

Bee Sting And Buss Head

If you had a good and rich Jamaican childhood, in the 40's to the 70's there are some rites of passage, some badges of honour of which you must boast.

1. Bee sting, wasp bite and buss head: What kind of unfulfilled childhood did you have if you did not get a bee sting or wasp bite while climbing your neighbour's mango tree, especially when it was forbidden to do so. And what of di bus head and di big coco yuh get from stoning di mango tree to get di mango

2. Eating dirt: In the first place, a good Jamaican pickney has at some point put dirt in his or her mouth. If you can remember far back enough, it did tasted a lickle strange, but it was a rite of passage. Of course there will be some parents who swear on a stack of Bibles "Oh my child would never do that." What they really should be saying is "I have never seen my child do that." But then, as the Jamaican saying goes "Wah eye no see, heart no leap";

3. Biting the dog or the cat: yeah so I hear you again saying your child would never do that. The truth is, you simply did not see. And at there little size, the dog and cat are actually afraid of this little monster, so they retreat and do not fight back, while Junior chews on Bruno's bone or fills up on cat food.

4. Mumps cloth: Thankfully mumps seems to be a thing of the past but there was a time when mumps was in style and it was pretty common to see a pickney wid a "mumps cloth". The mumps cloth was usually a piece of white cloth, passed under the chin and tied on top of the head, making the child look like a cross between a short ears bunny rabbit and a Christmas present. It was di funniest thing to pass a yard and see five or six of these bunny rabbit cum Christmas presents, because once one pickney inna di yard have mumps; everybody have it.

5. Bruck a window: What it is about Jamaican pickney and flinging rock stone I do not know. What I do know is that many a mother has had to pay to replace the neighbour's windscreen or bedroom window because Junior wid him "lean han" was flinging a rockstone after a puss or a dog. Sometimes mi convince say did dog and puss dem know what dem doing when dem pose up next to car windscreen or window.

6. Bug and insect biting: And we don't mean when mosquito bite di baby, wi mean when you see junior with a half of a worm hanging out of him mouth, or yuh see something brown in your child's mouth and you realize it is the end of a cockroach. 7. Those technical skills: So where are all those people who are talking inside of the radio? You needed to know where those voices were coming from, so technician that you are, you pop open the back of the radio to see exactly where the people were and what they were doing.

8. Yuh get a switching: Nowadays pickney nah get beaten fi purpose again, but there was a time when "switching" was the order of the day for discipline. Now, nutten nuh hotter dan a tambran (tamarind) switch. Two switch of di tamarind switch pony uh lickle fine foot dem and two things happen: you will remember the stinging for a long time to come and you the memory of it it will ensure that you will not be a repeat offender, whatever di offence was.

9. Zacheus Come Down: Remember how Jesus did haffie tel Zacheus fi come dung out of di tree? Well, there is a Jamaican saying "Puss and Dawg doan have di same luck." So not because all of yuh fren dem a climb tree fi pick mango, dat mean yuh must climb it to, especially if yuh n nuh know how fi climb. So when oonoo all up inna di people mango tree with no permission, and someboday bawl out "Missa Brown a come", inna yuh panic, the climbing skills which yuh never had to begin with, fly out of yuh head and is yuh one up inna di mango tree when di owner come.

10. Mango burn and night fever: So the mango skin pretty but that don't mean that the mango ripe. But yuh done pck di mango already and the temptation is too great. Yuh can't bad fi wait a few days for it to ripe. So yuh bite it and sour as it is, yuh eat it. By evening di whole of yuh mout side sore up. Of course your mother's favourite cure, much to your distress and the amusement of yur friends ... di dood ol' gentian violet. Fi di next few days yuh a walk roun wid yuh mout side purple.

11. Showing off Potty Training: So my friend's sister has her wedding dress on the bed, for the wedding next morning. In comes one year old Tasha, pulls off her diaper, letting everything fly. Worse of all she is so proud of her self because she did something in the "dikey". That something is now all over the bed and the wedding dress. What does a girl do?

12. Not knowing when to shut up: As a Jamaican pickney, you just have to repeat everything the adults said especially the things they thought that you did not hear. So daddy comes home and you promptly tell him that mummy say him fat like cut puss, or him no have no use. Deny it as she will, daddy is not convinced.

Added to that there are the cute (i.e. when you are watching it but not so cute when you are the victim) ways of children. They use their hands to "peckeh peckeh" (mess up) the icing on the cake, hours before the part. They puke all over your new business suit on the morning you have an interview. They start to cry when you are trying to pretend that you

are not at home and worse of all they tell the bill collector "mama stoop dung behind di door and say fi tell yuh dat she not here."

Then they start to pull one thread on your fancy ball dress, and when you arrive at the event, you are almost naked as the whole top or bottom has unraveled. Sometimes you wonder what possesses them, and try as you might, you cannot interpret their behavior. Why would a child turn over the bowl of cereal on his head. Why would a little girl put her mom's expensive shoes in the bathtub, pretending that it is a pair of dolphins? Only dem seem to have di answer. Chat-bout advice ... nuh badda try understand dem, just love dem

What other childhood memories do you have? Share them with us. Email chat-bout@chat-bout.net