

Summer

2017



Sandesh

“The Message”

A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

From Editors' Desk ...

Summer is undoubtedly the best season in Wisconsin. The pastures are lush green, the rivers and lakes are inviting and the days are cozy and warm. Summer passes quickly, rather too quickly, compared to the lingering long happy times of our childhood. Summer memories are a treasure trove of stories of camping, fishing, swimming, boating, hiking or just lounging around and doing absolutely nothing. In this Sandesh, we bring to you some delightful summer memories from our contributors. Happy reading!

Sandhya Sridhar



Message from the IndUS President

I am sure you will enjoy this edition of Sandesh as much as the beautiful summer in Wisconsin. The editorial committee has worked hard to make this edition informative and interesting. Big kudos to the team.

Our executive committee is actively forming partnerships with other non-profits, who share our common goals of fostering diversity, education & outreach, and giving back to the community. We are happy to announce a collaboration with CDFC (Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities) in organizing a picnic on Saturday, August 19, 2017 at Jefferson Park's main pavilion. Join us in our attempt to make friends and understand other cultures of our community while having fun.

We are excited and in the process of partnering with the Appleton Public Library in formulating a series of diversity

events focused on various cultures throughout the year.

We wish Kamal Varma (ex-president of IndUS) and Badri Varma (ex-chief-editor of Sandesh) good luck with their recent move to Boca Raton, FL. Kamal and Badri have chaired many committees and have been instrumental in the growth of IndUS. Their passion for the mission is so strong that they will continue to offer their help from Florida as needed.

We also urge you to renew your membership to IndUS if you haven't done so already. It will ensure your participation in general body meetings and in making important decisions.

Enjoy summer and looking forward to seeing you all at various IndUS events.

Sridevi Buddi

Sandesh

**An IndUS of Fox Valley
Publication**

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*The views expressed in the articles
are not necessarily those of the
Editors or IndUS of Fox Valley*

Reflections of Summer

By Shannon VanStraten



As a teacher, June is always a month of reflection. What were the greatest successes of the school year, and how can I recreate them with the next group of kiddos? What ideas didn't I get to implement that I can try to fit in next year? What didn't go so well that I need to tweak, adapt, change, overhaul, or completely throw out? Did I meet my academic goals? My personal goals? Did I help my students reach their goals? Did I prepare my eighth graders well enough to tackle their upcoming high school challenges? What do I need to write down while it is still fresh in my mind so that I won't forget it come September? Where did all of my pens and pencils go? Seriously, do the students eat them?

While I let my reflective brain wander, I find myself considering how different summer vacation was when I was a student, rather than a teacher. And if summer vacation is meant to recharge our mental and emotional batteries, how can I infuse my teacher-summertime with some of the best parts of my student-summertime? For me, the answer is outside.

Growing up in Hobart, my family had a few acres of land surrounded by the greatest woods a kid could ask for. And having always been a cold-weather-wimp, I appreciated

every moment of Wisconsin summer in that yard and those woods. It also didn't hurt that my mom's answer to "I'm bored" was always, "We have two toilets you could clean." My siblings and I learned very early on to make the most of every moment and create our own fun.

My favorite summer days were spent outside creating imaginary worlds or just exploring the beautiful world in front of me. Some days I was Karana from *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, building my shelter, foraging for food, spearing fish (*okay, they were leaves...*) in the river, and outwitting the wild dogs that lived on the island (*okay fine...it was our yellow lab, Sandy*). Other days Katie, Brianna, and I were mermaids that had been granted legs for one day only and were allowed to explore this place called "land". And while I never was quite brave enough to climb the trees that so desperately called my name, I did make an admirable fort inside a grove of trees to use as my own personal outdoor reading nook. Then when my siblings and I had exhausted our imaginations in the backyard, we would take a quick bike ride down the road to what is now Thornberry Creek, but was then an amazing amusement park of a mud pit. We spent hours climbing mountains of dirt and

mud, finding and counting thousands of tadpoles and returning each week to check on their progress as developing frogs.

