

Making memories on a long weekend, ice skating at the beach, boating, painted screens, and more (7 Quick Takes)

~1~



My husband wasn't able to join us for our beach vacation with my family this summer, so we promised our sons a long weekend in Ocean City, Md., this fall. Despite the marvelous lack of soccer practices and games this year, last weekend seemed to be our only free weekend, so off we went.

We pulled into the hotel parking lot, and I ran in to check us in while my husband and sons waited in the car. When I came out just a few minutes later, I found out that a car had flipped on Coastal Highway right near our hotel. My family had heard the crash and a scream. I missed the whole thing. By the time I came out, they were all praying a Hail Mary together.

As we watched the emergency crews swarm to the scene from our window, one of the boys said, "This is the lowlight of our trip." He was right. It turned out there was an unofficial gathering of a whole bunch of speedy, rumbling cars that weekend, and it made driving and sleeping a little challenging. But the rest of the weekend was a tremendous gift.

~2~

I had spent lots of time looking at hotels online before picking one, but in the end I just made sure I booked a hotel with an indoor swimming pool. I didn't even pay attention to the fact that the Carousel Hotel also had an ice skating rink.



Well, we could have skipped the pool. Once the boys discovered the rink, all they wanted to do was ice skate. Neither of them had tried it before, though Leo had been roller skating. I couldn't believe how they threw themselves into it.

They fell and jumped up, fell and jumped up, fell and jumped up. Their determination and sheer persistence blew me away. It was hard. It was painful. I had to pull a bandaid out for one scrape. They just kept going—smiling and laughing as they did.

Sometimes I think these children teach me more than I can ever teach them.

~3~



One of John's sisters lives at the beach, and she hasn't been well, so we went to visit her and her husband. They took us out on their boat on the Assawoman Bay. We sped over to Assateague, and the boys looked for ponies from the water. We went under a drawbridge and waved to other boaters. It was just before dusk, and the weather couldn't have

been better for our trip.

Our little fisherman loved it and so did his big brother. As we were pulling back into the dock, we spotted a heron. It took off from a dock and flew across the channel.

Then our little boaters poked around at a crab in the water while the men took the boat out of the water.

I'm so grateful for our trip and our time together. And—in case you were worried—we got back to the hotel in time for more ice skating that night.

~4~

My sister-in-law had the most beautiful painted screens created for her home.

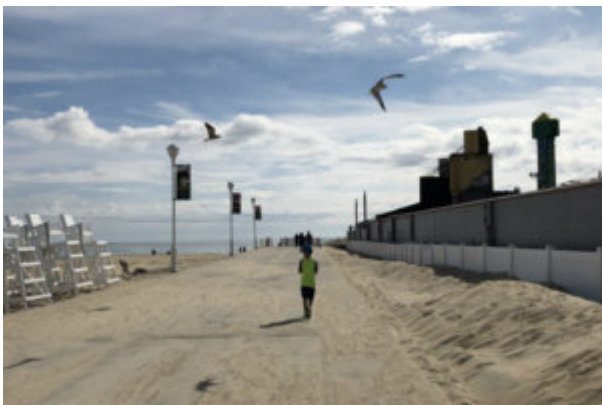


John and I have talked now and then about how much fun it would be to have a painted screen, but we talk about many things, and I'm not sure this one will ever come to fruition. And that's just fine.

But my sister-in-law's screens are beautiful. They show an egret taking off in flight.

I do not understand how the light still comes through them and how you can't tell they are painted from inside.

~5~



We arrived at the beach on Friday evening and left to come back late Sunday morning. It was a bit of a whirlwind and yet just right. But we didn't actually set foot on the beach much. Sunday morning before going to Mass we went out and looked at the ocean.

Fall is one of my favorite times to go to the beach, partly because there are fewer crowds and partly because John and I honeymooned in Fenwick Island, Del., after getting married. Whenever we go to the beach, I remember those first days of our

marriage and how special they were.

How many people get to take their children back to their honeymoon site almost every summer?

~6~

My husband's birthday was this week, and we had the best time celebrating him. I love our children's birthdays, but Dad's birthday is always the best. We gave him Halloween decorations, German food, a joke book, and a can-do clamp from his wish list. Then he picked a restaurant for dinner, so I didn't have to cook. I didn't even bake his cake because I realized you could get a small sheet cake for \$6 from the grocery store.



I loved that our older son stayed up late the night before so he could secretly make a birthday card in bed. Then he slipped into our bedroom and left it next to the bed where he knew his dad would find it the next morning.

~7~

We were chatting about something the other day as a family, and our older son said, "I'm going to ask a question and I just want 'yes' or 'no.' I don't want the long answer." And I laughed inside because I'm so much better at the long answers than the simple yes or no.

So are these quick takes over? Yes. Yes, they are.

Read more quick takes at Kelly's blog, This Ain't the Lyceum, and have a great weekend!