Land of Blue Smoke

I have often thought about where I want to live when I finish high school in Los alamos. Most students my age are looking to go away to a large university, with thoughts of fraternity parties, friends, and new experiences. I, however, have only one place in mind to move to when I graduate from high school. I plan to return to my mom’s home state of Tennessee, to live in my grandparents’ house in the country, just outside the Smoky Mountains. Fortunately, the country house is less than an hour from the University of Tennessee (UT) main campus in Knoxville. I hope to attend UT and be able to embrace living in the land of my family heritage. East Tennessee is the most beautiful, friendly, entertaining, and peaceful place I have ever visited.

I grew up visiting east Tennessee every summer of my life. This was the highlight of each year. The geography is one of the reasons I love it so much. I love rain and can sit and watch rain for hours. When I visit our place in Tennessee, I get many opportunities to enjoy the rain. As a result of the extensive rainfall in the area, the Tennessee hills and Smoky Mountains are beautiful, lush and green from May through September. I particularly enjoy watching the extensive quantity of Kudzu in the area. While most might view this thick green vine as an invasive species, I love the see the deep green leaves that typically cover hills, telephone poles and abandoned buildings. The early morning fog of the Smoky Mountains is the most breathtaking seen I have every viewed. I love getting up early and just watching the daily fog rise from the mountains. This is truly the land of blue smoke.

My grandparents’ property is surrounded by trees and lots of green grass, therefore, I can enjoy the beauty by just sitting in the rocking chair on the front porch and be surrounded by green. Additionally, the property is alive with wild animals, including squirrels, chipmunks, birds and many other critters who also enjoy the woods.

I enjoy being around the people of East Tennessee. The southern people are the most friendly, kind and helpful individuals I have encountered. The country neighbors near my grandparents’ property have informally adopted me as their own. As soon as we arrive, the neighbors visit, bring lots of wonderful homemade treats, and include me in their day to day activities. Several of these neighbors have become surrogate family for me. They often ask me to join them with caring for their animals and helping with chores on their farms. Additionally, I have extended family in the area, with whom I love to visit. My grandfather’s brother, Uncle Zack, lives a few miles away from our property. I love spending time with him and hearing stories of my grandfather and him growing up on their family farm in the 1940s. Being in the area and around so many friends and family allows me to connect with the previous generations and helps history come alive for me.

I also enjoy this area because of the extensive number of things to do. I have never been bored when I visit east Tennessee. Although our place is in the country, surrounded by trees and acres of land, we are only a few minutes to town. The town has extensive restaurants, retail opportunities, and in the old down town, over-head sidewalks. My family loves to just crank up my mom’s old ‘79 Mustang and just drive the country back roads. One of the best drives is know as the Tail of the Dragon, with over 300 curves in eleven miles! The community is surrounded by lakes, on which we often take the family boat. My favorite lake is Cherokee Lake, which hosts 400 miles of coastline. Our family goes on the lake even in winter. When we are not on the lake or driving the back roads, we often visit Dollywood and the Smoky Mountains National Park. The options for entertainment in this area seem limitless to me. My most favorite activity though, is just sitting on our front porch in the old-fashioned rocking chairs, watching the neighbor’s donkeys and goats graze on our land, listening to the freight trains as they pass in the distance.

East Tennessee is the most beautiful, entertaining, and peaceful place I have ever visited. I look forward to living there and going to school in the land of my dreams, surrounded by family, lush green rolling hills, and blue smoke (fog) rising from the mountains.