

My Prince Charming and the Battle of New Ulm



By Anna Von Reitz

When I was a young girl I used to dream and wonder like all young women do-- where would I go? What would I do? And, of course, would there be anyone to share my life? Or would I always be alone?

Try as I might, I had a hard time imagining any man who would be right for me. I was then, as now, a prickly critter, spunky and sharp as a ripe cheese-- as my beleaguered Mother moaned.... "Oh, I had a little girl and she had a little curl, right in the middle of her forehead.....and when she was good, my, she was very, VERY good, but when she was bad.....when she was bad....."

Okay, well, dreaming being what dreaming is worth, I decided that all things being equal, I might as well like whomever I liked for whatever reasons I liked him. And I bobbled about like this for quite a number of years with mixed results that revealed no rhyme or reason and no narrowing down of prospects.

It turned out that while I had really good taste in men, no two boyfriends were ever anything alike. There was no discernible pattern. Not for me any simple formula of "tall, dark, and handsome" or "blond, blue-eyed, and strong as an ox". It got to the point where I even I had to shake my head and my best friend said, "Just picture your Dream Husband."

Ha!

Apparently some women find this easy to do.

So, one afternoon, cornered by concerned friends and relatives, sweating like a dog, I was forced to explain my idea of Prince Charming.

This was wonderfully laughable, but also woefully memorable. It comes back like yesterday.

I heard my own voice coming in clipped, disgusted tones--- "Obviously, he must be wealthier than Midas, wiser than Solomon, better looking than Adonis, and....as kind as Jesus. Go find me one of those."

All the older women rolled their eyes and smirked and all the younger women stared at me in shocked disbelief, and I tucked the corner of my skirt under my outer thigh and sipped daintily on my lemonade.

This was, however, to be a turning point.

Despite my exceedingly private and furtive moments when I considered the whole concept of getting married --- Prince Charming, who turned out to be a dimly imagined combination of Gregory Peck, Clint Eastwood, and the All Spice Man with a sense of humor like Will Rogers and the goodness and patience of a saint---- was nowhere to be found.

Oh, and did I mention? He had to be courteous and brave and loyal? More loyal than a Boy Scout?

Fact is, I was smart enough to know that I couldn't imagine the man that God would set aside for me, if in fact any such earmarked piece of goods existed, so I didn't waste much time trying. Turns out my mate was fifteen years older than me and living in Alaska. Go try to figure that one out and make it happen.

My husband proved to be everything and nothing like anything I had ever imagined. This is because God thinks on a different scale, with far greater wisdom and depth. He deals with a whole different deck of cards. Jim Belcher was ---literally--- beyond my ability to imagine.

And that is the way it is with most of our dreams.

We struggle and fret and tick off our lists, we envision and we scheme and we get pictures in our minds of how something should work, or how someone should look and what exactly is required----and then God steps in, and blows our conceptions and assumptions sky-high and to smithereens.

Boom!

I am laughing as I write this.

Folks, you can't imagine what you can't imagine, until, unexpectedly, it's real.

I was just reminded of that today, speaking with Native Nations leaders. Some of them are locked in on what they want and what they need and they have thought about this for many years and they are sure of exactly how-it-has-got-to-be. They've got their "dream" trapped like an ant in amber, a timeless vision of Native Utopia, the world returned to pristine and simple grandeur, all under the benevolent and wise care of Indian Elders.

And, at some level, it doesn't matter to them that no such world has ever existed and that no such world is ever likely to exist. They just want their dream and they want it their way.

The truth is, that against all odds, Divine Providence has intervened and provided them with what is real and what is real is unimaginably better than any dream--- but it's not the dream of the Native Nations. It's not my dream, either.

What is opening up for all of us is, instead, is beyond our ability to imagine.

It's not our dream, it's God's dream, and like He told Job so long ago---- (and I paraphrase) ---where were you, when I built the Earth?

Throughout the afternoon I continued to get calls from Native Leaders, each one eager to stake a claim on things that are long past---- and eager also to describe the endless recitation of injuries and injustices and reasons why they and their claims should take precedence over everyone else.

At one point I had a Lakota chief telling me about Pine Ridge and Wounded Knee and all the other nasty horrible things his people have suffered, and suddenly I looked him right in the eye, got down on all fours in the Playpen of this kind of discussion, and I very calmly said:

"My Great-Grandmother was ambushed in the Battle of New Ulm, Minnesota. She had her baby torn out of her hands and cut in half before her eyes. Her husband was murdered in similar fashion. She herself was shot multiple times and left for dead on the open prairie, but not before she saw her two small sons also killed right in front of her by full grown Lakota warriors. She carried a musket ball embedded in her skull for the rest of her life, and all she was trying to do was get from Chicago to Seattle, Point A to Point B. I didn't recount that bit of family history because I am not here to relive 1862. I am ready to leave the ugly past behind. Are you?"

There was a long, long pause.

This focus on the past is habitual for many Native people and hard to overcome.

Today I talked to three Native leaders--- very powerful, very intelligent. Two of them were like prisoners coming out of a dark cell into the light.

I sat for a long time after the final conference of the day, staring out into space, thinking about all the horror stories of my own people, my own family. I thought about the country folk in Irish Pubs getting into fist fights over the Battle of the Boyne---which happened a thousand years ago.

Nothing is ever over until we say it's over, but there are times when we should, because when we hold onto the past with both hands there's no way to grab onto the future.

After all, I could still be waiting for Prince Charming or holding grudges for what happened to my Great-Grandmother in the Battle of New Ulm.

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