



### Text Version of Audio Story: Gala Event

They came wearing their fancy hats. One would have thought it was a gala event. These ladies were the movers and shakers of high society in our little town of 800 people. These ladies were the ladies of the East Juniata Women's Club.

It was a Tuesday night and, yet, the ladies of our little village of McAlisterville, Pennsylvania, were dressed in their Sunday best, a momentous — if not magical — moment in their lives. They had all spent the day in the beauty shops getting a hairdo. Some even went as far as Harrisburg so as to get a special certified hairdo. Their hats matched their outfits. The brims were conservative. Some hats had flowers. Some had feathers. Almost all had that netting stuff. Everything was color coordinated. Their fingernails were well manicured and painted just the right color so as to match their toes and everything else. The town had been buzzing for a week over the event and now it was the actual day of the event.

The buzz had reached a fevered pitch. They were coming to our modest home, to my mother's kitchen, for a demonstration. My mother had cleaned for a week and worked to make our house appear as if it was something straight out of the pages of Ladies Home Journal. They arrived one by one. Husbands drove them in clean, shiny, well-waxed automobiles. Men walked with their wives to the front door but were not permitted to enter. It was for ladies only. There had been debate: Should it be open to all the ladies in town? Some thought yes, others thought no. They finally arrived at a majority no-vote, because if all the ladies of town were invited, that would mean *you know who* would show up, and she is certainly no lady, some had argued.

Each walked into our house and politely commented as to how nice everything looked. As they milled around enjoying hors d'oeuvres, they all tried to peek into the kitchen to see if they could see it, if they could get a glimpse, a glimpse into the future, the future that was here and now and just waiting for them in my mother's kitchen in the little village of McAlisterville. Finally, the clinking of a spoon against a small crystal glass summoned them to appear in the kitchen for the demonstration. Mom opened her refrigerator doors. The audience looked on, wide-eyed with anticipation. She removed an Oscar Mayer hotdog from its package and placed it in a bun on top of a fine China plate. She placed the China plate in a "microwave oven" and explained to the crowd, "*It will be hot and ready to enjoy in just 30 seconds.*"

I was allowed to stay because I was part of the demonstration. I would have to eat the hotdog to prove microwaved foods would not kill one's child. After 30 seconds, the bell dinged and my mother removed the hotdog. Every woman in attendance touched the hotdog and oohed and aahed over the fact it was hot. They spoke of how *they* would all soon have a microwave oven and of how all of their lives would soon be different. I stood there in a white shirt and a bowtie, but I didn't want to eat the hotdog. I embraced the idea of defying microwave death. It sort of made me feel like a young James Bond, but I didn't want to eat the hotdog. Thirty some woman had touched it. My mother discreetly whispered in my ear that I would eat that blanking hotdog or I would be the next thing to go into the microwave oven. And people wonder why I have issues.

I'm the American Storyteller.