wanting to become good ball catchers.

Pig - This is a dice game played by two or more people. The object is to add points rolled and the first to get one hundred points wins. You may roll as many times as you like and stop whenever you'd like, but watch out for those ones. If you roll a "one" you pass the dice getting no points for that turn. If snake eyes comes up (two ones) you lose all your points on the score board starting back at zero on your next turn. The pig is the one with the guts who keeps rolling and soon enough a "one" appears. Another game called Pig Mania may be a derivative for this game where as it consists of actually rolling tiny pigs and counting points for the position in which the pigs land.



T.V. Tag - There are many variations of tag, but this one was a favorite. It's played like regular tag, only without a base. When the person who is "it" is about to tag you, you squat down touching the ground and call out the name of a t.v. show. If you can't think of one or repeat one that someone has already used, then you are automatically "it". This can also be played using cigarette names, popular songs, or radio shows, etc.

Jacks - Starting with 12 jacks and a ball, the player first throws the ball in the air. While it is in the air, he picks up one jack and then catches the ball on its descent, after only one bounce. After picking up all the jacks one at a time, the player then picks up the jacks two, three, and four at a time and so on until he has exhausted the supply. A player may not touch other jacks not being picked up. If also he fails to catch the ball, then he loses his turn. Variations of the game proceed by putting pigs in a pen (a cupped hand on the floor) to letting the ball bounce twice and clapping hands before the pick up. Many ways could be conjured up to make the game more challenging. Many old timers still have their jacks, and enjoy digging them out of maintain their skill at this once popular game.



Darts - Homemade darts could be made out of wooden match sticks. The top of the match is split $\frac{1}{4}$ " to place two pieces of paper perpendicular to each other to act as a propeller. In the opposite end of the match a pin is sharpened on both ends to make a point. A homemade board can be made of a soft material to receive the darts well.

Red Rover - Divide up into two teams, A and B. Team A lines up on one end of the field and team B on the other. Team A locks wrists, and calls "Red Rover, Red Rover, let John (A member of the other team) come over". John has to come running over fast enough to break through the people's arms. If he cannot do this, he must join team A, otherwise he returns to his own team bringing a member of the A team with him. Whoever has the most on their side wins the game. Many people I talked with remember the game from the bruises on their arms.



Trampoline Games

Add On - One person starts the game by doing one trick. The next person does the same trick as the first person and then immediately following adds his own trick. The next person does these two tricks and then adds another to it. Keep adding on till one person misses or forgets and goes out of the game. This continues until everyone is out. Some tricks used were seat, drop to a sitting position; knee, jumping on knees; front, landing on your stomach, back, or any other appropriate bounce.

Higher, Higher - Two people stand on each side of the trampoline holding the ends of a rope. First you let the rope lay on the tramp and everyone goes by and jumps over it one at a time. Then they raise the rope a couple of inches and everyone jumps over it again. The game is over when the last person can't jump over the rope. It finally gets so high that no one can get over it.

I Spy - Two people on the trampoline. A person with his back faced to these people calls out a challenge like seat, go. Everyone else does that jump and tries to sneak in another kind of jump without getting caught. If a player is caught doing another trick the person who's it says "I spy", and the one to get caught has to be "it" next. I spy may also be combined with other games to mean "you're caught". At times the term I spy went with the game Hide the Thimble.

War - This is a challenge to see who can break the consistency of the other jumpers. For instance, players may do, sit, stand, trying to break up the rhythm of the other jumper. By landing slightly before or after the opponent also doing a sit, stand bounce his bounce may be killed, or he may be sent way up, thus eliminating players to acknowledge a winner. two players' hands while a third player jumps.

Spin the Bottle - An old glass milk bottle, now replaced with paper or plastic cartons, is placed in the middle of the floor. The players sit around the bottle in a circle facing each other. One person spins the bottle. It turns and twists to a stop. The person that the bottle points to may choose someone in the room to take a walk with, kiss, hold hands, or other dares.

King's X - This is a popular term meaning time-out. In the midst of any game a player may cross the index and middle fingers on both hands and holler "King's X". This means that mom is calling, I have to leave for a minute, or many other situations where you need a time-out, and the players must respect this to let you go.

