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Maddy and Daddy,
June 2014 in Nyack, N.Y.

Stay Just a Little Bit Longer

SOMETIMES I GET this crazy idea that I'll pack up my family and we'll board a plane and take off and start over somewhere. Whenever we return from a trip, the wanderlust that put us in a particular place fails to wear off. I have a running joke with my friend Wendy Ware. She'll call when we get back from anywhere and instead of asking how the trip was, she'll offer this declarative statement: "Let me guess: You're moving."

My itchy feet are always inflamed at summer's end, and they're particularly anxious right now because, starting this month, both of my babies will be in public school. No more day care. No more baby talk. September 2014 signals the passing of time in the most incredulous manner — when the big yellow bus is there for not one, but both.

And sometimes I get this crazy notion that my girls will somehow be immune to all of the growing pains — the literal and the figurative — that I went through.

The counterargument is that everyone goes through those, and that the insecurities and the academic struggles and even the bullying are character-builders. (I'm monumentally happy to see that bullying is finally at the forefront of social conversations, and that actions are finally being taken to suppress this scourge.) Truthfully, I'll admit that the process of overcoming these obstacles built character in my own life and helped chart my course. But oh brother, was it ever painful.

Of course, I hope times have changed and that things will be easier for them. The older I get, however, the more complicated things become.

I was watching *Midnight in Paris* the other night,

a solid Woody Allen pic from 2011. There's a scene at Versailles in which Owen Wilson is ribbed by Michael Sheen because of his "Golden Age thinking," described as "the erroneous notion that a different time period is better than the one one's living in." As a painfully overeducated journalist, as a recovering dyslexic, as a father twice over and as a citizen of this world, I've learned that the older I get, the more drop there tends to be to life's curveballs, and a simpler time seems more appealing. As such, I've always been — and am becoming evermore — a Golden Age thinker.

And to which era would I like to time warp? The 1950s.

The war was over. American men and women returned from two theaters of combat and started new families. The industrial home front, used for years as a tactical military vein, once again reverted to being a commercial artery. Big band music subsided and the stage welcomed back Frank Sinatra, who helped pave the way for doo-wop, which helped pave the way for this kid from Tupelo, Mississippi. By the time Elvis Presley made his second appearance on *The Milton Berle Show* in June 1956, more than 70 percent of households in the United States had televisions, up from 0.5 percent a decade earlier. According to Leo Bogart, TV's first historian, "Television had established its place as the most important single form of entertainment and of passing the time." It should come as no wonder that a Golden Age thinker like me would like to have lived during the decade that is universally recognized as the Golden Age of Television.

Look no further than the descriptions of growing up in the '50s by Morgan Freeman (page 58) and Carlton Stowers (page 108) to buttress my point. There's something compellingly romantic about a time period when a boy could collect disposed soda bottles and redeem them for enough cash to buy a movie ticket. Wouldn't it be a gas to hop into your screamer, peel out with dem heels on fire and go for pinks before you stable the horses? I even love the '50s slang, daddy-o.

Lest you think the other editors of *American Way* are stuck in the past, this issue confirms that I'm the only square. Grab your passport and visit the country of Colombia (page 66), which has shed the shackles of the past and emerged as the toast of South America, and learn more about the enduring camaraderie of the *Fox NFL Sunday* crew (page 44). Also, see how the 50-year-old Wilderness Act helps preserve broad swaths of the contemporary American landscape (online at aa.com/americanway).

SOMETIMES I GET this crazy dream that my daughters will stay young and sweet and be my babies forever. They're aging, you see, and the bus stop is only the beginning. There'll be all sorts of growing pains and milestones up ahead — the winding road will be replete with great successes, near misses and unfortunately, as I live and breathe, abject failures. And so it goes. There won't be sock hops or poodle skirts or Everly Brothers LPs in their futures. But then again, there was none of that in my past. My Golden Age thinking centers on my parents' generation. Perhaps my daughters' will center on mine.



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