

Tom Foolery

Meet The Nelsons

(Posted 4-9-2008)

Here's Ricky, played by Ricky Nelson. David, played by David Nelson. Harriet.....what? Wrong Nelsons? Let the editor deal with it.

If you were at Boreal Bay Lodge last year, and I'm guessing that a lot of you were, you had an opportunity to meet our hosts, the Nelsons. I've known the Nelsons for awhile now. Not as long as some, but longer than many, and I can honestly state that what you see is what you get. They are plain-talking regular folk, with regular dreams, regular ideas, and regular challenges. At least that's how they make it appear. But I've decided that it's time to dig a little deeper, and at risk of losing this job and the accompanying generous stipend, find out more about these people that make our stays so pleasant.

Girly

Everyone has to start somewhere, so I think I'll start with the newest member of the family, Girly, the lithe young lady with the jet black hair who wanders through the resort, leaving her mark, and making friends all along the way.

Though not a member of the family by birth, Girly was adopted by the Nelson family last year after being abandoned by her natural parents. It's a sad story heard much too often, but the Nelson's saw what needed to be done, and they did it. I tried to spend some time getting to know Girly a little better, but it is hard to get her to sit still and tell you what's on her mind. If I were to guess, I'd say that she spends a lot of time thinking about squirrels, rabbits, food in general, and where she is going to take her next nap.

While always friendly and always smiling, she seems to have the attention span of a brick and the appetite of an elephant. I guess dogs are just like that.

Amy

What can one say about Amy that hasn't already been said in verse and song?

At 10 years old, Amy is the youngest of the Nelson ladies. She is the one with the hair that is so blond, you wonder what her real hair color is. Friendly and personable, Amy developed her easy-going style while working as a Keebler Elf when she was 4 at their secret location six miles outside of Wabasha.

From there she went to Sea World of Ohio for two years where she taught young dolphins how to swim before returning home to Buffalo, and starting the second grade at the local public school. Now in the fourth grade, Amy fills her spare time by goading her mother into teaching her to cook (especially pizza), tending to her Webkins, and playing computer games either alone or with her friends.

Proof that Amy is really smart for her age is demonstrated by the fact that I am her favorite guy named Tom in the whole world. Amy's goal in life is to grow up to be just like her mother, but without all the rules. She may not know this, but Amy is my favorite of the Nelson girls (Don't tell Jenny).

Jenny

Jenny was so anxious to get out and see the world that she was born after only 27 weeks while still small enough to fit in your hand. Now 12 years old, Jenny has always enjoyed a challenge and left home to go to Venice, Italy at the tender age of 8. While there, Jenny got a job working in a pasta factory and developed a love for spaghetti that she still has today. After a year at the pasta factory, Jenny figured that she knew everything there was to know about pasta making, Italy, and Europe in general.

Catching a ride with a group of Slovakian circus people, Jenny made her way to Marseilles where she signed on as a cabin girl aboard a tramp steamer headed for Rio de Janeiro. Arriving just in time for Carnival, Jenny enjoyed the gala celebrations and the colorful night life in Rio for a week before she was forced to spend the last of her cabin girl money to buy a ticket home.

Returning to Buffalo, Jenny quickly settled back into the quiet life she had left behind. Because of her outgoing persona she easily reconnected with many of her old friends and loves to spend time with them talking about the Jonas Brothers, and sharing makeup tips.

Jenny looks forward to spending summers at Boreal Bay where she helps out around the lodge and gets to take an occasional turn at being in charge of the front desk. She may not know this, but Jenny is my favorite of the Nelson girls (Don't tell Amy).

Kevin

Then there is the patriarch of the family, Kevin. What can one say about Kevin that hasn't already been said in verse and song?

I first met Kevin right around the time that Jenny was born. I still remember him telling us that she was so small he could put his wedding ring on her arm. I had just moved to Minnesota from San Diego and Kevin was one of the first people I met at my new job. In fact Kevin was one of the guys that helped me acclimate by sharing a few tricks about driving in the ice and snow. They said "Drive fast and brake hard" and told me that the best way to clear ice off my windshield was with a bucket of hot water. I appreciated their help, but knew immediately not to trust any of them further than I could throw a piano.

