

Monkey on my back

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By ANGEL KANE
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Every year when the Fair comes to town, there is one attraction I insist we visit before all others.

You've probably seen the attraction yourself.

At the very back of the Fairgrounds you will find a race course. Sometimes there are so many people gathered around the course, that I can't easily find a spot, so with child in hand, I push and shove my way to the front.

The gun goes off!

And out come the two racing dogs, each with a monkey on their backs.

The monkey – of course – is dressed like a little human jokey. Everyone screams for their favorite and when the race is all said and done, I insist each of my children take a picture with the monkey – at \$8 a pop.

I'm drawn to this event like a bee to honey. And not so much because of the dogs or the monkey but because of the man behind them both.

I first met **Frank** five years ago.

We were at the Fair and stumbled upon his attraction. One of my kids begged to take a photo with his rather pricey monkey, and in a funnel cake induced haze, I whole-heartedly agreed.

As we stood in line waiting, I struck up a conversation with the man working the monkey photo line.

Frank is from New York. He is married. Has one small child and spends his days working carnivals around the country in an RV. And I'm talking nice RV – air conditioned, sub-zero fridge, hard wood floors, tile shower – an RV that looks nicer than many of the places I have lived.

As Frank and I talked more, he asked me what I did for a living and I told him I was a lawyer.

He laughed "I used to be one too! Gave it all up and I've never been happier."

There are a handful of momentous occasions in my life: that day I graduated from school, the day I got married, each of the days I had my children...and the day I met Frank – a.k.a. the monkey man.

On my really bad days, when my feet hurt in my high-heeled shoes and my mind is numb from thinking and my eyes are tired from reading, I daydream about the monkey man.

Brody says I'm slightly obsessed with Frank and his monkeys as every year I make a mad dash to the back of the Fair to see if Frank is there.

To see if the monkey man still exists.

And Frank never fails me. He is always there wearing his hat, shorts and Hawaiian inspired flowered print shirt. He is the master of ceremonies as the music starts up and he readies his dogs and monkeys.

He is the epitome of pure joy. He is my hero.

And at \$8 per monkey photo, he is the smartest attorney that I know!

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