

PRIDE

By Verna Kwiatkowski

Definitions:

- a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired (bursting with pride ... pride in one's appearance)
- the consciousness of one's own dignity (he swallowed his pride and asked for help)
- the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance (the sin of pride)
- a person or thing that is the object or source of a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction (the swimming pool is the pride of the community)

Phrases:

Pride goes (or comes) before a fall. *Proverb:* if you're too conceited or self-important, something will happen to make you look foolish.

PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL

One of the highlights of my life in the 1960s was directing the junior and intermediate accordion bands at the Carrozza Music Center in Yorktown Heights, New York. How I loved that job! Each spring I had to prepare the bands for the annual music recital, and that's where this story begins.

I was particularly proud of my intermediate band that year. They were responding so well to my direction that band practice was a pleasure. "El Rancho Grande" was one of the pieces we worked on and the other was a rousing march. Oh, we certainly were ready for the recital, which that year was to be held in the auditorium of Loyola Seminary.

Yes, the band was ready, but I wasn't. What dress would I wear to the concert? I liked to wear long-sleeved dresses to conduct; somehow the thought of waving bare arms did not appeal to me. I had two beautiful dresses especially purchased for conducting but had worn both on more than one occasion when the band had performed. I thought that I *had* to have a new dress for the recital, and so I began to shop ... and shop ... and shop. I had no success at all in finding a dress that came *close* to the ones I had at home, and now the time was getting short.

The only dress I found in town that fit me and was in my price range was a black and white striped one – with *short* sleeves! Well, I ended up buying it at the last minute, though neither color is good for me, and compromising on the sleeve length rather than giving up the idea of having a new dress. Ah, pride!

Now it was recital time. The students were performing well and everyone was happy. At last it was time for the intermediate band members to take their places on the stage! This is the moment we were all waiting for. I stood there in my new black and white dress, lifted my arms, gave the signal and we gave the audience a rousing rendition of

“El Rancho Grande.” It was wonderful! I was so proud of those boys and girls, which included my son George and daughter MaryBeth.

After the applause died down, we got ready to play the march. It was very lively and going so well when ... what was that?? Something was hitting against my waving arm! I tried to see what was happening while still keeping time when, to my horror, I saw that my slip strap had broken and was dangling out of my sleeve, bouncing against my arm with every beat!

I was so embarrassed! Frantically I tried to tuck the wayward strap under my arm and still keep time. The band was dutifully following my lead, but I was slowing them down considerably as the piece went on. What a disappointment! The piece finally ended, the audience applauded, I promptly tucked the slip strap into my *short* sleeve and took my bows. None of the band members nor any of the guests ever mentioned the incident to me, as I recall.

However, Pat Carrozza, the director of the studio, did say something. “Did you know the band slowed down during the second piece?” he asked. I thought he was making light of something that had been so embarrassing to me, so I gave him a strong glare and said, “Yes, I know it did.”

It was not until many years later that I realized Pat had been backstage during the concert and had no idea why the band had slowed down. He probably still does not know! At this point in my life, though, I think the incident is funny. Maybe I’ll let Pat read this story and we’ll have a good laugh together. Enjoy!

Written in 1994 as a story for my family’s history.

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