

Friday, August 1, Kingston, New York

Well, I found this journal in a box during my massive clean out of my room. It is so funny to read through what I wrote four years ago. Well here we are on our first true road trip. We left around 6:30 PM despite I planned departure time of 4 PM. Oh well, I've come to realize that time is merely a suggestion for my family. We took 295 north up to 206 north to avoid the turnpike. I hate that road- always traffic, especially weekends in the summer. The drive wasn't bad. We didn't hit any traffic. Mom and dad are really excited to have the whole family together and I'm looking forward to it too, though I'm sure we'll have our sticky spots. Two close calls already when the easy pass didn't work for some reason. Mom got all nuts then when she decided to get off and exit to find a bathroom, that was a really complicated way. We passed a service center a few miles after we were back on the highway but wisely no one pointed out. Mom's been super anal of this new van. She vacuumed it before we left. (shrug) She drove it (slow?) all the way up here too, but it finally got over 1000 miles which is the suggested break-in. So hopefully she'll chill out some now. We all read a lot in the car and listened to my CDs and to that Steve made on behalf of the family. Highway towns like this always make me uncomfortable. I think it just feels kind of hollow to me, but the Ramada Inn can definitely cut it for me one night. I'm really looking forward to the towns in Vermont.

Saturday, August 2

I slept pretty well last night. I had my own bed because Teresa wanted to share with Gina since she was in a good mood. We had breakfast in the hotel restaurant. The food was pretty good. It was funny to hear different accents than you hear at home. Lots of Brooklyn accents. That's one of my favorite things about traveling so many random people from different walks of life. I sneezed while in line for the buffet and this big stereotypical motorcycle gang guy was like "God bless you" all super nice and friendly. I saw him and his friends packing up their bikes when we

were checking out. It was so funny to hear them talking, especially because I'm in the middle of reading ***Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance***. They were talking about 209 and other smaller highways and stopping at flea markets and how they didn't have enough room for everything. Plus, I saw that their license plates are Jersey so that makes them extra cool. They all looked like stereotypical biker dudes, long ponytails, mustaches and Harley Davidson T-shirts, and the chicks with their short curly blonde hair, halter tops and lipstick. We're back on the New York Thruway and then in Albany we take 787 to Route seven over into Vermont. Right now I'm pretty entertained looking around at the scenery and into peoples cars. There seems to be lots of families and as Teresa observed everyone looks happy. They must be going on vacation. It's Rocky and mountainous. Lots of green forest and some pretty valleys. I'm sure the roadside scenery will get even more spectacular. It is hot and humid this morning and overcast in that humid sticky way. The terrain is so rocky here that even the median is full of Boulder rocks. The mountains are rolling and covered with lush thick forests. This hazy fog looks cool sitting atop the tops. There are some yellow and purple wildflowers that are very pretty. One thing that does not add to the scenery around here are the huge ugly billboards in the fields and farms off the road. Bleck! The majority of license plates are Jersey, New York, Quebec and Pennsylvania. It's really great to be taking such an American trip. Is there anything more American than a road trip? American society and culture pisses me off sometimes but there's things about it I really love especially the diversity and freedom we have. There is a lot at our fingertips culture, nature whatever you're in the mood for, it's not far.

We've arrived in Bennington. Dad wasn't kidding when he said I was the tour guide. We found the tourist center after asking at a gas station. We went in and I got info and maps. We did a short drive around and saw three covered bridges. It's quieter around

here and the air smells fresher. Then we drove to the Bennington battle monument. It's a tall sandy hill dolomite limestone staff and commemorates general John Starks victory. [Then we drove to old first church. Robert Frost is buried in the burying ground behind it.] The guy running the elevator was a nice old man. There were 3 other people at the top besides our family. They were standing waiting for the elevator and I heard the man fart really loudly so I had to turn around like I didn't hear. It was a really obvious multiple wind one, not one you could play off by a foot shuffle or anything. After walking around the old first church and arguing with Steve about the value of poetry, we went to Vern's fish fry for some food. Man that place is great. It's one of those little shack walk up places like an old Dairy Queen. They had Barq's root beer and shakes, fish, burgers, etc. The fish & chips was really good and their fish fry sandwich was a piece of fried fish on a hotdog roll. Their onion rings were awesome too. Oh yeah, a great thing I discovered about Vermont at the tourist office was that there is no billboards in Vermont! What a novel idea. These people decided to preserve this rude side beauty.

