

Postcards from the edge

By Anne Georg for FFWD Magazine - February 21, 2008



Greetings from BOLIVIA'S Carnaval

Here's me with Bolivian president Evo Morales in Oruro, Bolivia. To my left, my friend Annabel is receiving a neck full of soapy foam courtesy of Bolivia's vice-president Álvaro García Linera.

Annabel's a Bolivian-born Brit whose family comes from Oruro. We're at Carnaval, a cacophonous kaleidoscope of dozens of brass bands accompanying groups of fabulously costumed dancers. They dance in a 20-hour-long parade in homage to the devil. Then they fall to their knees and crawl into the church to ask blessings from the Virgin.

Tens of thousands of spectators join in by randomly flinging water bombs and spraying foam, often directly in the faces of their victims — it's easier to pick their pockets that way.

Notice Linera and Morales went with the foam. See them giggling like schoolboys playing tricks on the girls. In this case Annabel. She swore she'd get revenge. I didn't believe her.

Later I watched as she avenged the foaming. She had two girlfriends in tow. They acted as decoys, sitting on the Bolivian president's knee while a bodyguard snapped photos.

The dancers and brass bands whirled and clashed by them in a chaos of bodies and noise. Water bombs whistled through the air, spanking the ground as they landed in front of the presidential party.

Annabel used the melee to position herself, pull out her arsenal and ambush the vice president of Bolivia with a prolonged blast of stringy foam. Linera quickly recovered from the attack and retaliated, pulling out his foam and spraying her right back.

El presidente laughed amicably. The two babes on his lap laughed. It looked like a security nightmare. But the bodyguards were laughing, too.

Can you imagine the humourless Stephen Harper in that situation? Methinks his RCMP security would wield taser guns, not cans of foam.

Ciao, Anita

Anne Georg