

Tea and Tulips

By Kristine Y. Snow

My grandmother's kitchen was the focal point of her house. There wasn't one family function which didn't revolve around the kitchen. Grandma loved to cook and loved to take care of people. In her mind, if you were stuffed full of good cookin' you were a happy person. Her kitchen was always filled with wonderful scents; cookies baking, her special pot roast on a Sunday afternoon, pies or cakes.

Her cooking varied but she only served one thing to drink. She always had a pot of tea brewing on the stove. She felt a nice hot cup of tea cured any ailment. And if you didn't need it to cure something, well wasn't that proof that the tea had done its job?

I remember the first time she gave me a cup of tea. I was about 3 and was seated at the table with my mother. My grandmother was serving tea and she sat a cup down in front of me - one of her fine china cups. I watched my mother sipping her tea and tried so hard to imitate her. I know now that I had more cream and more sugar in that cup than I did the tea itself!

Another thing my grandmother always had was fresh flowers. She had an extensive garden and used to go out every morning and cut flowers. She would put a bouquet in the living room; there was one in the center of the dining room table; a smaller one with one of her favorites, the wildflowers, on the kitchen table; and usually one "special" blossom in a jelly jar in the kitchen window where she could see it when she was washing up after a meal.

Spring was her favorite time in the garden. As soon as the snow melted she would be outside looking for shoots to be coming up through the ground. We would get a phone call letting us know that Spring was finally on its way. Her favorite of all her flowers was the tulip. She had, over the years, planted hundreds of bulbs; different styles, and different colors, and her beds were a favorite in the neighborhood.

What a sight they were when they bloomed! She had feathered, flamed and variegated. She had Darwin's, cottage and parrots; Rembrandts, fringed, and Triumphs. The names themselves were so exotic sounding. I remember helping her dig the holes, place the bulbs, and carefully cover them. It was so hard to wait until Spring arrived for them to show their heads.

She used to sit down with the seed catalogs in the fall and decide which bulbs to plant. When she got her order, it was like Christmas was for me. She would be so excited, deciding exactly where the new bulbs should be planted.

We moved Grandma yesterday to one of those assisted living units. She quickly got settled in, putting

on a pot of tea, and arranging the bouquet of flowers we bought her. And I went home to “Grandma’s House”, now mine, and settled in with a cup of tea and a bouquet of freshly cut tulips.

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