

Is it possible to have too much of a good thing?

[AP, FILES]



**MY TURN** CHARLES PINNING

## Childhood dreams can be too sweet

**M**oney changes everything. It was late morning and a sultry hot spell had settled over Newport. The beginning of August spelled just one more month of freedom, and I lay on my bed, bored, my gaze settling on the blue piggy bank on the bureau top. My recent birthday had caused it to ingest an unusually large meal of paper currency.

Staring at the ceramic piggy, something occurred to me that, oddly enough, had never presented itself before: I suddenly knew exactly what I could do, and was going to do, with some of that cash. Slipping a finger through the ring of piggy's red cork nose, I fished out a dollar bill, put on my sneakers and headed downstairs.

"Where are you going?" asked my mother.

"Nowhere," I replied. I kept moving, stepping out onto the porch and motoring determinedly up the street. At Bliss Road, I zeroed in on Kuznitz's, our neighborhood corner store, which carried the usual array of cigarettes and candy, brooms and cans of soup, bread, balsa wood airplanes, peashooters and anything else one might need, including ... Hostess Twinkies!

I only got hold of Twinkies on rare occasions. Sometimes, I'd open my lunchbox, and instead of an apple or a handful of potato chips in a waxed paper bag, or a couple of homemade cookies wrapped in waxed paper, there would be a glistening store-bought cellophane package of two Twinkies, and life suddenly sparkled. I loved Twinkies, and believed there was no limit on how many I could consume.

With my one dollar, I was able to purchase 10 packages of Twinkies, which Mr. Kuznitz placed in a bag, one package at a time.

"Having a party?" he asked.

One of the good things about being a kid is that you can just stand there and not really say anything intelligible, particularly to an adult who is not your parent. I made some sort of a sound, avoided eye contact and got out of there.

My father had a 1949 Buick sedan that he only used to drive

back and forth to work at the naval base. He kept it parked on the street in front of the house because "reverse" didn't work. I discreetly got into the back and quietly pulled the door shut behind me.

The inside was a soft and silent chamber, and I disappeared deep into the sumptuous gray cloth seat. It must have been 100 degrees in there and I kept the windows shut so as not to arouse suspicion. I pulled down the fat armrest, put one leg up on the fuzzy rope attached to the back of the front seat, and removed my first package of Twinkies from the paper bag.

The cellophane of each new package fluttered off my fingers and floated down to the floor. After the fourth package, my efforts began to slow and, a couple packages later, everything began to grow hazy. The heat and the sugar were closing in on me and, suddenly, my engines reversed.

Pushing down the door handle, I shoved open the door and collapsed onto the curb. My father was coming around the corner of the house with a pair of hedge clippers in his hand and, spotting me, he grumbled, "What the hell?"

I was inching along the sidewalk on my stomach like a Marine under fire at Guadalcanal when he pulled me up by one arm.

"What the hell have you been doing?" he demanded, taking in my condition and the car's open door. He dragged me over, then saw the Twinkie wrappers and the mess I'd left behind.

"God Almighty!"

"I had a dollar," I moaned. "I thought they'd be good." Was he going to spank me? I'd die.

"Were they?"

"No," I bleated. "My head hurts."

"That's not the only thing that's going to hurt," he said, releasing me. "Go inside and clean up, then get out here and clean this damn car."

And so the summer of 1960 writ my confused excesses into history — the beginning of a jingle-jangle decade like nobody'd ever seen before.

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