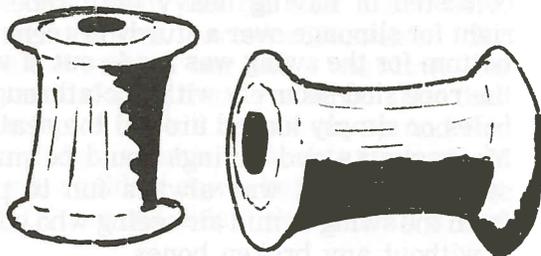
Simon Says - Everyone spreads out and faces Simon who is giving the orders. Simon may say "Simon Says" before the order, or he may not. When Simon says to the players, "Simon says touch your head", then you must do it. If only "touch your head" is said and you are caught touching your head without Simon saying to do so, then you are out of the game. Simon may also say "do this", or "do that" instead of giving an order, so you must watch him closely. These orders may be given out quite rapidly to insure only the best player to become Simon next. Orders such as: stand on one foot, touch your feet, touch the ground, hands on hips, clap your hands.

Blind Man's Bluff - One person is blindfolded and spun around in a circle until sense of direction is lost. Then he must search out the other players from noise or intrusion. Once a person is found, the finder must guess their name. If he is wrong he must be spun around to try again. But if the guess is right, the person who he has found is "it".

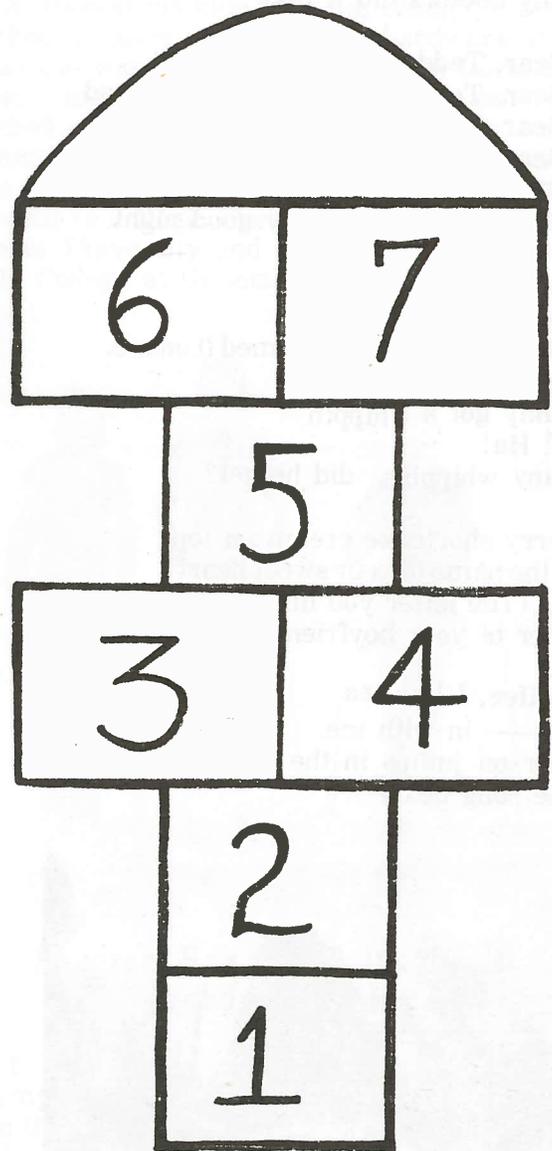
Ghosts In The Graveyard - This is a game very similar to blind man's bluff. The blindfolded person would try to find hidden ghosts or players in absolute darkness. This game often became scary as many of the players would try to jump out and yell, scaring one another.

Monkey In The Middle - This game is based on the same principle as the game keep away, but is played with only three people. The object is to throw a ball back and forth keeping it away from the monkey. If you throw it, and the monkey catches it, you must go in the middle becoming the monkey.

Spools - In the days before styrofoam and plastic, grandma had her own built-in-at-home game. This game came from her industrious sewing machine. Wooden spools, empty of thread, made excellent material for building blocks, stockade walls, heads for dolls, necklaces or bracelets and many other ingenious inventions. Spools came in different sizes and could be as adaptable in a game as the player who invented it.



Hop Scotch - A pattern drawn on a sidewalk or hard ground is also known as Petsy. This pattern may vary depending on the designer. A rock or other hard object is thrown to land on the hop scotch pattern. Then a player must jump alternating on one foot or two depending on the places for feet. As the player reaches the box with his rock he must pick it up and continue completing the jump. After the player returns with the rock it is thrown to the next numbered square. If a line is touched or stumble made, the player loses his turn to the next player.



Marbles - Marbles was a very popular game in Steamboat when spring came around. "The steam mine had a power plant house heated with steam. The plant ran up to Eighth and Pine Street. You see, the steam mine made those streets clear. You knew spring was here when they started playing marbles." And as Dorothy Wither can tell you, "I was the best marble shooter in the neighborhood."

