



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

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## Women, Pre Title 9 (1972) - Were we really that active?

Thursday, October 11, 2012

One of the reasons often stated as a cause of the sudden increase in obesity over the last 20 years is a reduction in activity levels. I want to take an honest look back.

While my friends and I actively played outside during childhood, for girls that pretty much ended by age 12. We may have been outside, but there was more sitting on the "stoop" watching the boys who were still out there playing actively than personal participation. For those not raised in the city, a "stoop" refers to the stairs in front of your house. There we would sit and talk for hours.

Most of us walked to school, but if you lived more than 1 mile away, you got a pass to take public transportation. In my parents' rural hometown school buses performed the same function for almost everybody.

I remember wanting to participate in sports, but if there was anything organized for girls, it sure wasn't very visible. In high school I was proud to have made the basketball team. But we played 6 on 6. You were only allowed to dribble twice and then you had to pass the ball and NEVER were we allowed to cross the center line. I suppose we were considered too delicate to really run hard. By my college days the rules had changed to allow a "roving forward," one girl who was allowed to run full court. I graduated in '67 and don't know much beyond that.

We had PE in high school for 4 years, but the activity level wasn't very high. I found this picture in a yearbook.



Even at that minimum level, shirking requirements was an art form among the girls. We were excused from participation for having our period. 1964 was the first physical fitness tests prompted by President Kennedy's program. I surprised my PE teacher with a 7'1" standing broad jump when the class average was less than 5'. My girlfriends thought I was freaky. I was one of the very few to earn the physical fitness

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patch.

We didn't have video games, but TV was new in the 50s and we spent a lot of time in front of it. There were dire predictions for our future including how it would ruin our eyes. Judging from the number of shows I remember vividly, it was a major pastime.

As a young mother no one I knew belonged to a gym. While in the city we pushed our children in strollers to the park where we sat and talked. Noone was jogging with them. After moving to the suburbs even that ended and we strapped the kids into car seats and drove everywhere.

So although I would like to remember an idyllic time of activity, I don't think it was true. While I was more active than most and stayed that way, by today's standards, it was hardly anything. Yet looking at all my class pictures, I can only identify one girl with a weight problem and no boys.

American women began to gain weight at a tremendous rate beginning in the 80s at a time when there were many more fitness opportunities than before. Our eating habits changed too as did the ingredients in our food, but that's another well documented topic.

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**MOOSLADY**

I never played sports in high school(80-84) but my mom didn't drive and kids didn't all have their own cars so I walked 3-5 miles/day just as part of life. I rarely ate out and my parents didn't allow snacks or unlimited desserts(they should have been Puritans, they thought fruit juice was decadent) so overeating wasn't appealing. College I was broke and living on my own is was trying to eat on \$5/week- think pot pies, ramen noodles and cheap cereal(back when cereal was cheap). Oh and I had no car so long bus ride plus 5 miles to get to classes. Got way too thin at one point and had a bad knee injury that didn't heal well. Even after college when I was mostly sedentary I didn't gain weight until I was hugely stressed by my marriage ending. So not sure people were really more active at an earlier time once they were adults, but definitely were eating less processed food and having less stress.  
3167 days ago



**NANCYANNE55**

I posted a blog several years ago titled "Super Size Is Now Regular Size", and I think that's the issue, not inactivity. And the super-size started in the 80's.

Having said that, kids were I grew up were indeed more active than my own kids were/are. I rode my bike EVERYWHERE (often miles away), starting in about 5th grade. I think this was the big thing- My mom wasn't going to drive me, so I got myself there. We kids walked to each others homes, often a mile or more away, and we had a 24-foot above-ground pool in our backyard, so a lot of time in the summer was spent seeing how many times I could swim across it and back without coming up for air. Not surprisingly, I had beautiful legs. Unless a kid is in a organized sport these days the odds of them getting that kind of activity are really slim, safety being a big factor for a lot of parents, I think.  
3168 days ago



**CD988070**

Increased disposable income, less time, more restaurant- and processed-foods : (  
3168 days ago



**CATMAGNET**

I didn't even start kindergarten until 1976, so I was part of the first generation that was able to take full advantage of Title IX. However, there still wasn't much as far as youth athletics for girls back then, so my activities were restrictly mostly to musical pursuits during my childhood. By the time I got to high school, I wasn't really athletic at all, and hated PE. It really hasn't been until recently that I've really started to love exercise in multiple ways and forms.

I'm glad that you shared your experiences. They're a real eye opener!  
3168 days ago



**NELLJONES**

Actually we were a lot more active back then. We walked to school, walked to the store, walked to our friends, because kids didn't have cars. There was only one phone in the house that we had to share with everyone, so it was easier to walk to your friend's house. We had to hang laundry out on the line and wash dishes by hand.





I think the big difference was in what we ate. A Coke was a 6 1/2 oz bottle. Juice glasses were 4 oz. Dinner plates were smaller and we had much smaller servings. Check out old cookbooks to see what constituted a serving size back then. I was the fat girl in high school and that was because I snacked. People just didn't snack much back then, but I sure did and paid the price.  
3168 days ago



#### SUZYMOBILE

We're about the same age, and I was dismally inactive until my ex-husband got me into fitness and weight loss in the early seventies. That was the beginning of the jogging boom, right around the time Jock Semple chased the first woman who tried to run the Boston Marathon to the side of the road. Runners were still viewed as borderline freaks, the Jack LaLannes of the road. And lifting weights?? I never told anyone that I was pumping iron in the basement!  
3168 days ago



#### MJZHERE

From the 70's - my activity level was extremely active. We weren't allowed to sit in front of the tv - my mom made us go outside. Weekends as a teen, GF and I often rented a bike for two and rode everywhere. We were expected to pass the physical fitness - and God help the one or two who didn't. Maybe it is because we were rural? There were only one or two overweight kids in our age group - I graduated with most of the same kids I started kindergarten with. There were the "thin little girls" and they were the ones who "watched" the boys, didn't play sports and never seemed physically strong. I always felt "big" around them but the pictures from then show a thin, muscular strong girl.  
3168 days ago

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