

## BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE

March 2017

A neighborhood is wherever you create it.

He and I are discovering this as we make our way North, RV park to RV park. We pull into a \$30 per night driveway, level the home on wheels, hook up the sewer and electrical, slide out the wings, put on a kettle of tea, sip on the steps, and survey our surroundings.

In the absence of a garden, wildflowers—especially dandelions pushing through asphalt—are considered more. In the absence of a yard, the permanent park dwellers' gnomes and concrete sculptures make you smile instead of roll your eyes. In the absence of wind chimes or hanging plants, you stop to admire the flags anchored near the doors of your hello-goodbye neighbors.

This flag resonated with me because it says: JUST GO and on each triangle of the happy-strand are the letters A-D-V-E-N-T-U-R-E. (Go Big or Go Small. Just GO! is painted on my car by the duck under the rainbow).

Me: "Oh, I want to get a picture by that!"

Him: "Aw, c'mon." (Translation: Really? How silly.)

Me: "Yes." (Translation: Is the honeymoon over *again*?)

Him: Sigh of irritation.

"All right...get by it." And then...

Him: "Hahaha...look! They're all in the window laughing."

One of the flag owners came out smiling.

John/Hans said, "So you like the flag."

"I love it. Can I have it?"

"Sure," Hans said, pulling it from the ground and handing it to me.

"Really?" I turned my eye to the outdoor carpet.

Hans was followed by his wife, Master Gardener Janice, and their grandsons Caleb and Preston.

I introduced myself to her with a kind of apology. “Your husband just gave me the adventure flag.”

Within minutes, while he and Hans were speaking to each other in Deutsch like reunited best friends, and Janice was giving me a tour of their new RV, complete with bunk beds, fold-out sofa, master bedroom, big screen TVs. Basically, it’s large enough to hold a season’s supply of Sam’s Club bulk-ware.

She pointed out the details that made their getaway home so cozy. The red and aqua rickrack she’d sewn on the white shower curtain, the cubbie that held board games and jigsaw puzzles, the pictures with recreational motifs hung on the wall.

About once a month, Oma and Opa take the kids to a park where they set up a weekend home, go canoeing, ride ATVs, stargaze, make shooting stars with plastic glow-in-the-dark arrows. A favorite moment of hers was when Caleb woke up and, looking out the window from his bunk, said, “That’s such a beautiful view.”

In a temporary neighborhood, there isn’t time to make more than a morsel of small talk before becoming friends. You get right to the heart of the matter. You share intimate moments—like being privy to the rickrack and to the grandchild’s sleepy observation—with someone who, five minutes earlier, was a stranger squatting by your flag.

So take a selfie alongside someone else’s belongings.... maybe with the laundry on the line. You never know who’s peeking out the window. You might even end up with a new flag to fly, an invitation to a home-cooked German dinner, and a handful of wildflowers.

Bloom where you are.