

## The Grand Hotel by Fonda Dubb

Strong images are in my mind

A little girl with ringlets

Sleeping with each thread of hair curled and twisted into a coil

Held together by strips of white linen

An image of my mother holding tightly onto them

So they wouldn't sway

In the morning.

All the work and trouble

To reveal a ringlet

Not one not two but a whole head of hair with ringlets round my face and a fringe and ribbon to keep them framed around my face

I suppose it was a fashion round that time

When I was only 6 or 7 staying at the Grand Hotel.

Another image fills my mind

A beautiful winding stair case that went very high and so I walked the steps each day up and down

to reach the bedroom

or the entrance

depending where I was going

To School

To Bed

It didn't really worry me

As long as the ringlets stayed in place.

Such a change from life on a farm

And Jimmy the Head Waiter who greeted me with his shiny white teeth, would show me the way into the huge Dining Room of the Grand Hotel and take me to my seat.

I loved the white starched serviettes which stood up straight and must have been folded with great care.

My favourite was the soft-boiled eggs

Which I cracked with a knife to get a straight edge

And sprinkled tiny grains of salt from the silver salt cellar onto the egg before I used the silver spoon to dig inside and mop it up quickly into my mouth before it drizzled just a little way onto the corner of my mouth and caught it just in time!

Jimmy unfolded the serviette onto my lap.

What a waste I thought;

they looked much prettier standing up!!

The toast was brought and set upon the table in a silver toast holder.

I always felt like I was a Queen

When I spread the curled butter to melt onto the toast.

It made me feel so tall and strong

As if I could rule the world with all my strength and power

after eating such a lavish meal served on silver dishes and with white starched serviettes standing stiff and tall.

What a treat it was to eat at the Grand Hotel.

I wiped my mouth full of the eggy bits,

folded the serviette and laid it down across my plate.

What a waste I thought to do that to a Serviette!!

Yes there was bright red jam too that I sometimes ate.

And then I was off to School.

Feeling like a Regal Queen.

Image no 3 was nothing like 1 or 2

It was I thought

So very strange to sit on Chamber Pots which were such pretty things

To sit on them and pee in them

While I slept on the high bed above,

to find the next morning they'd been whisked away

to find a clean chamber pot under my bed.

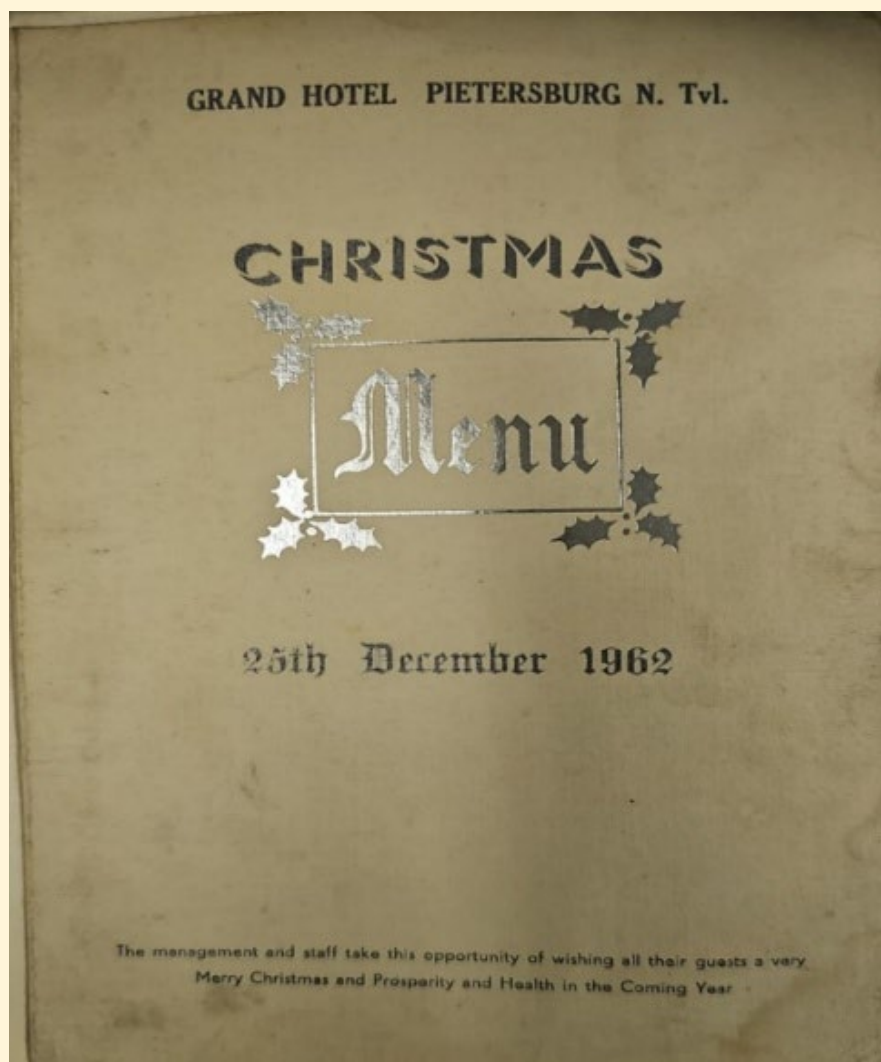
I never asked

I never knew where they were taken to.

