

Ladies of the Lake – June 2019

By Barbara Galvin

On June 5, 2019, the Ladies of the Lake had the pleasure of being entertained at a Victorian Tea Party, conducted by Mindy Knapp and her daughter, Annie Knapp. Both Mindy and Annie were dressed to model Victorian fashions. Mindy wore a blue and white checked dress complete with hoop skirt, while Annie looked lovely in a crisp white blouse with a satiny yellow skirt. Both ladies greeted all the guests at the door, demonstrating Victorian manners.

In addition to Mindy and Annie dressed in Victorian fashion, a guest, Sami H as Barb Jonckheere's granddaughter from Kentucky, wore a grey and white vertical striped dress, complete with lace shawl in keeping with the times. To complete the look, Sami wore lace black gloves, a round straw hat with ties beneath her chin and a beautiful smile as she also greeted the ladies. Thank you Sami!

Hats were very much a part of the Victoria fashion, so hostess, Marti Dallmeyer, supplied numerous hats in all sizes and shapes for the Ladies to "get into the Victorian Age." Later on, Pat Sivil, "the Hat Lady," would demonstrate her own extensive collection of hats with special stories to accompany the "new" look of each hat.

Pat Sivil was also dressed appropriately for the Victorian Tea. She wore a black suit with colorful flowers and a matching black straw hat with blue flowers and black veil. Pat told the ladies that "wearing a hat was considered a rite of passage into adulthood."

The Ladies who made the Pavilion into a Victorian dwelling were Sharon Butler, Marti Dallmeyer, and Barb Potter. These hostesses made sure everything was perfectly Victorian. They decorated the tables with lace tablecloths and huge vases of fresh flowers, peonies, Iris, and carnations. Barb Potter was the flower lady with help from Sharon Butler. Marti Dallmeyer brought china dishes to authenticate Victorian elegance and grace. The total effect was magical! Thank you, ladies.

As the Ladies arrived, they were greeted by Mindy Knapp, Annie Knapp, and Sami Has. Our own Sharon Butler took photos to capture the moment.

Once the ladies were all present, Mindy Knapp began her presentation of Victorian Tea. Mindy explained how she was introduced to tea very early by her grandmother, who had a special teacup reserved for Mindy. Mindy and her grandmother had "good times" and she enjoyed not only the tea but also the stories. Mindy said, "teatime is a dying art as well as is being a lady" especially concerning table manners.

Mindy is involved with Civil War Reenactments of highclass society and of course, the tea demonstrations. She began by explaining the correct way to steam tea and how to enjoy the tea with "the sip," she has helped groups raise funds with the program.

In the past, ladies were invited to tea with written invitations, so there was time to prepare and, of course, to bring in flowers. Annie explained about guests knowing that flowers convey messages by color. For example, all roses symbolize love, but the colors have special meaning. Red roses "say" passion, while yellow roses "say" friendship. Pink, in flower language, "says" happiness and gratitude, while white "says" innocence.

Mindy then passed out fans to the Ladies, while explaining "scandalous behavior" in Victorian times. "Scandalous behavior" meant the fans would be waving wildly! It was not uncommon to incur "scandalous behavior" especially at a tea, because any slip up in manners was considered scandalous. This included accidents, spills, dropping a cookie, or not using tongs to properly transfer a cookie to a plate. Mindy shared that she has been "practicing" for Tea Parties for five years!

Mindy then introduced Pat Sivil, the Hat Lady. Pat not only brought numerous hats to share, but also brought an antique hat box. She warned that ladies always wore gloves, and had hats, purses, and a special handkerchief. Victorians considered "flirting as entertainment" which was boldly carried on with the use of a fan and a handkerchief.

Pat shared that little hats are “insignificant,” but also can be striking. She mentioned how Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy made the Pill Box hat famous and popular. Then, of course, the best advertisement for hats is Queen Elizabeth. Pat said, “I love to see the Queen’s hats.”

