

BRIGDEVIEW BEACH.

BridgeView Beach was known to all in the African-Americans community of Springfield, Illinois and surrounding states as the Black Beach. In the 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's it seemed to be the only place to be. For a holiday did not go by without the gathering of 100's of families and friends, to rejoice in their reunions, by having bar b-que grills lining most of the park area, or packed picnic baskets and side dishes and music coming from the jukebox in the pavilion, or individual tape players scattered throughout the park. Everyone had their turn, if the adults were busy outside the kids would claim the inside pavilion and play all of their music and dance most of the afternoon away. Sometime there would be a local band to play for several hours.

Adults and kids alike joined their friends in laughter and games. It was nothing to meet people from St. Louis, Missouri, Peoria and Chicago, Illinois who looked forward to the drive just for a day or weekend of celebration.

Special groups of people would get there early to lay dibbs on the 'Pavilion on the Hill.' Young people played on the swings, and slide. Once on the hill, it wasn't often that you passed on the chance to roll down the hill. Just to add a little excitement, periodically someone while still on their back from the roll would swear they saw a snake and everyone would run screaming in all directions.

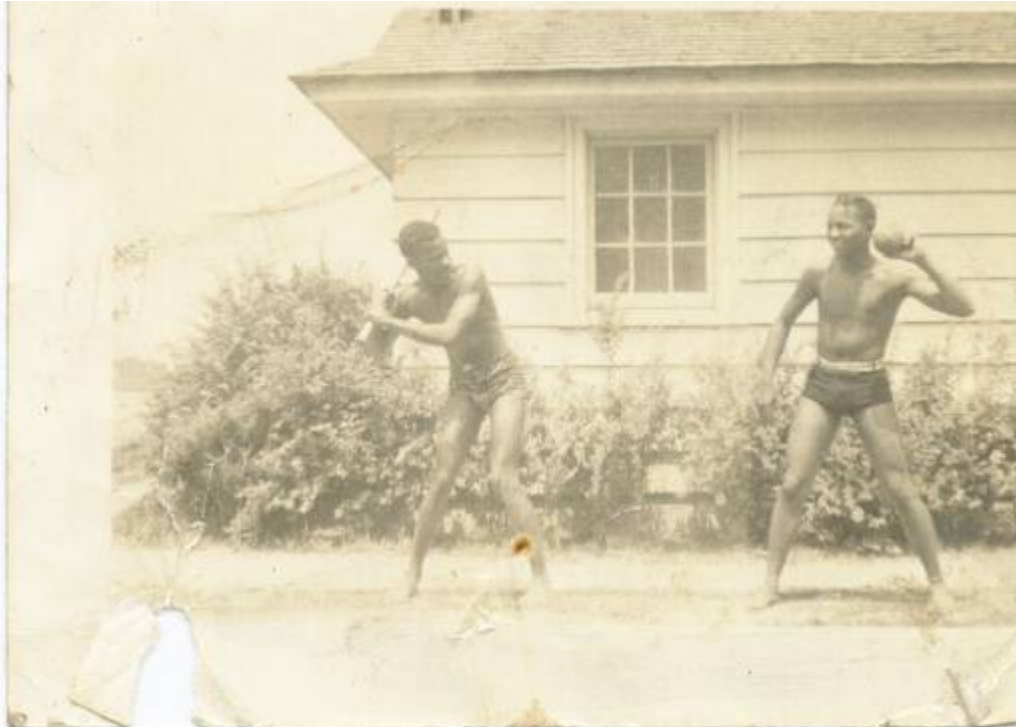
If you were not on the beach laying out and playing even though you didn't go into the water, you laughed and ran to cover every inch of the park. Something you would have a hard time picturing if you had not grown up in Springfield, Illinois was the beach area, if you could see it for the people, it was set on an impressive lake front.

Everything was shared, even if you ate before heading to the park, someone always offered you something to eat or drink. Don't kid yourself, the adults laughed as much as the kids did, whether they played cards, games, or just sat around listening to music and visiting.

As the sun went down, on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, or Labor Day Celebrations, everyone rounded up their kids and picked up all their trash. There was never an incident or disturbance during this day, despite the large number of people. It is almost as though they appeared at sunrise and as quietly rolled back down the highway with the golden red hue of the sunset. By then the kids were tired, and the adults were anxious to continue on with entertaining with their out of town guests at their homes. Sometime the night would end with families going to the Drive-In Theater.

The pictures shown were taken over the years, the beauty remains the same, and as a matter of fact this property today in (2008) is prime lake area for large gatherings of

many organizations or groups throughout Springfield. What is no longer seen here is the beach area, which is now green space, nor the celebration of African-Americans. Once the Springfield lakes were integrated the need for just a Black Beach faded out and so too did the history and reunions, now there are only memories, that is if you were fortunate to have shared in the Hey Day of Springfield's African-American History at BridgeView Beach.



**BRIDGEVIEW BEACH LAKE SPRINGFIELD, AUGUST, 1939
MILTON BEVERLY AND WARREN ST. JAMES.**



**BRIDGEVIEW BEACH LAKE SPRINGFIELD, JULY 1938
DOROTHY MAYFIELD AND MONICA JACKSON (14 years old).**



FRIENDS AT BRIDGEVIEW BEACH.