



Derby Day!

Leaving Louisville on Monday after Derby Day was a melancholy milestone for my husband and me. We love cruising over the rolling hills and rivers, seeing the horses and livestock living the legacy that is Louisville. They look so content grazing in the pastures surrounded by barns and beautiful well-established estates. I especially enjoy the stone embedded overpasses and tunnels. The layers of color and contour contrast the green grass, and sporadically sprout spontaneous waterfalls. These are the travel treasures I recall most from childhood visits to Kentucky.

I love the culture, the lifestyle and the legacy characteristic of Louisville and Lexington. Like any state, Kentucky boasts a variety of venues, but the raising and racing of horses is by far the most popular and prominent. And Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby are likely the most famous icons in the industry.

Derby Day has evolved into Derby week, with fireworks, festivals and celebrations across the state. Every year there is a Derby story that captures our hearts...an amazing and enchanting horse that comes out of nowhere to delight, deliver and dominate the coveted Run for the Roses. This year, the 135th Derby was no exception. Mine that Bird, literally billed as a 'filler' in the race with 50:1 odds, came from the very last position, passing eighteen of the finest fillies in the business to win the race by more than six lengths in the last quarter mile. An amazing finish for a horse most people had never heard of and even fewer bet on. A \$2.00 wager yielded over \$100 winnings, the second highest in derby history!

Of course the trip includes a trek through the mountains. The GPS suggested going through West Virginia, and while it is a little shorter, the wider roads and rounder curves through Tennessee and North Carolina render a more relaxed ride, especially at night. But it was downhill in the daylight for the ride home and the time seemed to fly much faster that way. Clouds that resembled steam emerging from the trees framed the majestic mountains.

I still get misty eyed when I hear the song, My Old Kentucky Home. I am sure it is the result of seeing my mother do the same because I have never actually been a permanent resident there. Though both my parents, their families and most of my cousins were raised there, Louisville has always been a distant destination from my home in North Carolina. But that doesn't keep me from feeling at home when I'm there. After all, home is where the heart is. And likewise, my cousins have come to call Topsail Island their summer home as well. I saw the count down on their refrigerator while I was there: Only 9 weeks to Topsail Island! They are landlocked in Kentucky, and their annual



homage to the ocean is a special event. Their exuberance for the beach reminds me just how blessed I am to be here whenever I want. I like calling North Carolina home!