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loss at
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and other hardships

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Of Surfing, Fishermen, and Holidays far from home

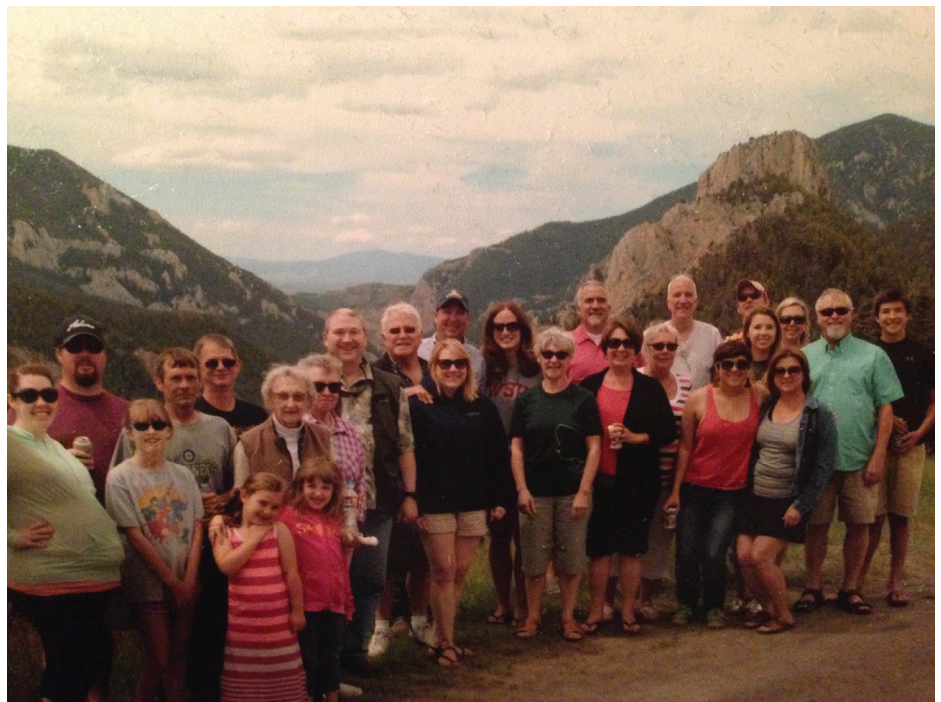
by Paige Lewis | Jul 2017

I have been back and forth between the United States and other countries often enough to appreciate the reality check I usually get from a short visit home. When I went to Montana at the end of June, among my worries were; that so much English was going to overwhelm me, that I was going to have to go 2 weeks without a surf session, and facing realities that I've kept away as well as I could while I was gone. My worries really didn't amount to much, which of course is standard operating procedure when it comes to my life.

Worries Coming Home

I jumped back into English, although it was a little hard at times. I live in a Spanglish household in Chile so sentences like; "Weon, can you pasarme that cuchara?" Dude, can you pass me that spoon? are commonplace, and when one word doesn't work in English it is easily substituted and understood.

That was the hardest part linguistically, not being able to express myself as I wanted to. However, on the flip side of this, I was able to speak like I haven't been able to in months. Family communication is an extremely underrated and often forgotten luxury. To live with 4 other people and talk to them through inside jokes and stories that span over almost 22 years is very unique, the longer I spend away from my family the more I recognize how special this is. My second worry,



The Davenport Family after Rosie's Memorial service in Montana

going 2 weeks without surfing, was another silly one. It wasn't really a worry I would say, but more like a bummer. I've been going surfing a lot lately and I've really gotten into it, to the point that I drove about 3 hours to find a wave that was working with my friend Dean, (the search was in vain and we walked about 15 minutes to our last spot only to find that it was not even close to surf able). But I digress, and I have two words, fly fishing.

Now hear me out surfers and fishermen, there are days where we wake up before dawn and drive until the sun starts rising. Hopefully there's a good spot with no one around, or there's a secret spot that no one else knows about (the first rule of good spots is that they don't exist). Peeing in unusual places is the norm, and a sandwich is equitable to a gourmet meal after a morning outside. Normal humans wouldn't last very long in such icy water, but to just get so close, (either to catching the fish or a wave) leaves us with 3 options;

- 1) keep trying and be successful,
- 2) wear ourselves (and our arms) out trying, or
- 3) purple feet and hypothermia.

These are not all mutually exclusive. So with my share of frozen water and dark wake-ups I wasn't missing much in that category either.

My third worry was facing realities. That worry was more founded than the other two. I had been distancing myself from a lot over the past few months, my Nana passing away of course being the first thing I was going to have to deal with on arrival. I was terrified that I was going to land in Montana and a flood of repressed emotions was going to take over, cue the mental breakdown. As it turns out, I'm not as good at repressing emotions as I like to think I am, so it wasn't a lot different than how I've been dealing with it.

There was no awkwardness and stiffness about the subject, we all

talked freely about her and made jokes about how we should put the urn facing forward because, “she would’ve been pissed if she couldn’t see where we’re going in the car”. From slightly morbid ‘selfies with Nana,’ to drinking honorary beers on the mountain, to stories about my grandmother that I had never heard before, it was perfect. I cried the most I have in a very long time, and it still hurts, but with my family it’s always good.

Thanks Surrogate Family

I also want to take a quick moment to thank my surrogate family here in Chile, those who brought me food, pastries, beer, etc. Who let me cry as much as I wanted, and talk about random memories, and wouldn’t let me eat lunch alone. I can’t explain how much I needed you, you guys rock, and I would have had a considerably harder time away from all of this without you.

Back at My Second Home

After a short week and tiny vacation from reality, I was back in Chile celebrating an American holiday. Spending holidays in other countries usually brings me a combined sense of freedom, nostalgia, and homesickness. It’s fun to make holiday celebrations your own, making your own food on Thanksgiving, organizing Easter egg hunts for your friends, and Fourth of July barbecues. But the absence of family and old friends can be obvious too, and although holidays are always fun, the deviation from tradition can bring on homesickness.

This Fourth of July was the second I’ve spent away from home, and it’s strange to celebrate a holiday that I normally associate with blazing heat

and boats to winter time and cold. To celebrate a typically American holiday halfway around the world is weird. To not be in the U.S. while everyone I know is celebrating and together was difficult. But we had a party, we cooked a million burgers (shout out to grill-master Claudio), sang the national anthem, flew our flag, and lucky for us we also got to share our day with the finals of the Copa America 2015.

Chanting, cheering, and general horn-blowing craziness was well under way in my house at 5:00 when the game started. This quickly escalated to jumping group hugs as the game finished on penalty kicks and Chile secured a win that has been eluding them for almost a century. Of course, this was against our rival, Argentina, along with one of the most historic victories in Chilean soccer, so we all took to the streets— and in normal fourth of July style immediately lost each other in the very crowded park.

My last and biggest fear about last

month I didn’t even realize I was worried about until I got back. I was terrified that I would experience the intense difference of my two realities, and become disillusioned about home or about Chile. That I would miss my family way too much once I got back, that going home would throw me off the track I was on in Chile before I left, that I would feel completely out of place in my old life. Surrounded by red, white, and blue, people jumping, singing and laughing with fireworks in the background was everything I expected from my Fourth of July, and proved that, as usual, I have nothing to worry about. ❤️



Love you, Rosie.