

Poolside

It is a weekday morning and I'm the only person enjoying the ambiance of the grotto-like community pool at my condominium complex. All my neighbors must be hard at work. I feel lucky to get the pool area to myself; just one of the benefits of being retired. The late June sunshine is reflecting off the swimming pool surface creating a dazzling shimmer of light in the clear aqua blue water. The reflection is almost blinding, and causes me to close my eyes. The warm sun and the fresh air lull my senses into a quiet reverie. I doze off remembering another summer day spent sitting beside a swimming pool almost thirty years ago.

"Mom, look at me. Look at me!" calls my five-year-old son, Bryce, from the shallow steps that run along the length of one end of the swimming pool. It is my 36th birthday. I am sitting in a comfortable lounge chair at the Kona Kai resort hotel in San Diego, Ca. It is located at the tip of Shelter Island (actually a peninsula) in the San Diego Bay. A sailboat marina is on one side of the hotel, and the front opens up to the bay. The hotel also has a lovely pool overlooking the marina; altogether, the perfect vacation spot.

I wave and smile at my son. We have been hanging out at the pool multiple days a week. Bryce, and my three-year-old daughter, Erin, have been delighted to get to play in a pool on a regular basis. The Kona Kai is about 25 miles west from our home located in the much warmer and dryer inland area of San Diego. We don't have our own pool. Coming down to the cooler harbor after work is a wonderful treat on hot summer evenings. The pool is shaded from the late afternoon sun and my little red heads can play in the water to their hearts desire. I pretend we

are a wealthy family with limitless resources to enjoy the luxuries in life. In reality, we are a middle-class family on a budget, who found a way to have a lovely stay-cation. If you dock your boat in the Kona Kai's marina, you are entitled to use the hotel's amenities. It is a huge bonus for the \$600 month slip fee.

My adventurous husband, Bob, recently decided to buy a small 20 foot sailboat. It has a small cabin and actually has space to sleep four people. The double bed is up under the main deck. The two benches in the open area serve as seating for the fold down dining table during the day. By night, the benches convert to narrow beds for our two small children. He found one of his famous "deals" and bought the boat for \$1000. Of course, it needs another \$1000 of parts and service to make it usable. While Bob is looking for a reasonably priced place to keep the boat, we decided to rent the Kona Kai slip for a month. Hence our pretend luxury vacation is in full swing.

Neither of my children knew how to swim when we purchased the boat. I was nervous about taking care of small children onboard. However, they have child size life jackets to wear, and Bob and I are good swimmers should anyone fall overboard. Plus, the children have learned where they are allowed to go on the boat to stay safe. In the meantime, I am taking advantage of our Kona Kai pool time to start impromptu swim lessons with them.

"Good job, Bryce," I encourage, "you are really doing great." He waves at me and pushes off the steps to swim under water like a little frog. He recently learned to dog paddle on the surface, and soon learned he can get around much faster doing the same thing underwater. He has no fear of holding his breath and getting in over his head. My little girl is more timid. She is perfectly happy to have me carry her around the pool. She will lie on her stomach and kick the water with

her feet, but isn't ready for me to let go. She also doesn't like to put her face in the water.

Playing on the three long steps in the pool is fun for her.

"Erin," I call, "come sit with Mommy. Our dinner will be here soon. Let's get you dried off." I wait for Bryce to resurface, and then call him out, too. This is one of the most fun parts of the day. We order food from the hotel staff and have it served poolside. I order a strawberry margarita for me and Shirley Temples for the children. Bob is working on the boat, but he joins us for dinner by the pool. This particular day is a Saturday and the hotel has a live band that plays poolside on weekends. It is the perfect setting for my birthday party. After dinner, Bob has the waiter bring me a little cake with candles (that the children quickly blow out on my behalf). Our little family cuddles up on two lounge chairs to enjoy the music and the sunset over the bay. I sit in total contentment and drink in the wonderful moment. I think to myself, I will remember this day forever.

And, as I rouse from my daydream, I smile to acknowledge the still precious memory. Erin, now 33 years old, is getting married this summer. She, and her fiancé, recently purchased a home which will be the setting for a lovely backyard wedding. Bryce, now 35 years old, is married and about to become a father the end of September. This will be their first child, and the first grandchild in our family. A new generation is starting. I can visualize them teaching their little one to swim, while building their own happy memories. I sit back in my chair and soak up the joy of basking in the circle of life. The past, present, and future come together in one special moment of shared family love. I close my eyes to see where else I might time travel on this sunny afternoon.