

Hey Parco! Ep. 1 'It's a Miracle We're Still Alive' Transcript for Website

(phone rings)

Ann: Hey Parco!

Samantha: Hey Parco!

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: Hello friends! Welcome to Hey Parco! The mostly true adventures of two recovering Gen-X Valley Girls. I'm Samantha.

Ann: And I'm Ann, and we're the Parcos. And today we're going to discuss "It's a Miracle We're Still Alive" Part One.

Samantha: It really is a miracle.

Ann: Duh. Duh. Duh! (giggles)

Samantha: As members of GenX, we definitely grew up in a world with some very special dangers. Sometimes we're amazed we've made it this far, and we know we're not alone in that feeling. So we're here to reminisce and ruminate on the hazards of growing up GenX. Where to start with this, huh?

Ann: I mean you know, I've got one for you. I still have my pair of Click Clacks.

Samantha: You don't!

Ann: I do!

Samantha: And what color were they or are they?

Ann: They were like a, or they are like a, like a psychedelic greenish yellow color.

Samantha: Okay, I could see that. Okay, for anybody who doesn't know what a Click Clack is, give it a little description.

Ann: So a Click Clack are two little balls that are connected to two strings and a little ring on top, where the, where the two strings are connected to the ring. And you bounce it up and down, it makes this click clack noise.

Samantha: Yeah, like, right, like you hold the ring and you sort of, like, move your hand up and down, and the balls, like, hit each other.

Ann: They hit each other and they make a very loud clicky clacky sound. (sound of clicking and clacking from vintage ad)

Ann: I mean, i didn't realize that the Click Clacks, yeah um, were as big as the Hula Hoop.

Samantha: I believe that, just because I remember that we all had them. We all would all have them, we were clicking, clacking - can you imagine what a nightmare that was for our parents? To listen to the click clack all the time. They were also sometimes called like Clangers or Klackers.

Ann: And they were also sometimes called Knockers! (BOING!)

Samantha: Knockers? I don't remember that.

Ann: I did, I did a small dive on that. Okay, i did a small dive.

Samantha: Let's hear it.

Ann: So okay, so in 1971, several children... See, when they were made of glass, and if they were hit too hard, they would shatter.

Samantha: Yeah, I don't think we knew them when they were made of glass, did we?

Ann: Mine are made of glass, because everything I have are hand-me-downs.

Samantha: And super dangerous.

Ann: And super dangerous. So, so, so, the Click-Clacks would explode, and they'd explode into the eyes of the children and blind them.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: And there was no, like, there was no consumer toy thing at the time,

if you can believe this.

Samantha: Okay.

Ann: Now, now, okay, so they were completely recalled. All right? And it was illegal to own these glass Click Clacks-- I probably shouldn't have said that I still have the glass Click Clacks. So they were recalled and they were taken off the market. And then they came up with Klackers that were made of wood or of metal or of other plastics, and they found that the plastics also exploded, and the shrapnel in the eye was not a good thing. Okay?

Samantha: Generally not a good thing, yeah.

Ann: But here's, here's something that I found so fascinating in my little brief dive: Click Clacks were huge all over the world, and so when all of our things were getting recalled, my god, everybody else in the world were going crazy for Click Clacks. And, you know, the popularity kind of died down, and, and in 2017, in Egypt, the Click Clacks came back! Only they were called Sisi Balls!

Samantha: This cannot be a good thing.

Ann: I'm assuming S-I-S-I is pronounced Sisi or is it SeeSee?

Samantha: I don't, I don't know. Okay, sounds like a good guess.

Ann: Right, so they named it Sisi balls after the president of Egypt.

Samantha: What, was his name, Sisi?

Ann: Yes, his last name was Sisi. Sisi balls. And people were getting arrested for playing with the Click Clacks, and that is the end of my story. So not only not only can it blind you, it can cause political unrest. (giggles)

Samantha: Besides the exploding, besides the thing that actually like got them taken off the market or whatever, I mean, they were dangerous in other ways too. I mean, you could really whip somebody with these Click Clacks.

