

Our Trip Takes Us

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By Becky Hirn

My sister-in-law called while we were in Columbus for the Ohio State and Wisconsin game. She wanted to know how it felt to be back in my old college town. We were only in town for one day and I hadn't really thought much about it. I was busy worrying about where we'd park the RV on a game day. When I had a hard time answering, she said, "You know, you did a lot of learning there, a lot of growing." She was right. There's such a big difference between your first year away from home and your first year as a mother.

Our conversation got me thinking about the impact places have on us. From the places where we grow up, the places we vacation, the places we raise our children, the places we learn important life lessons—each place makes an impression and becomes part of us.

For me, there are places I can't go without feeling nostalgic. A good example is Delphos St. John School. I did a lot of growing there too. Like many others in Delphos, from kindergarten through graduation I walked those halls, made friends on the playground and stayed after school for sports and other extracurricular events. When I get the opportunity to walk those halls again, whether it's with my own children or while volunteering at the annual church festival, I know the place has touched me. There's a personal tradition there.

For many of us there are other places we keep going back to, dependable places, where we like to relive moments and recall certain times in our life. Some people keep going back to the cottage in Michigan because it's tradition. Some people always shop at the mall on Sunday. When I used to waitress at NuMaude's in high school there was a young couple that came in once a week, without fail. I used to remember what they always ordered. During the summer, I love taking my kids to the Van-Del drive-in. It's a place that's always been part of my life.

I also love going to new places, making new moments. After this trip I'll have a lifetime of places to look back at, and hopefully some to revisit. In the last couple weeks we were introduced to Chicago's legendary pizza at Gino's East, where everyone signs their name on the chairs, walls, tables, wherever. And in Iowa we visited the Field of Dreams, where Abby pitched in a pick-up game with some girl scouts. These two places are now part of my personal history.

Homes, stores, and restaurants. It could be my grandma's house in Indiana, my first apartment or the park where I played softball on the Blueberry Muffins team. Maybe it's the restaurant where Dan got down on one knee and asked me to be his wife. These are my places and they have meaning. If you could see everyone's places when you looked at them, it'd be as unique as a fingerprint. That's what makes talking to each other about where we've been so interesting.

After I told my sister-in-law I wasn't sure how I felt about being in Columbus again, I looked around and realized that I was still standing right in front of one of my favorite Columbus haunts, Half-Priced Books, where 15 minutes earlier I'd come out with an armload of books, just like I always used to do.

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 how to partner with the trip as an advertiser. You may e-mail Becky at beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com