

GOING TO THE ROAD

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Want to go to the road today? This is something I hear once a year, always sometime in May when the temperature is in the mid-60s and the day is sunny and dry. The 'road' is not a road we travel on, but one we travel 'to', going cross-country through all kinds of terrain as we follow Mitchell Creek from near our home to its source, where it flows out of a big series of swamps up by 220th Avenue. They tell us bears are coming back here in the lower peninsula where we live. Sometime I think there might be bears in those swamps.

The trek is some two miles as the crow flies, but probably somewhat more than that as the crow meanders, which is the way we have to go, following the creek as it winds back and forth like the switchback trails on a mountain. We like to go before mosquito season really kicks in and while those May flowers are still everywhere. This spring is all mixed up. The lilacs in town froze up this year and we have no lilacs, at least in our yard. And some other flowers are following suit.

"Going to the road," as we call it goes back many years now. I don't know exactly when we first started doing it. And when we took little kids, and we did (not to mention a couple of eager dogs), it was quite an endeavor. But all of us loved it because as likely or not you were going to fall into the creek at least once on the journey, usually while crossing a log or jumping from stone to stone along the water. Even dad falls in once in a while, and the kids like that. Of course the dogs run back and forth in the water whenever they want.

And cross the creek we do and any old way we can. There usually is one small bridge that is intact, but the rest of the crossings are "anything goes." Balancing on a fifteen foot log, sometimes quite high above the water is enough to dare any kid. Hopping from stone to stone, trying to make it across where the water is fast is another way. Sometimes we take our shoes and socks off and just wade across. More than a few times I have managed slip and fall in the water, after which I just walk in the creek with my soaking wet sneakers and socks.

Years ago I tried hauling my camera equipment along, but that was really a chore, not to mention dangerous for the equipment because of the slipping into the water.

Today just Margaret and I went, along with Molotov, our little black dog -- Molly to friends. He was totally psyched to go, although because we were in relatively new territory, he did not run away as far as he does around home. He stayed close today.

I believe we only had to cross the stream four or five times today. There were few bugs. We had fields to cross, hills to climb, and hollows to move through. In some places there are high banks when you can look down forty feet at the stream below. And there are brambles and overgrowth that wasn't there last year, that at times was so dense we had to get low and crawl through. And of course fir forests and deciduous trees, alternating.

My favorite part is where we come upon an old logging trail (shown here), where they leveled out the raised bed and you can look down what was a two-track as far as you can see. Along that raised trail there are flowers everywhere and the grass is short, making walking easy. That old trail is just a little piece of heaven for me. I love to look far down any unkempt trail or road

until it converges in the distance. Don't know why, but I just like that.

Only part of one shoe got wet, and it was not mine.

Anyway, Margaret, Molly, and I went to the road today. And it was good. I know our kids would have liked to be here with us.