Ann: Um, yes, as a matter of fact, because it's me, I remember hitting my own self in the head with them.

(giggles)

Samantha: Well exactly! You could definitely hit your own head and several of your friends in one flip.

Ann: Even probably one click.

Samantha: Several people.

Ann: In one clack.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: How about Lawn Darts?

Ann: Holy crow!

Samantha: Remember Lawn Darts?

Ann: Yes, I do remember Lawn Darts. It's funny that you you bring that up, because, um, I was at work and a friend of mine, a co-worker, said: "Yeah, my cousin and I used to throw them at each other. Thank god we weren't good shots!"

(THWACK!)

Ann: I mean boys are... sssilly. I was gonna say something else, but i'm just gonna say boys are silly.

Samantha: Yeah. And so in 1987 a seven-year-old girl was killed by a Lawn Dart, and that led to them being banned in the U.S. in 1988 and in Canada in 1989.

Ann: Wait in 1988?!

Samantha: Yeah!

Ann: I really I thought it would have been, I thought it had been much sooner with the Click Clack!

Samantha: Well, well no, because they didn't necessarily just apply the same rules for every toy. You know, it sort of had to be proven that it was dangerous first, and then they would apply some kind of safety label. But yeah, the little girl getting killed in 1987 is what led to the ban. Um so, so

they had already had it labeled as for adults only, right? But that obviously wasn't working, and so they just said, forget it, we just have to pull this entirely. And in an eight-year period before the banning, about 6,000 Americans were sent to the E.R. with injuries from Lawn Darts.

Ann: Oh my god!

Samantha: Yeah, I mean this was a serious problem. I mean, you can't, you can't trust it in the hands of adults either.

Ann: Well, here's the thing, okay, i have to ask, how, I mean, this sounds terrible but, how many alcohol-related Jart incidences? All right? You know, I mean, because you know you're outside, you're playing, it's usually a picnic, you're having beer or whatever, and you're throwing Darts.

Ann: Fourth of July or something, like a cookout. Yeah, someone breaks out the Lawn Darts, and then the tears start falling.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: You remember the Slip n Slide?

Ann: Wait, wait, wait! Don't tell me that's been banned!

Samantha: Well um, I'm not aware of it being, having been banned, right?

Ann: Right.

Samantha: But between 1973 and 1991, a 13-year-old and about seven adults suffered neck injuries leading to paralysis when using the Slip n Slide.

Ann: Oh my god!

Samantha: Well, and I have, I have my own little story with this.

Ann: Yes?

Samantha: Which is-- it wasn't actually a Slip n Slide, but it was inspired by a Slip n Slide. Because I was this like poor little kid and I didn't have a Slip n Slide.

Ann: Me either.

Samantha: My friends in my, yeah, in my apartment building, we took a bunch of long pieces of cardboard and set them out end to end to make a long slide. And we would get pitchers of water that, we would like go into the laundry room of the building, fill it up with water, pour it on, and then someone would slide down. It was totally because, you know, we wanted to have a Slip n Slide. And i was going in, it was my turn to go get the pitcher of water, I was soaking wet, of course, because i'd gone down the slide a few times. I got the pitcher of water and slipped on the floor, and absolutely my feet came out from underneath me and my head bounced against the concrete floor.

(CRASH!BIFF!BOING!)

Ann: Ohhhhh!

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah, and i swore from that day forward for a few years I could feel my brain jiggle inside my head.

Ann: Oh my god, you probably were seriously concussed.

Samantha: I probably was.

Ann: Yeah, you probably were.