Some of my other favorite memories of backyard summers weren't so happy at the time, but now make me chuckle any time I think of them. Like the time I was convinced I had rabies... A poor little mouse had fallen into the creek so naturally, I hopped in to save him. I scooped him up with a handful of water and leaves and quickly ushered him to the safety of the bank, only to be thanked with a swift chomp to the thumb. As I cried at the pain, my dear friend Brett checked out the wound and said, in what I'm sure he thought was a consoling and empathetic way, "Looks like you have rabies now." After a day of panic, I eventually broke down and told my mom what happened, and in her amazing-mom-way, she made everything better. And then, of course, there is the story that my poor brother, Ryan, will never live down - the day he destroyed the pool. (*This also happens to be one of my favorite stories to tell my students.*) Many summer days were spent in the backyard pool. It was an above-ground pool with sides that, mom made very clear, "were **NOT** meant for sitting." But why, Ryan asked? They seem sturdy enough. Let me just hop up here

and sit in the sun for a bit... Oh no big brother, they are not sturdy enough. What I wouldn't give to have been able to see his face as the wall collapsed and over 6,000 gallons of water rushed him, in a surfable wave, down the hill of the backyard and into the garden below. Time seemed to stand still and no one believed for a moment that. That. Had. Actually. Just. Happened. Thankfully he was safe and unharmed, but needless to say, he spent the rest of the summer (*and probably a few of the following summers*) working to pay back the money it cost to repair the pool. Lesson learned kids - listen to mom. She knows what she's talking about.

While my teacher- summers are now mostly spent completing graduate coursework, attending

planning meetings, adjusting and creating unit plans, and learning new curriculum, I do try to keep some of my favorite student-summer traditions. Hiking, biking, running, and walking the dog outside all bring me right back to my childhood-summer-self. Only now I've traded exploring the imaginary lands in my backyard for exploring new cities and states and countries as I check places off my travel list. These outdoor adventures, from the shortest walk down the Fox River Trail, to the most spectacularly breathtaking hike up Machu Picchu mountain, make my heart happy and recharge my mental and emotional batteries. I've done my reflecting; I've looked back and I've learned. Now as I look forward to what this summer will bring, I know

three things for certain: I am so very lucky, I will make time to enjoy the outdoors, and I will try not to get bitten by any mice or break any pools along the way.

Shannon VanStraten is a teacher at Leonardo da Vinci School for Gifted Learners in Green Bay. She has been a teacher for nine years and absolutely loves it. She has been a bilingual, fourth grade teacher at Eisenhower Elementary. Currently she teaches at the middle level, working with students in grades 6-8 grades. She was born and raised in Green Bay, and even though the winters are harsh, she says, it's a pretty great place to call home..



It Is Still Possible To Get Lost: Our Summer Road Trips In This Mostly-Empty America

By Alex Hummel

Somewhere around 1995, I read Jack Kerouac's "On the Road." Then, I happened upon Steinbeck's "Travels with Charley" in moldy paperback buried in my folks' basement. Both prose travelogues, written in dreamy, feverish and languid lines. Read them both. Loved them both. A year or so later, I met my future wife. We became fast friends and, in short order, fell in love. Within our first year together, we decided we'd make the kind of epic American road trips both Kerouac and Steinbeck had chronicled. And so we set

out in the summer of 1997 from Appleton to and through the American West, our summer getaway, ending in San Francisco. Broken DNA strands of Route 66 would be the favored way. It was romantic, close, scary, frustrating, devastatingly beautiful, lonely, enduring, endearing, and a big awakening to the fact that most of America is still open, empty, unseen stars, oil refinery plumes in the darkness, scrubby railroad spurs, otherworldly radio static in between small towns like a phantom gravity and, to quote

Kerouac, "that engine calling our mountains."

I love America and to be on the road in our everlasting fixer-upper of a car.

So, there was born my wife Brenda's and my love of road trips. Our relationship was sort of forged and strengthened on these summertime marathons. After Route 66 west, we've done (sometimes with a friend

or two in tow) trips from the Fox Valley to Washington D.C.; Bend, Oregon; Toronto, Canada; Western New York State. We'd love to venture down south and into the southeastern swelter of the country. There's time.

