

Some Recollections About Hope

by Liz Gibbons

Many of you probably remember when you were young and would make a promise to a friend, you'd seal it by saying "cross my heart and hope to die" as you made a sign of the cross on your chest. Curious, I wondered where that saying came from. Some sources said it was part of a longer religious oath created around 1900. Others said it was a Catholic oath from perhaps as far back as the Middle Ages. Regardless of its origin, it was a common playground oath attesting to our truthfulness.

Childhood is often filled with hopes. Hopes for certain Christmas or birthday presents, for good grades in school, being well-liked, or dating that special gal or guy. But I do not recall getting my hopes up or bugging my parents concerning gifts. This was probably due to several factors. It was a time before television with advertising aimed at children. So we were not influenced to desire the latest popular toys. Further, I also surmise that, even as children, we had an underlying awareness that the United States was coming out of the depression, and then we were into World War II where many items were rationed or unavailable.

A somewhat popular item until about 1950 was a "hope chest." Many young women collected household items such as sheets, table cloths, towels and other items and stored them in a chest to use to furnish their home when they married. They were like a trousseau. This practice did not appeal to me. The Lane Company, a maker of cedar chests, distributed miniature cedar chests, which were about 9 inches long, to young girls. I received one from a local furniture store and have used it to hold jewelry all these years. Did any of you women also receive one of those miniature cedar chests?

With the power outage this week I was reminded of an old saying, "Hope for the best and prepare for the worst." Before I moved to Colorado I had a reserve of food, flashlight batteries, butane canisters that provided fuel for a small one-burner stove, a solar powered radio, and other items helpful in an emergency. In preparing to move I used up and gave away the food and most of the other items. That Wednesday when the lights began to flicker I decided to start preparing a quick stir fry for lunch. Just as I got the veggies in the wok the power went out completely. So I got out my one-burner stove planning to finish the stir fry only to realize that I had neglected to replenish the butane canisters. I made a list of items to stock for an emergency, and when the roads were cleared, I went to the stores to replenish my supplies with the hope that I will never ever need to use them.