Samantha: But there was an issue with it, with health health insurance. We'll go into some other time.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: That just adds to the perils of being a child in the 1970s.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: Okay, I was really into skateboarding and really into roller skating. And I think about all the things that I would do on that skateboard, like going to the top of a huge public parking structure and slaloming between the little concrete stoppers, car stoppers, all the way down. All the way down! I don't even know, without a helmet, without a cell phone if i got in, if i got hurt!

Samantha: Oh yeah, oh we were so far from cell phones, please. As if.

Ann: As if.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: Killer halloween candy.

Ann: Yeah, and was it real?

Samantha: I think there actually were a couple of incidents that weren't at all the way it was portrayed to us, but did actually raise fears. And that, this other part of it is that a lot of the deaths that were attributed to poison candy were actually due to natural causes or family accident and even at least one known murder.

Ann: What???

Samantha: Yeah, I'll give you a couple examples. So in 1970 a five-year-old accidentally ate his uncle's heroin.

Ann: Oh shhh - Oh my god!

Samantha: It was near halloween and the family didn't want to reveal that he had eaten his uncle's heroin, so they-

Ann: Oh my god!

Samantha: -they claimed that it was the halloween candy.

Ann: Oh my god!!

Samantha: Right. So, I mean, of course, they did like an autopsy or whatever and they realized, uh yeah, it wasn't candy. Just, you know, oops.

Ann: Wow!

Samantha: So that kind of a thing, um, and another example is in 1974: an eight-year-old boy, uh, was intentionally poisoned via Pixy Stix by his own father for the insurance money.

Ann: What???. Oh god, people are so evil! So evil!

Samantha: Yeah. So his father put the poison in the boy's own Pixy Stix and, just for good measure, he put it in a couple of other Pixy Stix that were given out to children. But happily, those children never ate them. So even, whether or not there ever really was any killer halloween candy when

we were children, yeah, we lived in fear of it.

Ann: Right, well, I mean, remember, remember when the Tylenol capsules--

Samantha: I do remember that.

Ann: --had the cyanide in it?

Samantha: I absolutely remember.

Ann: And, and five, I think it was like five people died. And you know Tylenol took the capsules off the market.

Samantha: I don't remember what year that happened, though.

Ann: I think it was in the 80's.

Samantha: But that led to the safety caps and the plastic over the top of--

Ann: Right.

Samantha: --medicine bottles. And yeah, I mean, it's really hard to imagine, after you get used to these safety measures, to remember that there was a time when they didn't exist.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: When you, when you could just twist off the top of any medicine bottle, pull out the cotton that is there, and just: there's the medicine, you know. And there's nothing, there was no safety seal foil on top and there may or may not have been a safe- a children, children's safety cap. I can't remember when children's safety caps came along, but we definitely lived in a world that didn't have them though.

Ann: Right. When we were really little.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: We were latchkey kids.

Ann: We were latchkey kids. Not only--

Samantha: So we walked home from school.

Ann: And we'd stay home by ourselves. By ourselves!

Samantha: By ourselves or just with, like, other, with our friends.

Ann: Right, right.

Samantha: You know, that was pretty much it. I mean, there's um this quote on a Wikipedia page about GenX, describing GenX as the generation that "went through it's all-important formative years as one of the least parented, least nurtured generations in U.S. history." Yes, I think we can attest that this was our experience.

Ann: Like my mom was a nurse, okay? And she was a very good nurse, and she ended up becoming an administrator. But she was a very good nurse and she knew what she was doing. However, because she was a single mom and she was working really hard, I wasn't like number one on her plate. And when I would get injured at home because i was alone, and i decided to, you know, trip on, I mean, i was always breaking something, right? I was just always breaking something.

Samantha: I do remember this.

Ann: And so there was this one time that we we were dog sitting my godmother's wiener dog, and I was in the backyard with the wiener dog and some other neighborhood kid, and um, we were playing ball. And I somehow tripped on the wiener dog's bone and I sprained my right ankle and broke my left ankle.

Samantha: Wow!

Ann: And I called my--

Samantha: You were completely down!