I directed us to Lake Shaftsbury a few miles away using the handy dandy map the tourist office lady gave me and highlighted. We went to pay at the Park entrance and the lady went to hand us the tickets and \$10 change. Dad goes I didn't give you any money. The lady is like oh I was anticipating and looks at the \$20 in mom's hand. It smells great here like a Christmas tree. We changed into our bathing suits and staked out a picnic table in the shade. We took paddle boots out onto the lake. It was really shallow all the way through. There is an island in the middle so we pulled up to the edge and Steve jumped out and checked it out while I kept control the boat. We paddled all the way to the other end of the lake and saw that there were a lot of tree stumps sticking out of the water and some submerged. We're paddling along trying to avoid them when we come to a standstill and only go in inches when we had paddle hard. The boat was stuck on top of a tree stump. Steve jumped out to try to push it off, but was unsuccessful so I stepped down onto the slippery

submerged roots and pushed it off. We paddle back and saw that Teresa and Gina had cleverly anchored onto a small (?) and were exploring the island. We took a dip in the lake to cool off and it was really refreshing. Then we did a nature trail around the whole lake. It was really pretty and parts of it were so cushiony making it feel so cool to walk on. It was only 3/4 of a mile which was good because we all had flip-flops and other inappropriate shoes for hiking on. On the road back to Bennington we passed an ATM. Just there on the side of the road – nothing else just a working ATM machine. The mountains are so lush and green here – I can see why they call it the “Green Mountain State”. We also passed Robert Frost’s house on 7A because he lived in Shaftsbury. We checked into Darling Kelly's motel which looked kind of shabby from the outside but was really cute and cozy and clean on the inside. After showering and changing, we went to catch the end of the summer concert series right off of the main street. We were all really hungry so after a few minutes, we headed off to Main Street to find some food. We went into the Madison brewing company, which was pub like and looked good. They had a lot of local beers on tap. Dad got Old 76 which was dark and very flavorful. A little fruity. I got bucks honey. It was Light and had a yummy bold aftertaste. The soup was really good too. Scotch Ale and cheddar, tomato basil, and French onion. The wings were kind of weak. Dad didn't think they were tender enough on the inside and crunchy enough on the outside. I didn't like the sauce, it was just straight up barbecue sauce. We moseyed around a bit more and then went back to go to sleep. I was sharing a room with Gina. Dad came in with his guitar and sang “the boxer” to us. Teresa joined us too.

Sunday, August 3.

, Route 9 to 100, Westin Ludlow Tyson.

I didn't sleep too well last night. Gina is a tosser and bed hogger so she kept waking me up and keeping me up. Right around dawn we both woke up and couldn't get back to sleep. I get up

and got my disc man to listen to Pablo Honey. The people next to us were up at the butt crack of Dawn so they didn't help the situation. Gina moved to the floor so I got a few more hours of sleep. Everyone took forever to get moving and Teresa ate her unrefrigerated leftovers while we all badger her about how gross that was. We went to the Catholic Church in Bennington, which Steve was definitely not happy about and we argued about making the decision to not go and he read during church. Mom accidentally told this old guy we were from New York when he asked. We went back to Fern's to have ice cream for breakfast. Their chocolate custard is just unbelievable. It's so delicious and has real chocolate chunks in it. I looked over the map and book to figure out what to do today. We drove east on route 9 until we reached Wilmington. There was a lot of road construction, where the roads were totally stripped and I think Mom was pretty nervous for Bessie the car. It was a really pretty drive – green mountains as usual as we drove along side the Harriman Reservation for a little which was beautiful. In Wilmington, we got onto 100 N. and just followed it all the way up to Westin to stop for lunch. It's really hot and humid again and was sunny this morning but it's been raining off and on now. The country store and the Bryant house were closed because it's Sunday, but there was this village country store that had really good sandwiches and lots of country store stuff-cheese, maple syrup, candy. The bathroom was in the basement and it was like a house basement. We got some fudge, cheese and syrup. We tried some good drinks too. Orange Creamsicle, and Vermont sweet water, which was really like good slightly sweet seltzer water. Then we left Westin and continued driving to Ludlow. It was raining really hard and it was pretty gross out, but we decided to try to find the Falls and swimming hole I read about in the book anyway. The directions were really vague, but we pulled through with flying colors and found the right turn and then drove all the way to the end/top of the road. The falls were off to our right and there was only one other car there with a Vermont license plate. We're super cool like the locals. The Falls and big swimming hole were

