

Lunch Bucket Paradise- A TrueLife Novel
Fred Setterberg

Yes! The San Francisco suburbs were like that in the 1950s!

A childhood friend of mine from El Cerrito recommended this book to me. I could not put it down. It absolutely captured the life and times. A far better known book that did the same, albeit for Los Angeles, is Joan Didion's "Blue Nights."

What comes across is the freedom and self-confidence that we felt in those days. A working stiff could support a stay-at-home wife and family. He could feel good about his job without shrill nagging from his putative betters about how he was ruining the environment. He could feel confident that his kids would find a place in society when they grew up. California public school education was about the best in the nation – the exact opposite of today.

The nostalgia was especially poignant for me. I am now raising a second family in my retirement years in Kyiv, Ukraine. Kyiv, like El Cerrito sixty years ago, is a conservative, somewhat religious, homogeneous city. I don't worry about my kids being kidnapped or sexually abused. We all take the bus, and in doing so get to know our neighbors. We shop at neighborhood stores or at the market stalls in the nearest central market, where we know the merchants and they know us. Unlike my grown family in the United States, the kids here are not freighted around like sacks of potatoes strapped in car seats, schlepped from lesson to lesson with the intent of turning out perfect adults. They simply grow up – and seem to do a much better job of it than kids who are the products of comprehensive programs.

Septuagenarians will share my nostalgia. Millennials (those who still read) may develop a bit of an appreciation for what has been lost.