Ann: I called my mom at work and I said: "I think I really hurt myself." She's like: "You just got out of a cast." And I said: "I think I need to have an x-ray, Mom." "No!" So she waited a week! She waited a week before she took me in to get all x-rayed and everything, while my feet were blue! These are the kind of parents that tough, "toughen up, kid! walk it off!"

Samantha: It was very "walk it off."

Ann: Oh it was so "walk it off!"

(lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: And during the summer when we'd be off school, we had friends who would be sent off to camp.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: Things like that, right. But you and I were not so fortunate.

Ann: No. As a matter of fact, my mom would send me to like this, like, like, Tuesdays and Thursdays, she sent me to the Y. Um and she got on some kind of scholarship. And then, um, Summer School; my mother would always sign me up for Summer School at the elementary school that you and I met at.

Samantha: Child care!

Ann: Exactly! That's where I learned how to square dance.

Samantha: Right!

Ann: Uh you know, yeah yeah, so um, but uh, but, but Summer- Summer School was always over by noon, so...

Samantha: Right. So there was still a lot of time.

Ann: And my mom was not coming home till 5:30, 6:00, sometimes 6:30. But I-I was so afraid of the Planet of the Apes... (ominous music plays)...that I wouldn't go walk down my hallway.

Samantha: Oh no!

Ann: The hallway was dark and all the, all the doors...

Samantha: I remember that dark hallway, yeah.

Ann: Yes and it was really scary, it was really, really scary and then the glass shower door, like... finally, I would have to like, I'd run really fast in hopes that the planet of the apes were (not) going to come and take me away and put me in a cage. And then I would go, I, I'd quickly go to the bathroom and then I'd freak myself out with that stupid glass door. Where I'm like, somebody's behind that glass shower door!

Samantha: Right.

Ann: Oh my god, oh my god! And then when I was 10, when i was 10, it was, I was no longer afraid of the Planet of the Apes, I was afraid of Darth Vader and the Storm Troopers! (imperial style music plays) And they were all gonna take me away, and I-I would believe that Darth Vader was in that stupid shower just waiting to take me!

Samantha: But if he'd been in there, you would have heard him.

Ann: Maybe not.

Samantha: His scuba gear breathing

Ann: Scuba gear breathing-- that's, that, oh you know what? It's amazing how logical you can be when you're 54. (triumphant musical note)

Samantha: Okay!! (laughter)

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: Well, I mean, the whole latchkey kid when we're, when we're little was was one thing. Uh, the whole latchkey kid as we came of age was a whole different kit-n-caboodle.

Samantha: Well, when you say "came of age" I mean, what do you mean?

Ann: Well I mean like teenager. Those ages when the hormones are really kicking in.

Samantha: Well, I would say much earlier than that. I mean, I'm thinking of when you and I were still in elementary school, when we were in sixth grade where we met--

Ann: Awww, I love you, Parco!

Samantha: I love you too! Uh, we would get up to mischief at your house after school.

Ann: Oh yeah!

Samantha: And we were only like 11 years old, we weren't teenagers yet.

Ann: No, no. Yes, I know, I know. We definitely would get up to mischief

and we would, you know-- I mean, it's amazing how much we were able to roam free on the streets--

Samantha: Yes.

Ann: --of the San Fernando Valley with nary an adult, you know. Like I've always said, I've always said, my thing was going to record stores. And I do believe that the employees at Moby Disc are the ones that formed, you know, gave me the, the, the male figures in my life. They were like my babysitters, you know?

Samantha: Right, right.

Ann: They would, they would--

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: --you know, "Settle down, young girl. Here, listen to this record."

Samantha: "It'll set you straight."

Ann: "It'll set you straight."

Samantha: Yeah, I mean, I remember us certainly like going out on our little expeditions after school, as well, to places like record stores and the mall, of course.

(I'm a Val, I know!)

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: Yeah.