So much of America is, as they say, "flyover country" these days. It's a shame. We fly, we forget, we fracture. We don't see the ground-level grand portraits... and the problems. A road trip gets you up close and personal—sometimes brings you to tears by the clarion beauty. We often get lost, and that is one of the big bonuses, however temporarily maddening it may be for us.

Yes, one's car turns into a garbage scow, drowning in coffee cups, unsweetened tea bottles and potato chip bags. That's okay. Plenty of time to clean out at the destination... or the end. More often than not, however, the road winds its way to a tarnished diner or a highway fruit stand or "Dateland" in southern California, which had the most delicious, sugary, rich and refreshing date shake one will ever consume. We've driven (and ridden trolley cars, buses, subways, cabs, and host-friends' Hondas, etc.) to nurse Irish coffees on Fisherman's Wharf, inhale buttermilk fried chicken in Charlotte and drink old fashioned cocktails on

the front porch of the Roycroft Inn in Aurora, N.Y., where, my father-in-law—in an obvious state of peace and presence after trying his first boozy sip—said "well... it's a sipper."

America, on the road, is also a big mystery. An oddity. It is as weird as it is majestic, and just about any trip you take is replete with evidence. One morning, you're heading through Colorado and those purple clouds you've been watching on the horizon slowly turn to rock. They are foothills, and mountains, and peaks, and harrowing switchbacks, and then you're down and out and on your way to the ocean. Then, next morning, you're passing by a graveyard of cars some guy has turned into art... or that big Green Giant in southern Minnesota (where they can grow vegetables and, clearly, are proud of it). Or Spam museums. Or alligator shows in South Dakota. Or mustard, or corn and any other banal thing you can think of that someone has made a museum for. Combs? Did we see one for combs and brushes? ... I can't remember. Long story short, the eccentricities are as mind-blowing as the monuments.

And, as with any road trip, it's usually a two-way journey. So, you either rewind or find a new route back. Invariably, things will

look different with the compass pointing a new way. You lament the end but long for home, and you count yourself lucky for the laughter, which, in our experience, develops in vastly greater quantities than the periods of quiet. For Brenda and me, it is the laughter and the wonder on road trips that reconnect us to one another and to this giant, complicated country. Every adventure ebbs and flows differently from the last, imprinting itself on our timeline.

"We should take a road trip," she'll say. And, I might hem and haw at first but, eventually, am right with her. And with no consultation of Kayak or logging into Southwest's app, we make time, pack some bags, gas up, point the car in the right direction and go, go, go.

Alex Hummel lives in Oshkosh with his wife Brenda Haines, is a co-founder and owner of a marketing and consulting company. Both are strong supporters of the community's and region's revitalization and growth. Alex is a former newspaper journalist. He also previously served as a community and school educator with Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services Inc. He now works in the Office of the Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Summer Quote

Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.

Henry James (source: <http://www.thefreshquotes.com/summer/>)



My Summer Self

By Pooja Bambha Arora

“A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing and the lawn mower is broken.”

James Dent

Every summer has a story and there are so many stories I would love to tell. Summer ends that longing inside my aching heart. It lets me connect with nature. It's an open invitation to come and explore the abundance of nature. A childhood memory that I cherish of enjoying summer abundance, is eating mangoes with my siblings in India. Coming from India, my love for this oblong juicy pulpy stone fruit is immense. There are over 400 varieties of mangoes available in India. No wonder that it is the national fruit. The very peculiar and prominent paisley pattern that we find in Indian art and clothes is inspired from the very shape of a mango. Mango skin is also used in Ayurvedic medicines. It is known to have properties to beat the heat and cure the body of unwanted toxins during summer. Besides having summers off from school, the reason I would look forward to the hot and sultry North Indian summer was to eat all varieties of mango. There were a lot of homemade mango drinks, mango pickles, mango chutneys, mango candy, mango shakes and mango ice cream. My mom complained sometimes, about us being off from school

during summer, and having to cook for us all day long, but being a kid, I looked forward to the food that came out of my mom's kitchen. Most of the lunches were served by sitting us down on bamboo floor mats. Desert coolers would circulate refreshing cool air while we ate. We were advised to stay indoors during afternoons when temperatures peaked. We would eagerly wait for the clock to chime 5 so we could go out to play hopscotch with friends in the neighborhood. The ice cream cart would show up, sending us back home to beg for ice cream from our parents.

