

Life is Worth Leaving

By Sheila Johnson

She leaves at 8:30am hoping to arrive at her long awaited destination between 2:30 and 3:00pm the same day. Driving such a long distance unaccompanied was new adventure, and it took lots of prayers and self-talk. Neighbors, friends, and family gave nods and stories of reassurance. Some even offered maps that had already been highlighted between Denver and Santa Fe. She leaves with a sense that it was going to be a beautiful road trip, with beautiful scenery, and plenty of gas and potty stops. She was not disappointed.

Four days before the journey, she leaves home and takes her car in for a “on the road” tune up. The wait was short, service excellent, and by the way, no charge for a full tune up since it was her first time using that shop. She leaves happy and knows that it was an exceptional gift from God because auto shops ALWAYS find something to charge you for, even when there is NOTHING to charge you for.

She leaves Denver and is surprised how long it’s taking just to get out of the city limits in morning traffic. But it’s okay because she is driving, feeling courageous and happy. Driving down highway 285 south was indeed a visual and sensual experience. The aspens displayed a rare shade of yellow. The evergreens were Christmas tree posed, and all lights were dimmed compared to the bright glory of the morning sun! The running tributaries and streams were clear and inviting to any species of mammals. Small creatures scampered around the landscape, while others continued to moo, neigh, and cock-a-doodle-do at by passing cars, trucks, and an occasional motorcycle.

She leaves knowing that in just a few hours she is going to meet two dear friends from college whom she has not seen in forty-eight years. She wonders if she will recognize them. After all, she has spruced up her Facebook pictures for those who live far, far away!

First stop, Angel Fire ski resort—fresh air, high altitude, tears of joy, unending laughter, home cooking, hot toddies, card playing, tears of sadness, stories beyond measure, picture taking, and promises not to wait forty-seven more years.

Next stop, Taos, New Mexico. Delicious food, colorful fabric, shades of red *reistras*, and a re-acquaintance (for her) of her Native American heritage and cultural context were found here. The pueblos were beautiful with adobe buildings and homes, renovated places of worship, jewelry making, fresh oven-baked bread, homemade candy, and warm, yummy fry bread. She leaves knowing that her body and soul have been fed and there is absolutely no room for any of the -isms in the world.

Last stop, Santa Fe where her love for art is satiated and renewed. Beautiful people, art, and long walks sang concertos to her soul. Delicious Mexican food, diverse cultures, and universal good will were served for desert.

She leaves with chili peppers, spices, beads, and a lifetime of memories. She leaves joyful.