

A Round Robin Tea Party.

I had never heard of a Round Robin, until this past Sunday. My friend, Jody, invited me to a ladies' round robin in the town of Issaquah which is on the outskirts of Seattle. We left at about eight o'clock, stopped for coffee on the way, and reached the town of North Bend at about ten thirty. Jody had decided to expand our day trip to include an hour of shopping, and North Bend is a great place to do that. There is an open mall area that has many discount, name brand stores; we call them 'outlet'* shops. The items are new, but very reduced in price, possibly because they are a season or two old. I rarely* go there, but I know many women will make the two hour trip, just to get some bargains. My mind wasn't set on shopping; I was intrigued about the round robin coming up. I was also distracted by the beautiful countryside. Going over the Cascades towards Seattle from Wenatchee is awesome, if you love miles of dense forest, and high mountains. Of course, as you approach Seattle, there is a drastic climate change; the area obviously gets lots of rain. There is nothing but green, and trees everywhere. Overlooking North Bend is the impressive Mount Si, a huge mountain that seems to appear out of nowhere. We got back on the road*at about eleven thirty, and reached our destination just before twelve. Walking into the house was quite surprising. The place was packed with ladies, all wearing different hats (everyone was told to wear a hat as a conversation starter). The house itself was intensely decorated, and filled from floor to ceiling with memorabilia, ornaments, photos, and collectibles. I have never seen anything like it in a private home. I have been to a few antique and collectible stores that were chock-a-block* with items. After being introduced to the host and several other ladies, I turned to Jody and said, "This place must be a nightmare to dust!" Every piece of wall was covered with something, and shelves were full to overflowing with *things*. We were all called to sit down in the main lounge, have vodka and orange, and introduce ourselves. The point of a round robin tea party is to get to know everyone in the room, at least for a few minutes. So, a five course meal was served by the host's husband, and with each course we were to sit in a different room with a different group of ladies. Each course took about half an hour, and during that time we ate, drank far too much tea, and chatted. Some of the ladies had done this for years, and others like myself, were experiencing it for the first time. And, you know, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I had the opportunity to briefly get to know some fascinating ladies. One of the most fascinating was the host, Mary. She had started having parties at the age of seven, and had arranged them ever since. She fills her calendar with gettogethers, parties and trips, for the whole year, and organizes who will be there, and when the invitations go out. It's amazing. Her husband is as amazing as she is. Most men I know would want to live in a house that is like a 'living scrapbook', and certainly wouldn't be interested in serving lunch to a large group of chatty ladies. But, thankfully, it takes all sorts*.

Related vocabulary: outlet shops, rarely, to get on the road, chock-a-block (chock-full), it takes all sorts (to make a world).

1. There's no point buying a coat for full price at a regular shop. Go to the outlet shop instead, and save money.
2. "Do you drink?" "Rarely." "How often?" "Once a year."
3. We need to get on the road (be on the road) by six, so we'll get to the office on time.
4. His room is chock-a-block with books and magazines; you can hardly walk in the room, it's so full.
5. That man goes everywhere on a unicycle. Oh well! It takes all sorts!