Kevin was raised by wolves in the backwaters off of a northern Mississippi River oxbow. He learned to fish and hunt before he was 3, and was reading novels before he was 4. No, I don't know where a guy being raised by wolves gets novels. Please hold your questions until the end. In time, Kevin could no longer ignore his human roots, and when he was 9, he stuffed himself into a basket that he had placed on Den and Sue Nelson's front porch. He rang the bell, and when they answered he handed them a note that said he was an orphan and needed a home.

They took him in, cleaned him up, and adopted him as their own. Over the years Kevin's new father taught him how to fish, hunt, and be an all-around sportsman. This helped to instill a strong work ethic and sense of fair play in the growing young man. Sue taught Kevin some of the softer arts, like how to be polite, generous, and loving. You might notice that neither of them taught him to cook.

After high school, Kevin went into the family business (ala Michael Corleone), but soon found that it wasn't for him. He opted instead for a trade school where he learned to take advantage of his photographic memory and later got a job at an auto parts counter. Kevin can still tell you the part number for a head gasket on a 6-cylinder 1963 Chevy Nova, which proves that he's almost as smart as Marisa Tomei. But I digress. Suffice it to say that Kevin married Jean, then found a more or less stable job as a corporate drone until he saved enough Loonies to buy Boreal Bay Lodge with the desire to turn it into the world class fishing destination it deserves to be.

Jean

The matriarch, the mother, the doting wife, the fair-haired dynamo, the woman behind the man, the smile that shames the sun. That's our Jean.

I don't have a lot of facts to share about Jean, but that's never stopped me from writing about something before. Minnesotan by birth, Jean was raised somewhere in the state, and I think it might have even been around the Minneapolis St. Paul Megalopolis. then again. I could be wrong.

As a child, Jean longed to be on the Broadway stage and knew all the songs from My Fair Lady before she was six. Tragically, Jean's hopes for a show business career were cut short when she was a mere 11 years old and a seemingly routine case of the heebie-jeebies transmuted into an infection of her vocal cords that destroyed her ability to hit three notes; C sharp, F flat, and E major 7th. Devastated, Jean found solace in raising white mice, which she then sold to local pet stores and snake owners for a small profit that she had to share with the family.

After high school, where Jean had been a cheerleader, the towel-girl for the band, and a state-ranked pole vaulter, Jean back-packed across Europe and Asia searching for something that would fill the void in her heart. As she wandered across the continents, "If only I could sing" had become her mantra and obsession until the day she came upon a small convent just west of Kathmandu where the nuns were teaching deaf orphans how to sing with their hands. Seeing an opportunity to express herself through song, and being a typical American, Jean bullied her way into the classroom and was immediately pounced upon by four nuns who rapped her knuckles mercilessly with ornate, hand-carved rulers. After being escorted to the gate and asked to never return, Jean used the last of her mouse money to buy a one-way ticket home.

Knowing that she might one day have to stop sponging off her parents, Jean enrolled at the now defunct Fergus Falls College of Nursing and Institutional Cooking. After three years of hard work and perseverance, and after bringing three of the entrees back to life, Jean was awarded the school's only "Nursing in an Institutional Kitchen" degree. She then returned to the Twin Cities to look for work, only to find that institutional kitchens didn't need nurses.

Nearly broke and virtually homeless, Jean decided that her only hope for survival was to find a man to marry who could provide for her in a manner to which she would like to be accustomed. Figuring it a good way to meet people, Jean took a job at a local diner as a part-time hostess/waitress/cook, and began her search for Mr. Right. I think it was about 6 months later that Jean met Kevin at an intimate party hosted by her Mother's friend's hairdresser's first-cousin's best friend. I would like to say that it was love at first site, but those of you that have actually seen Kevin will find that to be rather farfetched. However, fate stepped in and by the end of the party they were, um, how can I put this? Bosom buddies. That works.

So, in order that I might escape from this tale quietly, let me just say that there was a courtship, a wedding, and two gorgeous daughters (and a few years) later they bought the lodge and Jean finally has Kevin where she can keep an eye on him. She may not know this, but Jean is my favorite of the Nelson girls
(Don't tell Kevin).

Oh, and they have a cat named Rusty.

Time for me to feed the dog,

Tom

