

When she opened the front door to her home we all took one step back. "Come in," she invited.

Our Bluebird leader herded the ten little Camp Fire Girl Bluebirds into the first room, the spotless kitchen. Mary Dove closed the door. She showed us the way out of the kitchen with the red and white window curtains and on into the cozy small living room.

The first thing I noticed was the numerous doilies. They were everywhere. Some rested on the arms of overstuffed chairs. Rectangle doilies lay on the headrest of other chairs. A long one invited us to sit on the davenport (sofa, couch) and relax. "Just don't lean back onto the cherished artwork," I told myself.

We were in the second grade. We were on a field trip with the troop. Our leader was a friend of the home owner. The owner stood tall as we looked up at her. Her braided grey hair was curled around her head. She wore a flower printed nylon dress reaching almost to her ankles. Her tied shoes were of the nun variety: soft soled, quiet when she walked. She looked, to me, like an 80 year old person would look like. We were in awe. Her smile opened our hearts.

"Welcome to my home," she said while passing around a blue and white platter of homemade chocolate chip cookies. "Juice in a few minutes," she added. Her voice was soft, something you would want to hear read a story to you at bedtime.

We were in her home to see her doilies, touch her artwork and pretend that we, too, could create and crochet the likes of the starched table runner on the table angling for favorite place, strutting its stuff in the corner near the couch. The bathroom was off to the side of the table. My quick look showed the yellow throw rugs on the floor. A small window let in some of the sunshine we left outdoors. I liked her home. Too shy to get up from the couch and meander to the bathroom, I wiggled a little while noticing the other Bluebirds paying attention to our leader Mrs. Jacobson. Her daughter was in our troop. We were being told the reason for our visit. We had been invited to visit and learn about a craft other than pasting cutout hearts on paper, coloring hula girls traced in a color book and ironing plucked fall colored leaves from trees and ironing them between two pieces of mom's waxed paper.

Her lesson on "How to.." went way over my head at the time. After all, an eight year old who lived in a home without pillows on the couch, without a lampshade on the dangling light bulb in the middle of the living room ceiling, and only gossamer curtains covering the pull window shades had no idea that there was art like this that could put cozy and comfort in everyday life.

My life was changed forever during that bluebird field trip to an overstuffed home. With very little space to walk around the tiny living room I saw a grand space opening up in my mind. I told myself that someday, I too, will create a comfy cozy home. Wall hangings would cover up blank space on the walls. There would be table cloths to drape on coffee tables or decorate the kitchen table when company came for a visit. There would be pillows to squeeze, baskets to weave, doilies to crochet.

Mrs. Mary Dove would be close to 150 years old today. She lives in my heart. "Thank you, Mary for opening the door."

Lana Russ