

By Jo McCormick

Madrid Resident

Working in the activity department of Golden Ours just got into my blood even though it was a far cry from my original dream of teaching English and physical education/coach. It gave me opportunities galore, however, to use the gifts I was born with—creativity, organization and even control which can become a detriment rather than a gift.

What those many years at Golden Ours did teach me was compassion for people and the realization we must meet and greet our own mortality. I learned a whole lot more from my elder mentors than I could ever hope to impart to them.

We are all blessed with various degrees of intelligence that allows us to play the game of life but wisdom is a blessing bestowed on the aged. Wisdom can be acquired only through the experiences one gains in living life.

Reminiscing activity was an enjoyable one for most nursing home residents. On one such occasion we were visiting about our favorite foods and how they were prepared. One resident, Otto, loved his mother's home canned beef and gravy over fresh baked biscuits. All those present agreed home canned meat was delicious and could quickly become a hearty, delicious meal.

The question was asked, "Could we can some beef and later make biscuits for all residents who might want some?" A quick check with the DON and dietary and it became a "go for it!" I never had canned any kind of meat so was grateful for a Farm Journal publication that my grandmother had given me.

This food preservation and recipes to use the finished products in that book got me through the project (just in case the residents did not quite remember all the necessary steps.) Otto said he had cut up a lot of meat in his day when they butchered at home. He and I went to the grocery store to consult with the butcher, Ken. He and Otto decided to go with a sizable chunk of chuck so Otto could cut it up—the store would deliver it at a specified time.

We had canning supplies and good "meat cutting knives" at our house that could be used for this project. Otto did the initial cuts to break down that chunk of chuck. Several other residents and Otto made it ready for the jars. Ladies packed the jars, added some salt and water and our home canned beef was processed.

On the day of our special meal several ladies made the biscuits which we baked on large commercial size sheets from the dietary department. It took three rounds of baking in the activity oven, as we had decided to cook for all the residents, and dietary would supplement the beef gravy and biscuits with the rest of the meal.

It went over well and the resident cooks were very proud of themselves. Cooking, baking and food preparation were activities many residents enjoyed—even if they were mainly interested in watching and, of course, sampling.

Bon appétit until next month. Jo