

## Chapter 2: The First Trade Show

"Your phone is ringing," Pete said to me as we were driving down the highway. It was 5:30 am, Pete and I had packed the kids into the truck and I was on my way to our first trade show. The All Canada Show is, apparently, a great show and I was excited to go make some sales and meet new people.

On the phone Pete could only hear my end of the conversation, "Good morning,... oh no really... you're kidding ...oh well that's OK, hopefully I'll see you later."

Ted, our general manager, who was flying in from Saskatoon and meeting me at the airport in Chicago was unable to make his flight. Oh well, no big deal, I can do this on my own if I have to. I think!

Hugs and kisses to hubby and the kids and I'm on my way. I'm at the airport in plenty of time and the line ups aren't even that bad.

"Come this way ma'am and bring these bags with you," says the security guard. Oh boy, I've heard bad things about those little grey rooms. Into the little room we go with two women and the man at the door.

"We need to search this case first." The display booth for our shows fits very neatly in a big case. Every extra inch was packed with brochures, extension cords, tools etc... and if it's not in the right order it won't fit and will get damaged. They won't actually take it all apart will they? Wrong!! Out of the case comes every single thing. As they're swabbing every piece with their little wands looking for who knows what, I hear over the speakers, "Maxine Key please proceed to gate 17."



"They're calling my name to board," I say to the lady with the wand.

"Don't worry they'll wait," she says as she leaves the contents of the booth case all over the dirty floor and moves on to my suitcase.

"We need to check you now ma'am," said the smaller of the two women. Really? Did I just see a look of amusement on her face?!

Then over the speakers again, "Maxine Key gate 17 for boarding."

"That's a call for me again and you're kidding right?!" I say. Thank goodness they only gave me a quick search and pat down. They finished and told me I could pack up my things, put them on the belt and be on my way.

"You will need to help me pack this case back up properly so I can even make my flight," I half beg and half demand of them.

OK, repacked and running to Gate 17. Phew made it!

I realize as I'm heading to the very last row of the plane that almost everyone is giving me a dose of mild stink eye. I get seated wondering just how long they've been waiting for me. Out of the window I see my booth and suitcase coming on a cart.

Hmm... Why is it that we are still sitting here 15 minutes later?

Over the speaker comes the answer, "Sorry folks it seems that our cargo door is frozen open and the service technicians are on their way to have a look." I can hear people mumbling and peak over the top of my magazine to see heads turning my way, sending me now serious stink eye! Come on people! It's not my fault that it's -37 C outside and I got dragged into the nasty gray room.

"Ok folks the technicians are still working on the door and we will let you know shortly if we need to change to another plane. Luckily now that I've shrank myself down to my mom's size people can't see me over the back of their seat.

Finally after another 2½ hours they got the door closed and we were on our way. I've got it all planned out in my head. I'll grab my bags, get to the resort, set up the booth real quick and have just enough time to change before the show starts at 5:00 pm. Luckily the show is in the same resort I'm staying at and I'll check into my room after the show is over at 9:00 pm.

Happy to be the last one off the plane and avoid walking past all those eyes again, I head to the baggage area. Waiting... waiting... waiting... Where are my bags? At the desk the helpful lady tells me that my bags are coming in a different flight.

"But I saw them come to the plane on a cart!" I exclaim.

"Yes it says here that they were removed from the plane in order to perform some mechanical work," she replies.

Oh boy, maybe now is the time to start panicking. How exactly is an interior designer/artist with no booth, no brochures and no Ted going to sell fishing trips?! A million things are going through my mind. I can't sell lodge trips! I've only been there once, I love fishing but I'm a total amateur, never fly fished and know nothing about it and the biggest fish I've ever caught is a 14 pound pike. "OK calm down, don't cry and pull yourself together!" I say to myself.

In the limo ( yes a limo, it's cheaper than a taxi in Chicago) I call Pete to give him my updates. As always he calms me down and reassures me that it will all work out. Ted had left a message saying that he could make it in on another flight and would be at the show tomorrow. He left a phone number for Tony from BC Sport Fishing. Tony and Erik (one of his guides) would gladly help me set up the booth. I'm sure partly to help me out and maybe to make sure that Ted still had a job when he arrived. Thanks so much Tony and Erik for volunteering to help me out but there is no booth to set up! At least I'll have time to check into my room.

So 5 pm rolls around, I'm in my empty booth space happy that I had put a few brochures in my carry-on and as ready as I could possibly be. People actually stopped and talked to me! I came up with a line after a while. When people were looking into the empty booth to see who we are, I would say, "Do you like the display?" This would always get us talking and one group even came back the following day and booked a trip. I went back to my room that evening thinking that tomorrow would be a better day and wishing I could give Pete and my kiddies a good night kiss.

The next morning the booth showed up, the luggage showed up and Ted showed up. Yippy!

Things were good. I met lots of potential guests, other lodge owners, suppliers and most of all I learned a lot. The first trade show was, after all, a success.

*A sneak peak at Chapter 3: "It costs how much to get a pound of butter to the lodge? Five dollars? That can't possibly be right!"*