Jump Rope - One sport which has been very popular for years is jump rope. A rope is held in two players' hands while a third player jumps. Also a player may jump alone by swinging the rope over the head and under the feet, jumping to miss the rope. Cleverly rhythm sayings are sung to keep the rhythm of the jump. Some popular old chants used by many a rope jumper are quoted:

Cinderella dressed in yellow,
Went upstairs to kiss a fellow,
Made a mistake and kissed a snake
How many doctors did it take?

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear turn around
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear touch the ground
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear touch your head
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear go to bed
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear turn off the lights
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear say good night.

Down by the ocean
Down by the sea
Johnny broke a bottle and blamed it on me.
I told ma, ma told pa
and Johnny got a whippin'
Ha! Ha! Ha!
How many whippins did he get?

Strawberry shortcake cream on top
Tell me the name of your sweet heart
A, B, C... (The letter you miss a jump on is the first letter of your boyfriend's name)

I like coffee, I like tea
I like _____ in with me.
(That person jumps in the rope with him and sings the song next)



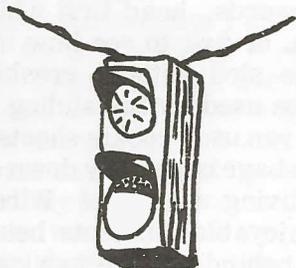
Baseball - Baseball could always be organized if there were players enough. In the event if there was a shortage of players the game would turn into "Scrub". This meant the first person to tag home plate was up to bat first, then catcher, pitcher, 1st, 2nd base etc. As a player would be put out, the other field players rotated till they reached bat and got put back out to field. Another method of deciding who goes first was hands placed on a bat on top of each other till the bat's top is covered. Baseball became the hit of Steamboat in 1917.

King Of The Mountain - One person gets on top of a rock, snow bank, or any other of this sort representing a mountain. He must try to keep the "soldiers" from getting to the top of the mountain by continually pushing them down. If one of the soldiers gets up to the top, he becomes the new "King of the mountain".

Rubber Guns - A rubber gun was usually made out of wood, either carved or a sawed right angle to resemble a gun. A clothes pin is attached to the handle portion of the gun with bailing wire or rubber. Next, an old car tire innertube could be cut crosswise to make a circular rubber ammunition. The rubber is stretched from the barrel of the gun to the handle, and clamped into the clothes pin. When an opponent approaches the corner, the battle begins. The object is to hit your opponent without hitting him in a dangerous place. Actually more fun was derived from this game in the making than actually shooting, considering the players have to watch out carefully not to hurt other players.

Swings - A swing could always be made to hang from the old oak, willow or aspen tree. This consisted of having heavy duty rope tied just right for slippage over a sturdy branch. The seat bottom for the swing was made out of wood with the rope tied securely with knots through drilled holes or simply looped around the seat bottom. Many chants and sayings could be made up to swing by and it was always fun to parachute from the swing in mid air seeing who could make it without any broken bones.

Red Light, Green Light - One person stands with his back facing the other players. He says "green light", waiting as long or as short as he likes to turn around calling out "red light". The object is to be the first to tag him without being caught moving. Green light is the signal to go, the red light means stop. If he sees you moving you must return to the start. The words "red light" and "green light" may be spit out quickly in order to assure "it" of catching other players in motion.



Hide And Go Seek - The person that is "it" hides his eyes at home base and counts until he thinks the rest of the players have had time to hide. Then he must go on a search to find everyone. When he sees someone hiding he runs back touching the base saying "Ali-Ali-um-free", and telling who he has spotted, and where the person is hiding. If "it" finds someone already out of their hiding place running towards base he must either tag him, or get to the base before him. The last one to get caught running to home base is "it" next.

Spot Light - is played just like hide and go seek. The only difference in this game is that a flashlight is used to search for the people hiding.

Sardines - This game is opposite of hide and go seek. One person hides, a small place works the best, while the rest of the players cover their eyes. The one who is it seeks his own small nook to hide in, and the players split up searching for him. As the game proceeds and "it" is found by a player, then that person quietly hides with him.

This goes on until everyone has found the one hiding. By this time, the place in which he has hidden gets more crowded like a can of packed sardines. The person who found the one hiding first hides next.

Kick The Can - also remembered as Nurkey by many people, has always been a favorite. The rules to this game are the same as those in hide and go seek. The difference is that it is played with a can instead of a base. When the person "it" sees someone hiding, he must jump over the can saying "Over the can on ____". If one of the players feels as though he can kick the can before "it" jumps over, he will free everyone making the same player "it" again.

