

Whatever Happened To Sundays?

by Joan Black

Long ago and far away there was a time called 'SUNDAY'. There were six other ordinary days before Sunday, but Sunday was SPECIAL. Factories, shops, businesses all closed. If there happened to be a need for an item, it meant borrowing from a neighbor, or doing without.

Sundays *felt* different. From the moment of waking, the ambiance seemed softer, quieter, expectant. Good things happened on Sunday. It was the day to wear 'best clothes and Mary Janes', to decide which of the three local churches to grace with our presence. The denomination was not important – it was the one particular choirboy who warranted out attention that week that was the deciding factor.

The aroma of roast beef, baked ham, fried chicken and apple pies wafted from the neighbors' houses as we headed home to our own family gathered around the table, covered by lace cloth and beautifully set with the heirloom china and silverware. Oftentimes relatives or friends would be invited to share the meal Mother had spent the morning preparing. Afternoons saw us reading, listening to music or playing board games – no boisterous games on Sunday – it was a day of relaxation, rest and renewal, both spiritual and physical.

And then, one day, SUNDAY disappeared with a bang! – literally. On Sunday the 3rd of September, 1939, war was declared and SUNDAY, as we knew it, morphed into another hectic, harried workday. Factories, shops, businesses all stayed open seven days a week, out of necessity to feed the hungry war machine. Church bells rang only as a warning that the enemy had invaded, air raid sirens blasted the ritual of afternoon tea, and bombs intruded on the once peaceful Sunday mornings. No one had any 'best clothes' to wear. Roast beef was a thing of the past, and everyone was too busy to attend church services.

Six years later, when peace was restored, Sundays gradually returned, but – like the world and all the people in it – Sunday had changed. Many new customs and inventions altered the dynamics. The television set, the barbeque, the automobile, the scattered family – all these things plus the convenience of seven-day-a-week availability of both necessities and luxuries made the 'Old Ways' outmoded. The exact opposite of restful, relaxing, renewal, became the norm. Now the purpose of Sunday seemed to be catch-up, get-more, do-more, go-more, and go-further-and-faster.

The geriatric set, the so-called 'Greatest Generation' is fast diminishing in numbers. We are the ones who recall nostalgically the 'Good Old Days' when Sundays were distinctly different from weekdays. But, time marches on, progress happens whether we like it or not, everything has to change or else it petrifies.

Whatever ... Sundays past, present and future, each one adds to the store of memories to be enjoyed and treasured, and that SPECIAL DAY inevitably becomes another of those items added to the list of "Whatever Happened to ...?"