

NEVER FAR FROM HOME

by Amanda Brozana

In September, for the third time in a year, I turned my car west for a long journey. Friends have asked how it is that I am so comfortable with all the travel and being away from home. The thing is, the being away has never bothered me because no matter where I've lived or traveled, I've never felt far from home.

In this particular trip, I had stopped by the beer distributor to pick up eight different varieties of Yuengling. I had promised to introduce a few uncultured western men to the beer of my people while back in Washington and Idaho.

Across the nearly 3,000 miles, Schuylkill County was riding with me in the backseat and in my heart. Stopped in construction in Ohio, I caught a glimpse of the Black & Tan case and thought of my wild idea in college to adopt two miniature black and tan Dauchunds and name them Yueng and Ling. Barreling through the night on the wide-open stretches of South Dakota, I hummed "100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" after I retrieved a fresh water bottle from the back of the truck and caught a glimpse of the Porter bottle case.

By Missoula, I was weary when I rummaged for some snacks and made eye contact with the iconic eagle watermark on the box of Lager. It screamed "press on," and I did.

It's not just a beer, though, that makes me both nostalgic and proud of our little slice of the world. As the sun rose at my back, and I made my way up the mountain I had become familiar with that leads into Idaho, I thought of our mountains – which some of the west would consider foothills. How

I had missed them when I lived in states where the Appalachians, older than the bones of dinosaurs, weren't on the horizon providing a sense of comfort like a hug. I've made residence in five different states and the District of Columbia, in travel to the remaining states in our union and several foreign countries. In each I have found the reminders and connections to this place we often forget to appreciate are plenty, and every one has reinforced the bond I have with the home of my childhood, and place that helped forge my identity.

I invite you to explore the country with me in these issues of Schuylkill County & Beyond and feel the connection between spaces. Next up: on the road to a Kansas wedding. Read more in the Summer issue.

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