

I sit here, smack-dab in the base of a bowl of beauty, actually, in the parking lot of Cass, West Virginia. The cars around us sport plates from Florida, California, Texas and may other states. Folks, lugging coolers and cameras, pour across the railroad tracks, intent on only one thing.....that Shaye #5-pulled train that will take them to the top of the mountain today.

We are on our way home from spending a couple of days with son Randy and his precious family in a peaceful and rustic (oh, yeah, rustic...4 bedrooms, 2 baths, WIFI, hot tub, modern kitchen, wrap-around deck) cabin in the Canaan Valley of West Virginia.



We've taken a detour to Cass but, sadly, this isn't our day to ride but memories of past jaunts up this glorious mountain fill our hearts. Appropriately, a coffee mug in the gift shop proclaims a quote from John Muir, "The mountains are calling and I must go".

People are milling around the rebuilt station, waiting for their ride. One momma, probably in her 80s, is sitting quietly with her son (maybe 50 years old) who is huddled beside her and happily anticipating their adventure. Sonny, proudly wearing a Cass Railroad cap, is mentally challenged but Momma loves him enough to give him this experience. He squeals with delight as the hissing, throbbing steam locomotive rumbles into view.



With a belch of thick black smoke and an ear-piercing whistle, the mighty monster leaves the Company Store with its cargo of “happy campers” who are waving at anybody who will notice that they are the ones riding this train and the rest of us are “left behind”. Don’t you just know Jim is clicking away with his arsenal of equipment?

A few people straggle across the now-deserted parking lot. Jim stashes his cameras and tripod back into the little red Cavalier and we begin the wild-flower-strewn trek back to our blessed life in Lynchburg. Life is good; God is great!