

Bread Roll

By Jules Perrin

Years ago, when passengers could bring the occasional guest on board when the ship was in port, my mother was approved to bring my wife and I aboard the Queen Elizabeth for lunch. A magnificent event on a majestic ship.

We toured the ship with oohs and aahs inserted at the appropriate times along with the obligatory camera flash.

Around lunch time we are escorted into the palatial dining room where waiters dressed in regimental clothing seemed to hover everywhere. Our waiter held our chairs and executed the obligatory flick of the napkin as he placed it in our lap. Silently we sat there and absorbed the atmosphere of the whole procession as waiters scurried round tables delivering plates and drinks to the tables.

Our waiter returned to our table with a tray of assorted delightful bread rolls. The tray was thrust forward and offered to my wife.

Now hold that thought. As a tray is offered for your selection you would first choose and make your selection. Now I continue.

My wife ponders the assorted rolls and after due deliberation she attempts to remove her selected roll from the tray.

As her hand rises in the air and starts to descend on the tray of assortments, the waiter, at the speed of a striking Cobra, raises his pair of tongs and strikes the back of my wife's hand.

I am sure the world stopped revolving and time stood still for what seemed an hour but, in reality it was only a split second.

In that split second, we all looked at each other with utter amazement and disbelief. The poor waiter's face seemed to shatter and appeared to dissolve into total contrition. His eyes told a pleading story as striking a passenger, if reported, would be a very serious blemish on the waiter's record.

Also in this period when time was going so slow, we again looked at each other but our looks of dismay quickly transformed to smiles and loud laughter.

The waiter began his apologies and explained that you select the roll and he would put it on your plate.

We certainly had a very courteous and attentive waiter for the remainder of lunch.

Even today we still rib my wife by passing trays of rolls or smacking her hand with a pair of tongs. These still remind us of a lunch with a difference on the Queen Elizabeth.

Have fun and stay safe