

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

It's great to be back in Delphos for the holidays. It's given me the chance to participate in all those traditional pre-holiday events, like making cookies and staying up until 2 a.m. talking and eating at my parent's Christmas party. We've also been to the Rustic with some high school friends and I've bumped into people at Chief's and Alco while shopping for Christmas gifts and food. This just would not have happened on the road. I would have been buying pumpkin pie at Piggly Wiggly and exchange gifts at Target. This year is different. Instead of being here all year, I've come home. It's a real gift to see it in a new light.

One Christmas tradition I love is last minute shopping with Dad. This is an event that goes way back, probably 20+ years. Each year, a few days before Christmas, Dad and I go out shopping. It started out when I was a teenager. He had some stocking stuffers to get and I had some last minute item to find. From that year on, through high school, my college years, and when I lived in Columbus, we haven't missed a year. Shopping, talking and drinking coffee with Dad has taught me a lot over the years about what it means to give and receive gifts.

One thing Dad always said to his five children was "You get what you give." It took me a long time to understand that statement works in many ways. When you give anger, you get it. When you give honesty, you get it right back. Dad really illustrated this concept with our annual shopping trip. What he's been giving me all these years is time. Even with five children, he's always found time for just the two of us. What he got in return was my time, and a great relationship with his only daughter. That's a gift.

When I think about all the gifts I've been given, particularly this year, on our trip, I see abundance. We've been invited into many peoples' homes. Friends have us given tickets to Disney World, Universal Studios and the Louisville Slugger Museum. We've been given time, money and encouragement. I don't say these things to show how lucky I am or to make other people feel not as lucky. I share it in gratitude and to recognize those who give so much.

I'm also attempting to connect what I already know about giving and getting from my dad. Because I often feel like I'm on the receiving end more often than I should be. I talked to a friend about the gap I feel in my giving and receiving. How can I repay everyone for all that they've given to me? The friend, a great gift giver, said I should never feel guilty about receiving a gift because that takes away from what the giver is trying to do for me.

And I guess it's true that people give not to get something in return, but to be a part of the big exchange in life, to participate in the giving and getting my dad taught me about.

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

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