

DO YOU REMEMBER...

By Sarah Holloway

Writer's Corner

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Boarding houses, those large, old-fashioned houses where single men, students and others could live or just stop by to devour wholesome, all-you-can eat meals in a homelike atmosphere?



I lived in three during my late teens and early 20s – each in a different state.

The first was in Bowling Green, KY, in the late '40s where I completed a seven-month business course at Bowling Green Business University. I arrived in the fall at an assigned rooming house where only three other girls lived. One of them went out every night, and the other two were apparently friends from the same town in Mississippi. Both were tall, blonde and attractive and talked and laughed mostly with each other. I felt as welcome as unwanted hair.

I remember the sick, empty feeling that griped me after calling home when my mother's voice vanished and I realized how lonely miles now separated us. A week or two after classes started, I met some fellow business school students who lived in a boarding house nearby that sounded very different from mine. I soon transferred to an upstairs room at "Mrs. Mac's" and was never homesick again.

The town was full of returning veterans, and the phone at Mrs. Mac's rang regularly for girls who lived there. The fellows who called weren't always particular, and sometimes the conversations went like this:

"Could I speak to Marcie?"

"She died." (*Meaning she's out or has other plans.*)

"Well, is Betty in?"

Hold one. BETTY! PHONE!"

And someone who didn't suspect it had a date!

I dated one of the students who ate there, learned about sledding and danced to jukebox favorites like "Until" and "On a Slow Boat to China." We ate the evening meal at a long, dark table, filled with hearty food, laughter and exuberant spirits. My memories of the period are fuzzy, but I still have snapshots of the friends I knew then – my first experience at living away from home.

In 1950, I traveled to Colorado Springs, CO, found a job with the Nestle Chocolate Company and moved into my second boarding home – another large, old-fashioned



house with a long, dark dining table, run by a wonderful, intelligent woman whose memory I cherish.

(Picture: A snapshot of the boarding house Sarah Holloway stayed at in Bowling Green, KY, in the 1940s.)

This one had a couple of students diners along with a group of single older men. I had another upstairs bedroom and shared a bathroom down the hall with a couple of the old

guys who lived there – a common practice then. I have many happy memories of that period, but since I hadn't the money to make visits home, I moved back to Florida after a year and found my last boarding home in Jacksonville.

After finding a job and living in several isolated rooms, I moved into the sparsely furnished attic of a huge old house where I met friends and soon felt at home. My attic mates and I rode busses to our jobs in downtown Jacksonville, and I still remember the pungent smell of the St. John's River and the excitement of living in my first big city.

I don't think any of these experiences would have been bearable without the friends I knew then and the comfort and safety of those boarding homes – my home away from home.

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