

THE
OKEE DOKEE
BROTHERS



FIELD JOURNAL
(APPALACHIAN EDITION)



THESE LINER NOTES ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNALS WE KEPT WHILE ON OUR MONTH-LONG HIKE ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL.

AND...WE'RE OFF! WE'VE PACKED OUR TOOTHBRUSHES AND WATER BOTTLES. WE'RE LEAVING BEHIND THE MICROWAVE AND MASSAGE CHAIR. WE'VE TRADED IN OUR CANOE PADDLES FOR TREKKING POLES AND WE'RE HEADING TO THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS. WE'LL HIKE PART OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL, LEARN ABOUT OLD-TIME MOUNTAIN MUSIC, AND SPEND A MONTH LIVING IN ONE PAIR OF UNDERPANTS (WELL, MAYBE A FEW MORE THAN THAT).

DOWN IN ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, LIVES A FELLA NAMED DAVID HOLT. HE IS AN AUTHORITY WHEN IT COMES TO APPALACHIAN-STYLE MUSIC. IN FACT, JUSTIN LEARNED HOW TO PLAY THE BANJO FROM ONE OF DAVID'S INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. HE SHOWED US INSTRUMENTS LIKE THE MOUNTAIN BANJO, STEEL GUITAR, AND THE MOUTH BOW. HE ALSO TAUGHT US ABOUT SOME COOL PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS LIKE THE WASHBOARD, SPOONS, AND BONES (YOU CAN EVEN HEAR THEM CLACKIN' AWAY ON THIS VERY SONG!).



JAMBOREE

IN THE TOWN OF FLOYD, VIRGINIA, THERE SITS A PLACE CALLED THE FLOYD COUNTRY STORE. EVERY FRIDAY EVENING THEY HOST A DANCE CALLED THE JAMBOREE. THEY DO A SPECIAL TYPE OF DANCING CALLED CLOGGING (SOME CALL IT FLAT-FOOTING). CLOGGING IN THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS IS A TYPE OF SOCIAL DANCING. LUCKILY, JOE TOOK A FEW LESSONS ON HOW TO CLOG BEFORE WE LEFT FOR THE TRIP. UNLUCKILY, JUSTIN DID NOT... BUT HE WAS EQUALLY ENTERTAINING!



EVERGREEN

IT SURE RAINS A LOT IN APPALACHIA THIS TIME OF YEAR! AT FIRST, WE WERE JUST HAPPY IT WASN'T SNOW. THEN THE RAIN STARTED TO DAMPEN OUR SPIRITS A LITTLE BIT. AFTER 6 DAYS, WE WERE JUST PLAIN SICK AND TIRED

OF ALL THE WET. NONETHELESS, WE DID START TO NOTICE HOW IMPORTANT THE RAIN WAS TO ALL THE TREES AND PLANTS GROWING AROUND US. EVERYTHING IN THE WOODS WAS TURNING A

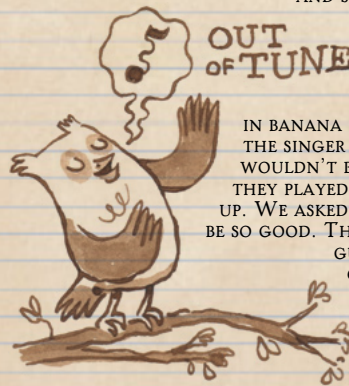
WE DID OUR FIRST APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKE ON THE BORDER OF NORTH CAROLINA AND TENNESSEE. WE LOADED UP OUR PACKS AND WALKED 10 MILES. THIS SECTION OF THE TRAIL WAS HEAVILY WOODED AND WENT UP 2000FT IN ELEVATION (WHEW!). WE MET A LOT OF FOLKS ALONG THE WAY INCLUDING A GUY WHO WAS HIKING IN HIS BARE FEET. MADE US FEEL SPOILED IN OUR FANCY HIKING BOOTS. ANY WAY YOU CHOOSE TO HIKE, EVERYONE STARTS BY PUTTING ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER.

WALKING WITH SPRING



THE OTHER DAY WE MET UP WITH A FAMILY OF KID MUSICIANS. SAGE (16) WAS THE ELDEST AND SHE PLAYED FIDDLE AND MANDOLIN. BARUCH (14) PLAYED GUITAR AND BANJO. LEVI (11) PLAYED BASS (AND COULD ALSO EAT HIS BODY WEIGHT IN BANANA PUDDING). SELAH (8) WAS THE SINGER FOR THE GROUP. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW INCREDIBLY THEY PLAYED. WE COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP. WE ASKED THEM HOW THEY GOT TO BE SO GOOD. THEY SAID, "PRATICE." I

GUESS WE'D BETTER GO GET OUR LESSON BOOKS OUT AGAIN AND KEEP PRACTICING. MAYBE ONE DAY WE'LL BE HALF AS GOOD AS THEY ARE.