Samantha: Um, but I also remember us making prank calls from your house.

Ann: GAAASSSSPPP!

Samantha: Back in the old days, where you had the phone book and you, like, looked somebody up. And even in a place like Los Angeles, greater Los Angeles, you could find a lot of people's phone numbers in the phone book. Because you actually had to pay to not be listed--

Ann: Exactly!

Samantha: --in those days.

Ann: Exactly.

Samantha: And so, yeah I remember us making several saucy calls--

Ann: Oh, okay, but I will say that you you were the--

Samantha: I don't know why.

Ann: --because you had, you had the perfect phone sex voice.

Samantha: Which is weird, because we're talking about 11-year-olds, 12-year-olds. Kind of deeper voices run in my family, so I had a fairly deep voice even though, to look at me, I looked younger than I was, but i sounded a lot older.

Ann: Right. And plus, yeah, you had such an amazing vocabulary at that age, I mean you were very, you still are, but, I mean, you were extraordinarily smart.

Samantha: Stop!

Ann: You would go--

Samantha: Thank you, but...

Ann: --you would make these, can you, can you do one of those phone calls? Here, hold on: BRRRRING, BRRRRING! (imitating phone ring)
"Hello?"

Samantha: (sputters) I-uh-I... (in silly high-pitched robot voice) "This is an obscene phone call. (very fast panting)

(laughter)

Samantha: Did that require a great vocabulary? I don't remember-- okay, that was one of our standard silly ones--

Ann: Right.

Samantha: --that we did in those days. um, but, yeah, there, there was, um, let's say a little bit older, when we were 14-ish, 13-14 we had a unusual, an unusual Algebra teacher.

Ann: Oh my god!

Samantha: And he came from Hungary originally, is my understanding.

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: Um, and, uh, he had a heavy accent. That is not what made him strange; it was his general demeanor and his methods of teaching.

Ann: And his, well, don't you remember the little mimeographs that he would he would put? "Be happy, healthy and wise"? I still have some of those.

Samantha: I don't remember that! Wow!

Ann: Oh god, he would always, like, and they were, like, teddy bears, and it was, like, what the hell is this?

Samantha: And that is the opposite of his personality.

Ann: Completely!

Samantha: Total opposite of his personality. He was unapproachable, he did not want you to ever talk to him, he didn't want to teach his students in any, like, one-on-one way. What he would do is, he would set up the overhead projector-- children there used to be something called an overhead projector--

Ann: Right.

Samantha: --that would have--

Ann: Well, wait, wait!

Samantha: Yeah?

Ann: Yeah, there's no longer mimeographs. There are huge, huge amounts of people younger than us, who have never smelled a mimeograph.

Samantha: That's true. So it's like a a primitive copy machine.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: Basically yeah, but yeah, there was, I guess, heat involved or something that would create that smell--

Ann: I don't know.

Samantha: --thermal paper probably, or something like that. I don't know, because I never operated-- I know some students would operate the mimeograph machine in this school.

Ann: Only the, only cool kids got to operate the mimeograph.

Samantha: Really? Was it cool kids?

Ann: I think so! I think it's, I think it was like the, the kids where the parents gave a lot of money to the school, so let the kid use the mimeograph machine.

Samantha: So, but, this Algebra teacher, we did actually target him for some of our prank call abuse.

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: And I seem to remember... if you want to BRRRING BRRRING now, you can BRRING BRRRING

Ann: BRRING BRRING! BRRRING! BRRRRING! "Hello?"

Samantha (affecting a fake French accent) "Alexander, is it you?"

Ann: "Y-yes."

French Samantha: "Alexander, it is me! You did not meet me for our secret rendezvous. Where were you? Oh Alexander, you left me alone."

(laughter)

French Samantha: "What do you have to say?"

(laughter)

Normal Not-French Samantha: That was the kind of thing that we did to

that particular teacher--

Ann: Oh my god!

