



Blueberry Picking

by Ann Drew Yu

It's mid-July, the peak of summer. My family is loaded into our minivan, rumbling down the highway toward our favorite pick-your-own blueberry farm in Wisconsin.

"Remember the year we only got twelve berries?" our son Connor calls from the back seat. "What a joke!"

"Or the year there was a may fly hatch?" chimes in our other son, Brian. "They were everywhere – even in our food. It was so gross!" We all shudder at the memory.

"Or what about the year," I add, "when Connor announced in his three-year-old voice 'Too hot' and insisted we leave 'Now'. I had to distract him with 47 cups of lemonade while you and Dad picked as fast as you could." We all dissolve into laughter.

Then I call out: "Remember the year we didn't go?" Dead silence.

Of course they don't remember. There's nothing to remember – we didn't go. That was the year I learned a valuable lesson.

There wasn't anything out of the ordinary that summer to prevent us from blueberry picking. There wasn't a drought. We weren't gone on vacation. It was just a typical summer with lots of good stuff competing for our precious time.

In hindsight, though, I know exactly why we didn't go. We were too casual about the summer calendar. We unwittingly gave away our time until it was gone. Weekend birthday party? Sure thing, we'll be there. Tennis camp with a friend? Okay, let's do it. Biking with neighbors? Count us in. Before we knew it, blueberry season came and went without us.

That is why there are no blueberry memories from that summer. There's no photo of the boys standing by the sunflowers at the farm; no re-enactment of Mom hissing, "Stop throwing blueberries at your dad – people are watching!"; no cookies from the town bakery to eat in the car on the way home and no frozen blueberries enjoyed throughout the year in oatmeal and blueberry muffins.

This is the valuable lesson I learned: there's a huge difference between managing the family calendar and creating the family calendar. Managing the calendar means reacting to requests for our time and passively complying. Creating our calendar means proactively deciding what we really want to do, staking out the time and making it happen. Then, we can fit in anything else that comes our way as time allows.

With this in mind, I have a question for you. Is there something you'd really like to do before summer ends? You still have time. Take it from me: grab your calendar, write it down and make it happen. You won't be sorry.

As we continue our trek toward Wisconsin on this July day, I smile to myself. My sons think we are going to pick blueberries but I know differently. What we're really picking is how we want to spend our time. On this particular summer day, we are choosing to rumble down the road together filled with anticipation about the life we're creating.

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