

# Does Anyone Remember?

Mischievous youngster thought a home bridal shower needed an extra bit of excitement.

By Bert Maxfield, Sulphur, Louisiana

HERE in southern Louisiana—Cajun country—there is a word used to describe a young mischievous child, usually a boy.

The word is canaille, pronounced “con-EYE.”

This word should have been my middle name instead of Clifton, since I was full of mischief. Some people say that, at 70-plus, I still am.

Having explained that, I’ll tell you about one of the best pranks I ever pulled.

One evening, in August 1950, my oldest sister, Mary Ann, and my mother gave a wedding shower for a friend of my sister’s.

In southern Louisiana, in the summer and prior to air-conditioning, it was very hot and humid, so all the windows were left wide open.

Our brick home in Lake Charles had lots of large windows. The living room couch sat in front of very large triple windows with a ledge outside.

The young ladies arrived, dressed in their Sunday best, including the honoree, in her going-away dress. The party was a big success, with lots of laughing and happy conversation.

At this point, in my canaille way, I decided that the party needed some real excitement. Remembering that I had saved a Red Devil firecracker from the previous New Year’s celebration, I took it to the

tool shed, along with an old shoelace and a candle. There, I melted the wax from the candle onto the shoelace to make a longer fuse for the firecracker.

Then I crawled around the house and placed the Red Devil on the brick window ledge in the middle of the triple windows, lit the fuse and crawled back around the house. I went into my room, right across from the kitchen, so I could be seen playing checkers with a friend.

The party was proceeding well with the opening of gifts and serving of refreshments, which consisted of a popular thick, rich punch and a beautiful cake with soft, gooey white icing.

Nearly all of the cups of punch and plates of cake had been distributed when the Red Devil let loose with a terrific explosion.

All pandemonium broke loose in the living room and dining room with women screaming, and plates and cups, full of cake and punch, crashing to the floor.

Mother was in the kitchen and immediately looked around the corner into my room to see if I was there...and there I was, sitting with my friend and playing checkers.

When the party ended and the guests had left, my mother told me that she didn't know how I did the dastardly deed, but she was certain I had something to do with it.

I was amazed that my mother, being a strict disciplinarian, never punished me for this classic prank.

Many years later, she asked me, "Just how did you pull that off?"

She just shook her head when I told her everything.

Whew. Thank goodness time helps to heal frazzled nerves.

About 15 years after the explosion, my wife and I were going on a picnic in the country and stopped at an out-of-the-way store to pick up some last-minute items.

When I went to the counter to check out, the lady asked, “You’re Bert Maxfield, aren’t you?”

I had no idea who the woman was, but I acknowledged that I was Bert Maxfield.

“I’m Marge Petty Kunzweiler,” she said. “I was at the bridal shower when someone set off a bomb.”

“Yes, ma’am. I think I know who the culprit was,” I said.

She just laughed and told me to say hello to my sister for her.

I never thought I’d be famous, or should I say infamous, for any reason. —Bert