

## A Colvin Family Roadtrip

by Jennifer Colvin

“Do you want to go to the zoo?”, Dad asked me. *Umm... Duh. Who wouldn't want to go to the zoo?* So that was that. That question was asked on a Sunday and we set off on that Friday. Dad is spur of the moment kind of guy when it comes to a family trip. The Colvins hadn't been to the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle since my youngest sister, Finley, was about one year old. She was currently 5. All kids need to go to the zoo, right? It's the mandatory deed of the parents.

The only plans my parents had established for our little trip was leave around 12 o'clock for Seattle, arrive in a town outside the vicinity of Seattle and try to find a hotel, then get up the next morning and spend the day at the zoo then drive back home that night. My parents are rather famous for making day trips. During their seven post child years they would get up early in the morning and drive up to four hours to go to the mall for the day, then it was right back home to sleep in the next morning.

So we started off following the only plan we had. We were somewhat comfortably packed into the van and made it to Mazama when the first dilemma hit us. The ABS light in our car turned on. Not desiring to risk it, Dad turned the van around and drove all the way back to Twisp only to have the guys at Quality Lube tell us that its totally fine and to enjoy our trip. Thanks Quality Lube guys! Sarcasm intended. So off went the Colvins on their second attempt. Considering we had left in the afternoon, the only time Mom allowed us to stop was if our bladders were about to explode. We were finally, officially on our trip. If you are like me, music freak (no exceptions for any of that mainstream stuff), adventure seeking, outdoorsy, with an extreme case of wanderlust person, then you would get it when I say that a drive over Washington Pass never gets old. You just need to make sure that there will be good music for the ride. In this case it was, for the most part, Jake Bugg, Kodaline and St. Lucia. The ultimate roaming music.

As we passed through the peaked North Cascades mountains and tiny town after tiny town, the wanderlust beast gets fed. Don't get me wrong! I love the Methow Valley and all of its cutesy, joint town charm and the glorious mountains and hills surrounding it. But I believe that it is unhealthy to stay in the same place for too long. God gave people legs to aimlessly wander about. Walk, rove, ramble, drift! People need to roam around in order to have stories to tell. Enough rambling on!

Approximately thirty minutes from Seattle in a town I have never heard of, and considering we had no official place to stay at for the night, our parents just decided to just mosey around whatever town we happened to be in until a hotel would come around. After inquiring of a couple hotels, both with no prevail, it was on to the next town. We only had to venture into one hotel where they informed us that there was a great possibility that a family like ours wouldn't be able to find one room in the whole vicinity of Seattle. Wonderful. Just to be sure that the person was telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, Mom and Dad decided that they would try to call around to other hotels whilst sitting in a sketchy Walmart parking lot. At this point in time it was around six o'clock and we were all very exhausted and extremely tired. All we were asking for was a suitable place to rest our heads. So us four girls just sat in our tired, white minivan (you know, because minivans have emotions)

dreaming of the great weekend that could await us. All the while, a great deal of pedestrians were entering and escaping the money-hungry store. A small conflict erupted about the entrance of Wal-Mart. A cop car, gangster man and a questionable women were involved. I was designated commentary person. That is Colvin for, the person who makes up what the people outside the car might be saying or thinking. If you have never had such a jolly time joining in car festivities such as these, then please let me be the first to say, "I'm so terribly sorry for your loss." Back to the adventure!

So as it turns out, that particular weekend in Seattle, had many different large gatherings going on. Two of them were something to do with the Seattle Seahawks (a game possibly) and a marijuana convention. Yes, a convention for marijuana. This was why almost every suitable hotel was booked. I say suitable because when you have a family of six you don't want to be staying at a Motel 6, no matter how ironic that might seem. Its just too small. After much consideration and reasoning with one of my sisters in particular (no names mentioned) we resolved to start heading back home. And as you may have picked up on, we were still hungry. Imagine this... four very tired and very hungry girls complaining in the back of a minivan with newly found, crushed dreams of going to the zoo. Oh, and did I mention that we really didn't have any idea of our whereabouts. These same girls have been sitting in a car for almost four hours straight and are very impatient now. As a parent you would probably not want to tell them that now they get to spend four more grueling hours in the car only to end up back at home.

