



# Aroma of Yesterday

Howdy pals'n'gals, Slim Volume here to ramble & riff on olfactory memory. Hold tight, here we go...

In 1969, my sister went off to college at UCDavis. At the time, she did not have a driver's license so I helped out by shuttling her back and forth between Fremont and Davis from time to time whenever my parents could not.

When cargo was involved, I would drive our 1964 Chevy Biscayne 4-door wagon with the 283 V-8 and SlideGlide transmission- a plain-jane car with nonpower everything and an AM radio without pushbuttons. Naturally it did not have air conditioning, and a run to Davis in the summer was a brutal experience- 65 MPH down the freeway with the windows open and still it was hot as hell.

(I would kill for that car today, but that is a topic for another blog post.)

Approaching Vacaville on I-80 from the south with the windows down, you'd suddenly be overwhelmed by the delicious aroma of roasting onions, because there was an onion dehydrating plant right next to the freeway on the north side of town. I loved that smell. Next to the plant was a huge open-sided shed with enormous conical piles of onions under the roof and trucks with trailers coming and going in the yard. Another mile down the freeway and the onion smell was gone until the return trip.

Years ago Vacaville grew to engulf the onion processing plant and the suburbs overtook the onion fields and then the plant was shut down, never again to dry out another onion. The storage shed was turned into an antique mall or something equally psychedelic and unless you knew right where the plant once stood, you'd have no idea it was once there.

This afternoon Suzannah Doyle cut up some huge yellow onions from the food co-op and put them into the dehydrator and I closed my eyes and for a brief time I was once again 17 years old, behind the wheel of that big blue Chevy with the windows down doing 65 northbound on I-80, a half an hour outside of Davis, bound for the UCDavis Student Co-Op out next to the airport west of town on a scorcher of an afternoon.

Smell those onions- and that's how olfactory memory works.

Until next time-

SLIM