

Smiling shirt and a Bear – My favorite story and day in 2002.

The phone rang. “Edward and Bear are waiting for you.” I caught the elevator down to begin my walking tour of Toronto’s Queen Street. I was wondering who Bear was.

I entered the lobby and there they were-my new adult friend Edward and his 12-inch high stuffed teddy bear! “This is Bear and she wanted to see the Teddy Bear exhibit at the museum on King Street,” Edward explained. To say I was surprised was an understatement.

As we stepped onto the cold pavement it began to rain. “Here,” Edward said, “Hold Bear as I open the umbrella.” And there I was. Thirty something and walking down a crowded street holding a stuffed Teddy Bear.

Bear soon had his debut on Much Music’s Speakers Corner. We paid a Looney to give our two cents worth. I, however, was speechless. Luckily Edward came to the rescue. And there was Bear, on our knee, happily staring into the camera.

Amazingly, despite the sheets of rain, Bear stayed dry, right smack in the middle of the two of us, all crowded under one umbrella. He also managed to receive all of the attention. As we ducked from shop to shop people would say –“what an adorable Teddy Bear!” and Edward would explain how Bear was going to see the Bear exhibit on King Street. The waiter even took Edward seriously as he said, “table for three” as the ladies nearby giggled as Bear took her place at the table. Bear watched as Edward shared his freshly baked scone with me. It was delightful.

As we left and walked to another store, I spotted across the street a wonderful bright yellow sunflower building. It drew me to leave Edward, Bear and the umbrella behind to investigate. As soon as I walked in, I saw it. A zesty swirl of orange, red, yellow, black and pink bubbles on a blouse! I giggled immediately. Bright colors are my friend.

20 minutes later we arrived at the gallery. After Bear signed us in, we saw from floor to ceiling portraits of people with their bears. Again, folks were pleased to share their musings with a ‘live’ Bear in the room with them.

But the best moment of all was when a woman dressed in black squealed with delight upon seeing Bear. She rushed over to squeeze her cute fuzzy face. The gallery owner was thrilled that Bear came to see her Teddy Bear exhibit.

This was a day that will forever be etched in my memory. Who knew that a rainy day in Toronto walking with a friend's Teddy Bear could be SO much FUN, and draw so much positive response!

It has been said we all have a need for expression and creativity. A shirt full of bubbles, and a Teddy Bear Parade was how I unexpectedly did that. What would yours be?

Now every time I wear my swirly shirt I shall recall with a smile how wonderful it was to be free from worrying about what others may think and abandon myself to the sheer delight of enjoying the pleasure of authentic, fun expression this stuffed Teddy Bear and her friend Edward gave to me.

Try it!

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