

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

Both of my children like to hum. Abby and Dan are whistlers. They all whistle or hum while they're playing, working, driving and daydreaming. I've heard that's a good, healthy thing. I'm more of the work in silence kind of person. I prefer it that way. When I'm reading or writing or driving, my focus is too easily distracted by music. That doesn't mean I don't appreciate some good tunes though.

One of the coolest gifts we got when we left for the trip back in June was a homemade CD mix from Dan's brother, Doug. The two-CD set he called "Hey, America, You're So Fine" is jammed packed with thumb-drumming songs, great for traveling down America's highways. We've whipped those CDs out many times throughout the last 24 states. The kids love it too. One song you might hear them humming is "Spirit in the Sky."

The thing about music is that alone it can create good feelings. It can change a bad mood into a good one. Then when you couple the music with a fun activity, for example, driving down the highway with the windows down, family sing-a-long style, then you've really created something. Somehow music and songs attach themselves to good times and the next time you hear the song, it all comes rushing back. I hope that happens for the kids.

Fortunately, we've had a lot of opportunities to combine musical vibes with the good vibes of our trip. It started with Doug's CDs, but sometimes we just make up our own songs. Usually, this is the work of Dan or Abby. When we were in Michigan, in an attempt to be educational, I started naming all the Great Lakes we had seen so far. The next thing you know, Abby was singing the names of the lakes to the tune of the Superior Federal Credit Union jingle. I don't think the kids will ever have trouble memorizing the Great Lakes now. We really laughed about that one. Every once in a while, we still sing our Great Lakes song, just for fun. Another made up song is based on a made up sandwich. One day Dan got creative in the RV kitchen and made the Chilaroni Sandwich, a concoction including chili and pepperoni. Now it's a sandwich with a song.

Another way music has become part of our trip is through Abby's music class. We all get to join in. Last month we were learning about the Baroque period. We'd be driving through the mountains listening to Mozart or stopped in traffic trying to pick out the French and Russian national anthems in Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. This month the curriculum is taking us into music around the world. We did a family sing-a-long of a West African welcome song, Funga Alaphia.

Speaking of sing-a-longs, in South Carolina last week, we visited a great little island just south of Charleston, James Island, for the opening night of their Holiday Lights festival. It was the biggest and best drive through display I've ever seen. Maybe it was a little early for Christmas and the temperature was in the 60s. That didn't stop the kids from popping in a Christmas CD and singing "Silent Night" and "Tis the Season."

I might say that I like to work in silence, but really there's always a buzz of activity around me. Stopping now to listen I hear Carter humming and running his Hotwheels through the stones. There are crickets and birds chirping. There's a low murmur of Dan and Abby finishing up math class in some lawn chairs over by the creek. This is the music of my life.

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