

Abby's Amblings – The Path

“Wow, only 15 hours to Nashville,” I exclaimed. After driving across a good portion of Canada, from BC to Ontario to visit family, this did not seem far at all.

I was just outside Sault Ste Marie on my sister Wanda's farm, and she was sharing a story of a trip down south and mentioned they had stopped in Nashville. As I was thinking of going back home to BC through the states, I thought, wow, a little visit would be fun. I'm in....

I think it prudent to mention here that as a hobby, I'd only been dabbling in songwriting a few years and had just acquired a cigarbox guitar I was learning to play. Wouldn't it be a hoot to find a little honky tonk open mic in Nashville to play at – just to say I did.



Next morning, bound for the border at Sault Michigan, me and Periwinkle (my little van all set up to travel with bed, etc.) were on an adventure. Pulling up at the crossing, the lady grilled me for about 15 minutes, then told me to pull it over. “Argh!” Now it was Mr Big Dude Border Control guy's turn to do the grilling, and after a few minutes, he comes out with “I know why you're going to Nashville; you're going to make a record.” To which I promptly laughed – “Sir, I will go and get my guitar and play for you, and then you will know that I'm not going to make a record, it's a hobby.” He was not at all impressed or convinced by this, remained insistent, and instructed me to leave all my belongings and go upstairs to the waiting area. “Argh!”. After waiting two hours, he returns and says I'm good to go. Thinking my van will be in pieces, I head downstairs, only to find that nothing was even touched. Wonder what he was doing for two hours??? Back on the road, I reflected with amusement that he thought I was going to make a record. I mean seriously dude, you can't just show up in Nashville and make a record. “Sheesh!”

Having time on my hands, I meandered down back roads and drove along Lake Michigan, a most beautiful journey. Pulling into Nashville a few days later, I decided it was time to find a hotel and give the body a rest. Sipping my coffee the next morning, checking out AirBnB, I find a little acreage just outside of Nashville with rooms to rent, by a fellow who has a group called the Love Drums. Ummm, ok.... His response was quick, he had a room if I could be there within an hour, as he was headed to a music festival. “Festival? Did you say festival? Can I go??? Next thing I know, I'm winding my way up through the gorgeous Tennessee hills to a music festival on a farm, with a plan to meet up with fellow I'm going to rent a room from.

Pulling into a big farmer's field, I hear the primal beat of some amazing drumming- must be him. After introductions, I pick a fine piece of field real estate to spend the weekend, park my little Periwinkle and I'm off to explore. What a beautiful set-up, complete with stages and vendors. Stopping at the tie-dye tent, I get chatting with the owner who says “Go get your cigarbox guitar and play some tunes, see if we can rustle in some customers.” Sure, what the heck. So, there I was, somewhere in the hills of Tennessee playing my songs for the tie-dye guy on a funky little farm.

We did draw in a few people, one of them being a reporter from the Macon County Times who came over to see what was going on. All of a sudden, this woman who had been watching me play steps in and says “This lady is from Canada and she's come to Nashville to make a children's record.” WHAAAAAT!!!! No, no, no, I'm NOT here to make a record. Fresh off my stint with Mr Border Patrol, I begin looking over my shoulder to see if this is a set up. I quickly assured the reporter that I was just a visitor passing through on my way home. “Ok, but can I take a picture, I love your cigarbox guitar.” she says. Why not, what can it hurt.

After a thoroughly enjoyable festival with friendly folk and great music, I packed up and followed The Love Drums back to the Nashville acreage where my rental room, along an awesome little village of wonderful people, awaited. A few days later while on my computer, I thought with some amusement, “hey, I should check out the Macon County Times and see if my picture is in there. One never knows. And there I was, big

picture, with the caption “Canadian woman comes to Nashville to make children’s record.” “Ahhhhhhh!” I sure hope that Border guy doesn’t read the Macon County Times! Why would she print that, and what was with the children’s record? Oh well, not much I could do, so I moved on to see if I could find an open mic.

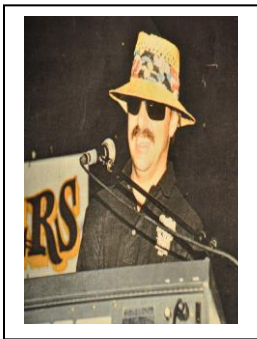


Bluebird had one – hahahaha – not a chance, way outta my league. But there was one, a little honky-tonk bar called Turn One that said anything and everything welcome. Now that sounded way more my style. Once there, Jimmy, the host, came over and said I was more than welcome to play. What a fun time, folks were very supportive and friendly, I had a blast. So much so, I decided to stay another week and go back.

The following week, a few of the locals got up with me, including a washtub bass, too fun. Afterwards, Jimmy the host invited me to come back Friday night, as his old band was getting together to play. I couldn’t refuse an offer like that, so Friday night found me back at that little bar, listening to a top-notch band playing fantastic music. I was very impressed - until intermission when Jimmy yells out “Abby, get your geetar, I know it’s in your van, come and play with the boys.” Are you nuts? I’m not getting up there with those guys, get real. But he wouldn’t take no for an answer and since the band was more than encouraging, I thought “what the heck,” and went for it. There are no words to explain the feeling of having very accomplished musicians playing your songs. I never knew they could sound like that and I kept messing up because I was so busy listening them play. It was aaaaaamazing. I floated off the stage having one of the most memorable experiences of my life. Wow. I think I need to stay another week.

And that’s just what I did. Walking in the following week, the whole bar shouted “Abby”, just like “Norm” of the show Cheers. It was so sweet. While sitting and chatting with Jimmy afterwards, I asked him if he knew a dobro player, as one of the fellows at the acreage was looking for one. Yup, so the next day I called the number he gave me, said my name is Abby and Jimmy gave me your number. The voice on the line says “Abby, the one with the cigarbox guitar?” “Ummm, yes,” I replied, who the heck knows me??? Well, it turns out it’s the keyboard player in Jimmy’s band. “I loved playing your songs the other night, do you want to record them?” he says. Well shut the front door!!!! I can’t believe this is happening, as I nervously glance over my shoulder for the Border Patrol guy. Turns out he has a recording studio, plays multiple instruments, and loves to help and support new artists. Show up, record vocals, and he will fill in the rest. Seriously, you have got to be kidding me. Nope, he wasn’t, and that folks, is how Abby’s Amblings came to be.....

The border guy knew, the lady at the tie-dye tent knew, the Macon County Times reporter knew, but I sure didn’t. It still feels surreal, the Universe has a wonderful sense of humour.



And this talented, heartfull man, Rojo Marlowe from Nashville, and I continue working together to this day. We recently released our second CD – “Abby’s Amblings II- A Little Further Down the Path.” But since my friends love this story so much, I decided to combine the two CDs and include it. And that’s a wrap.....

The musical community I have had the good fortune to become a part of is simply – the best. I would like to acknowledge and honour with the utmost appreciation, those who have supported, encouraged, and made all this possible... thank you just doesn’t seem to be enough. There for the grace of you– go I

- Rojo Marlowe – Nashville TN – all instruments
- Anthony Sharky – Risque Disc Records – Nanaimo BC - vocal recordings
- Paul Bezooyen – The Hermit’s Music – Nanaimo BC – harmonies, vocal recording, mixing, manufacturing
- Linda Bezooyen and Meg Keene – Nanaimo BC - harmonies