When it comes to summer vacations, there is usually a road trip. Our family road trips in India were mostly to my Aunt's house in Dehradun, also known as Doon Valley in the foothills of Himalayas. Dehradun was well connected to other Himalayan tourist places like Mussoorie and Haridwar. We would travel to those places as well. Being a foodie, I have a fond memory of picking out fresh lychees from an orchard near my Aunt's house. Doon Valley is known for good lychees. I would finish a full carton of lychees with my cousins the very weekend we reached there. Lychee is a dense juicy fruit with the texture of a grape and it can be called a close relative of rambutan (if you have tried that). To delve deeper into the description of a lychee, as soon

as your teeth peel its outer bright, scrubby red skin, you taste the juiciest blend of sweet, tart and floral scent through its translucent flesh. That first bite of a fresh lychee plucked from a tree in an orchard near my Aunt's house after hard work of climbing the tree was a bliss.

After coming to the United States, the story of summer has changed for me. I desperately look forward to warm summer weather after harsh winters of East Coast and the Midwest. What I love about summer in this country is again tied to enjoying nature's bounty during the season – including fresh blueberries, strawberries, peaches, picking them up from farms. Nature has its own way of giving us the right produce to beat the heat. We moved to Green Bay area in August 2015 from Buffalo, New York and few things I truly relish in Wisconsin are the visits to farmers market in Green Bay and farms in Door County. I look forward to exploring more natural treasures of Wisconsin, make more happy memories and have more summer stories to tell.

I believe that Mother Nature gives us an open invitation to enjoy her beauty during this season when the weather is warm and everything is blooming. I look forward to connecting with nature and it's produce during summer. I like to take

long walks in state parks, catch a summer concert by the river and visit farms. Another good thing about summer is that I can step out in summer dresses and flip flops without worrying about packing myself into layers.

While summer can become as hectic as the rest of the year with road trips, backyard barbecues, summer events and countless engagements, I always make sure to relax and enjoy the idleness of summer. On weekends, I wake up little later and sit on the patio to soak up some sun and store vitamin D reserves for rest of the year (research shows that we can do that). In these super busy times

that we live in, I am slowly easing myself into unplugging from social media and the insane pace of life, especially during summer. I am learning to live in the moment. I hear birds chirp, watch butterflies flutter, notice leaves rustle in mild breeze and appreciate beauty of blossoming geraniums and black-eyed susans. It's a little dose of detox we can give ourselves by tuning into little joys of nature that surround us.

After all, summer gives us an opportunity to press the pause button of our fast-paced lives. It allows us to give ourselves permission to stop and smell the roses... literally and metaphorically. Isn't

that what life is all about?

Pooja is a Ph. D. candidate at State University of New York, Buffalo (SUNY). While working on her dissertation, she worked as an adjunct instructor and writing consultant at the same university. She is a writer, a foodie, a movie buff, an acting enthusiast and a folk singer. She loves to perform folk dances from India. She loves to travel and make new friends. Being a new addition to the area, she looks forward to exploring North East Wisconsin with her family.



Reflections of Summer

This picture was taken by one of our editors Dr. Gaurav Bansal using his iPhone in June 2017 at Green Isle Park in Green Bay. Seen here is the reflection of the trees and the clouds above in the East River flowing below.

IndUS News

IndUS held its annual banquet on November 19th, 2016 at Radisson Paper valley hotel. The theme showcased was Holistic India. The annual gala was attended by 500 guests who were introduced to the wellness and holistic aspect of Indian culture. Our guests could attend the interactive sessions with knowledgeable practitioners of various methods of alternate healing like Mudra healing/ Reiki, Ayurveda, Yoga and Chakra healing. There were live sessions on naturopathy and mental health as well. A very wholesome and healthy dinner was prepared by chef Manjit which appealed to our guests' discerning palette. Dr. Susan Taylor was the keynote speaker for the evening. She is a nationally recognized researcher and speaker on meditation. Our audience gained much insight about the power of healing through meditation. The cultural program offered much need calming music and soulful melodies. The evening was beautiful and offered everyone an opportunity to make their lives better with simple holistic practices.

