

## Story for Soulful Encounters – August 11, 2008

Once upon a time, not really that long ago I was reading my 'Abilities' magazine that had just arrived. I always looked forward to receiving this magazine because it was always full of ideas on positive ways in dealing with issues for those of us that have to do things differently from the majority of the population.

I was diagnosed with MS in 1997 and became active in advocating for those persons that couldn't. I was always a fighter for the under-dog so this was not a stretch in my personality.

However when I was no longer able to work as a nurse in 2004, I threw myself into every area I could find. Nursing had always been a big part of my life and being from the 'old school', nursing was not a job, it was a vocation, a calling, and it defined who I was. I believe God gave me strong nursing skills because it was the only thing that ever came easily to me academically and a natural.

I was involved in the Board of Directors as the Social Action Director for the MS Society in my local chapter for a time as well as assisted in getting a monthly support group off the ground and continued co-facilitating it until the beginning of this year. I was also involved in the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee and Chaired one of the subcommittees; I was a member of the Board of Directors of the local Independent Living Centre as well as a member of the Committee to Evaluate Drugs for the Ministry of Health for the province of Ontario.

Too busy for a social life? Or keeping so busy to avoid one? Having been married once my heart was still bruised and battered and not very trusting. Past history showed that I made poor choices when it came to men. I was a rescuer. What I really was, was a co-dependant personality, the

result or having a super controlling Father that could never be pleased regardless how I tried. A Christ centred program called Celebrate Recovery showed me how not to fall in the traps I had in the past anymore and to allow God to guide me in my life journey.

Things changed the afternoon I read that Abilities magazine. I saw an ad and brief description of a dating site for disabled persons called Soulful Encounters. I went on line and signed up hoping it wouldn't be like some of the other dating sites I had tried previously.

Within a couple days I was contacted by a man from Toronto who stated he wasn't disabled but was helping out his good friend who was the owner of the site.

Something didn't feel right so I contacted the site administrator who was also the owner, via the site email. I received a response promptly asking for my telephone number so that we could discuss this issue more thoroughly. I don't know why but wasn't reluctant to give my number to her.

We talked about this individual that had contacted me; she confirmed he wasn't a friend and that he would be immediately removed from the site.

Further light conversation followed and I found she lived in the same city as I did and in fact lived basically around the corner from me. She mentioned her husband being a Dr and when I looked at the call display I recognized the name although it was a very common name, so I asked her if her husbands name was \*\*\*\*\*. She responded in the affirmative and asked how I knew him. I explained he and I had worked for the same company for a few years until he had retired. She asked if she could share that I was on her site with him and of course I said sure. Her oldest son was

present when she was telling her husband and although no names were used it turned out her son was my pharmacist. Coincidence – don't think so. Her and I became friends and had lunches and tea's together until we both got too busy.

Not too long after I was contacted by a very handsome man that was a hiker and backpacker despite having had a heart attack. In his email that he sent me through Soulful Encounters, he told me I 'rocked his world'.

We started emailing back and forth regularly through the site but suddenly the emails stopped. No warning, just nada. I was disappointed because I had enjoyed his sense of humour and just his manner.

After about a month I was really missing his emails so I sent him one that said 'so did you fall off the face of the earth or what??

A week or so later I received an email that he had been mountain climbing with his oldest daughter and there were a couple times he thought he was going to 'fall off the face of the earth'.

He told me that I was the only one he had contacted on the site although he had been contacted by a couple females. He also told me he felt that it was a power much greater than anything on earth that had brought us together on Soulful Encounters.

I truly believe that God softened and healed my heart and has given me His Best in my Life Partner.

We started to talk on the phone and talked pretty much nightly. During one conversation I mentioned I had a dream to swim with the dolphins before I died – not that I was planning on dying anytime soon but that it was a life long dream. He suggested I check out Dolphin Adventures at the

Indianapolis Zoo. Next thing I knew I had tickets to swim with the dolphins as well as to the Indiana State Fair and the grandstand show of the Oakridge Boys and Kenny Rogers.

My friends were not too happy that I was planning on driving down to Indiana alone to meet a man that could be an axe murderer.

I left them all with the contact info in the event my body turned up floating down the lazy river.

I hadn't driven any distance alone since before I'd been married so I knew I'd have to break it up in a two day drive. I was excited about embarking on what I looked at as an adventure.

I had my scooter, walker and cane just to be on the safe side. You never know that kind of day tomorrow may bring. Be Prepared!

The customs officer didn't see it that way. He was a 'young pup' who was on a major power trip. He kept telling me I couldn't come into the USA unless I had a job. I explained I was employed but was on LTD. He kept repeating I couldn't come in without a job because I wasn't going to be a burden on their health care system. I'm thinking to myself - Canada has a kick butt health care system why would I even think about wanting theirs. He finally let me through after 45 minutes and there was no car search – just him flapping his gums at me.

That was adventure number one.

Adventure number two started after I turned onto the last secondary highway that would take me to my destination. The first road sign after I turned said 'prison area do not pick up hitchhikers'. I went down this road but didn't come to my destination but did come to a side road that looked somewhat inhabited. I had a lovely tour (unescorted)

through an Air Force Base. I guess that would be adventure number three.

