

The engagement story

So many of you have asked, “how did it happen”, “where was it?”, “how did you propose” and the list goes on. So Jenn and I have decided that we would love to be able to tell you all in person or through e-mail, but out of fear of spending the next 11 months telling our friends and family the story we have elected to explain it in great detail for you to read so you are all up to speed. That way when we speak you will all know the romantic details.

Here is a bit of an overview of what our Saturday was shaping up like:

Earlier in the week Jenn told me that the owners of her company (John and Faye Fisher - providers of Dale Carnegie Training Courses) had invited us to a fundraising dinner for the Calgary Educational Partnership Foundation (CEPF) on Saturday night in the Crystal Ballroom at the Palliser hotel. Since it was a black tie affair (or vintage 19th century if you had access to such clothing) Jenn scheduled a hair appointment for 3pm that day and I debated getting a tux. With all the hoopla, I suggested that we go for a picnic (something we did together the first day I picked Jenn up from the airport when she moved out to Calgary) in the afternoon if the weather was nice. Jenn agreed saying it was a nice idea since our nice fall days are numbered. I had planned to go to the same spot since it symbolized our beginning in Calgary and thought it would be a nice idea to re-visit for the proposal. I did not tell Jenn my intent since it might raise her suspicions. So the plot was set.

The Tux

It was a warm fall morning in Calgary. We had several errands to do prior to the dinner so it was going to be a fairly busy day. First, I had to go get a tux for the event that night. Shame on me for leaving it until the last day. Since it was a black tie affair I figured I should look the part. So at about 11am we landed at the tux rental place and started looking. That took about 30 seconds since they do not carry all styles in house, but rather one style only that they could rent on the spot. So I tried it on and it felt great, nice fit and style. We then looked through a catalogue and decided that a paisley red vest and Windsor knot tie would be a nice addition. So I proceeded to try them on and once again they were a match, tucked in a matching red pocket square and we were set to go. The girl told me she would hem my pants so we went off to get the some goodies for our picnic.

We came back from Safeway and picked up the tux and went back to our apartment to drop it off and grab a blanket and a couple more items for our picnic. On the way Jenn suggested that we go to the same spot that we had a picnic the first day she moved to Calgary. SUPER!!! My plan was falling into place and she will not suspect a thing since it is her idea.

The Picnic

When we arrive at the spot, Jenn got out first and I popped the trunk. With the trunk door serving as a blind, I reached into my sunglasses case where the ring was inside of it in a

forest green satchel (not the usual box). I quickly maneuvered the ring from the tied satchel as not to draw Jenn's attention to me. I slipped the satchel in my pocket and the ring in my back left pocket so that when we were facing each other she wouldn't see it in my front pocket.

We threw down the blanket at our spot overlooking Calgary as we had done years before and it could not have been a better day. We snacked on crackers and cream cheese, bruschetta, and I had the usual beef jerky to fulfill my carnivorous need.

I lay there the entire time on an uncomfortable angle, conveniently facing Jenn, since I was afraid that the ring might be altered under the pressure of my body weight. Occasionally I reached back to make sure that it had not fallen out and finally moved it to the top of my pocket. We had just packed up the remaining food and Jenn had stood up to face Calgary and had her back to me. This was it, the moment I was going to ask Jenn to marry me. She said something to the effect of "well we had better get going now" as she turned to face me. She turned to see me on one knee holding out the ring I had chosen for her. I said "perhaps you can wait just a moment before we go...". She replied "You aren't serious, Oh my God!!!" and began to cry and gave me a hug. I then asked her to reach her hand out so I could place the ring on her finger for the first time. There were many loving words shared that I cannot recount, but we were there for probably another 10 minutes discussing the love we had for each other and the future we dreamed of together.

The Phone Calls

As soon as we returned home Jenn went for the phone to call her family. She reached her mother, Mary Lou, and could hardly speak, so much so that her mother thought that she was sick. They spoke for a while and I then began making calls to my immediate family. First I tried to call my Mother, but no dice. So, I called my brother and shared the news with him and then my sister. Jenn had to rush out to her hair appointment still crying, so much so that when she got to the salon, they were asking her why she was upset-hehe. Finally I got a hold of Mom and she was simply ecstatic.

