

The gloves are on.

She is ready for a shopping trip, a drive of five miles to downtown.

The white cotton gloves usually go hand-in-hand with a fashionable hat, and a summer frock. Her “every summertime” trip to the big city from her home in Eastern Montana means shopping for clothes and luncheon out with two grown daughters and two young granddaughters.

Grandma Leonie Audet (de la Pointe) had flair. She had fashion which in the 1950’s meant dressing up to go downtown. No one wanted to “slip into” blue jeans and a cowgirl shirt. That was normal wear when we visited her in the country.

Grandma and grandpa came to visit, along with my aunt, who was in high school. My sister and I had fun watching her apply face cream, makeup and lipstick. We would watch and to learn. She would wear her white cotton gloves with pride. We couldn’t wait to grow up, too.

Going to the fancy stores downtown was a treat. We would wear our Easter gloves made from see through rayon. They were too hot to keep on, though. So, there was “no touching” on this town trip. The “good” table dishes for sale in the store were spread out as if the workers expected us. Drinking glasses gleamed. Silverware sparkled. I was sure I would see my reflection if I could sneak a look. Shopping with grandma, mom, my aunt and even being with my sister, two years older than I, was better than a Christmas gift. We didn’t get clothes for ourselves, we just watched as grandma and my aunt tried on garments. I like to think that I helped make decisions.

Then there was luncheon in the secluded dining room of the department store, located near the perfume counters. A waft of fragrance would often drift toward us. It was a magical moment. The white gloves came off for dining. I listened eagerly for tidbits of wisdom when the adults conversed.

When I was much older, I often returned to the dining room pretending, allowing my childhood memory free to rewind. My white cotton gloves rested nearby the sparkling water glass.

Now, the gloves are on, again but for our protection. They are surgical looking, white for sure, but also blue. They are disposable. They are not the wrist size cotton gloves mom wore for trips to town They are not the long cotton gloves senior high girls wore when dancing at school proms.

These gloves are at hand to put on to help save our lives; to help stop the Covid-19 virus from spreading. As I wiggle my fingers into the gloves, I think of my grandma during her visits with us in the city.

The gloves are on, allowing me to pretend, again.

Lana Russ