

There are events in all of our lives that we plan to endure rather than enjoy. Whether it is a little brother's ill-rehearsed violin recital or a trip to visit family members with whom we do not often associate, there are some occasions on which we decide to push through to the finish line instead of enjoying the journey. Although I have worked on improving my outlook over the past few years, there are still times that find me grumbling and searching for brighter times ahead instead of creating my own sunshine. I forget that there is good in everything.

It had been years since we had embarked on the awful eight-hour drive to Pocatello, Idaho, to visit my father's family. I was mostly dreading the long journey there, but the time I would spend with my ill-acquainted relatives left me feeling apprehensive, as well. My plan was to fill as much of the time as possible with a stack of mystery novels from the library. If I couldn't make time go more quickly, at least I could block some of it out.

I was uninterrupted in my reading for most of the journey northward, until we crossed the Utah-Idaho border and entered my dad's home state.

"Look!" my dad exclaimed, pointing to a sign that read, "Welcome to Idaho!"

I nodded in response, eager to get back to *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, but my dad continued to talk. He pointed out a creek and a nearby cluster of homes. He talked about the fishermen we saw camping along the shore and told me that my great-grandfather, George Shiozawa, had often gone fishing there when he was young.

As we neared Pocatello, more and more stories came rolling out of my father's mouth.

"There's the hill where I ran cross country!" he told me excitedly, pointing to a section of land now overrun by buildings and roads. "We ran all the way up that mountain, too. You see that path there, between the two poles? That's where we went."

He pointed out a field he farmed...and another...and another.

“That’s the house where my first-grade teacher lived,” he told me. “Here’s where my best friend used to live!”

I finally put my bookmark in and slammed the book closed, exasperated at my father. My legs were cramped and my brother was shrieking. My only form of escapism, reading, was being interrupted by a history lesson I had not requested.

We finally arrived in Pocatello, where we gave hugs and kisses to grandparents, aunts, and cousins. We settled in for a long weekend of cooking, eating, and spending time together.

On the day after our arrival, we piled back into the truck and traveled 30 minutes away to the Idaho State Fair in Blackfoot. My dad’s stories, I discovered, were far from over. He pointed out building after building, field after field, giving me a visual history of his youth as we traveled northward along the I-15. I grumbled and considered pulling out a notebook to take notes, as if all of this information might be later found on a pop quiz.

My heart soon softened, however, as I continued to listen and discovered that my father’s stories were more compelling than I might have supposed. I thought I knew a lot about the man who raised me, but every story he told managed to surprise me.

“You see that building there?” asked my dad, gesturing to a white-brick convenience store we were approaching on our left. “I can’t believe that store is still there; that’s the wall I crashed into, right there.”

There was not a hint of sheepishness in his voice as he filled me in on a youthful mistake involving a tractor and some ill-attached cargo.

Further along, my father pointed out a wide dirt road, a dilapidated, maroon-colored barn, and a silver pickup truck.

“The house I grew up in was there by that barn, about where that truck is,” Dad said.

“Why isn’t the house there anymore?” I asked.

“It was just really old,” my dad replied with a shrug. “It was a crappy old house. Someone else bought the property and decided to tear it down, I guess.”

He was stalwart, unphased, about this major part of his history that was now gone. I pictured the only boyhood snapshot I could remember seeing of him. He was five years old, wearing a bright red shirt and an oversized cowboy hat, sitting on the back of a brown pony. I pictured that same little boy on that deserted farm in the middle of nowhere.

We were miles and miles down the highway when my father pointed out a series of large, green fields.

“I used to farm these, back when we lived in that house,” he told me. “I would get on my horse and ride all the way down here, and the farmers would pay me to plant in these fields.”

I pictured the tiny boy from my memory riding all this way to labor, to plant, and to harvest in these fields that were not his own.

The following day, we were all sprawled across couches and rugs in the living room, dozing off the fatty foods and fast rides we had taken in at the fair the day before, when my grandma came into the room with a stack of boxes in her arms. She sank into a vacant couch as she opened the first box and pulled out a stack of photographs.

We gathered around her, intrigued. My dad traveled back in time to his youth, yet again, as he pored over photographs that I had never seen before. We laughed over the bad haircuts, coke-bottle glasses, and awful fashion that my father and his siblings had donned in their youth. We pored over fuzzy exposures of generations of Shiozawas, drinking in a part of my father’s history that, before obscured, was now in vivid color.

Now, as I look back on the weekend that I finally learned to enjoy, rather than just endure, I see snapshot after snapshot of my father's past. I see the little Japanese boy with the messy hair, the boy who grew up hard-working and poor. I see the boy who traveled mile after mile on a little pony to farm potatoes and wheat in fields that were not his own. I see the boy who became my father, the boy who provides for his family and makes sure that we never go without. My father has instilled in his children the same values of hard work and success that he gained as a child growing up in southeastern Idaho, but he has done so without making us go through any of the trials that he did.

I can see the bright sunshine that comes from a life that is lived in service.

I can see the good in everything.