down a steep, rocky incline right at the bottom of that was the stream with rocks and pools of water. It was raining and thundering, but we still went down and took off our shoes and started waiting around. We started to venture towards the edge where the two biggest falls were. Mom was really nervous and freaking out, of course. All the kids kept slowly edging down and exploring our own pathways down. I found one pretty good one because to not to slippery and pretty good foot holes and steps. I slid down and crawled like a crab on my butt. Steve was looking for somewhere to jump in, but it seemed to be pretty shallow everywhere. Even though mom was flipping out about lightning and stuff., me and Steve slid down and in. It was a little cold, but not even as bad as I expected. We were already pretty soaked because of the rain anyway. It was so fun and kind of beautiful to be in there while it was raining. Gina came in and Teresa wearing her clothes. Dad slowly ventured down as mom wearily watched us and took a few pictures. But even Mom came down and we coached her in eventually! The two largest falls cascade down into a large round pool that was deepest in the middle and got shallower and rocker around the edges. It was so beautiful and secluded. I don't think I can describe how wonderful the whole experience was. After finally tearing ourselves away after two hours or so we headed to Echo Lake Inn a few miles away in Tyson. Echo Lake is right across the street and the Inn rents out boats and canoes for free which is part of the reason Dad picked this place. We have a condo and there is a room with a queen bed, a futon and three twin beds in the loft. Everyone was excited to get some good sleep. There was only one bathroom though, but we all did pretty well and got ready in about an hour. Then we went to Sam's steakhouse which the book said was famous for its filet mignon you can cut with a butter knife and great salad bar. I love salad bars! Everything was really great except the waiter carded me to have a glass to share the bottle of wine with mom and dad ordered. I didn't have my license with me. He said 'sorry but they're really strict here.' Come on! I was with my parents. Oh well whatever. The filet mignon was

awesome and the salad bar too. They gave us a dish of sour cream and real bacon bits for our baked potatoes. We got a frozen mud pie for dessert and shared, even though we were pretty full. We hung out in the rocking chairs on the front porch of the inn, but they were pretty weak and didn't rock that well. I went in after a little while because the bugs were driving me crazy. We all went to bed early (10ish) with plans of getting up early.

Monday, August 4.

Tyson Route 100 and 100 a, West Woodstock, Woodstock and Coochie.

I slept really well last night. Having my own bed was killer and it was fitted into this little groove, which makes me feel all snuggly. We didn't get up until 845 which was not as early as planned. Dad went to get canoes and stuff, but all that was left was a row boat. He Teresa and Gina went out. Mom was mad because people are only supposed to take out canoes for an hour, but these people are gonna be gone for a while to a park and stuff. Oh well, it's pouring again anyway. I can handle rain, but this is getting on my nerves. Everything to do around here is outside and though we can handle rain who wants to hike and bike in mud with water dripping all down in your face. Well, I (?) the waterproof camera we bought will come in handy anyway. The rain scared away those people who took the canoes out so me and Teresa took one and Steve, mom and Regina took another. Dad walked around the edge of the lake and read. We canoed all around and across the lake, which we latter clocked was 9/10 of a mile long. It started to rain as we were docking and it felt good but it was good timing. We went to the Crowley cheese factory, the oldest in America all made by hand. Then we got in the car and drove about 45 minutes north up route 100 and 100A to West Woodstock to the Lincoln Inn. It was a really pretty converted old farmhouse right on Ottauquechee River. There was a pretty covered bridge right there too. We're the only people

