Taking Aim: How Old We Really Are

by Harvey Fireman

Look at a copy of "Dick and Jane", or maybe the first newspaper you read: "The Weekly Reader" or "Highlights for Children". Only subtle differences are obvious. There might be a few Black and Puerto Rican faces to appease the liberals, but not enough to antagonize the racists. Dick and Jane still run with their dog, Spot. The "Weekly Reader" still prints simplified versions of complicated issues. And "Highlights" still publishes crossword puzzles for first graders. Basically though, the books, magazines, and newspaper we read haven't changed.

The games they play are the same ones you and I played. Sure, there are slight differences. The rules and language might be a little foreign. But still, it's the same.

Did you ever tell a kid to "Cut it out!" when you wanted him to stop doing something? You can bet he'll snap back at you "But I don't have any scissors." It's the same answer we gave.

When I was a kid, and wanted to challenge someone on a point of information I'd ask "How much do you wanna bet?" And then, before my opponent had a chance to answer, I'd say "A million dollars?" Well, kids still say the same thing, without any conception of what a million dollars is worth—or used to be worth before Nixon took office. But that's another story altogether. The questions and answers are the same. They don't change.

Maybe some of the problems are a lot more serious than years ago. A few kids might have moved from booze to pills, or from cigarettes to pot. But for the majority, it's the same as when we were kids.

If there are any differences to be noticed, they're subtle ones. They're not readily apparent to the eye. Certainly, it's not the kind of thing you would notice or think about every day. When you finally do think about it, you realize that it's been many years since we played these same games, and how old we really are.