

Oct 24

Coming Home

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Though going away can be invigorating, rejuvenating, refreshing, and exactly what the spirit needs, eventually, one has to come back home. And, no matter how well a trip goes, I always look forward to coming home.

I miss the dogs when I'm away, no matter what trusted, conscientious and caring hands I have left them in. For my last trip away, since the island has lost its kennel, my grandson, Patrick, came up to take care of the dogs. Darla and Blackie Chan took to him right away; Rosa Parks was the last, stubborn hold-out. Even though he made every effort to make friends, even stopping in on his vacation last August to let her become familiar with him, Rosa Parks refused to be nice. She continued to respond to his presence with snarls and scowls and constant barking.

Patrick came up here two days before I had to leave, to get to know the routine, and let the dogs get used to him. When Rosa Parks snarled and barked, I closed her in the bathroom for “time out.” After five or ten minutes of that, she was willing to join the group, limiting her bad behavior to a ferocious scowl. On the day after I left, Patrick sent me a message telling me “Rosa Parks is finally warming up...” Great news! Other messages informed me of their behavior, both good and naughty, and let me know that Patrick was taking his responsibility seriously. Even though I knew they were being well cared for, I was glad to get home to them!

I loved having time with family and friends when I was downstate. Leaving them to come home is comparable to ripping off a *Band Aid*. It hurts! It’s hard to wake up and not have my sister Brenda right there to talk to! I have to get used to not having my family nearby, to not being able to run into old friends on the street. Though I love my solitary life on Beaver Island, coming home is always an adjustment.

I have to get used to letters and phone calls instead of in-person visits. On-line shopping replaces quick (though, granted, overwhelming) trips to *Meijer’s* or *Walmart*. And, though my time away was short, local prices give me a bit of “sticker-shock” when I first get home.

On top of all that, coming home is exhausting! Or, maybe it was the travel that wore me out, and it just catches up with me when I get home. Either way, I was drained! My first day back, I saw Patrick off on the plane, picked up my mail, and got a few groceries. Home, I greeted the dogs, and unloaded the car. I pulled the clothes from my suitcases, swept the floor, did a couple loads of laundry, and washed the mound of dirty dishes my grandson had left. A walk with the dogs, a simple dinner and an early bedtime finished the day.

The next day, I excused my laziness as a need to catch up. I did a lot of sitting around: a little writing, a lot of reading, and too much time staring at the computer screen. The day after that, I checked the garden, picked what was ready, and stewed the vegetables to process and freeze for soup stock. That was just about *all* I accomplished that day. The following day, though still spent in lazy restfulness, was also my day of reckoning.

I noted that I had let my good morning exercise habit, developed over many months, drop by the wayside between travel and home-coming. The rest of my well-established morning routine was hanging on by a thread. I had let rain and drizzly weather keep me from walking the dogs two days. My kettle of steamed vegetables was still in the refrigerator, waiting to be processed. My empty suitcases were still sitting at the foot of the stairs. Enough! Time to get back on track!

There have been times in my life when a trip to the mainland has ended with me going immediately back to my job. I’m so glad that wasn’t the case this time! This particular trip demanded almost a year of preparation, and several months of long days and intense labor on my part. Travel is always an adventure, tiring and exhilarating at the same time. And, maybe my present age is a contributing factor. Whatever. In any case, it appears that I need almost a week to recover upon coming home!