My last image is of men's shoes that were in pairs outside the bedroom doors.

Black and brown colours stacked pair by pair outside the bedroom doors.

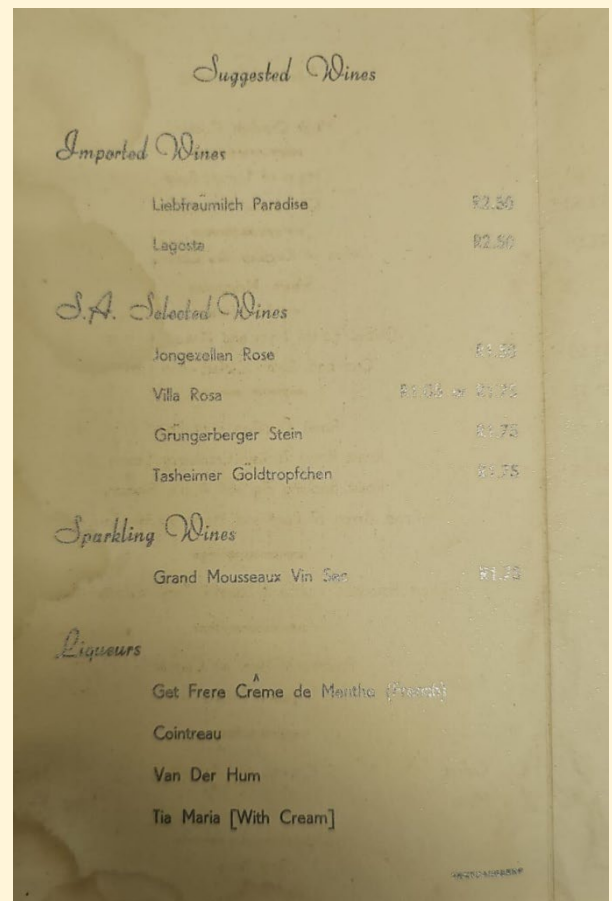
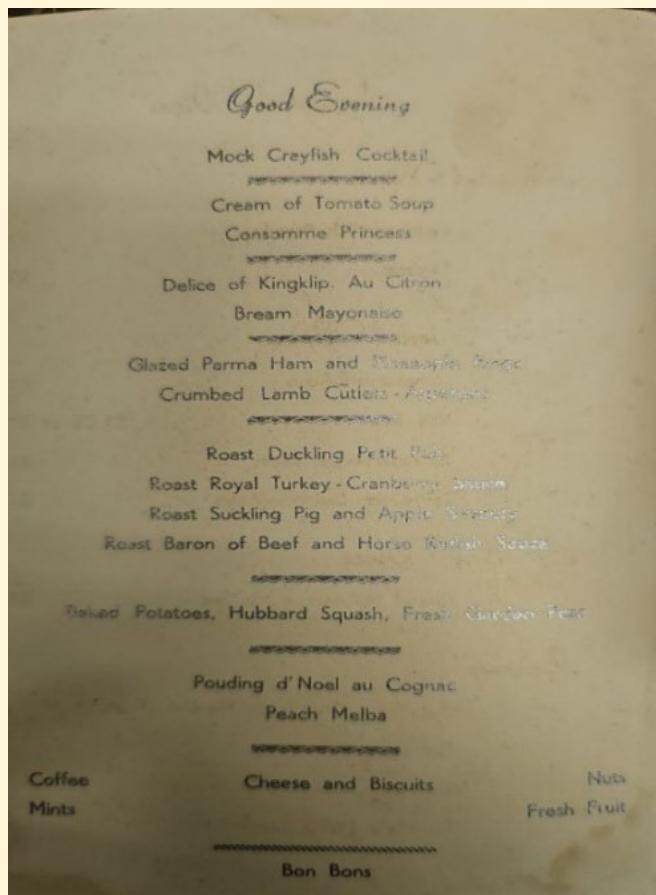
They were taken away before breakfast  
And returned all shining bright.  
I never asked who cleaned the shoes but they were always bright.  
It was a long time ago and yet  
They remain intact inside my brain  
And make me think  
There must be a large box of images of when I lived  
to keep these memories so tidily intact  
As a little girl  
At a special time  
At a special place  
Called The Grand Hotel



## The Grand Hotel by Fonda Dubb Written in 2022

The photos of the menu of a Christmas Dinner in 1962 were supplied by Vivienne Katzman whose brother Raymond ran the Grand Hotel in Pietersburg, Northern Transvaal from 1957-1968.

The Grand Hotel was owned by South African Breweries. (S.A.B)



## Fonda's Family History in Pietersburg

This poem was written with fond memories of her visits to The Grand Hotel in Pietersburg. Fonda's family lived in Sekhukhuneland (named after Chief Sekhukhun) in the remote bush, near the Olifant's River. Her father, Willie Halberstadt had a trading store called Bapedi Trading Store selling everything from bully beef, mealie meal to blankets. He was also the local postmaster.

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