Mom and Dad very lovingly hadn't quite given up all hope on a hotel as we found ourselves, once again, driving back through Arlington. The last reasonably sized town before coming upon the Cascades. We all tried to keep our eyes peeled for a cute little B&B to at least stay at for the night. Mom managed to get ahold of a hotel in Darington. You know that little town with like one grocery store, one restaurant, and one hotel. Perfectly placed in amongst mountains covered in pine after pine after pine tree. Anyways when we arrived in Darington the hotel seemed rather promising. The only down side to potentially staying at that hotel would be a Seattle trip cut short to only being able to go to the zoo. There would be no extra little trip to the aquarium and Pike Place Market. The final prognosis happened to be keep heading back home. Before we took off for the next grueling three hours of driving, we stopped at the one grocery store in Darington. Surprise, surprise, there was hardly many options for an agreeable on the road dinner. My road dinner consisted of one of those wilted prepackaged salad things with a box of considerably dry triscuits and string cheese. Us Colvins don't like to forget our dessert so we made sure to grab a very large sack of multicolored jelly beans.

We reach the peaked cascade mountains just as the sun began finishing up glowing orange. The mountains and their giantness are a little intimidating at times, but they have a longing, warm feeling of home wrapped like a blanket around them. They kindly decide to share their homeyness with those who venture on the windy roads carved into the sides of them. The only way I was able to stay up to help Dad look for anything getting ready to risk their life in the roadkill hungry road was to scour my ipod for any music that kept an upbeat sing-along tune and desperately search for the drum beat to it. Bouncing your feet up and down while simultaneously tapping your knees and vigorously shaking your body around until your mind has drifted away and you are physically music itself. Mom completely trusts Dad's driving. I on

the other hand have personally experienced many times where Dad has almost hit a deer. Almost because I was there to yell "Deer! Deer! Deer! Deer!"

After fighting with the constant head rolls and painful neck jerks that go along with driving late at night we arrived home around twelve. The next morning I woke up to dad trying to find hotels online in Seattle so that our family might actually complete our trip the following weekend. When that proved not to work it was opted to just going on a day trip to Spokane. At least we could get some school shopping in. That Saturday was quite foggy due to the lack of an adequate amount of sleep. For anyone who doesn't know what the adequate amount of sleep is, its 8 hours. It is a mandatory thing to get the perfect amount of sleep. Too little, I feel tired. Too much, I feel tired. I know, ridiculous logic Jennifer.

Early Sunday morning, us Colvins, got into our, now, well known minivan, and set off for Spokane. You could say that we are regular ol' travelers about now. The drive to Spokane is really nothing spectacular. Especially in comparison with the glorious Cascade Mountains. Flat, dry piece of land after flat, dry piece of land, occasional herd of cows. It is very easy to confuse the black cows with the large boulders scattered amongst the golden brown fields.

I get very lost in Spokane. Since almost all of the buildings have the same old red brick look. We "hit the jackpot", as Mom would say, in Spokane. The day following the Sunday jaunt to Spokane Dad managed to get a hotel in Seattle for the coming weekend. Yay! Perseverance and patience paid off! Once Friday rolled around, we packed for our deeply needed weekend trip and took off early the next morning. Instead of a sunset against the pointed mountains, there was a sunrise waiting for us against the Cascades. We have already experienced this as a whole family before, but like I have mentioned before, you never get tired of driving on Washington Pass. It was as if the mountains were saying "Have a nice trip! See ya in a couple days." After concluding that the zoo would take almost all day to go through, so we decided to visit the Seattle aquarium and take a gander around Pike Place while in the neighborhood. Cameron and I have been to that aquarium multiple times, but that didn't take the fun out of seeing our two little sister's expressions illuminate their faces when they got to touch starfish, sea anemones and a sea cucumber. No fun trip is complete without the presence of some sort of conflict. The conflict of the day happened to Finley. We hadn't quite finished perusing through all of creatures, but Finley insisted that she journey through the tourist trap that people like to call a gift shop. Everything that Finley wanted in the gift shop was way over her price limit. So this, in turn, created great conflict in her mind. She was a like a nasty, little, green, grouch the whole rest of the aquarium trip. That is, of course, until she got her way.