Highlands Elementary School hosted multicultural night event on Thursday Feb 9th, 2017. It was attended by a good number of people. Our booth represented



Indian culture with display of clothes, jewelry, art, henna tattoos and food samples. Kids loved samosas, mango juice, carrot halwa. Henna tattoos drew most of the crowd to our booth.

Huntley Elementary School organized their Multicultural Night on March 16th, 2017. There were



over 10 booths of various countries and cultures. IndUS of Fox



Valley was one of them. It was well attended by staff, students, families, and community members. Guests had an opportunity to learn about India and its culture through pictures, food, clothes, henna, and other artifacts. As usual, henna and samosas were the most popular items! Children also enjoyed trying on salwar kameez and wearing bindis. Overall, our booth received lots of positive feedback. It couldn't have been possible without the hard work of IndUS members and volunteers.

Ferber Elementary Multicultural Night IndUS participated in the Ferber Multicultural Arts night held on April 21, 2017. Over 500 people attended the



event and the India display was a huge draw. With food, henna tattoos and a display of information, our volunteers enjoyed taking the



students and their families through this cultural experience.

Annual Diversity Fair at Neenah High School was held on Friday, April 21st, 2017. IndUS booth has always been a popular spot for over seventeen years. There were long lines for getting henna tattoos. Tandoori chicken and samosas were the hottest selling items. The food sale and henna generated \$250. The amount will be donated to a worthy cause. See a news-clip at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?sns=fb&v=8E6wXLxTg0E>



Diversity Discovery Day at children's museum was organized by the Building for Kids and Celebrate Diversity of Fox Cities on Saturday, May 6th, 2017. It was attended by over a 1000 people. Not only does the event provide an experience of different cultures to young children, but is absolute-



free. IndUS this year chose a theme of festivals of India. The two featured festivals were Diwali and Sankranti highlighting the rit-



ual of flying kites. The booth was decorated with colorful kites, drawing in the most crowd. Kids made floating rangolis. There was lot excitement. They also tried Indian clothes and had the most fun getting henna tattoos. Dipanwita Datta of Green Bay performed Kathak dance (see a clip at <https://www.facebook.com/buildingforkids/videos/10155059274450751/>.

ly A tray of savory samosas was also donated by IndUS to the volunteers' luncheon at the museum.

Bollywood Gharana Concert was presented under our long-standing tradition of spring concert on Friday, May 19th at West High School, Green Bay. The artist featured were Abhijit Pohankar on keyboards, Aditya Kalyanpur on tabla and Nash Naubert on flute. The trio started with pure



Hindustani classical style moving to Bollywood ghazals and contemporary pieces. They displayed the nuances of ragas as well as the intricacy of ghazal style performance, with such grace and beauty that our audience were in complete trance! The artists also displayed their finesse by playing favorite ragas and showing off their perfected skill with sheer harmony and passion! It was certainly a night to remember as the music stayed with us all throughout! We are thankful to Schreiber Foods for providing a grant to bring these artist to North East Wisconsin.

Sonu Pareek

Summer Quote

I am Summer, come to lure you away from your computer... come dance on my fresh grass, dig your toes into my beaches.

Oriana Green (source: <http://www.thefreshquotes.com/summer/>)

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*(Co-chair, IndUS-2017)***IndUS of Fox Valley, Inc*****Mission***

IndUS of Fox Valley is dedicated to promoting Indo-American friendship and goodwill by serving the community through social, cultural, educational and charitable activities.

Upcoming IndUS 2017 Banquet Event***Theme: Royals of India***

Saturday, November 18, 2017

5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Venue: Radisson Paper Valley Hotel Appleton

Highlights:

Exhibition
Social Hour
Authentic Indian Cuisine
Cultural Program

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