

## Nature's Beauty Overrides Glitches of Vacation

*by Liz Gibbons*

"My back is really hurting," my husband said as we approached Capitol Reef National Park. I took over the driving and when we got to our campsite, Vic stumbled over to the picnic table and sat and watched while our two sons, then age 11 and 14, and I set up our campsite. When that was accomplished Vic dragged himself to the tent, lay down and spent most of the next four days there. Every afternoon about four o'clock he would emerge from the tent to be driven to the pay telephone to call his client who needed some legal advice while we were on vacation.

The boys and I decided to make the best of the situation. The second morning I drove them to the trail head of Frying Pan Trail, a strenuous trail they wanted to take which connected to Cohab Canyon Trail which led back to the campground. With a backpack containing food and canteens of water they spent much of the day on that long hike. The succeeding days the three of us took shorter hikes.

In the evenings we three went to the Ranger's campfire talks. Walking back to the campground we were overwhelmed by the clarity and beauty of the night sky and the number of stars visible. There was a stillness and feeling of deep connection with the stars and constellations that we could identify. The Milky Way was magnificent and, yet, seemed mysterious. (As a side note, a few years ago the Park made a commitment to reduce light pollution and to educate visitors about the night skies. In 2016 Capitol Reef became the seventh National Park to achieve the designation of "International Dark Sky Park" by the International Dark Sky Association. It is a "Gold Tier" park which signifies the highest quality skies.)

We proceeded next to Bryce Canyon National Park. Vic's back was still bothering him, so he was not able to help set up camp. We took in the many sites of Bryce mostly by car, and were captivated by the colorful eroded spirals of rock called hoodoos.

Our next stop was Zion National Park. Vic was feeling a little better but still was not able to help us set up camp. Dave and Bob hiked the famous Angels Landing Trail, and I went with them until the heights became too scary for me. Bob was freaked out by little lizards that seemed to be everywhere in the park. Then Dave developed a nose bleed that would not stop. He and I drove to the ranger station where there was a nurse on duty. She told us what to do to control it. But it bled periodically over the next few days. When it came time to break camp and head home, Dave's nose began to bleed again. Bob and I did all the packing as Dave reclined in the car with his head back trying to stop the bleeding. The tent and sleeping bags had to be loaded on the top of our station wagon, and Bob and I had a particularly hard time heaving the heavy tent up on top and tying everything down.

The situations on this trip were more inconveniences than being a vacation from hell. Being surrounded by nature's exquisite beauty made it tolerable.