

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

My Dad says you gotta have one of those uncomfortable moments every once in awhile. It's what reminds us that we're human. Along with all the wonderful experiences I've had on this trip, it's also lent itself to plenty of those moments.

The most intimidating reminder is the line of questioning we sometimes get when we pull into a parking lot. Surprisingly, not everyplace we go is camper-friendly. Some people, mostly parking lot security guards, think that since we drive our house around, we might just start living in their lot full-time. "You're not planning on staying here all night?" they say. "No, we're just getting groceries," we tell them. "Good, because it's not allowed," they answer.

Another note on parking lots: When we do happen to stay overnight, legally, and we have our windows open, our neighbors seem to forget that we can hear their conversations. I double-checked the door was locked one night after I overheard a strange conversation about a truck stop employee who takes pictures of truckers on the side. Talk about uncomfortable.

These are the things I feel like I have to spell out when friends and family stay with us. Before my brother visited us last fall, I unsuccessfully tried to explain that living on the road just isn't like living at home. "I know," he said, "I've been camping before." I told him that we don't have an endless supply of water, our bathrooms are very small, we have to find sanitary dump stations every couple days and electricity is a luxury, not a given. Water, sewer and electric are not things that people in houses think about each time they use them. I never thought about it, they were all just available. But on the road, if we don't keep an eye on the tank levels and the battery charge, things can get uncomfortable. My brother really did understand and he also helped us watch those levels.

So did my parents when they came to Arizona this past week to visit us. It's an understatement to say they've been camping before. I still felt like I needed to explain the brevity of the RV shower. I can shower in a matter of minutes now. It's very normal to me. I like knowing that my quick showers conserve water in one tank and space in another tank. I guess discomfort is a relative thing. It makes me more uncomfortable knowing the wastewater tank is full and I won't be able to shower until I find a place to dispose of the water.

There are plenty of other examples of uncomfortable moments on the road. Right now, it's our neighbors, the camp hosts, who empty our trash every other day from the barrel next to our site. I wonder if they think we generate too much trash, we should be recycling or something else. It's like the feeling you get when you want to clean up before the cleaning lady comes. Then back in January it was the cold that got to us. Our toothpaste froze and we had to hang blankets over the doorways and windows to insulate the RV. We also had two water leaks, one in the RV, one in the travel trailer. These things are temporary, fixable, but still unpleasant.

For all the people who tell us how much they'd like to travel the country in an RV or live on the road like we do and to those who have said "This is so cool, take me with you!" I try to give them all the

encouragement I can because, this life is possible if you choose it. This and many other far-fetched dreams are achievable. However, there is one caveat: There will definitely be some uncomfortable moments, that's how you'll know it's working.

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