

DOWN HOME: Her world grows & also shrinks

May 8, 2008

Posted: 5/09/08

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We're breathing easier at our house these days. Molly, our youngest daughter, returned home after studying in Europe for a semester.

Back when I was in college, I thought "suffering for Jesus" as a summer missionary in Colorado was pretty exotic. I never dreamed of spending a semester overseas.

But Baylor University's international studies program figured large when Molly evaluated where to go to college. And thanks to scholarships and variations in tuition, she wound up studying at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands for not much more than the cost of a normal semester in Waco. So, her dream became a reality.

Joanna and I watched from afar. Through the semester, we traded instant messages online and even talked through Skype, a telephone program that works on my laptop computer. We monitored Facebook for new pictures of our darlin' daughter in exotic places.

The quality of studying overseas multiplies the more students travel and experience various cultures and societies. Maastricht filled the bill for Molly, our family's world citizen.

A few days after they arrived in the Netherlands, the entire Baylor group took a trip to Istanbul, Turkey. OK, I was nervous, but my prayer life picked up.

Once the semester started, the kids went to school four days a week and traveled during long weekends. Truth be told, I probably enjoyed hearing about Molly's journeys about as much as she enjoyed actually taking them.

Every Sunday, I awaited news from her destinations—Prague, Berlin, The Hague, Bruges, Amsterdam, some little town in eastern France, Interlaken, Paris. Some parents live vicariously through their children's athletic or musical prowess. Me, I just got a kick out of hearing where my kid visited over the weekend.

When their studies ended, the students spent a month backpacking over Europe. So, the variety and pace of reports quickened—Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Porto, Lisbon, Madrid, Barcelona, some little town in southern France, Cinque Terra, Pisa, Florence, Rome, Athens, Santorini.

When she got home, Molly showed us pictures. We spent an entire evening on the couch, reliving her semester, trip by trip. I inadvertently revealed my low-brownness when I acknowledged my jealousy peaked at the wrong time—not when she saw the “Mona Lisa” or visited St. Peter’s Basilica, but when she sledded down the Swiss Alps at night.

The world became both larger and smaller for Molly this semester. She experienced a dizzying array of complex cultures but also got to know real human beings in strange and far-off places.

I thank God Molly got to see so much of the world. And I thank God for bringing her home.

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