The weather was in no one's favor that day. Hot and hazy summer day in downtown Seattle. We all had an extreme case of hunger, so from what Cameron and I could remember from our previous trip to Seattle with some friends, Pike Place Market had plenty of cute little shops that one could enter to have a nice mid-day meal. So, with the whole family's consent we ventured toward the number one tourist destination in Seattle. Mind you, it was a Saturday in August in Seattle. A frazzled Mom and Dad clutching their two youngest daughters arms in search for the many so called lunch destinations I promised. Cameron and I had to fend for ourselves. A million different scents penetrate anyone who dares to go to Pike Place Market. Dusty old books and nicknacks, perfumed flowers, cold fish, and coffee from the original Starbucks. Pike Place people are rude. Well let's change that to Seattle people in general.

Dad and I finally found a little cart with a rude man with mean eyes and lots of black facial hair. He struck me as quite creepy since he was rather ill-mannered to my father but kind towards me. What a weirdo. Although he was very strange person, the warm, seasoned bread with colorful fillings were way too hard to pass over. The creepy man finally gave Dad and I our lunch which was actually well worth the wait. A chicken pesto calzone like thing for me and a very meaty calzone thing for Dad. The rest of my sisters decided on a smoothie while Mom thought that she didn't need to get anything because there would be someone who wouldn't eat all their food. She was wrong. Mom didn't really take into consideration the true hunger facing her four daughters and husband. I felt bad. So even though I hadn't actually contained my hunger, I gave her the rest of my lunch. Our parents tend to get quite frazzled around large crowds of people. So right after consuming our lunches in the quietest possible place in the market, we booked it out of that tourist whirlpool.

My parental units are suckers for a good antique shop. I suppose that I am too. It's a hereditary condition, antique shopping. I scoured through the antique shop checking out the vintage clothing with someone else's ancient DNA intertwined in the fabric and the retro vinyls of things I have never heard of in my life. After deciding that I was way too broke from a summer of exclusively spending my money on vanilla lattes and cream cheese danishes at Blue Star, we left empty handed.

After finally navigating ourselves out of hectic Seattle traffic and onto the freeway our van headed straight for our hotel suite. Yes, our family exceeds the maximum people in a room requirement and thus requires either two hotel rooms or a suite. We arrived in Everett, the location of our hotel, around 5 o'clock. Again, my family was starving to death. I know that's a cliché remark, but it was true. There happened to be an Outback Steakhouse across the street so we loaded into the van and took the quick jaunt.

With happy stomachs we went back to the hotel, turned the TV on and snuggled into bed. The next morning would be Zoo day! Excitement running through our veins made it difficult to sleep soundly. Or maybe it was just dad snoring. Either way, I knew I was going to be in great need of a good cup of joe in the morning. Thankfully the hotel provided one of those full continental breakfasts otherwise we would have starved yet again. And you can't go to a zoo hungry, for fear of seeing a zebra steak or an elephant stew instead of the actual animals themselves. So we woke up the next morning and ate our breakfast, packed up the van and headed for the zoo. Our family only planned on staying at the hotel for one night so it was a quick trip to Seattle, but it was so well worth it. Zoos never get old. Exclusively family weekend trips never get old. That is only when they are planned ahead of time. Things get intimate on our family trips. And intimacy is good. Family is good.