staying there so it was like having a whole house to ourselves. They have a great library and book collection in the hall upstairs. We changed and headed over to the Quechee gorge a few miles away. It's a narrow rocky cliff 165 feet deep and over a mile in length. There were two easy trails down, to the left and right. We went right first to the waterfalls. It was about .3 miles down and there was a dam and some ugly stuff around and above the waterfalls so that was kind of disappointing. We headed up and down to the other side, about a half mile down. It was downhill the whole way obviously, I guess. The narrow river channel came out to a rocky area in front and to the left of us. The rocks were all angled, and there were pools and channels of water between them. If you walked across the edge where the narrow deep channel of the water was, you could jump in and be carried away in a "lazy river" way. You had to "exit" left before you went down this wide slide of rocky rapids before emptying into a larger pool. Some people had brought a tube and went tubing dammit. It looked really fun, but Mom was doing her flipping out. Nervous thing as per usual. The rocks were hard on your feet because they were jagged and a smooth off way. It was really fun, cool and beautiful in a very unique way, but there was something that was lost a little because it was a pretty popular place. There is just something about feeling secluded and like you've discovered a place. The sky got really dark and it started raining again so we thought that was a good time to leave. We showered and headed out to the center of Woodstock for dinner. We went to Bentley's, nothing that special but they had a good variety and good specially bottled root beer. Their wings were really good and they only gave us nine instead of the promised 12, so we brought that to our waiter attention. He must've thought we were insane. Andrew really annoyed with us but he brought us four more. Hey, we like our wings! We talked about the road trips mom and dad have taken and when they first met and Father Sullivan. I saw a cop going around and checking to make sure all the shop tours were locked. I guess that's what it's like in a small town. We went back to the Inn and played trivial pursuit in the library. Dad was

really good at it, he caught onto the proper way of thinking and is just so intelligent. The rest of us didn't do so well. Other people would definitely be annoyed/amused at our lack of trivial knowledge. Teresa wasn't so into it, which was kind of obnoxious because she does that a lot. But she was reading selections from this random book which were pretty interesting. We headed up around 10 PM with only a piece or two amongst us.

Tuesday, August 5.

West Woodstock Route 89 N. to Waitsfield.

I shared a room with Steve. I got a double bed to myself and I made him take the cot because he always gets to bed to himself. The room was really cute and kind of Victorian. Steve snores when he sleeps on his back and that's how he fell asleep so I made him roll over. Dad woke us up at 8:30 for breakfast downstairs. Breakfast was included because it was kind of B&B place. There was fresh squeezed orange juice, good hot chocolate, hot out of the oven blueberry muffins, an omelette with all kinds of good stuff and whole wheat toast. The owner and cook were so nice and friendly. We walked down to the covered bridge and took some pics and stuff. We let Dad take our picture in front of the Inn if he let us listen to music in the car. We drove up 89 north which is a more standard interstate. We got off at exit 9 and got on 100 B south which was a much prettier drive again. Green mountains, snaking lazy stony rivers and cute farm houses. We went to the Chamber of Commerce in Waitsfield and got info on trails and swimming. Everyone wanted to do some hiking so we headed up Lincoln Gap Road to do part of the Long Trail March and climb to the top of Mount Abraham. We've done some hiking and were pretty prepared but we had no idea what we were getting into. The trail was so rocky and since it's been raining every day for like two weeks, it was really wet and slippery. We knew the trail was 5 miles round-trip, but didn't expect it to be quite so challenging. Mom was a little slower and Dad slipped a lot, but they did well. I wasn't sure Mom was