BLACK BEAR MAMA

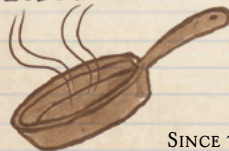
BEFORE SETTING OUT FOR THIS HIKING TRIP, WE READ ALL SORTS OF BOOKS ABOUT THE WILDLIFE IN THE APALACHIAN MOUNTAINS. THEY ALWAYS SEEMED TO MENTION ONE THING FOR CERTAIN: BLACK BEARS. SO NATURALLY, WE'RE KEEPING OUR EYES PEELED AROUND EVERY TURN JUST IN CASE WE GET TO MEET ONE AND SHAKE ITS PAW! SOMETIMES WE EVEN SING A LITTLE TUNE WE MADE UP, "HEY BLACK BEAR, YOU OUT THERE?" ...NO BLACK BEAR SIGHTINGS SO FAR, BUT WE DID JUST HEAR ABOUT ONE EATING A HIKER'S TRAIL MIX! WE'RE PRETTY IN LOVE WITH TRAIL MIX, SO I GUESS WE'LL STOP YELLIN' FOR BEARS.

EVERYONE WE MEET ON THE TRAIL HAS A TRAIL NAME. A TRAIL NAME IS LIKE A NICKNAME USED SPECIFICALLY WHILE YOU'RE HIKING. THESE NAMES ARE GIVEN TO YOU BY FELLOW HIKERS AND KIND OF DESCRIBE SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT THE PERSON. WE MET FOLKS NAMED, NUGGET, TASKMASTER, PACK RAT, KOMBUCHA, U-TURN, LOTUS, CHAINSAW, GYPSY DAVE, TUMBLEWEED, AND OUR FAVORITE, HILLBILLY WILLY. WE EVEN GOT TRAIL NAMES OF OUR OWN! JUSTIN DECIDED TO CALL JOE "FLAT FOOT" (INSPIRED BY JOE'S CLOGGING SKILLS) AND JOE THEREBY DECLARED JUSTIN "CRICKET" (SO JOE CAN YELL, "PICK IT, CRICKET!" BEFORE ALL OF JUSTIN'S BANJO SOLOS).



HILLBILLY WILLY

RIDDLE & RHYME



TODAY THE RAIN TURNED OFF FOR A SPELL WHILE WE HIKED A HILLY SECTION OF THE GRAYSON HIGHLANDS. AS WE CAME TO THE TOP OF A RISE, WE WERE MET BY A HERD OF WILD PONIES. NOW, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU KNEW THIS, BUT PONIES ARE NOT BABY HORSES. NEWBORN HORSES ARE CALLED FOALS (COLTS FOR MALES/FILLIES FOR FEMALES), YOUNG HORSES ARE CALLED YEARLINGS, AND A PONY IS A MINIATURE HORSE (WE DONE LEARN'T ALL THIS IN AN UPPER-DIVISION COLLEGE COURSE: MY LITTLE PONIES 301).

SINCE THESE PONIES WERE CONSIDERED WILD, THEY DON'T GET HAIRCUTS LIKE MOST OTHER HORSES YOU MAY HAVE SEEN. THEIR MANES WERE LONG AND COVERED THEIR EYES. THEIR BODIES WERE UNCOMBED AND KINDA SHAGGY. THEY DIDN'T EVEN HAVE JOBS! THEY JUST ROAMED THE HILLS ALL DAY EATING AND WRITING EXISTENTIAL PONY POETRY. HERE'S ONE OF THE RHYMES WE HEARD:

DO I LIKE TO EAT THISTLES? NAY
DO I LIKE TO EAT STICKS AND DEAD LEAVES? NAAAAAY
DO I LIKE TO EAT GRANOLA? YAY!!

THE OTHER DAY WE CLIMBED UP TO A SPECIAL PLACE ON THE TRAIL CALLED MAX PATCH. WE WERE TOLD IT'S THE BEST VIEW THIS SIDE OF THE MISSISSIPPI. ROLLING HILLS, FLUFFY CLOUDS, AND GENTLE BREEZES ON A FIELD PATCH 4,600 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL. HOWEVER, WE PICKED THE WRONG DAY. AT THE SUMMIT, WE WERE MET WITH 50 MPH WINDS, RAIN, HAIL, AND NOTHIN' TO SEE 'CEPT FOR NOTHIN'. IT'S PRETTY HARD TO ROLL CAMERAS IN CONDITIONS LIKE THAT, BUT WE WENT THE EXTRA MILE TO SHOW YOU WHAT HIKING THROUGH A CLOUD IS LIKE.

