

Go Fourth and Be Merry

So, as many of you know, I didn't grow up in New Rockford. My family lived an hour away, in McClusky, ND. But I still spent much of my childhood here visiting my grandparents, especially for the holidays, and most especially around the 4th of July.

I vividly remember the first year I was in the parade here. I was maybe six years old. My mom and dad and aunts and uncles had stayed up until all hours of the night, preparing the little vintage electric car in the garage and fabricating pixie wings out of sparkly chenille pipe cleaners and tissue paper.

My cousin Eric (the official chauffeur, maybe 11 at the time) and I were roused out of bed, fed scrambled eggs, and shuffled off, bleary-eyed, to line up for the parade.

Off we went. I grinned and waved majestically and threw candy as far as I could (which is not very far, much like now), while Eric drove and mostly tried to run over his brother when we got close enough. In the end, we kept the leftover candy. Not a bad day's haul for a couple of sugar fiends.

After the Pixie Princess float, which was just for kicks, my family started taking this whole parade thing Pretty Darn Seriously. With the sponsorship of the Rockford Theatre, we devoted much of the '90s to popular movie-based floats, like Hook, Pocahontas, The Flintstones, and Batman (for which we were awarded first place, bytheway).

Of course, one year, for some reason, we went as General "Stormin'" Norman Schwarzkopf and His Lovely Assistant. I am not making this up.

Usually, it was a varying combination of cousins, siblings, second cousins, aunts, uncles, and miscellaneous hangers-on who were involved in the whole scheme. We handmade or rented costumes, and spent days decking out the same little electric car in elaborate wooden and PVC frameworks to create a giant golden pirate ship, Bedrock-style-foot-powered-car, or a very tiny Batmobile.

The crowd's response was glorious. Confused, maybe, curious as to who these strange costumed children were, definitely, and wondering just where we had found that much gold spraypaint on short notice. But they really seemed to love seeing us.

And we loved being there, with sweat-run makeup, crushed velvet pantaloons, melted candy and all. The chance to be weird together in public is something we just couldn't pass up, and it made for memories I wouldn't trade for the world.

This family tradition is, admittedly, something I miss terribly. We're all grown now, serving businesses or boards that need willing volunteers to man their floats for marketing and promotion. I'm in the parade again this year, for the New Rockford Community Foundation, and

I'll get to wear a pretty dress and wave and make sad attempts to throw candy out of the line of oncoming traffic. I may even be accompanied by a leprechaun.

I'm afraid somehow, it's just not quite the same.

I guess the long rambling point here is this. Make memories with your families and friends, make traditions. If not for you, then for your kids, and for the young folks in your family. They last a lot longer than a bag of parade candy. They're worth the effort.

In addition to the parades in both towns, there are lots of great events going on this 4th of July in New Rockford and Sheyenne. You can check them out on the posters in local businesses, in the ad in the Transcript, on free schedules available at Miller's Fresh Foods and online at www.cityofnewrockford.com. Get out there and enjoy the best celebration of the summer!

Also, a heartfelt thank you to all the individuals and organizations that donate their time to keep these cherished community traditions going: the Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Firemen, Library, Museum, DPRCA, Rockford Theatre, Golf Course, Eagles Club, and Sheyenne community leaders, to name just a few. Your time and effort is greatly, deeply appreciated.

Have a great holiday, folks, and keep it local!

~Jessica