gonna make it to the top but she did it! It was beautiful. We were truly at the summit of the mountain and could see 360° around for a full panoramic view. On clear days, you can see all the way to Lake Champlain, but it was hazy and rain clouds were rolling in of course. Going down was pretty hard especially at the top because it was like real rock climbing. Just huge slippery slanted rocks to make up the path. We pretty much just sat down on our butts and slid down. The rain thankfully held off until we were out of the worst of it and more sheltered by the trees and not quite as much “rock-climbing” and more hiking. Steve bounded ahead striding with momentum. I did the best I could with my old Skechers with worn tread. I was with Teresa a large part of it and we had a really good conversation part of the way about us and our friends and people. There was a shelter about a quarter of a mile the way down and there was a journal with some pretty interesting entries. A lot of people are making their way up the Appalachian long trail all the way into Canada. The last entry was a 62-year-old doing just that. That's so amazing. I'd love to do something like that. That hike was so unique. Even Dad who has been on his share of hikes said he's never been on anything like that. We didn't bring that much water and were just running on a big breakfast so Steve and Mom were cranky and I was getting pretty delirious. After we all finally got down we drove back towards Warren Village to get drinks. We stopped at a Citgo and I didn't have shoes to go in. All I wanted was red Gatorade so I asked mom, Steve and Teresa to get it and out they come with no red Gatorade! Steve got all belligerent but lent me his shoes and I went in and got some. It was pretty funny because they were so big and wouldn't stay Velcroed. Even though it was almost 530 because it took us four hours to hike we wanted to swim so we headed to Warren Falls, which I read about in the book and got directions from the tourist lady. We went south on Route 100 and the first place you can pull over and park that isn't a private drive is where you park and walk down. (first police after Lincoln gap Road). There were a few ways to go, but we followed some kids who looked like they were going all the way down to

the right. It was amazing. It was like a waterpark. There were a series of waterfalls and small ponds. The rocks were large and smooth because of the constantly flowing water. The book says south of Warren Village, the Mad River becomes a series of dramatic falls, and whirlpools cascading through a gorge. That's a pretty good description. We jumped off huge rocks into the deep pools and some of the rocks had a long and smooth groove you could slide down into a deep fall like a waterslide! We jumped off a big rock that was about 15 feet high after we got more daring. It's pretty safe around there because the water has smoothed the rocks so there is no jagged edges and most of the bottoms of the pools are small rocks and pebbly. I did have a pretty scary near death experience though. I was standing in the corner of one of the pools and Mom was asking me where Steve was so I got distracted and the water sucked me down backwards headfirst down a steep waterfall. I remember kind of calmly thinking oh boy I'm gonna hit my head on a rock and pass out, but I didn't and didn't (missing) more horrible consequences because I had plunged and surfaced without any injury other than a dull pain in my hand that I banged on the rocks as I flailed down. That kind of made me wanna not press my luck, but I still had fun and did some more fun jumps and slides, but just tried to be more conscientious. Some kids were watching and were like whoa. Did you hit any rocks?! The kids we had followed down the trail were totally out of their mind. They were jumping off a 40 foot ledge into a small pool. One kid was seriously insane and did it without barely a thought. The water was a beautiful blue green color too and the gray big rocks. It started to rain again after an hour and a half or so and that encouraged us to leave again. I had been really tired, but the cool water woke me up some. We went to Millbrook Inn, the "country Inn" mom had been talking about. Apparently they have a really good dinner there but they don't serve on Tuesdays. Their dinner smelled really good though. We went to "The Den". I was so pooped and pretty delirious, but the salad bar was small but good, with really chunky homemade looking blue cheese dressing. Root beer was

really good too and had its own label so we decided it's all from the same place and each Restaurant puts its own label on. We shared a piece of homemade blueberry pie that was made that afternoon. We hung out in the living room and talked to the wife owner for a bit but went to bed pretty soon around 10 because we were pooped.

Wednesday, August 6.

Wheatfield Route 100 N. to Route 89 N. Burlington.

