

Independence Day And That Other Nashville

Well, it's been a long week and a half – which is probably how long it will take you to read this super-long blog post I'm about to write. Hey, it's been awhile since I've been able to blog, and I have lots to say! Tons of fun since the 4th of July weekend, but go-go-go constantly, and I am so tired, it's unbelievable! A quick (well, kinda, sorta) rundown...

July 3 – my birthday, so we dragged the kids down to a larger town down south to see their fireworks, one of my favorite birthday activities. The only problem is that the fireworks didn't start until 10pm, and we wanted to get there by 2pm because we had tickets for a raffle at a party thrown by a store. Even with our 5 tickets, we did not win any one of the 50 prizes (no surprise there; our luck is terrible when it comes to things like that). But the party was lots of fun with airbrush tattoos for the kids, sand creations they could make, free coloring kits, and also free hot dogs, pizza, and baby water bottles. We had no trouble killing time for the next 8 hours, although it did exhaust all 6 of us. We had a nice birthday dinner at Bob Evans (have you tried their pot roast stroganoff? It's yummy!!), even though they forgot to sing to me or my little boy, whose birthday is 8 days after mine (so we were celebrating both). No matter, I usually hate stuff like that anyway (like it for my kids – for me, not so much), but I was willing to give it a try just for the free dessert. Oh well. This larger town's fireworks were much better than our hometown's, though the kids would not let me forget that they are starting to find fireworks boring. Might have to find something new for next year's bday celebration, or maybe a babysitter so Hubby and I can enjoy fireworks alone for a change...

July 4 – After church, we packed all day long for our upcoming

camping trip. This involved doing lots of last minute laundry and preparing the house as best I could so that it wouldn't be too much of a mess when we got back. Although we were exhausted, this turned out to be a good decision because when we got back from the 3 day camping trip, my mother-in-law and her sister and kids were here waiting for us – that was SO not the plan. They were supposed to be at their hotel, and we were going to change into our bathing suits and go meet them at the hotel for swimming, giving me a chance to pick up my very messy house. But more on that next post...

July 5-8 – July 5 was the day the kids had been waiting for – we left for Nashville. Not the well known country music capital of the country in TN, but the lesser known, population 800 Nashville in Brown County, southern Indiana. What a beautiful place! I can understand why it's a very popular destination in the fall, the scenery must be nothing short of gorgeous when the leaves change colors. As for visiting in July, that was nice too. Never mind that the weather was above 90° all 3 days of our vacation – we barely noticed, thanks to the accommodations my husband was able to find for us: an over 3,000 sq ft fully furnished house that fit all 13 of us comfortably on its secluded 10 acres. I made a video tour of the house, but I haven't figured out how to put in links to youtube.com playlists yet, so you lucked out – a video tour of a house you've never been to would probably bore the pants off of you, and now you don't have to sit through it. You'll have to settle for the ultra-exciting text version I'm going to describe below (some of which you can skip if it gets dry – remember, I use my blogs as sort of a family diary as well. Years into the future when I'm long gone, I'm hoping my loved ones will enjoy reading my ramblings. If not, hey, my feelings certainly won't be hurt!).

The long, tree-encircled, steep hill of a driveway ended at a garage with a basketball hoop, grill and table and chairs for grilling out, which we did a lot! Hubby and I played a few

games of H-O-R-S-E with my dad, which quickly became a championship when all 3 of us were tied at one win apiece. Unfortunately, Hubby and I were not able to win a title for our family name, but we still had lots of fun. Just off of the driveway, there was a swing that overlooked the pond area, which was a short way from the house, down a steep hill and past the firepit area. We had lots of fun cooking our lunches over the campfire and making smores at night. My 10-year-old daughter also revealed her hidden talent as a master fisherman, er fisher-person! She found a bit of line on the ground with a hook, and proceeded to use it – **without any bait** – to catch no less than 5 fish, and they were larger fish than we had caught with my nephew's fishing pole and using bait!!

Upon entering the house, the living room (2 couches and large tv with over 100 movies from which to choose, as well as a bookcase full of board games, books, and magazines) was to the right, and the kitchen and breakfast nook was to the left. Off the back of the living room was a washer / dryer (who wants to do laundry on vacation? But in case of emergency, it was very nice to have, especially if you were going to stay longer than the 3 days we were staying) and a half bath. On the 2nd floor, directly at the top of the stairs was a bedroom with a bathroom (where my sister, her husband, and their 2-year-old slept), another living room (this one with a couch, futon, and billiard table), and a wrap around 4-season room with CD player and CDs (no country music?!? Don't worry, this is the only suggestion I could think to make on my comment card – everything else was perfect) and a Foosball table. Off of the 4-season room was another bedroom with bathroom (this is where Hubby and I and our 2-year-old slept), and then outside of the 4-season room was a yard with a deck with swing, chairs, picnic table, hammock, hot tub, swingset, sandbox, and outdoor fireplace. And oh yeah, my sister's room and our room shared an outdoor patio as well.

We also had a cut-throat pool game championship with my dad,

but we didn't do very well at that one either... and since we're on the subject of lost games, I might as well get it out there that Hubby and I came in last on the Cornhole tournament as well. How funny is that when the Illinois family had never heard the term 'cornhole' anyway? ☐ Must be an Ohio thing, but that didn't seem to help our Cornhole skills... So we lost H-O-R-S-E, we lost cut-throat, and we lost Cornhole, but in what must have seemed like an even exchange, we made our reluctant family play some party games against their will – Mafia and Partini. I can't say they were big fans of either game, but at least they gave them a try and gave us some hilarious memories in the process. Here's what happens when people reluctantly play a normally very fun game called Partini:

Back to the house... from the 2nd floor living room was a staircase that led up to the 3rd floor master suite, which boasted a master bathroom with whirlpool tub. My parents slept up here, and lucky for them (?) there was a huge walk-in closet right next to their bed, which the 4 older kids (my 3 girls and their cousin) immediately eyed as a "clubhouse" where they could sleep right next to Grandma, who of course agreed. Also on the 3rd floor was a little nook with another queen bed, huge closet, and a little couch and chair – this is the bed where Uncle Bud slept. And off of the master suite was a huge outdoor wrap-around deck, where Hubby, my dad and I spent the first night watching the hilarious comedy *The Goods* in the fresh woodsy air (on our laptop – didn't want you to think there was a tv outside or anything. There were an abundance of cool bugs – huge moths and a different sort of firefly than I'm used to, but no outdoor tv).

Overall, a wonderful trip; I don't think we could have asked for it to be any better... well, perhaps the weather could have been a bit cooler, but what else can be expected in early July in southern Indiana than three 90°+ days in a row? That made our trying out the hot tub interesting – here we are packed in like sardines; we did try putting some ice cubes in it, but that didn't work so well. It kind of felt like being meat in a stew for a giant's brew:



And with that kind of weather, it made us even more thankful that we had changed our original vacation plan which was Jellystone campground in Fremont Indiana. It still sounds like a fun place, but the cabins there were very tiny and didn't have bathrooms, plus it was going to be mobbed on the dates we had to go – July 5-8. I will take our secluded, 3000+ sq ft, air conditioned house with plenty of bathrooms

any day! It was a bit further than Jellystone – 4 hrs vs. 45 minutes, but it worked well because our Chicago family had basically the same travel (distance-wise, anyway – they made a lot more stops than we did and so the trip took them longer to complete).

Whether you're looking for a fun place to have a family get-together, a vacation with friends or with co-workers, I highly recommend checking out the houses and cabins for rent in Brown County Indiana. If you would like to know which cabin is the one we stayed at, just leave me a comment, and I can send you more info!