Samantha: And then there was the day he played along with it and was like: "Oh, what a rendezvous?" And that's when I screamed and hung up the phone, because I was so freaked out that he was actually interested in this weird French character that I had created, so...

(laughter)

Ann: Do you remember when he, when he jumped out the window to chase a student?

Samantha: Oh, that's right! He saw--yeah, yeah I do remember that, yes-- he spotted one of our classmates who was skipping class and actually jumped out the window to catch him.

(laughter)

Samantha: Yeah, he wasn't normal, but, yeah...

Ann: Oh god.

Samantha: But he was, he was--we didn't even explain, like, how bad he was. He would scream at us till his veins were popping--

Ann: Oh my god.

Samantha: --because somebody asked, dared to ask a question.

Ann: Yeah.

Samantha: Because, like I said, like I started to say, he, he would use his overhead projector and he would write all of his, like, lecture notes on the overhead projector.

Ann: Yeah.

Samantha: And then you were supposed to just copy down everything he wrote, and that's how you were supposed to learn Algebra.

Ann: It was the first class I ever failed.

Samantha: Yeah, but you weren't alone, there were so many people failing in that class, the only people who weren't failing it were people who had tutors outside of the class who were teaching them. And the rest of us were just screwed. So yeah, we had to write some kind of letter to the administration and then they basically, it was like we never took the class rather than actually get the F.

Ann: So what, that's, I'm glad you remembered that, I mean, I just remember being so horrified by that grade. Um, so the next year, in order to go-- so we separated and went to different high schools-- and in order for me to be accepted into the school, I had to retake Algebra that summer. And it was an independent study Algebra.

Samantha: Mmm!

Ann: I got an A!

Samantha: Right.

Ann: I aced Algebra! Which is really funny, because if, if I tried to do it now, I don't even remember how to do half the math. Um, but, but what's so interesting is, when I was 18, I worked at Tower Records. That very Algebra teacher came up to my cash register. I was so angry at him, and I looked at him and I said: "You know, I had to retake Algebra. But guess what, I got an A! But not because of you!"

Samantha: Did he remember you?

Ann: No. No, he could give a crap about any student.

Samantha: Yeah, I think he got kicked out of our school, so I don't, I wonder where he was even teaching at that point.

Ann: I don't know. Maybe he went on a rendezvous. (giggles)

Samantha: Perhaps he did. Alexander!

Ann: You're so good. You were like the best prank caller.

Samantha: We were, we were feral, that's all I want to say. We were absolutely feral.

(lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: And we bought the Playgirl because it had Mark Spitz in it-

Samantha: YES!

Ann: And we all put on English accents, thinking that that would make us older.

(giggling)

Ann: "This will be a great cover, girls! They'll never know we live in the neighborhood."

(giggling)

Samantha: Uh, we didn't have a fake ID or anything, how did we--?

Ann: I think we were just flirting with the guy.

Samantha: Yeah, yeah, that's probably right. You know, and you were tall, so people always thought you were older than you were.

Ann: Yeah, you know what, I was, I was the youngest, I want everybody to know. But, of course, I'm the one who gets in trouble--

Samantha: Can I just say, excuse me--

Ann: I take, I take the brunt of it--

Samantha: Excuse me! Hello?

Ann: What?

Samantha: Can I just interject something here? You are one month and nine days younger than me.

Ann: I'm still younger! (giggling)

Samantha: One month and nine days. That's it!

Ann: I don't care, I'm still younger! (giggling)

Samantha: (sighs) These are the things that matter.

(laughter)

Samantha: "It's a Miracle We're Still Alive" continues in our next episode of Hey Parco! We'd love to hear YOUR stories of being a Gen-X kid! You can contact us on our website "heyparco.com" where you'll find links to our Instagram, Twitter and Facebook pages, along with images and info related to this and other Hey Parco! episodes. Thanks for joining us! See you next time!