I shared a room with Steve again and got a queen bed all to myself. Slept pretty well woke up feeling much more rested and with it. We looked at pictures and talked to the husband of the owner for a little bit before breakfast. They've been all over the world to all 50 states. They close the Inn and travel for four months a year. They served us breakfast outside even though the weather was still iffy (of course). Everything was delicious specially the homemade bread French toast. Then we were off to Burlington up Route 100 a short way down onto Route 89 N. and route 2 West into downtown. We parked down on the waterfront off of college street. We passed the University of Vermont and it looked really nice. There were lots of college aged kids around and you could definitely tell it's a university town. We decided there were so many even though it was summer because why would you want to leave? We headed down to 83 Main St. "Skirack" to rent bikes. They had nice mountain bikes with easily adjustable seats and a bathroom so we were happy. We rented them for \$16 per bike for four hours so we could do a good portion of the Burlington bike path. It runs for 8 miles in Burlington itself along Lake Champlain and at the edge of that you can take a ferry to continue on for another 4.5 miles. So we started biking. The weather was pretty nice and it was definitely hot and humid. The majority of us brought/wore bathing suits in anticipation of swimming in Lake Champlain at some point. The bike path in Burlington was a paved, narrow, black path away

from cars and running pretty much through trees along the coast of the lake. We passed a few fellow bikers, runners and rollerblades, but it wasn't very crowded. I'm not sure where we started on it, but I do know that it was much easier to cover lots of miles than my previous hilly bike trips. This path was pretty much flat the whole way. It got really awesome at the end of Burlington when we had to take a ferry to continue. You load your bikes on and pay a dollar and the boat starts up., turns around goes about 100 feet and parks. Then you're on the Champlain Islands. There was lots of driftwood on the small beach and it was really pretty. The path continued through marshland and alternated between consisting of a boardwalk and a muddy dirt path. There were lots of signs, warning us to watch out for frogs crossing and at first, I didn't know what they meant, but then I noticed these tiny green frogs that would hop out of the tall grass right in front of my bike. I had a couple of near squishes and Teresa was especially paranoid about killing any. After a mile or so the path lead out into a neighborhood and some local kids were hanging out on the wooden gate that led off of our path. They held it open for us. The path became loose gravel and sand, which made me kind of nervous because it's definitely not good to try and stop and turn bikes in sand. Then the path became a causeway between the islands on the lake. It used to be the railroad line and I guess they just took the tracks off. It was beautiful and the water looked like glass. There were a little green Islands all around and New York was to the left period but there was no breeze and my face felt like a windshield because so many little gnats were stuck on it. We got to the end of the causeway because there is a 200 foot gap where an old railroad turnstile used to be. I'm not sure what the big problem is with these small gaps and why they can't just build a bridge or something but whatever. Mom had to go pee and Steve tried, but couldn't because of stage fright because there was a boat right near us. Dark gray storm clouds were rolling in from the west so we sped down the causeway. Being on there during a thunderstorm would not be a fun thing. The storm was led by a

nice breeze, which was a welcome treat on the way back. We made it to the beach on Lake Champlain for a quick dip before the storm hit. We had only been in for a few minutes before they whistled everyone out because of thunder. It was just as well because the bikes were due back in like 15 minutes. I was glad we went in the lake. I felt a lot cleaner washing the bugs and some sweat and grime off myself. Though I don't like lakes anywhere near as much as the ocean I must admit the after feel of swimming in a freshwater lake is nice. I actually felt cleaner and was not gross when I dried. We were staying at the Comfort Inn, which was in South Burlington a few miles away, so we went straight to dinner at Sweetwaters a few streets down on the corner of Church and College. It was pretty good as far as the food went, good wings, but nothing that spectacular in my opinion, though we did sit outside under an awning and I faced the Church St., Square which was great for people watching. We noticed a general trend of bushy facial hair for males and Dad regretted having recently shaved off his beard. The kids are definitely more radical and cool looking but as I told Teresa, I think it would get on my nerves after a while because I'd run into a lot of 'I'm different look at me!' attitudes, but who knows. We walked around for a bit and tried to go to some thrift stores a girl from UV told us about but they had just closed. We headed to the Comfort Inn and showered and read. We explored a little and found a playground at the ice cream place across the street. We hung out there a bit and I made some phone calls because Burlington is the only place in Vermont that my cell phone has worked, but it started thundering so we went in pretty soon and went to sleep.

