

# ... And the Livin' is Easy

Memories of a season long gone inspire me to make this the best summer ever.

## Summer of '89

**CHILDREN OF THE '80S, REJOICE! THIS PLAYLIST OF SOME OF MY FAVORITE 1989 JAMS WILL MAKE THIS SUMMER'S ROAD-TRIPPING A NOSTALGIA PARTY. BUST OUT YOUR WALKMAN AND TAKE A LISTEN.**

**Roam**, The B-52s  
**Escapade**, Janet Jackson  
**Partyman**, Prince  
**On Our Own**, Bobby Brown  
**Like a Prayer**, Madonna  
**Toy Soldiers**, Martika  
**Big Dreams in a Small Town**, Restless Heart  
**Killin' Time**, Clint Black  
**How Do**, Mary Chapin Carpenter



One of the songs above was almost certainly playing when this photo—of me, age nine, in our backyard pool—was taken.

**ON A RECENT** episode of the *Oklahoma Today* podcast, I got to reminisce about the summer of 1989. That was the summer my dad decided to replace all the wooden shingles on our roof after a hail storm—and tasked my brother and me with picking up the old shingles out of the yard when he discarded them. The highlight of every day was at 3 p.m., when we got to go inside and watch reruns of the 1960s *Batman* TV show.

It was also the summer the *Batman* film came out with Michael Keaton and Jack Nicholson—and Prince's accompanying anthem, "Batdance" (though I preferred "Partyman"). That June, my neighbor Erica Salkow and I got to go to Yukon to see *Ghostbusters II* in the theater—her mom, Laura, drove us there in her Porsche. It was the summer of The B-52s' *Cosmic Thing* and Clint Black's *Killin' Time*. It was the year I got to invite my third-grade class over for an end-of-year pool party—only to have a thunderstorm break out and leave us to roast hot dogs in the garage (which ended up being more fun anyway). That summer, I read, on my dad's recommendation, *Treasure Island*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. It was the year my Little League team—the '89ers, coached by my mom—won second place.

In fact, 1989 stands out in my memory as one of my best summers. It had all the elements: a summer job, a backyard pool, blockbuster movies, Little League, great music, parties, reading lists, and road trips. Subsequent summers have ruled or not in their own ways, and even though I haven't attended school in a lot of years, I still get weirdly giddy at the end of May. I know the heat will get old, and I'll get anxious for football season to begin, but I always get a little drunk on the possibilities the season presents.

Having spent the summer of 2020 watching *Tiger King* and masking up to go to the grocery store—the only kind of road trip I took last year—I find myself keyed up for this one. So it is in that spirit that we present this issue, which is all about summer fun. With "Brain Waves" (page 44), we've assembled a list of road-trip destinations that'll remind your kids how much fun learning can be after more than a year of Zoom-based instruction. In "Sub-Zero Heroes" (page 54), Karlie Ybarra goes in search of the state's best ice cream—with delicious results. Megan Rossman has curated a gorgeous scenic portfolio that'll have you packing up for a lake trip ("Shore Leave," page 64), and Greg Elwell explores the amazing town of Bartlesville, which you'll want to visit soon and often ("The Bartian Chronicles," page 74). Finally, in "A Strange Arrangement," (page 84), we introduce you to Mustang High School graduate Bartees Strange, whose groundbreaking indie rock is for sure going to form the basis of my own personal summer playlist.

The past year has been an absolute punch in the face, but as vaccination rates rise and the world reopens, we look forward to greeting this summer with open arms. We hope this issue helps you to do the same.

**NATE**

Nathan Gunter, *Editor-in-Chief*  
 nathan.gunter@TravelOK.com

“It was the **YEAR** I got to invite my third-grade **CLASS** over for an end-of-year pool party—only to have a **THUNDERSTORM** break out and leave us to roast **HOT DOGS** in the garage.”