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Bettie Perez

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'R AND R' AT THE YWCA

By BETTIE PEREZ



Y.W.C.A. BUILDING, 601 TWIGGS STREET
... Photo Taken Oct. 3, 1931

-TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
LIBRARY Photo

In the late 1930s, long before the military term R&R became meaningful, my mother taught me the value, the vital necessity of that exercise. My training ground: the original YWCA Building which housed the Cafeteria and a Ladies Powder-Room, furnished for lounging. I learned lifetime lessons there, though neither of us knew it then.

I was a fresh teenager and hated the place, at first. Supposedly, summertime, out of school, were carefree days of youth. Not for me; mother worked in an office downtown. Home alone and playing the streets, was not an option; going to work and lunch with mother at the "YW" was not either; this was required duty.



FASHION SHOW AND DINNER AT Y.W.C.A.
"...Sponsored by Teenage Charm Class, Nov. 28, 1961

That Young Women's Christian Association Building, corner of Twiggs and Morgan Streets (1926-1951) was not their first home, nor the last. First established 1913 in a home on that same corner, the house was torn down for the "new" building and finally "modernized" on the corner of Pierce and Twiggs and sadly, is nonexistent anywhere now, though the original building still stands.

That structure, cool-beige concrete was simple, straight harmony inside and out. Sky-bluegreen trim, arched entrance double-doors, and tall palms shading long windows all around suggested its welcoming characteristics.

The Cafeteria was a noontime haven for mother, for any working-girl, or in today's vernacular: "single-parent-working mother."

A term, by the way, this generation thinks they invented. Someone should tell them how prior families survived a depression, pre-penicillin illnesses, and polio, stretched between two World Wars. Stressed-out working mothers? You bet. They fought battles of hunger, home and health. Nevertheless, for my mother at least, some bit of tranquility prevailed at the "YW".

Lunch-HOUR there meant exactly that: The full HOUR. Never a noisy fifteen-minute "break" at a sandwich counter or a half-hour "brown-bag" on a bench.

THE HELPFUL MISS TABER

Beginning with the side-door parking, no more than a minute away from your car; then home-cooked food, served and shared with friends on both sides of the counter; and ending in the Ladies Lounge for a



Y.W.C.A. Y-TEENS BUSY ASSEMBLING FIRST AID KITS
...Photos of Y.W.C.A. Past Presidents on Wall

twenty-minute nap - no more, no less - the "YW" was gentility personified; our nourishment for body, sustenance for soul. People were at peace there, even through World War Two.

Mrs. Frank Farmer, now deceased, supervised the Cafeteria longer than I can remember and I think she wrote the rule-book on "service with a smile." If we could but call her back.

Miss Gladys Taber, also deceased, was Executive Director for 37 years from 1926-1963; her encouraging hand was always out to mother, even years later after I was gone from home.

REMEMBER THE STUDEBAKER

Mrs. Gladys Fellows, Office Manager for eight years through the Forties, endeared herself to us when she invited me to her office and she explained the switchboard to me, among others things. Her family owned Fellows Motors. They sold Studebaker cars. After we became friends, mother drove a Studebaker almost until she died. I sold her last one in 1968; it was fifteen years old, and a classic. When I got married our first car was a Studebaker. You could say my chats with Mrs. Fellows were unforgettable.



'YW' RESIDENCE, 1921
...First Home, 205 Plant Avenue
-TAMPA/HILLSBORO
UGH COUNTY PUBLIC
LIBRARY Photo

The food had a tea-room touch without tea-room prices. I am talking budget here. One dollar furnished you a meal with a cloth napkin; hearty entree, small biscuits already buttered came in three's, and home-made Tapioca, unseen and unheard of today. If you wanted apple-pie instead, you paid twenty-cents extra. We paid it: Oh my, did we! Mother never baked like that. Plump, with freshest fruit, crust so flaky-warm, they crumbled even as you glanced at them. I ate my first crunchy-cheesy-topped apple-pie there. Never did anything compare, unless it was "Goody-Goody's Drive-In" cream pies, which was another form of relaxation altogether, too long a story for now.

After lunch, the Powder-Room offered us yet another friend: an oasis for mother's nap. Both room and nap were more than necessities for her. This was real-life R, R, and R - Refresh, Relax, Revive.

A BIBLE ALWAYS HANDY

The ante-room here whispered "rose-garden" colors, with small tables, soft lamps and inspirational pamphlets, plus Liberty, Saturday Evening Post, and Ladies



BETTIE MANSELL PEREZ
Age 12, and mother,
Maria Valdespino Mansell
C. 1938

Home Journal publications. More than one Bible sat in the rack next to the white wicker rocker, and, naturally, there was a chaise-lounge.

Mother focused on the rocker, always and no one ever questioned that it was hers. I watched from the chaise; since we had no such at home, it became my magic carpet. I abhorred naps. There began my fun with reading. I read "Girl of the Limberlost," (Stratton- Porter) there and to this day, "secret trails" are a part of my life.

Mother began rocking only after a few minutes of reading the pamphlets. Eyes closed, one elbow rested softly on blue cushions, with her hand - cupping her cheek, and she was fast asleep. Twenty minutes later - no time-clock, not a word spoken to her - she was up saying: "Okay, Honey, let's go get primped up." "Back to work, Dear-Heart."

And that was another vital necessity-primping. Also too long a story for now. But, somehow, years later when I needed

that YWCA Powder-Lounge Room, it came back to me. I had absorbed, like osmosis, the solace of that nap-time in the "YW".

Thank you, "YW", for my R&R training. The original building is being renovated for offices, I imagine, but I hope some of the quiet dust will remain.