Mother May I - One person is the caller. He will say to someone, "Take ten baby steps". The person he is talking to must say "Mother may I?" before he starts. If he forgets to say mother may I, he has to go back to the start. The first one to reach a designated point wins the game. Mother may I works best with one caller and three or more players.

Baby step - touching left heel to right toe

Giant step - very big step

Elephant step - bending over clasping hands swinging arms to represent trunk

Scissor step - walk with straight legs

Kangaroo step - hop

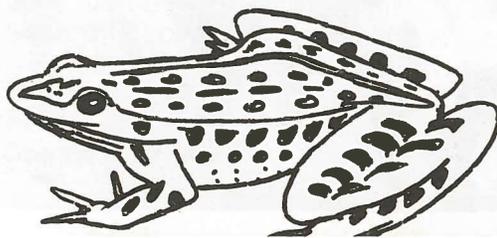
Umbrella step - hands above head turning around as you step

Ring Around the Rosie - One person stands in the center of the circle while the others hold hands rotating around the center one singing "Ring around the rosie, pocket full of posie, ashes, ashes, we all fall down". When the group says "we all fall down", the players must all squat down. The last person to squat must stand in the center of the circle next.

Marco Polo - This is played in a swimming pool. The person who is "it" closes his eyes and tries to tag one of the other players making him it. He does this by saying "marco", where as all the players must answer with "polo". The person "it" catches one of the players saying polo by hearing where the sound is coming from and moving in that direction to tag him.

London Bridge - Two persons lock hands above their heads. The rest of the players walk under while the song "London Bridge" is sung. "London Bridge's falling down, falling down, falling down. London bridge's falling down, my fair lady." At this time hands are dropped capturing the person who had been walking through at the time. The song continues, "Take a key and lock her up, lock her up, lock her up, take a key and lock her up, my fair lady."

Leap Frog - This one was always a fun event on a nice summer day. Many children lined up bending over with their hands on their knees. The person at the end of the line jumped over all the others like a frog. This continues with each person causing the line to move farther and farther along.



Chinese Checkers - This game is an ancient one, yet still popular. Many grandfathers have taken time out from the ranch or farm chores to make a chinese checker board for a grandchild. The board is approximately 2½' x 2½' with equally spaced drilled holes in the diamond end of a five point star in the middle. The outer edges of the star may be painted to designate home base. The object of the game is to move marbles from the home triangle to another opposite triangle before another player can. Each player has marbles of one color to identify his team. If a marble is filling a hole the player whose turn it is may jump that marble. Jumping helps speed the process of getting all marbles to a home base. A player tries to set up good jumps to insure his winning quickly. As many as five could play this game and enjoy a challenge.

Party Games

Pin the Tail on the Donkey - is almost self explanatory in its name. A picture of a donkey is placed on the wall, each player holding a tail with a pin attached. One by one they are blind folded, spun around to lose sense of direction, and sent off trying to pin the tail in the right place on the donkey. The one who comes closest wins the game.

Bob for Apples - A bunch of apples are placed in a bucket full of water. One by one the players try to grab an apple with his teeth. This simple task may not be as easy as it sounds since apples sink with any pressure given to them. This often results with a nose or mouth full of water. Try it.



“Living in Steamboat we didn’t play as much as we skied and sledged. We used to have a fantastic time sledding with all the kids. Every night we would go up on that hill by the high school and pile on five or six sleds. We’d go clear to the railroad tracks.” Sleds could be home-made with the right amount of materials. In mountain country there was always a snow covered hill to try out the new toy. Races could be run down a hill, plus there were many challenging positions to take on the hill such as going down backwards, head first while laying on your stomach, or just to see how many you could get on one sled without crashing. An innertube could be used for hill sliding too. The clever inventor even used cookie sheets, wooden slats, or large garbage bags to fly down a hill.

“Many kids living in Three Wire Winter country spent enjoyable moments being pulled on skis or sleds behind horsedrawn carriages. Today this sport or game still exists, only cars have increased the danger and speed for ‘Skitching’.

“Attic games could always be fun. Old clothes could be found for playing dress-up and having tea parties.”

Hiking or walking in the woods and mountains has always been like a game to people living in such beautiful country as this. “We’d have lots of picnics in Strawberry Park, Hot Springs, and up at the Stonequarry.”

Flowers or greenery could be collected for pressing or preserving summertime beauty. Rocky Mountain butterflies are elusive, but catchable.

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Isn't it Great to be
A KID AGAIN?