My Moments in Time

First off, I want to explain that by no means do I think God is full of shit. Just that it seems throughout my life, I have always managed to gravitate in deep thought of life's biggest questions around the bathroom. Like you know, why does it only happen to me? Or is this all there is? If you look back inward on your life as well, you too would see that you have prayed more than once around the lord's porcelain thrown.

Being a mother of four kids, and coming from a loud Italian background, I've learned to use my sense of humor to observe life's daily routines and paint my own perspective on them.

And yes I have learned that the sanctity of one's bathroom is a real blessing, or is that finding oneself in the bathroom alone is the blessing! Over the years I've managed to live a life only one can compare to Lucy Ball, and all the trimmings to go with it.

Yes, married to an illegal Mexican for 20 years and learning to adapt to a lifestyle that was completely foreign to me. Okay, I must tell you cooking beans and eating beans the last twenty years hasn't helped my disposition. (But, it did keep me close to the porcelain god I prayed to)

I've been known to tell the story about being kidnapped by Mexicans and dragged to the Western side of Wyoming to live out my youth as a teacher of American Culture. (or should I say eamerican culture!!) Okay, maybe not American Culture, more like the do's and don'ts on handling oneself in life's day to day struggles. Looking back at this time, I wasn't a teacher at all; I was the student. Seem he got to learn English, and I got to find out how handle bed bugs, and the art of debugging his friends that would come to visit us.

Okay, so he was younger than me, so he was from a different Country, hell it wasn't my fault. I was born in Florida and was living in Wyoming where most men were so white their skin had a plastic

blue tint to it. Most men up there worked in the mines deep underground and never saw sunshine.

Just landing in Wyoming, I had a great sun tan going on and thought Juan was the only normal man around (sort of). So he was shorter than me and looked like Charles Bronson. (The really young version of Charles that is).

Yes, it was difficult at first communicating with him, more like sign language pointing at this or that to get his attention. But his heavy accent never did leave him over the next twenty years, hell my friends to this day still can't understand a word the man says.

My name is Valerie, but when you hear him say it, I sound more like a disease, "BallariA" as he says it. Okay, so my last name at the time was a Doab, so when you put it together I sounded like I had VD, Lord knows I prayed he'd get it right, but nope he always sounded off proudly yelling over the SWAPMEETS or the local Wal-Mart's. (Sad part was I'd always be waving proudly back towards his barking).

Okay, over the years the barking my name ended, to my relief, only to a sharp whistle that only one can compare to a Sheepherder in the mountains of the vast open plains of the west. (And yes again I would look proudly in the direction to that whistle).

Sometimes it was other Mexican husbands calling their wives attention, hell they'd get most of the wives attention with a good whistle. Did I mention that my husband was a sheepherder when I met him? Yep, okay, so...

I was really dingy; I wanted to learn to ride a horse. Being from Cocoa Beach Florida I never gotten the opportunity to ride one, and heading out west here was my chance. So here we are, Juan the sheepherder and me in the Mountains of Utah with a bunch of sheep.

Okay, so before heading deep into the mountains with him, I had to get prepared for this adventure, I never have been in the mountains with a bunch of sheep or never even seen a horse before, so I needed to get a couple of things before heading out.

So, Cowboy boots and a good hat were in order. And well, okay, so, I couldn't walk very well. (Who but sheep would notice right?). It took Kathy and me most of a good week finding the right style of boots that would look right and allow me to look like I didn't walk

like John Wayne.

Hell, I'll be on a horse most of the time. Who cares if I can't walk straight, right?

Well, fast forward to the big day.

So here I am, just Juan and his boss and I in the thick of the mountains of Utah setting up camp. I guess the way things work in sheep world, the owner drags up this little tin cabin that is no bigger than an outhouse that is pulled by horses up to the site where we're going to set up camp for the next three months. Yes, the horses got to rest before we started up the mountains looking to be introduced to the sheep.

I must admit that trying to get on a horse took a lot out of me. Juan had to firmly grab my ass and push it up and on that damn saddle.

Well, let's just say the owner was a bit surprised to see me having trouble getting on the horse, let alone riding it up one of Utah's large mountain sides. Okay, so Juan had to grab my reins and drag the horse up the hill. There I was bitching as we went higher and higher up in the forest and through the mountains. But after about 5 miles of being drugged up and over and around the bend looking for the sheep, I began to get worried a bit that we were getting lost.

It was the owner's idea to suggest that I might want to head back to the camp, and let them go on alone. (Hum, "I wonder why he asked that"? I thought). After all, I thought I was a good sport with this; I hadn't started crying or anything.

In fact, I didn't say a word about the slippery rocks the poor horse was walking across. (Nerve-racking as it was). Anyway, my hat looked good, and I was having a grand time of it as poor Juan dragged me upwards on that mountain. He had this look of determination on his face or was that just his beans acting up again?

