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Sleep-Over

The summer I was twelve, my Sunday school class had an overnight party at our house. The nine members of the class had excitedly done all the planning, with only an occasional suggestion from Miss Teagarden, our teacher.

We would gather in our backyard soon after dinner. Mary Virginia, Mary Alice, Alice Faye, Frances Anne, and Cecile offered to bring army cots; with my family's four cots, no one would have to sleep on the ground. We were all sorry that Mary Jane and Jane Claire wouldn't be able to come; with Miss Teagarden, Dorothy Jane, and Frances Anne, we would be a party of eight.

We used most of our planning for the breakfast menu, which we intended to cook for ourselves. Orange juice, bacon and eggs, bread for toast, along with some butter and jelly, sounded just right to us. Dorothy Jane volunteered to bring paper plates, cups, and napkins so that we wouldn't have to wash dishes. I was sure that I could furnish all the cooking utensils we would need. There was a two-burner gas hotplate in the garage, usually used to boil the white clothes on wash day.

Until starting this story, I had never wondered about the pattern of our names: the only single names in the group were Miss Teagarden (Marguerite), and Cecile. The rest of us were always addressed by our double names, Mary Virginia, Mary Alice, Alice Faye, Mary Jane, Dorothy Jane, Jane Claire, Mary Frances, and Frances Anne, and they always seemed perfectly natural to us.



Mary Virginia Voorhies

On the day of the sleep-over, all of the Sunday school party was gathered in my backyard before dark. We used the twilight to set up our cots and store our breakfast ingredients in the refrigerator in the house. The yard party proceeded just as one would expect such a party to proceed, much telling of jokes, giggling, running about the yard, trying out the bathroom in the house, and eventually settling down to telling ghost stories and gradually getting to sleep. Miss Teagarden had insisted that we must not be too boisterous; my parents' bedroom overlooked the backyard. We were agreeable and must all have been asleep soon after midnight because we wanted to be up early to cook our breakfast the next morning - a first-time experience for several of the girls.

Soon after dawn, we woke up the few stragglers, went about folding our army cots with a surprising lack of noise, gathered our food from the refrigerator in the house, and began cooking our bacon and eggs. We fried about three pounds of bacon, pouring the excess grease into a clean coffee can, and then each girl had the chance to cook her own eggs just the way she liked them. The inexperienced cooks had trouble, at first, in breaking their eggs without puncturing the yolks. Fortunately, enough liked scrambled eggs that we could use up the broken ones. A great variety of straight-up, over easy, and over hard eggs resulted. Even those of us who did not like eggs consumed at least three; maybe eating outdoors enhanced our appetite.

Then we faced the problems of how to toast our bread. We tried holding slices over the open gas burners without much success; then we tried frying the bread in the hot bacon grease. Success! In fact, we used most of the poured bacon grease before we had used all the bread. I'm glad we didn't know about cholesterol, for we developed huge appetites for the crisp fried bread, piece after piece. We hadn't noticed that Miss Teagarden had accepted Mother's invitation to join her and Daddy for breakfast in the comfort of the house. What we were having was great fun without any supervision at all and with no casualties. We managed to consume all the bacon, eggs, and bread, but discovered that the butter and jelly were superfluous. The other girls straggled home in mid-morning. I slept all afternoon.

We never had another all-night party, probably because we never again had such an understanding teacher as Miss Teagarden, but I'm sure that each of us carries a fond memory for the one overnight we did have.