I got back out onto the main highway and carried on south figuring I messed up the directions. Just down the road there's another area that looks like it might be a small town. Adventure number four was a very brief trip in and around and back out very quickly a Correctional Facility. On the way back out on the corner of the highway was a gas/convenience store. I knew I had to call my Sweetie and tell him I was lost. Adventure number five was finding his phone number, finding a pay phone and having the phone spit my Canadian quarter back at me three times before I clued in. I was turning to go to the counter to get change in US money to use the blasted phone when the young man behind me asked if I was having problems. I asked him if he knew where my final destination was and he said no but his girlfriend would be able to help me and that they here parked right beside a car with Canadian license plates. I went out and asked her and she drew me a map. I just didn't go far enough along the original secondary highway I had started to take – (the one with the prison sign). She said I'd go thru miles of corn fields before I got to my destination. Adventure number six was finally making it to the town limits of my destination then not being able to find South High Street. Now all my years of Brownies, Girl Guides and Rangers and a stint as a leader in the Boy Scout movement helped me with directions – so I knew that North High Street had to turn into South High Street at some point. That's the way it works ... unless you're in the town I was where it appears that North High Street just dead ends and goes poof!

This is a very small town. I would guess the population would be under two thousand. I probably could have stood on Main Street and yelled for my sweetie and he likely would have been able to hear me.

I am not a foolish female, I would find the street if it killed me.

Adventure number seven started when it was starting to reach dusk. I was tired and frustrated and wanted to cry. If God had brought us together was He now keeping us apart? Had we misinterpreted everything we felt were signs from God Himself? I pulled over to the side of the road, through my hands up in the air and said God You aren't helping me here. I looked up and a local police car turned the corner towards me. I flagged him down and asked for directions. This was the start of adventure number eight. He told me to follow him in a really thick drawl. Then after about ten minutes he motioned I pull up next to him. He asked me if I was sure I had the correct address. Adventure number nine started when I realized in this small town with a population equivalent to my apartment building complex, this local constabulary didn't know the streets any better than I did. Adventure number ten started when I kept following him and this time where North High Street appeared to go poof, he stopped then proceeded through the stop sign. A very small sign on the opposite corner stated South High Street and half way down this very short block on the right side was my sweetie standing in the door waiting for me. I beeped to the police and motioned I had found the address. What had appeared to be a dead end was in fact a ninety degree angle corner leading onto another street. The joke still stands today that I was escorted by the police to my true loves arms.

Our courtship was the same as any other couples – just concentrated and condensed. When we would see each other in person, it would be for a minimum of three weeks at a time. The 'best behaviour' only lasted a couple days. It was obvious very quickly that it was safe to be real.

I'm sure you've heard people say their partner 'completes' them, that they were only half a person before meeting.

Well my love doesn't complete me or me him. We were both already complete people, happy in our lives but looking for more. My Partner compliments my personality and adds an entire different dimension to who I am with or without him. Compare it to a house that's had an addition put on. The house is still the same but a section has been changed and the house has grown because of that.

I met his entire family on my first trip down but unfortunately my family couldn't squeeze the time in to meet him when he was in Canada.

Spending Christmas was very special because his family have a strong Christian faith, so the season is celebrated for the birth of Christ not just the presents the little ones exchanged. In fact Grandma read the Christmas story from her big Bible and asked questions of adults and children alike.

It was during this time that we looked at a house that was for sale along the water front of a lake. The Real Estate person asked us how long we'd been married. My Sweetie responded that we weren't, but would be in a couple months. After I picked my jaw up off the floor I asked him if he had planned to share this with me anytime soon. He told me he was planning to propose and get married on our trip to the Smokey Mountains in May. He said it was going to be a surprise. It would have been a surprise alright because I don't routinely carry my divorce papers with me when I travel so there would have been no marriage. He admitted he hadn't thought of that and stated he'd have to hunt for his because he's been divorced for 17 years.

His family thought we had gotten married in early December when he was in Canada because we had a romantic trip planned to Niagara Falls.

We didn't tell his family until the week before we left on vacation in May that we were getting married down there.

It was a beautiful ceremony, not because of the words that were said but because we were high in the mountains closer to God and it felt like God was hovering over us giving His blessing as well, through out the service. Our eyes were locked on each other through out the service until the end when we both raised our eyes to the heavens thanking God for giving each other His best.

God continues to walk with us through our day to day life and keeps us focused on Him in our marriage not our marriage alone.

I am so grateful that Soulful Encounters existed then and continues to grow and expand from a dating site to a community site. Without Soulful Encounters what medium would God have used to bring us together?

I have now inherited 2 grandchildren, 2 great nieces that are all under 13 yr. I love them all dearly. I finally have the children and the family I have always craved, and the best part is that they love me too.

Life with My Love continues to be one adventure after another, full of laughter and escapades of the unknown around every corner.

Fairy tales can come true if you keep the faith and trust in the Lord.

Wolfpaw and Ziggy

The end