

Bridge to Somewhere



My mother had seven children to care for. It didn't leave her much time for herself.

I do remember her saving time for herself in one fashion. She was in a bridge club. Bridge club was 8 ladies that met about once a month to play cards. The hosting of the event rotated, so every once in a while it became my mother's turn to host the bridge club at our house.

I don't know how she did it. Our house was always chaotic with seven kids. There was homework to be done after school. TV to be watched, dinner to be eaten, baths to be taken, more homework to be done by older kids, and the list went on and on.

Most bridge clubs that I know of take place in the afternoon. That might have made it a bit easier; to hold it while kids were at school. This bridge club met at night, after dinner.

I remember my mother preparing for bridge club. Half of our house was completely transformed. It was cleaned to the point of sparkling. The living room glowed. There was an ante-room that was used and so was the dining room. The living room and ante-room both had tables set up with 4 chairs each for the playing of cards.

There were pretty decks of cards, little pads and pencils, and dainty napkins. All things for little, curious hands to get in trouble. We'd poke our fingers and marvel at the designs but never more than that.

The dining room held little, pretty antique plates, spoons, cups and saucers, and more dainty napkins. There was great anticipation for snacks and dessert. My mother had two very special nut cups that were part of the event each time. She'd put what would now be classified as "fancy mixed" nuts in the cups.

My brother and I would stand transfixed, staring at those bowls of nuts. Our faces were just tall enough to be eye-level with the exotic nut mixture. It was all we could do to keep our "paws off". Once in a while, my mom would let us eat a nut. That was heaven.

When the doorbell started to ring we had strict instructions to march up to bed. We already had our footy pajamas on. We were ready. I thought it was so funny that the front doorbell rang. I thought all people came to the back door unless they were selling something. These ladies must have been pretty extraordinary to come to the front door.

They'd waltz in with their hats, handbags, and their pretty coats. Some of them even had those "animal things" tied around their collars. (I inherited my mother's "animal thing" and I keep it in a very precious box. The stone martins.) The ladies could chat and twitter. Kisses on cheeks were exchanged everywhere. My brother and I didn't want to be involved in any kissing so we'd rush up the stairs.

We were supposed to be going to bed. However, the temptation was too much to resist. Lest we be caught by our mother, we'd crouch down above the stairway landing. We'd try to hear what the

ladies were talking about. I don't recall anything they ever said, and what did I care what they were discussing anyway? Would a five-year-old understand? No matter. I thought it was worth my effort.

Inevitably, we'd giggle about something. We'd be caught. And we'd be admonished and sent up to our beds. No matter. We were tired anyway. And these ladies weren't nearly as interesting as we thought they'd be. But next time they came, the nuts would still be of great focus and we'd still hide on the stairs and eavesdrop. That's for sure. Bridge club was special.

Cheers!