

Small Town, Big World: Home Sweet Home

By Britt Benson-Steele

This month, "Small Town Big World" is a reminder that whether we go somewhere or stay put, there are things for which to be grateful for. As Rumi, the 14th century poet says so memorably, "Wherever you are, be the soul of that place."

After living overseas for a culmination of years, spending time in India, Thailand, and Indonesia for extended periods of time, I have come to realize that wherever I go, there I'll be. The grass, in fact, is not greener on the other side. It's just a different shade. Some things may be better. Some things are worse. Some things are definitely easier but some things are harder. That's just the way it is.

So why do we go "away?" Do we long for something different? Interesting? Inspiring? Or do we escape where we are because we've created a life worthy of some sort of escape? I suppose it's different for everyone, but it

bears asking the question.

When we lived in Bali, we hardly ever had to lift a finger. Our laundry was done, groceries purchased, fruits and veggies washed and chopped, beds were made, meals prepared, cleaning was done, and all of our bills were prepaid back in the US so we didn't even have to mess with a phone bill. We found ways to busy ourselves and given that we lived there for six month stints, we discovered right quick that the same sort of things we were wanting to somehow escape back home (too much to do, not enough time for ourselves, etc.) we managed to recreate all the way across the world. Wherever we went: there we were

It is always amazing getting away... and it is always wonderful coming home. I remember distinctly



Larry Steele with Nyoman, our Pembantu (housekeeper) after she just returned from the market with all our produce, now washed and ready to chop.

the sense of landing on US soil, and just how good that feels.

Once, in the middle of the night about a week after we returned to the United States following our last long-term trip to Bali, I woke up to get a drink of water and found myself shuffling my feet across the carpet as I moved from the bedroom to the kitchen. I stopped, stood still for a moment in the darkness and

experienced an unusual wave of gratitude as I realized, "Oh, wow! I don't have to shuffle my feet across the floor here... there are no snakes, scorpions, nor rats rambling about our home in the darkness."

I remember how much I loved traveling to the tropics, where I could wear flip flops 365 days out of the year, sun, eat mangos and hang out on the beach... But I also realize how fortunate we are to come home to this side of the globe, where I can be grateful for my warm, dry, snake-less, rodent-less home, and where I have a car with doors, and work that I love.

This place, big and small, this country and this little town, are pretty darn amazing, and I hope you someday get to travel to some sort of far-away place, if only so you can come home again and realize just how sweet it is.

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