I can still see the owner's head turning back looking at us, and I kept wondering what he was thinking. Hell, he probably thought this man was a nut bringing some southern gal up to the high country. Now, knowing Juan as I do was an easy call. I was just a necessary tool to live with, cook, lover, and well yes, your occasional totter of firewood.

Well when the owner asked me if I cared to head back alone to the camp site, I looked him in the eye saying, "HELL NO…."

I'll never find my way back to the camp alone. (He smiled saying "the horse knew the way"). Hello, I said he just arrived as I did, how does the horse know any more about where we are than I do? Crap this guy isn't that bright!!

He lost that fight, and we continued crossing the Great Salt Lake dry beds heading towards a little lake where his sheep were drinking and doing sheepy things. (Thank God Juan didn't know English back then, hell he would have bitched a good one at me) life was simpler then; when he didn't speak a lot.

As the summer progressed so did I on my horse, I've managed not to fall off so far, and still, keep up with Juan roping and tying bells on the little black sheep in the herd.

Why the black sheep I asked?

According to the book, sheepherders bell the black sheep in the flock, because there's not many of them.

They tend to wander with the white sheep. Thus you get a better idea where all your sheep are, or so Juan said. Okay, I'm buying it!!!

Well, one afternoon, Juan and I decided that some of his little flock had gotten lost, and we had to go and rescue them. So we saddled up and headed on mountain trails again. I managed to lead my horse alone this time. And as we approached the lake, Juan asked me to go to the other side of the valley and push the sheep down the hill.

Well, it didn't seem like a big deal, so there I was alone in the wide open valleys of Utah, this Italian gal up on a strange horse with my new boots barely broke in. Pushing and talking to the sheep as I'm asking them to move down this hill. Let's go, ladies, as we went across the mountain. I didn't notice that this hill I was on was actually a mountain, with a cliff on the side that dropped off.

I was into the western moment of the adventure, life was good, and I was so proud of myself for actually being this brave to tackle it with open arms. Damn some people will never get this opportunity in life and look at me, Lord, I'm so excited. I decided right then, and there I was some western gal from a good John Wayne movie. I was free and independent and grabbing all that life had to offer.

Okay, it's my adventure okay!!

Well, about then I noticed the edge of the mountain coming to an end. Imagine little Shelly rocks under the horse's feet, and the cliff is

getting closer.

Hell, I thought to myself, I can't turn the horse around he'll slip off the cliff with these Shelly rocks.

Now picture me up on the horse on this edge of a cliff. On my left is the downward side of the mountain, towards the sheep and the lake. On the right side is the cliff, the horse is leaning close to the downward side, so if I was to get off on the left, I'm heading off on a downward angle.

I decided to go on the downward side figuring I could dig in with my boots, and I dismounted. I threw my leg over the saddle and laid my boot into the slippery Shelly rocks, and the next thing I knew, I was flying ass over head down the mountain.

Over and over I'm tumbling as I'm hearing Juan laughing his tail off. Yeah, he was across the other side of the valley facing me as I tumbled my way to a dead stop at the bottom near the lake.

So it wasn't the most lady-like position I've been in. But what pissed me off was, here I was worried about that damn horse falling off the cliff, and decided to climb off him to help guide him or turn him around.

But when I came to a stop and turned to see the horse had walked down the mountain to meet me there as if to say, "Hello Stupid!"

Yeah, you can say I was a bit sore that night, hell, come to find out later I was actually pregnant at that time and didn't know it. Well, we ended up spending the rest of the summer with the sheep and the horses and me falling off more than I stayed on.

I found out that God lives in the woods as well, yes no toilet in that cabin. I would just find myself a good roll of toilet paper and ride the horse into the woods as Juan would stand guard. What he was guarding I'm not sure. But he always stood guard for me.

The first couple of times I had a rough time of going outdoors. (Brings backs thoughts of Girl Scouting, CRAP). Seems learning to tie down the horse right is a must, to poop in the woods.

He'd break loose, and well I was busy with my praying and all - when all of a sudden I'd fart and the horse was right behind me rearing up yelling at me. Okay, pooping in the woods is not the easiest event, but having a massive beast watching you do it, well that's just wrong in my book.

I decided right there and then If I was going to be watched by some animal, let it be some animal that doesn't know my ass.

It's amazingly funny over the next twenty years; I always could count on Juan carrying toilet paper where ever we'd go.

Damn for not being a boy scout he always was prepared.

Well almost always...

Seems awhile down the road of marriage we had already had our first child, Kirsten Arleen. Yes, I did say; first, we were still living in Wyoming and thank God she was born in the spring time that following year.

