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More than once, I've taken interest in messages stressing that women need other women. Male companions and children step in to play important key

roles but it's never a favor to shut out women connections.

This concept was reinforced ten-fold when my sister and I met four Christensen cousins in the mountains for quality time together. It was also a treat to have a cousin's daughter join us for part of the time. As a woman herself, we were reminded that the next generation has reached adulthood.

There was no whining, yet plenty of wine.

Barb was the organizer who arranged for the roomy house in the quaint mountain town. She even put out a survey of personal preferences for meals, snacks and details such as what you like in your coffee (if you like coffee). A lovable gourmet cook, she's a natural at entertaining (like her mother) and made a plan for what meals would happen when.

"You cooked?" some women might ask. What kind of vacation is that? But that's part of our heritage. Family meals around the table were important in our book of memories and the long rustic table played a perfect role in our mealtime setting.

Our grandpa came to America from Denmark as an infant. Danish ethnic dishes came into play with ebelskiver for our first breakfast and pebernodder (Grandma's recipe of bite-size cookies) for a snack.

Lemon drops and the little white mint candies with the bit of green gel in the middle were not a part of the snack supply, however we all well remember how Grandma Christensen always had a little dish of each in her cupboard.

Karen came the farthest from Florida and served as Barb's shopping companion in filling all the "likes". She has a knack for caring for others and always seemed to be observant of being Johnny on the spot in being there for us, be it with a fresh cup of coffee, a glass of wine or a towel when getting out of the hot tub. She's also a good planner and seemed to be the one we turned to for carrying the map when we went on our hiking excursions amongst the beautiful mountain scenery.

Her daughter, Michelle, really proved helpful to me when I was trying to figure out a new phone. The younger generation has such a natural know-how with techy devices. She fascinates me with her healthy eating habits, her simplicity and her astounding knowledge for scientific research.

My trip started with my sister and we realized how little we get together although only 40 miles separate us. The journey to our vacation spot gave us some quality hours of catching up on our own families. Brenda has a special place in my heart. Her role as a doting aunt for my girls has always been key and she helps spoil my grandchildren as well.

That was evident in all of the cousin talk that nieces and nephews are near and dear to us. Stories surfaced of the cute comments out of the mouths of babes.

Barb, Karen, Brenda and I have memories of holidays and of our childhood trips to the mountains. You see, our moms were sisters and our families gathered more often than that of their much-older sister and their brothers.

Technology changed the communication. Rather than a survey that everyone contributed to in a matter of minutes, my mom and aunt exchanged menu lists via letters. The lack of car seats also made a significant difference as to how many people you could pack in one car. And we are no longer expected to all four sleep sideways on one bed.

It was a real treat to have Ellen and Deb join us and to have a chance to create a much deeper connection. We haven't been blessed with so much time together as adults when there weren't a whole slew of people around for a family event. They both admit how painfully shy they were growing up, yet have proven themselves to be strong, impressive communicators in their professional roles.

Ellen, the older and wiser of our pack, has such quick wit and I gained a real appreciation for her character. She and I could relate in our incredible role as Grandmas. And during a shopping spree, we ended up at the cash register with the same top. Twins.

Deb, who's just a few months younger than me, contributed some mouth-watering meals. I learned so much about her as an encouraging mother and fun wife. She was given a precious photo album after our aunt passed away and she duplicated the photos electronically for all of us. Looking through the album brought up new topics of conversation.

Funny how we never ran out of conversation topics and were all very compatible. There was quite a library of movies to watch, however we never once turned on the T.V. After all, we had each other for entertainment. We laughed until we cried and cried until we laughed. It was a relaxing priceless time together and a great dose of natural medicine. And as we parted, there was no doubt that we will strive to connect again.

As the words of the Mizpah Benediction show on the church's beautiful stain-glass window in memory of my special Aunt Ruth, "May the Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another."