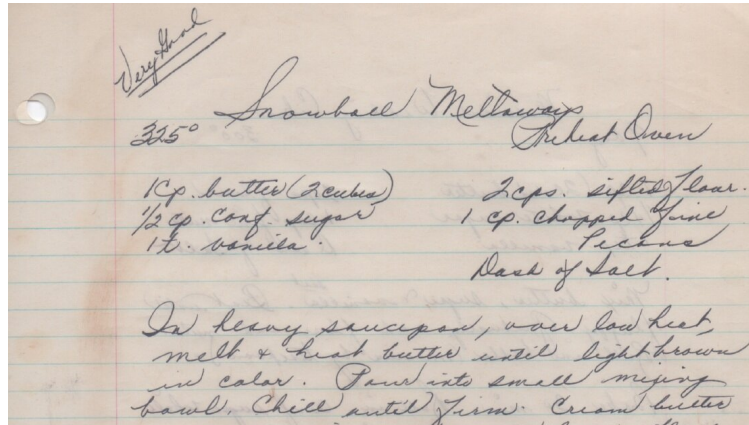


TIES THAT BIND



Seattle, WA | Date Unknown © BJW

As we hang up our human-created paper calendar, we are also in a position to reframe how we choose to show up in conversation with one another.

2020 Fruitcake Incident

Despite being close in adolescence, the adult relationship with my elder sister has been fraught with periodic years of silent pain.

In between obvious points of personal blame that leads to shame, there is a lot of a grey area history filled in by colorful "she said, she did" on both sides of our precarious positions.

As I have mentioned previously, I am not keen on texting as a form of meaningful

communication. However, Clan Miller group texts and the occasional virtual meetup over the last few years have helped to thaw our frigid connection to one another to the point where I made it to my sister's cookie and candy gift box "A" list this year.

A baker after our grandmothers' hearts, my sister sent sweet treats that included beloved secret family recipe caramels, Pinwheels (my favorite!), and Spritz.

As we collectively raised a toast on New Year's Eve to the year that was, my sister indicated that we all received the same goodies, with one exception, "Alicia's box included a couple of pieces of grandma W.'s (on our maternal side) fruitcake."

Quickly retracing my inhalation of Pinwheels and Spritz, I grimaced and said, "I did not receive any fruitcake." Sister held her position and quietly stated, "it's okay to admit that you did not like it."

My ire started to build.

With webcam rolling, I dug deeper into the akm-perceived caramels-only tin. To my embarrassment, I found bonus peanut clusters and two slices of gently wrapped fruitcake.

*Assumptions Lead To
Misunderstandings*

This empathy activist is not blind to her blunders.

I could see the trust that we worked so hard to rebuild crumbling in real-time. While my oversight was just that, what hurt the most was to see my sister's dismay.

No surprise, she assumed that I was not too fond of the fruitcake and did not want to admit this in front of our family. Since I never realized that the sweet treats included fruitcake, I assumed that she must be mistaken.

When In Doubt, Talk It Out

Disagreements de-escalate when we intentionally put empathy into action. While we may not reach full agreement, when we listen to learn instead of to respond, personal feelings are validated.

Speaking of validation, I have penned this week's perspective at the urging of my sister. I honor our sisterhood and remain mindful that we will have disagreements in the future and that this is okay.

Quite frankly, how tedious would life be we if never disagreed with one another? Conversations take on new meaning and lead to inspiration when we allow space for differences of opinion.

The Fragile Strength Of

Our cross-cultural bloodlines bind humanity.

Like last year's fruitcake mix-up, let's change the ending by treating one another as precious family jewels, luminous despite race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Until we meet again, let love be the light that guides you home. ❤️

Yours in Solidarity, -akm

January 6, 2021

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