Then the demonstration began with Pat arranging hats to look elegant, like a floppy brim hat for a wedding. The secret is placing the hat flat on the head, not on the back like a cowboy hat, according to Pat. When on vacation, remember that “men like hats” according to Pat, so wear that huge brimmed yellow hat!

Pat’s hats range from expensive ones purchased at Marshall Field’s or name brands like Mr. John, to practical hats. She commented on the number of times she has been asked, if not wearing a hat, “where’s your hat?” Thank you, Pat.

Mindy then continued the tea demonstration as the water simmered. She told us how Victorian ladies would bring their own cups to tea in a special carrier. She also surprised many when she announced that “Americans drank more tea than Brits!” at the time of the Boston Tea Party.

We learned rules for proper tea serving. For example, daughters served tea, not mothers. Only one person serves tea at the table, and that person is designated by being closest to the tea pot. Tea was a precious and expensive item, so there were wooden boxes kept under lock and key to protect the tea.

Also, molasses was used more than sugar by Victorians. Sugar was also expensive, and molasses is healthier. Today, Southern States still use molasses in tea instead of sugar.

With all the manners on display at Victorian teas, the ladies were surprised to hear Mindy call a silver bowl the slop bowl! It was the place for used tea bags, but that’s quite a name.

There were also Tea Deputies, guardians of propriety, who were eager to wave the fan to signal “scandalous behavior” by someone else.

Mindy and Annie then began a little quiz period. They asked the Ladies questions about tea, like “why is the pinkie finger extended when holding a teacup?” Winners who gave the correct answers were given a choice of, what else!, tea! Our winners were Barb Potter, Barb Jonckheere, and Pat Dahms.

The Ladies learned about High Tea, Low Tea, and Royal Tea. We learned about napkin manners; no, do not crumple the napkin on the table! That’s “scandalous behavior” and the fans will wave.

The tables looked elegant with the beautiful flowers and china, but now the platters and serving dishes were bursting with food. Cookies of every kind were lined up, from sugar snaps to cinnamon snaps. Sandwiches were not only delicious, but so pretty. A bowl of fresh fruit was placed by each serving place. Scones made the British flavor complete. Delicious!

Thank you to our hostesses who also did the food prep. Cookies, cheesecake, and meringue cookies were made by our ladies. Cucumber sandwiches and turkey sandwiches with cranberries on cream cheese were scrumptious. Plus everyone enjoyed the fresh berries. A joyful thanks to Sharon Butler, Marti Dallmeyer, and Barbara Potter for all the work to make the Victorian Tea not only look spectacular, but also taste delicious.

The Ladies of the Lake and guests enjoying the Victorian Tea were Barb Dunlap, Pam Gaskill, Mary Ingressia, Barb Jonckheere, Nona Kempton, Marti Dallmeyer, Barb Potter, Sharon Butler, Judi Jones, Jane Stevens, Cindy Hanning, Pat Dahms, Gloria Miller, Nancy Lee, Kay McKinley, Lonnie Woodring, Laura Jennings, Pat Sivil “the Hat Lady”, Beverly Reed, Candi Powell, Barbara Galvin, Mindy Knapp, Annie Knapp, and Sami Hass.

Our July 3 meeting will be held by Carleen Adams at her home. Carlene will be hostess along with Pam Gaskill. Carlene will be making the main meat course, but requests that the Ladies of the Lake bring one of their best potluck dishes or desserts to her house. The July hostesses are also asking the ladies to come between 11:00A.M. and 11:30A.M. because lunch will begin at noon. Please be prompt to help our hostesses, who also noted that there is no need to bring a plate setting or silverware. Our hostesses will supply those too. (Please do remember to bring serving utensils for the potluck side dish/dessert you bring.)

As we prepare to celebrate the 4th of July, let us be truly thankful for all the blessings we have received. Time to thank the Lord!