Non-vacation in Pulaski, Tennessee

The hot and humid air felt blissful after riding in a very cold car for over seven hours. My grandpa had wanted to visit relatives before they passed away, and this was why my mom, sister, brother, pregnant aunt, uncle, grandpa, and I piled into a mini-van for a mere one night trip to Pulaski, Tennessee. It had been last minute; one day I was being informed of our ‘vacation,’ while the next I was unpacking at a Super 8 in Pulaski, an hour away from Nashville.

Pulaski was a small town in the country. That didn’t mean our motel had any quaint country charm. On the contrary, the neighborhood made me leery about swimming in the Super 8’s pool, even though the motel’s grounds were fenced. It didn’t help that my grandpa wanted us armed during our stay. If this was where Uncle Earl and Aunt Millie lived, I was afraid of meeting them. I braced myself when we drove to visit them at their house.

To my relief, our drive took us out of town and onto a broken road, surrounded by woods and crops of corn and radishes. When we arrived, I wasn’t so unfeeling that I failed to notice the beauty around me. Pulaski was mainly rural, and Uncle Earl and Aunt Millie had a small house far removed from the atmosphere of our Super 8. Their house had been a wedding gift years ago, and the time and care they had put into it and their land was evident. The gravel drive led to a well-manicured lawn and welcoming front porch, which Aunt Millie still kept up, even in her eighties. Hummingbirds flew from feeder to feeder, filling the air with carefree sounds. Beyond the small radius of a tidy yard, I could see all the rest of their seventy-five acres of land, which my great aunt and uncle had left to nature. In the distance, there were a few crumbling barns.

I didn’t get a chance to look long, as the door was opened for us by Aunt Millie herself. She was a small lady, but clearly felt very able and ready. She immediately made us feel welcome. We continued inside, where we met Uncle Earl. He, too, made us feel welcome, and he was easy to be around. Uncle Earl and Aunt Millie didn’t put up a front for us, but invited us into their routine. We walked down a deserted, rutted lane for miles and never left their land. We ate dinner early and then watched the sun set. When we returned the next morning, Aunt Millie was refilling the hummingbird feeders. Our last view was of the hummingbirds flying in the early morning sun.

Maybe I wouldn’t have chosen to visit Pulaski, but I’m glad I had no choice in the matter. The unknowns of Pulaski let us experience Tennessee in a pure way. Sometimes the best trips are the ones that are unexpected and unplanned. Taking such a unique trip allowed me to experience true Southern country life. Next time you visit Tennessee, I suggest you adventure into the wild unknowns of Pulaski.