

Nan

“Nan, you awake? Nan, wake up!” Bloody woman works three jobs on only a few hours sleep. Is it any wonder she falls asleep sitting at the table?

Nan has always worked three or more jobs. Start at 3:30am – office cleaning; 7am – day job, a cook in hospital until 3pm; a few hours to do shopping, cooking, cleaning at home, doing the washing for all the family (7 of us) by hand in the bath (it's like pressing grapes) and then more office cleaning until 10pm. Just gets in with enough time to cook Grandad's supper, normally a bacon sandwich (with HP, of course).

“Nan, you awake? Nan, wake up I want to tell you something. You want a cuppa, Nan?”

“Where's the fire? What's the matter? I was only closing my eyes. Is the Pope Catholic, of course I'll have a cuppa. And don't forget my milk (tinned Libby's condensed milk, full of sugar).

Nan's awake, tea's made, I can now tell her me news. If only I could. I often have these little chats with me Nan. Ever since I was taken away from her at 6 years old. I wonder what she would say. Most of it, I couldn't repeat here; she was very colourful with language and used the full range!

“You'll never guess what?”

“What you done?”

“I've been to the House of Commons.”

“What, on a tour? They do them now, you know. Gawd (means God) knows how much that cost you. Fool and his money soon parted. What you do that for?”

“No, Nan, listen. I was invited to go, all costs paid for. Didn't cost me a bean.”

“What's all that about then? Spill, I've got work soon.”

“I've been working with some people, choosing books for people connected with Dementia, and they launched the book list from a dining room in the House of Commons. We had canapés.”

“Is that that food that you eat with tweezers and you need 3 or 4 to make up a mouthful? Sod that, I'd get worn out before I was full up.”

“But Nan, how many times have we passed it on the bus when you're on your way to work in the early hours? I've often wondered what it was like inside. Now I know.”

“Were the skirting boards clean? I know a few who work in there. Lazy cows most of them, or at least they were. What was it like behind the doors? Most people forget to Hoover there.”

“Nan, I'm trying to tell you that I was given the red-carpet treatment. I had a special pass, and I was escorted to the room with a special guide with a green tie (for the House of Commons; red tie for the House of Lords).”

“Well I never! One of us lot actually being invited to a fancy do in the House of Commons! Well girl, you've done good. To think that your great-great-grandmother chained herself to the railings. That's an improvement, I'll say!”

Although my Nan died over 30 years ago, I still keep in touch with her. I keep her

memory alive. They say you always carry the one you love for the rest of your life.