

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

“Move!” That’s what the woman in front of me at the grocery store had on the back of her shirt. I stayed out of her way as she steered her cart into the checkout lane ahead of me. I kept watching her, wondering what would make her wear a t-shirt with such a straightforward message. I studied her. I recognized that we tell people a lot by the way we dress, how we stand and especially with the words on our shirts. I saw another shirt this week that read “Life is good.”

When the woman at the grocery store turned toward me to get the eggs from her cart, I read the rest of her story. “Let’s Move Memorial Fitness Walk.” Ah-ha, there was more to it than what I gathered on the surface. Still that bright blue shirt could have just as easily read “Move out of my way” or “The Fort Stockton Moving Company.”

Move is one of those versatile words. In February, we really moved along on our trip across the country, visiting three unforgettable states. We also helped move my brother into his new apartment in Phoenix. While his cross country journey was quite an undertaking, my family moves every day. In two weeks time we visited six national parks, two museums and two other tourist attractions. From Indian ruins in Arizona to aliens in Roswell, New Mexico, all 10 places were spectacular in their own way. The very best of these was the Grand Canyon, a very moving experience.

We spent four full days at the Grand Canyon. We could have spent weeks there. It’s the biggest place my eyes have ever seen and my mind has ever tried to comprehend. I think that’s one reason the view never got old. Dan, my brother, the kids and I went to a dozen or more overlooks. Everyone around us just stood and looked at it with the same amazement. We watched the sun set behind the canyon three nights in a row. We hiked the snow-packed Bright Angel Trail. We attended ranger programs learning about the geology, the history and the animals of the canyon. We saw mule deer, and elk. We heard the coyotes at night. I still don’t totally understand the Grand Canyon. The simple explanation is that the Colorado River, over millions of years, wore down a path through the earth and rock. Erosion played its part and the gigantic canyon formed. But I have a hard time grasping millions of anything. All I could see were sheer cliffs for miles. I tried to understand that and orient myself, not just geographically, but chronologically. Where do I fit in? The canyon is one of the grandest, oldest places I’ve ever encountered. This realization forced me to look inward, to uncover who I am and what my purpose is in this vast landscape. I’m still trying to process that.

Another thing looking a mile down into the canyon does is engage our human ambition. We see a mountain and say, “I could climb that.” We see a river and say, “I could cross that.” When we see the Grand Canyon, we say, “I could get to the bottom of that.”

My family didn’t get to the bottom during our visit, but we did go below the rim, which according to one ranger put us among the five percent of the five million who visit the park annually. Hiking in the canyon was both frightening and stunning at the same time. I learned another thing from Ranger Mike. He said that no matter how much time people spend at the canyon, they always want to come back to see more, hike more or reach the floor.

Unfortunately, we had to leave the Grand Canyon on Monday. But there’s a movement underway, in my family, to return to face that ancient terrain head on and get to the bottom of its mysterious effect.

Becky Hirn is a Delphos resident traveling America with her family for a year. She documents the journey at www.ourtriptakesus.com. Follow the Hirn family in photos, blogs, on Facebook and Twitter. Or learn

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