Thursday, August 7.

Burlington Route 89 S. to route 189 to route 78 to 22 A two route seven S. Manchester route 30 S. Jamaica Manchester depot Jamaica.

Slept well last night got up and had continental breakfast. I got the cinnamon bread we had left in the car and toasted some of it. We claimed a table for ourselves out by the pool because there wasn't any room in the breakfast room. Then we were off making our way south. We stayed on the western side of the state and took route 22A for a more scenic route. We finally found where all the farmland and cows are. There were lots of fields full of purple, yellow, blue and white wild flowers too. We stopped in Manchester for lunch and went to a pizza place. It took a little longer then I liked, but the pizza was hot and delicious and the root beer yummy, so it was all good. We only walked down the block because there didn't seem to be that much around. We decided to go to Dorset Quarry, which I read about. It was down route 30 north a little bit. Man am I glad we decided to go there. It's the oldest quarry in America (1873). I guess they just filled it up with water. The beginning of the quarry had big marble slabs piled all around. The quarry was like a huge pool with 10 foot ledges that made a few levels. Apparently the pool is really really deep. A kid there told me there is a crane still down there but it's so far down you could never touch it. The best thing about this place was that it was so deep and no jagged random rocks so jumping in was really safe. We attempted a 25 foot one first. That was pretty great. Around the corner was a 40 foot trap. Jumping off that the first time I screamed like the girl I am and instinctively shut my eyes the second I hit the air. I always walk to the edge and jump, unlike most people who run and jump over. Looking down freaks me out some, but fear of running, slipping and cracking my head open, scares me a lot more. After a few times off the really high edge, it got to be even more fun as I got more used to it and kept my eyes open till I almost hit the water and all of my senses were more alert. I could feel my body pick up speed right before I splashed into the water. Man it was so exhilarating. Dad went in and swam out and climbed up to the first jump. He chickened out at the edge the first few couple couple of times. He's really scared of heights. I never really saw that of him. He finally jumped though and despite his only

comment being I got water up my nose. I think he enjoyed it, especially conquering his fear for those moments. Dad got his cameras and taped us, and took pictures of us, jumping off the high ledge. It will be crazy to see. We left the quarry and started driving to Jamaica. We were stuck behind a huge dump truck on a one lane country road for pretty much the whole ride which definitely almost doubled our driving time. We stopped at the Three Mountain Inn to check in and use the bathroom. It took forever. It was already like 5 PM, but we headed over to the state park entrance to try to hike up to Hamilton Falls anyway. We found out it was a 6 mile round trip and decided to wait till the next morning. The lady at the Ranger station gave us directions to Pike Falls, which you could drive to and just walk out a short way down because it wasn't in the park. So we did that made a left onto Pike Falls Road right off of route 30 north and stayed right at the fork to go over a bridge and then 3 miles up to a little pull out to park and walk down. The Falls were pretty and there was a nice big swimming hole but the water was pretty cold and it was gray and not that hot despite my effort to brave it and swim, I got out quickly. Not to mention the fact that it seemed a little boring after jumping off 40 foot ledges earlier in the day to just weighed in at the bottom of the fall. There was a boy playing the flute when we came to the fall and it was beautiful. He was really good, especially considering he didn't look more than 11 or 12. We scared them away when we arrive though. People seem to do that here. I know we do- It's kind a double thing you-enjoy your peace and quiet and it's kind of broken by the presence of others and you want to give them the same opportunity of peace and quiet. We skipped some stones or at least I tried to under instruction from Steve and then headed off for some dinner. We had discovered that there were no restaurants in Jamaica or anywhere nearby really, so we use that as an excuse to head back to Manchester to try the Best Diner we read about in the book and had spotted on our way to Jamaica. It was right on route 30 in Manchester depot and it was a much shorter drive without no dump truck in front of us. The ride was definitely

