By Nancy Whitaker

LET'S ALL GO TO THE LOBBY

Drive-in movies used to be the place to go. On warm summer nights, there was nothing quite as much fun as going to a drive-in movie.

In previous decades drive-ins were thought of as teen hangouts, as it was one of the few places teens could be alone in those days.

Guys used to take their gals to the drive-in movies on dates and lots of times would want to park their vehicles in the back row of the outdoor parking lot, hoping to steal a kiss.

Back in the day, a carload of people used to be able to get into the drive-in for $5. I remember as a teenager, we would pile as many people as we could in a car and would often have two more hide in the trunk. Those were the days.

The drive-in always seemed to have a special smell. Sure, there was the popcorn and the hot dogs and the mustard, but indoor movie theaters had those things, too, and never smelled anywhere near as good as the drive-in.

Can you remember the great food commercials and songs they had to promote the popcorn, candy and hot dogs? "Let's all go to the lobby" was the only invitation needed for the big juicy hot dogs, the buttery salted popcorn, crisp icy drinks and tempting chocolate candies danced their way across the big outdoor movie screen.

Even if you had taken your own snacks to the drive-in, after you saw the those commercials, trying out the food at the snack bar was a necessity.

In the summers when my own kids were growing up, we would make plans to go to the drive-in a particular night. The kids were all excited and looked forward to going. We would dress them in their PJs so if they fell asleep, they would be ready for bed when they got home. There was nothing better.

Then there were the old speaker boxes you used to put on the side of your rolled down window for sound. I often wonder how many people forgot they were still on their windows and drove off pulling them out of their stands?

In a time when terrorism and war stories dominate the news, people see the drive-in as an escape. The drive-in represents a simpler time. Things like a drive-in night enable families to spend quality time together, in a world where simple pleasures have become harder and harder to find.

As time went by, more and more drive-in movie theaters fell by the wayside and today there are only approximately 373 open drive-in theaters in the U.S.

Can you believe that in 1958, there were over 4,000 drive-ins in operation in the U.S.?

There is a drive-in movie theater approximately 30 minutes away. In fact it is the same one I used to go to, my kids went to and my grandkids go to.

I was told that now they have three screens, giving you a choice of movies. The sound now comes through a radio and not through those speakers on a stand.

However, the snack bar is still a wonderful place with the commercials still saying, “Let’s all go to the lobby.”

Do you remember drive-in movies? Have you been to one lately? Do you like the various foods dancing on screen? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.