No, she didn't have any telltale signs of that fall, (then again when she was born she did have this birthmark on her ass, it was covering it from top to bottom). BIG BLUE BIRTHMARK!

I found out later that it's called a Mongolian birthmark, what Hispanic descendants usually pass on. (My mother actually said it was a sign from GOD, What that meant who knows?),

Of course, I showed it off to the local Welfare Department as soon as she was born. So I guess maybe we could say that fall off the cliff did leave her with a little reminder of my sheep herding days.

Well anyways, we were in Wyoming still, and Juan had gotten a job at Little America, (it's kind of like a truck stop slash homestead of sorts, for people to find food in the middle of Wyoming). Hell, there's not a lot of people that actually live out there. So a meeting place is vital for people to gather and be social.

Just about all the people that live in Wyoming are friendly. They love to talk and share their stories. Most of them never get the chance to, so if they see the opportunity, they go on and on.

I had met Juan when I was working at Little America in the beginning. A good Mormon named Ed ran the place. He was your average white tall legged man with little sense of humor, except thinking he was funny. But after getting to know me, he managed to learn to laugh at life a bit more.

I remember when I first got to town; I obtained a position as a waitress. Winter was coming soon; Wyoming is famous for their winters. Cold isn't a word used up there more like frigid! In this resort, Ed had employee quarters where we could work and live on the property.

It was cute; they had little apartments and dorms and actual housing for larger families It made perfect sense since the winters there were beyond horrid. I figured living out there was smart being a newbie and I was not good on the icy roads and all.

I had this friend named Kathy that lived in the next town called Green River. The two of us met in Europe a few years back with a band that we were in. That's how I ended up moving out to the Great Wyoming Plains. Playing my trumpet with Kathy out here in her band was my top priority. (Yeah you'll hear more about her a bit later).

Ed found me a little room to call my own. (Keep in mind, I've just arrived from Florida and haven't met my later to be Ricky).

Well, it turned out my little room was in a dorm. The dorm was all men, all Mexicans too-boot. (You know it looked more like a hotel hallway with little rooms with bathrooms only in each room). Talk about sad!!

Okay, I didn't meet Juan there I swear.

All the men there were mostly janitors or kitchen help, and all were illegal's. I guess back then help was cheap and illegal help was cheaper.

I kept very quiet and alone for the most part. Well, I would beat on the walls from time to time, about the tinkie tinkey music! Bitching at every opportunity to Ed, you'd think with him being a good Mormon, and a bishop of a church he wouldn't have placed me a good Catholic Girl with a bunch of men. (No, I don't care to listen to the ideas of "they're Catholics too attitude").

It wasn't all that bad until on trash day I'd usually empty my trash in an Acapulco garbage bag, and they'd give me dirty looks as I would walk my trash proudly outside.

Hell, my sister, Marylee went there just before I left Florida and that was my present from her. (Well it was a purse STRAW that is, so trash can was perfect for that little room of mine).

Whatever!

You know being I was a musician from Florida and having had taste in music was the actual reason I began to beg Ed to place me somewhere else.

Or was it that I had this cat named Cuddles and I wanted him to

live with me. For the moment my friend Kathy back in the central town of Green River had temporary custody of him.

So I had my eye on this two bedroom trailer that was on the property that I kept bugging Ed about. I figured that Cuddles and I would be very comfortable there. It was placed off on its own and no one would learn about Cuddles living on the property with me; Ed had a thing about cats I guess. Guess it's a Mormon thing.

I tried a couple of times just asking about that trailer, and he'd say NOPE that's for his RICK COLLEGE girls that came in the spring time, and they used that trailer then. "No way are you getting to live there alone." He was insistent. Okay!

So there I was stuck in this dorm, until one day, I sort of plugged the toilet up.

Yes, you heard it. Hell, I can't help that their plumbing is over twenty years old. You should have seen the Mexican men bitch and complain about the water being turned off for two days. (Yeah I know when my toilet was shut off they had no pressure on theirs either).

For a few moments, I thought we were going to fight a New Mexican Revolution. Okay, maybe not the revolution, just fighting over water the rights.

Yes, I got to move into this one bedroom apartment alone, it was better because there were no music or Mexican men bouncing basketballs off the walls thank God. But, well let's just say 'no doors' in the bathroom or the bedroom was a bit odd. Yeah, Ed kept telling me that's the only place available.

WHATEVER!

I still had my eye on that two bedroom trailer. (Okay, so, I had Cuddles with me now, and no Ed didn't know), but I just knew if I got that trailer I'd be happy.

Well, it was turning cold outside, and being this is my first time seeing a real winter you could say I was very excited, every night I'd bundle up and dress warmly for a walk up to the restaurant where I worked. I was so excited on that first morning when I saw snow for the first time.