The Fundraiser

We got all dressed up and called our friend Cara down to take a few photos of us before we went out. She did not know of the engagement yet so Jenn was waving her hand all around like mad to draw her attention to the ring. She finally noticed it and was very excited for us both, took a few pics of us and then we were on our way.

A short cab ride later we arrive at the Palliser hotel. We were greeted by people from the CEPF and directed to the Crystal Ballroom. We walked up the spiral staircase to the CP Pavilion that is a reconstructed railway platform with high ceilings and glass allowing guests to view the streets over which the pavilion stood. Once on the main floor we were met by a young boy who was dressed in 19th century attire holding a stack of rather large papers while crying out "Get a copy of the very first Calgary Herald from 1883" which was just that, a replication of the first paper ever produced in Calgary. Following him

was a server with a tray of glasses filled with champagne and a sliced strawberry in each. As if we were not already floating from the day's events, it just got better!

I had been in this pavilion for a company Christmas party before so I wanted to go to see the Vintage CP Railcars. The amazing thing about this room is that it actually has rail lines going into it! This is where they store the restored 1880's rail cars that CP uses to give tours through the Rockies. Kathleen, Jenn and I walked through the car marveling at its posh interior consisting of a sitting area, bedroom with marble counter tops and large dining area. What an amazing way to travel!

We then met up with the other guests from our table who were all very happy and excited for Jenn and I. We wandered around the pavilion and looked at some of the auction items and were impressed at the items. They were all silent auction items so people were perusing each and writing down their wagers on the items they most preferred. As we peered at each item, Faye came up to us and said, "Since today is your engagement, why don't I try to win you something". We were pleasantly surprised, but did not expect such generosity so she looked through all the items up for bid and began making her bids on them. We were then summoned to the Crystal Ballroom by a bell resembling that of an old railway station.

The meal was nothing short of excellent! A hearty soup, followed by a prime rib au jus entrée (Jenn had the vegetarian version, which came in the form of Spanakopita). After the main meal everyone was excused from their tables to mill around before the desert was served. So we went out to the CP Pavilion to check on Faye who was trying to secure one of 3 romantic overnight getaways. On our way back into the ballroom Faye said she was convinced that her latest bids would net her one of the trips for us.

Desert was served. It was a Saskatoon berry tart, WOW it was nice, just the right amount of sweetness and tartness. During the desert they held a live auction for the opportunity to bid on more expensive items. It was an exciting time of people trying to outbid on another for 1 of the 5 items for bid. To shorten the story a bit, the crème de la crème of the prizes, which is always auctioned last was a ride on one the Vintage CP Railcars we had toured through in the CP Pavilion. Included in it was room for 20 guests, return trip to Field, BC, and a gourmet dinner! Now to give you an idea of how much something like this costs, according to the brochures it would be roughly \$750 per person for the roundtrip which lasts just a day. You do the math...So, this last item up for bid began at \$1000, John had his heart set on this trip and finally got in on the bidding somewhere around \$5000 since there was a flurry of hands rising in the early bidding. It progressed from \$6000...\$8000.....\$13000, and finally John bid an astounding \$15000 to which nobody answered and he was the victor! It was likely one of the most exhilarating moments I have been a part of since about 2pm when I proposed to Jenn. It was a rush just being at the same table with the man!

After many people coming to congratulate John on his successful bid, the evening was coming to an end and Faye went to check on the winner list for the silent auction. She came back and said "Guess what?" You know where this is going don't you. "I won all

three!!!” We all laughed so hard and could not believe it. She approached Jenn and I and said “Pick the one of your choice.” We were just beyond belief that her and John were so gracious. We chose a romantic getaway for 2 at the Jasper Park Lodge with breakfast in bed and to top it all off a helicopter ride through the Rockies! I could not stop thanking them both. They said “consider this our engagement gift to you both”.

We parted ways with them and went for a drink with a few of Jenn’s co-workers in the Oak Room just off the lobby and were home around midnight.

How is that for a great engagement story?