

Down Home: The things we remember from family vacations

July 3, 2014

Well, now that we've reached Independence Day and the baseball all-star game is just about a week away, we're neck-deep in summer.

Around our house, we nurture a love-hate relationship with this season. Just the other day, Joanna announced, "I've about had enough summer." Technically, she was only 10 days into it. We both knew she was talking about the heat, and hot temperatures are about the same as their gastronomical equivalent, habañero sauce. A little goes a long way.



On the up side, schedules feel a bit looser in the summer. For one thing, we've got all those holidays—Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day, which we usually stretch into long weekends. Then, with

practically everybody at the office taking vacation, the rhythms of work relax a bit. And even at church—because we know if you can't beat 'em, you might as well join 'em—we back off some of the weekly routine.

I guess you could say summer feels different than the other seasons. Both

meteorologically and emotionally.

Question of the month

We explored an emotional benefit of summer at work the other day. As an ice-breaker for staff meetings, we always answer the Question of the Month. For July, the question was, “Where did you go and what did you do on your favorite vacation when you were a kid growing up?”

Apparently, our staff are suckers for natural wonders:

- Aquarena Springs and [Ralph the Swimming Pig](#) earned two mentions.
 - Caves—Carlsbad Caverns and Natural Bridge Caverns—figured prominently in two favorite family summer trips.
 - Lakes also nurtured a couple of vacations.
 - Mountains, mountains, mountains also attracted our wonder. Our staff fondly recalled the Rockies and the Tetons, Yellowstone Park, Estes Park, Tahoe.

Some of our crew visited grandparents and cousins for vacation. We trekked to Indiana, San Antonio, Iowa, Minnesota and Colorado.

Dysfunctional road trips

We also remembered the not-so-good along with the wonderful. For example:

- “My brother and I were getting almost drowned as we rode in the back of the pickup during a torrential rainstorm. I remember Dad pulling over to the shoulder and me thinking we would get to move up into the cab. Dad opened the little window in the back glass to tell us, ‘If y’all will move up closer to the cab, most of that will blow over.’ And

we continued to be soaked.”

- “Summer vacations were typically spent in Iowa at my aunt’s and uncle’s farm. Days were spent ... following my brother and cousin through the cornfields to where the cows and pigs were. I’d get halfway into the field, and they would both turn around and say, ‘You know pigs and cows eat little girls.’ I’d squeal and take off running for the house. I still believe it to this day.”
- “Yes, there was loads of family dysfunction, car breakdowns and sword fighting in the backseat with my brother ‘til my dad reached over and broke the swords and threw them out the window.”
- “My Dad had the idea to build a covered thing on the back of our 1955 Ford pickup. It had wooden supports covered with a kind of waterproof canvas or something. We got on the road toward Louisiana, ran into a big thunderstorm and had to turn around and come back. This was when kids could ride perfectly safely at highway speeds in the back of a pickup.”

Best memories

My best childhood vacation memories took place with Mother, Daddy, Martha and Martin in the mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. And my best adult vacation memories appear with Jo, Lindsay and Molly along Gulf Coast beaches.

The exotic sights from trips across the country capture all our imaginations. Every time I hear someone sing “America, the Beautiful,” I think about vacations—scenes I never would have seen if my parents had not packed up my brother, sister and me, and years later, if Jo and I hadn’t packed up our daughters and taken off.

Even with the heat, I can’t help but thank God for summer—and for the

scenic splendor of beaches and mountains and lakes and caves, as well as family road trips and swimming pigs.