

## Finger Bowl

Mom *whispered* when talking about special things.

She was very protective of them.

“This is a *fancy* restaurant.”

She whispered the word *fancy*.

Holiday Inn dining room in the now ubiquitous chain. Highlight of our summer vacation.

We didn’t get out much. Working-class parents providing for the family. Saving a dollar here, quarter there.

As a child, her family had servants and accouterments. Great Depression ended that.

*That’s a finger bowl*, she whispered, proudly educating us all.

Mom, Dad, kids took turns putting fingers ever so gently into the finger bowl. Then wiping dry with our *cloth* napkins.

Until.

Waiter, gaping, asked if there was something wrong with the whipped butter.

No worries.

*Let’s take a dip in the pool*, she whispered, maintaining a wide-eyed enthusiasm.

Yes, a *pool*, which we profusely documented with a classic Kodak Brownie. Black and white prepubescent poolside selves captured, attached by corner mounts to large, tattered black

photo album pages. Toasting greenish Coke bottles toward the camera, with that happy aura of uncommon luxury.

If that weren't enough—the air was chocolate-flavored. Hershey Chocolate Factory and amusement park, swaying in the Hershey Kiss Ferris Wheel seats, high above the hard world.

*Not everyone gets to come here*, she counseled. Again, that whisper.

Dad went back to delivering soda pop to supermarkets.

Mom, fulfilled.

She gave her kids a glimpse of the high life she'd once known.

Searched garage sales for years, looking for a set of finger bowls.

Came up short.

END