worth it and the book was right. My chocolate shake was amazing! They must've been over a pint of ice cream in it. It was so thick! We all got lots of different things and shared and it was amazing. I must take special note of Mom's tuna melt, Dad's chicken roasted in Vermont syrup and Steve's French toast. It was a good view of a big green mountain from our table too, which was great. We headed back to the end where the girls have a Cousy at a room. Dad came up and sang and played "Free man in Paris" with Gina. He had written to me about how he learned (relearned) that song after I sent him that picture of me and the Eiffel Tower. It was really nice. We danced around in towels and bathrooms for a bit and wrote in the journal they have for this room and then went to bed.

Friday, August 8.

Jamaica State Park, Route 30 E. to 95 south to 84 W. to 684 Home

We woke up at 7:25 to Bach on our cool CD alarm. We wanted to get an early start because we wanted to hike up to Hamilton Falls and be on the road by 1 PM. We packed up and having breakfast downstairs. Homemade home fries, sausage and a tomato ham and cheese omelette was what I had. Oh and there was this fresh pastry hot out of the oven, kind of like pie crust, and I think it had apricot in it. Then it took us like 30 minutes to pack up the car and go. We are so slow. We entered the park and didn't have to pay because we just had to tell them we stayed at the three mountain Inn. We parked and were the only car there. Their trail was flat and wide and ran along the West River for 2 miles. It was easy but kind of boring like walking on a dirt road for 2 miles. Then we made a right and the trail started going uphill and ran along the top of what was almost a gorge. Way down below was a stream full of little Falls and pools really tempting for swimming, but I had no idea how you would get down there. I guess that's

why the sign at the beginning said swimming was prohibited and that over 10 lives have been lost. There were lots of bugs flying into my face, ears, and hair and pretty much all over my body. It was pretty miserable. I was pretty bummed at the time because I was carrying my bathing suit and towel, but thought I couldn't swim. We reached the bottom of the fall and it was pretty spectacular. It was really high and narrow. There were huge slanted rocks that made up the fall. There was one little pool that was about 6 feet deep and a few other kids were venturing over there which I was glad to see. I took it as a signal for the go-ahead to swim. The water was cold, but I was hot, sweaty and full of bugs so it felt good. Gina was the only other one who went swimming. Everyone else wandered around waiting, and Mom impressed me by stepping from rock to rock in her hiking shoes and not getting wet. We saw a few frogs hopping around the wet and musty rocks. Other people started arriving and we had to get going so we did. Mom had to pee in the woods for like the fourth or fifth time? We recapped highlights of the trip and Mom went for peeing in the woods the most.

Best breakfast: Millbrook Inn.

Best overall lodging: Millbrook Inn.

Best water hole: Warren Falls

Best overall water hole experience: Buttermilk Falls.

Best drive route: 22A.

Best milkshakes: Best diner.

Best wings: Sweetwaters

Best blue cheese dressing: The Den.

I was pretty sad to leave Vermont. I felt my heart sink a little when we crossed into Massachusetts. I haven't felt that way about a vacation ending in a really long time. I absolutely loved Vermont. The whole state just had something about it, simple and beautiful, but still quiet and unassuming. It was great to be with the family too. We all got along really well with only a few understandable bad moods. I think now that I'm getting older

and have developed into more of a confident individual I can look at everyone in the family with more perspective and know them better.

The drive home began rather uneventfully, but after getting back onto Route 84 W. a little south of Hartford, Connecticut things began to get a bit hairy. There was about 5 mile back up that took us 30 minutes to get through caused by a disabled truck in a section with no shoulder. Then a few minutes later, we were in the left lane parallel to a truck with an attachment who's tire must've blown out because we uncomfortably watch them drag and crash along the guard rail. I hate driving on weekends in the summer. It's dangerous – everyone rushing and anxious to get away. Right after witnessing that accident, we saw one involving three cars on the other side of the highway. Seeing things like that is horrible and the worst part is that the best thing you can do in a situation like that is to keep driving.