Oh, my God, I decided after I got off of work that morning to head out for a walk in the snow. I had my new snow boots and my mittens and hat all ready to go. It was like a dream world; everything was so

white and clean.

The bushes were sparkling with flakes, and the ground was so crunchy and soft. I remember taking a lot of pictures that morning. I even got a few of the lake that ran into in the back of the property. I can still taste the snowflakes on my tongue as they fell out of the sky. (A couple of weeks later I had the pictures developed and showed them off at work).

Yes, Ed got to see them too, and when I showed the pictures of the lake to him with the view, he just spits his coffee he was drinking across the dining table where he was sitting. He started laughing at me and said: "That is no lake Val, that's an open Sewer out on the back end of our property."

Well hell, I didn't know, it looked pretty with the steam rolling off the top. I guess I was up wind when I took that picture. Oh well, I'm so glad my dad didn't hear me tell this story.

He always thought I was a bit light headed.

Well, then Ed proceeded to drag my pictures all over the restaurant showing all the managers what a tourist I am. I think he thought he was funny, whatever!!! Okay, the score is one to nothing I said under my breath.

I managed to get a few over on him during my stay there at his property.

It seems I managed to break the toilet again in my one bedroom apartment and went into make a work order. (Are you seeing a pattern yet?) Ed overheard me talking about my pot being plugged up and spoke up saying, "damn Val are you shitting bricks in my complex? I can't afford for the whole neighborhood plumbing to be replaced due to your bowel issues."

I just smiled, saying, "Damn you should be grateful I'm not taking my business to your public restrooms, and then your plumbing issues would be in serious trouble." (You would think a good southern gal like me could use the bathroom without all this drama)?

So that night I went to work, did my overnight shift and first thing early in the morning got off and dragged my tired tail home. I put my pajama's on and got ready for some much-needed sleep. No sooner than I hit the pillow, I was out. (Now remember no doors on my bedroom, or bathroom, right).

Well all of a sudden, I hear someone enter my apartment and head towards the bathroom. Still sleeping I just laid there listening to clinks and bangs at first. I finally got up to this nasty smell that managed to infest the back of my throat.

Not thinking I just started towards the bathroom, because I have to pee and there in my bathroom is this hairy nasty smelling man bent over my thrown that has been removed off of its spot. (I think he's in search for his inner peace) Getting closer to his GOD? Haha, Yeah, I have a sense of humor in situations like these.

He's got this snake looking thingy in his hand that is attached to some sort of a motor device. Drilling my hole and stinking up my house. Drilling for gold, I guess. (It's one thing hearing the noise, but walking into a nasty hairy man looking for Gods golden highway, well that's another).

Even Cuddles was upset; he had his tail up with it pointing at the bathroom as if to tell me that's your litter problem lady, not mine!

Being half asleep, half naked, thinking what the hell, and dealing with my cat pissed off was too much that morning.

Yeah, Ed had finally sent someone in to work on his outdated plumbing. He's finally getting the idea to fix it.

But why Lord, so damn early? Or should I say, late in the day? (I work overnights, and this is my midnight). Okay, now I'm pissed off and thinking only one thing, ED, ED, ED!!! I want my trailer damn it!

I had my PJ's on and threw on my long winter coat and snow boots, my hat, and my mittens and headed out to the office to see Mr. Ed!! (No not the talking horse I'm talking about the talking ASS).

I get to the front desk and stare down the gal behind the desk asking her if he's behind this door, she nods yes.

And buzzes me inside, I look around the room to a bunch of old gals busying themselves with paperwork and sitting at their desks staring up at me. I again ask is he in his office, without another word they said yes.

They buzzed me into his office, and there he was sitting at his desk doing absolutely nothing just sitting there. And he looked up and said good morning. I smiled calmly and walked next to his desk, and began to wipe my arm across his desk clearing all the items off the top of his desk in one good push.

And then proceeded to jump my butt up on top, and began to lie down and spread out across the whole desk.

Ed at this point had his mouth open, and his eyes were in shock, standing in front of me and his desk YELLING, "What the hell? Why are you laying on my desk?" He looked scared. "What are you thinking Val?"

I looked up and said being its midnight for me, and I have to work tonight, and you got your janitor in my house drilling for God knows what. I'd come to the one place I know there is peace and quiet, a place where no one will disturb me. Ed's office popped in my head; nothing is going on in there.

Well he got all excited, and I got excited and the next thing I know

I got my keys to my two bedroom trailer I wanted. That very day I got to move into Ed's Rick Girls trailer and live out my days there in Little America with my Cuddles happy.

Poor Ed seems he didn't have a chance. Who said God doesn't live in the toilet? My prayers came true. Well, sort of! Okay, so, I won't tell you I had to hire my own personal Janitor for the trailers plumping. Damn if I was going to bitch about the trailer's bathroom.