The Everyday Adventure

Imagine a dirt road surrounded by pine trees. A motor's faint hum crescendos until, rounding a bend in the road, a tractor drives into view. The tractor is pulling our “tank” – a trailer fortified with plywood, duct tape, string, and a satellite dish, designed and built by my brothers and me. I live in the tiny country town of Early Branch, and my home has a profound impact on who I am. Though I could name dozens of ways my home has impacted me, the three most important are the imagination, leadership, and love for others it has taught me.

Many kids have little interest in the world outside the internet and social media. Moving to Early Branch, South Carolina rooted out any tendencies I had toward that mindset, because we no longer had access to the internet. Instead, I developed a sense of curiosity, creativity, and adventure. I suppose the best name for this quality is imagination. The most fun I have in a week is when my siblings and I don our waterproof boots and set out exploring the acres of woods around our house. We love making up and conducting our own backyard science experiments. An example of this curious mindset is an evening when I heard a buzzing noise coming from a tiny burrow. I wondered what made that sound, so I sat down and waited silently for what felt like ten minutes. Finally, I saw something I had never seen before: a wasp-like insect digging a burrow. In many cases like this, I think where I live gives me a chance to learn for myself, be creative and curious, and love real-life adventures.

My home has also taught me life skills like courage, independence, and good decision making. All of these skills are part of good leadership. For some students, leaving home upon adulthood will be their first experience of living without someone else there to tell them what to do. I have been given a chance to make my own decisions and face the consequences, because, once I am beyond shouting distance from my house, I am on my own. No one is there to solve my problems for me. My brothers and
I learned this the hard way when our tractor ran out of gas nearly two-tenths of a mile from our house. After brief consultation, we decided that one brother would run back to get gas, while the others waited with the tractor. However, we soon realized that we had no funnel to pour it into the tank without spilling gasoline everywhere. That’s when one of us had an idea. We could use a magazine we had to make our own funnel. Thankfully, this idea worked. Though I will not likely spend much time refueling tractors in my adulthood, I can use those problem solving, decision making, and cooperation skills for the rest of my life.

All of these are good qualities, but I have yet to mention the most important thing my home has taught me. Growing up in Early Branch, South Carolina, I have learned to love my family better. In the absence of connection to the city and the internet, I have learned to connect with my parents and siblings. Without them all the reasons I love my home would be of little importance. When one of my brothers decided to investigate a deserted dig site and ended up sinking in mud that was sticky as glue, we followed in a flash, trying to pull him out. Soon the mud was past his knees, but we were eventually able to dig him out. To me this illustrates how my family will always be there for me, no matter how sticky the situation. My time with them has taught me that they are my best friends and the true reason my home is special.

My small town country home has been instrumental in shaping my life. The adventures I have, the choices I make, and the people I share it with are changing me into a more loving and imaginative leader. I am truly blessed to share an incredible place with such a loving family.