

FAITH UNDER FIRE

The Tiny Group

The invitation to McCary's Jewelers' 70th Anniversary caught me by surprise. Sleek and silvery, the essence of sophistication, its announcement reminded me that time does, indeed, march on. And a lot faster than I had realized! I made a note on my calendar to squeeze in a visit to the celebration because I love the proprietors and staff. It was a "fast track" workday, so I didn't stop for punch and cookies, but greeted everyone and made my way around to sign the commemorative poster. While waiting my turn, I examined the old newspaper clippings, photos and brochures on display. I am so used to visiting McCary's current Pierremont location that I had quite forgotten the earlier one in Shreve City, but in seeing the words, I was instantly transported back to that Saturday in the early sixties and The Tiny Group.

It was a time of charm bracelets and "cruising" and "social clubs" in Shreveport. Closely akin to Greek sororities in their organization and hierarchy, the clubs were nevertheless entirely local and overwhelmingly provincial. Yet one longed to be a part, and I was, having been selected in perhaps the seventh or eighth grade. (One continued with one's club into high school.) On the particular Saturday in question, five of us girls rode in a parent's car since we were all too young to have our own driver's licenses. Our generation grew up with the oversized family car, no center console and seats that seemed to stretch forever. I was in the back on the right - three in the back, two comfortably in the front, with a dad at the wheel. Time has shadowed his face. At any rate, one of our errands was to pick up something special at McCary's. I didn't know what, but there was a lot of giggling going on. When we arrived, several of the girls hopped out, went into the store and returned with a package. To my acute chagrin, the anticipated prizes, displayed and dangled and passed around with glee, were matching, custom-designed "Tiny Group" charms for all of the car's female occupants - except me.

I remember wondering why they had asked me along, and wishing I could transport myself onto another planet. No explanation was ever given, but the message was clear: within our social group, the "inner sanctum" of The Tiny Group had been created without my knowledge or input. As the girls continued to ooh and aah over their charms, I began to wonder if they even realized I was in the car. The parent never said a word. Was he aware of the situation? The day progressed, more errands were run and we were all eventually dropped off home. The event was so surreal that I spent half of the next year wondering if it



The "charm" of earthly exclusivity

had really happened. But it did. Was it deliberate, or were they so indifferent to my presence and pain that they literally couldn't see me there?

It no longer matters, because I later learned about another exclusive group - the premier exclusive group, as it happens. God's Word tells us that He devised a plan so INclusive that no one who wants to belong will be left out. But there's a catch. There is only one membership requirement, belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, His death and resurrection. And God casts the one deciding vote, because He alone can rightly judge the human heart's assessment of His Messiah.

Probably 20 years ago God reminded me of the Tiny Group incident and I forgave all of those silly teenage girls. Their motives and insensitivity are no longer factors in my life. As Paul says, "...forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:13b-14). Really, the Family of God is a much better deal. I don't need a gold charm to belong, and my membership won't lapse when I draw my last breath. Instead, unlike earthly treasures, salvation will endure throughout eternity. When I asked Lynn McCary Thomas for permission to use the store's name in this column, she shared a favorite quote of hers from the late Dr. Adrian Rogers: "It's not race, face or place; it's God's grace." What a wonderful paraphrase of Galatians 3:28-29! Read it for yourself and consider joining if you haven't already.

—Dianne B. Howell