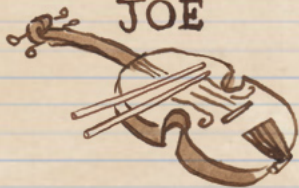
TINY LITTLE LIFE



WE MET A REMARKABLE MUSICIAN NAMED ELIZABETH LAPRELLE DURING OUR CONTINUED EXPLORATION OF APPALACHIAN MUSIC. WE GOT TO SIT DOWN WITH HER AT HER HOME IN RURAL RETREAT, VIRGINIA. SHE PLAYED SOME SONGS WITH US AND TOLD US ABOUT HER INTEREST IN OLD-TIME APPALACHIAN MUSIC. SHE PARTICULARLY LIKES OLD BALLADS. BALLADS ARE SONGS THAT TELL A STORY. SHE SAYS THAT THE SONGS SHE SINGS HAVE BEEN PASSED FROM PERSON TO PERSON THROUGH THE YEARS. KINDA LIKE A GIGANTIC, MULTI-GENERATIONAL GAME OF TELEPHONE.

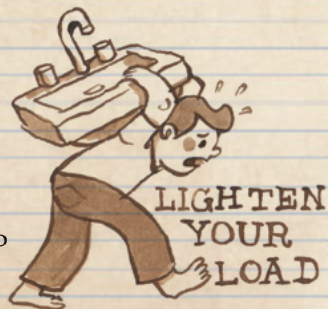


FIDDLESTICK JOE



WE JUMPED OFF THE TRAIL FOR A DAY TO GO HANG OUT WITH FOLK MUSICIANS, SPARKY AND RHONDA RUCKER. IT TURNS OUT THAT MUCH OF THE MUSIC FROM THIS AREA COMES FROM A UNIQUE BLEND OF CULTURES. THE SONGS FROM THE IRISH AND SCOTTISH IMMIGRANTS GOT COMBINED WITH THE RHYTHMS AND INSTRUMENTS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS (DID YOU KNOW THE BANJO COMES FROM AFRICA?).

ADVENTURE BECOMES EASY TO FIND WHEN ALL THE DISTRACTIONS OF YOUR NORMAL LIFE BEGIN DISSOLVING AWAY. THE THINGS WE NORMALLY WORRY ABOUT SUCH AS, "HOW COOL IS MY PHONE AND DOES IT HAVE INTERNET AND HOW FAST IS THAT INTERNET AND HOW MUCH MONEY DOES IT COST AND HOW AM I GOING TO GET THAT MONEY?" ALL BECOME VERY HEAVY TO CARRY ON YOUR BACK. WHAT BECOMES IMPORTANT IS THE SIMPLE STUFF. WHAT AM I GOING TO EAT? WHERE AM I GOING TO SLEEP? HOW FAR CAN I WALK TODAY? THAT'S WHEN WE START LOOKING FOR THINGS TO LEAVE BEHIND IN ORDER TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD. I DON'T NEED THAT MP3 PLAYER—I'LL SING MY OWN SONGS. I DON'T WANT TO CARRY MY VIDEO GAMES—THE STARS ARE BRIGHTER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL ANYHOW. I DON'T NEED THAT E-READER—I'LL MAKE MY OWN STORY.



OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF ROANOKE, VIRGINIA, IS A PLACE CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE BEST VIEWS ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL: MCAFEE KNOB. OFTEN TIMES WE THINK THE VIEW FROM THE TOP IS THE TRUE MOTIVATION FOR CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN (BECAUSE THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT A SUMMIT LIKE MCAFEE KNOB IS INCREDIBLY SPECIAL). IT BECOMES CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT TRUE ADVENTURE ISN'T JUST ABOUT REACHING THE TOP, BUT RATHER, BEING HUMBLLED WHILE FACING SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER THAN US.



WE STARTED AT A BEGINNING. WE'RE NOT EXACTLY SURE WHERE OUR PARTICULAR BEGINNING WAS, BUT IT WAS DEFINITELY A BEGINNING. THERE WERE QUESTIONS, APPREHENSIONS, AND THE ALL TOO FAMILIAR SENSE THAT WE NEEDED TO GET SOMEWHERE. WHERE SHOULD WE GO?

ONCE WE STARTED WALKING, WE DIDN'T MUCH CARE WHERE WE GOT TO—SO LONG AS WE GOT SOMEWHERE. WE WERE SURE TO DO THAT IF WE ONLY WALKED LONG ENOUGH.

AFTER MORE WALKING, WE FORGOT THAT WE WERE TRYING TO GET SOMEWHERE. WE HAD NOWHERE TO BE. NOWHERE WAS WHERE WE WERE AND NOWHERE WAS WHERE WE LIKED IT. WHEN YOU'RE NOWHERE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRY AND GET SOMEWHERE. WHEN YOU'RE NOWHERE, YOU CAN BE ANYWHERE. WHEN YOU'RE NOWHERE, YOU CAN BE RIGHT HERE.

NOWHERE IS JUST THE PLACE TO WRITE A SONG. RIGHT HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MOUNTAIN—THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.

