

Even now, is there joy in your life?

This week I have been learning, from zero previous experience, how to camp. Actually, my friend Monica calls it “glamping” since we are in a 23 foot trailer with two popout beds. The previous owner told us it had been “hardly used.” Ha! Originally from Poland, it is easy to see how he might get his adjectives confused. Clearly he meant to say “heavily used.”

Bill and I moved from a commercial camping site that had hookups for electric, water and sewer (yay!) and noisy neighbors 8 feet in any direction (boo!) to the beautiful Chain O’Lakes State Park in Illinois where the camp sites are spacious. Alas, there is only one hookup: electric. So much for the glamour part of camping. Solving the water part was easy. We hooked together two 50’ hoses so they reached the water hydrant and voila! problem solved. Okay, maybe not voila! We already had a 25’ hose so I went to the RV store (40 minutes away) and purchased a 50’ hose thinking that would do it and, you guessed it, it didn’t do it. On the electric side, the 25 foot 16amp extension cord didn’t cut it, either. The helpful ranger informed me we needed a 30amp cord. So back to the RV store I go.

But all that is *nothing* compared to learning how to handle human waste. I knew it wouldn’t be pleasant. I’ve changed enough diapers in my life to understand that! Undaunted, I cheerfully purchased a 12 gallon waste container on wheels. The dump site is a 5 minute walk from our camp site and so I thought, “What’s the big deal?”

It turns out there were *several* big deals. First, the sewer hose that came with the trailer does not have a locking mechanism to secure it to the hole in the waste container. You can imagine how important it would be to have that. So I put the hose in the hole and pulled the lever (release the hounds!) and well, let’s just say that the term “lord of the flies” kept going through my mind as a swarm descended (and horse flies bite!) I’m in a State Park with very strict rules about such things and I am panicked that, while I’m gone to the RV store (did I mention it’s 40 minutes away?) to purchase the locking mechanism that a Ranger will drive by, see the swarm of flies and tell Bill, “Get out. Now.”

There are many more tedious details that I won’t bore you with (including a backed up toilet—woo hoo!) but I am happy to report that it has all been resolved. As I haul the waste container to the dump site every 4 days or so, I feel as one with the pioneer women who have gone before me—those hearty souls whose form of glamping was the covered wagon. I’m *pretty* sure they didn’t even have an electric hookup when they stopped for the night!

I emailed my friend Susan in Costa Rica outlining all of the above and her reply was twofold: (1) “Holy #@*, I’m exhausted just reading this!” and (2) “Even now, with all you’re going through with Bill’s cancer and all you have to do to care for him, is there joy in your life?” I’ve been too busy to answer her so I wrote this blog instead.

Yes, there is joy in my life. I am in an amazingly beautiful park where the wind speaks to me through the leaves in the trees and the message is always the same, "All is well. All is well."

Our first day here, we were greeted by this snapping turtle. The rangers tell us the females are laying their eggs now.



And today, Bill and I took the kayaks out (it's the best he can do right now for any type of sport) and he introduced me to a swan family he had met a few days ago when he was on the lake by himself. My heart soared when the mother swan took flight over the lake to try and distract us from her beautiful babies. We pretended her ploy worked but we had already seen the cygnets (okay, now I'm just showing off for my daughter. She and I were trying to remember what baby swans were called.)



Joy has nothing to do with circumstances. It is something you carry in your heart. I used the turtle and the swans as a trigger to feel my joy but they didn't cause it, I did. And so can you, no matter what your circumstances are.

What do you use as a trigger to tap into your own joy?