

My Mother the Bullfighter

When my parents were first married after WWII, it was hard to find employment for my father, a new Mining Engineer graduate. In the quest for work, my father ended up as a mine supervisor in a small town in Peru. Living with the locals in an environment so different from the northern Ontario town where my mother was raised, she encountered many new experiences. She had stories of sifting ants out of the flour before baking and finding poisonous snakes snuggled on the floor of a porch as she and my father watched a thunderstorm.

But, one of the stories I remember best is of the day she was walking home from the market and had an encounter with one of the common local horned cows grazing in the fields. The cow was known to be bad tempered, so when she noticed it lowering its head, and scraping the ground with its front hoof, she knew she was in trouble. What was she to do? That small town's weekly entertainment consisted of Sunday evening bullfights which were conducted before the said bull was slaughtered and sold in the market for meat on Monday morning.

So, taking inspiration from the matadors of the village, my mother decided to try to wave her purse to divert the cow from goring her with its horns. Alas, the cow wasn't going to fall for that ruse, and it ignored the purse and headed straight for my mother. The only thing left to do was to grab hold of the horns in an attempt to prevent being impaled. The cow lifted her off the ground, tossing its head as she held on precariously. Fortunately, local villages saw her plight and threw rocks at the cow until it abandoned its attack.

When my father came home, he didn't believe the story until he saw Mom's bruises. That cow disappeared from the village after that, but my mother stuck around to tell the story of her Bull Fighting ventures.