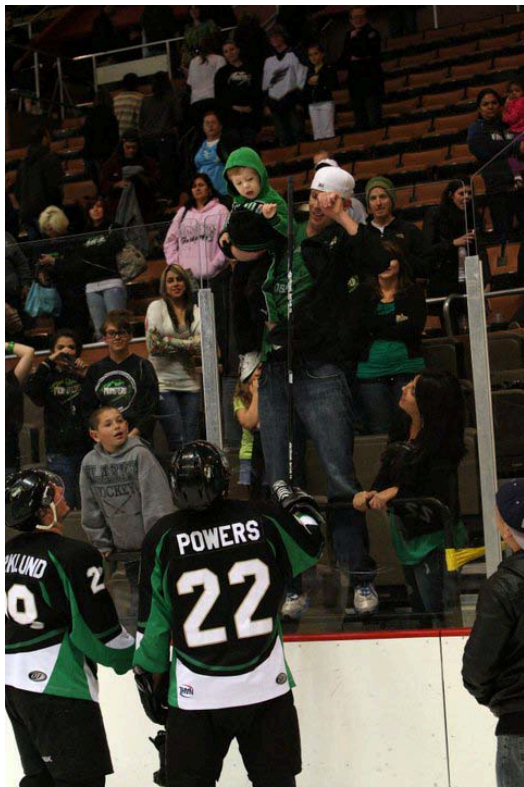


“Billet” is a word you don’t hear a lot, unless you are in the military, or involved in amateur hockey. Throughout Canada and Europe it is not uncommon for young men to leave home at a very young age and live with host families to pursue their hockey dreams. Two years ago, the Fresno Monsters had their inaugural year of amateur hockey. We missed going to Falcons professional hockey games, so we bought season tickets. We fell in love with the group of young men, ages 16-20 that came to town. They came from the northeastern states, Southern California, Finland and Sweden, etc. They seemed to be like a big group of funny puppies! Families that hosted the young men seemed to have wonderful experiences, but I watched from afar. The idea of hosting a boy would pop into my head every now and then, but I would push it away, and go on with my life. I was too busy. I came up with thousands of ideas why we shouldn’t house a player. However, a moment of clarity (or insanity) came, and we decided to give it a try! What did we have to loose, and maybe we could make a difference in the life of a young man who is pursuing his hockey dreams. And perhaps we might be paying it forward for our grandsons.



I will say that without a doubt, it is one of the best decisions we’ve ever made. Last year, we hosted players from Switzerland, Sweden and Rhode Island (almost a foreign country). We lived through their season with pride when they had success and tried to console after losses. We learned so much about them, their countries and their hockey journey. Our whole family, but mostly our grandsons, benefited from the experience.

At the last game of the season, Johan, (our Swede of 9 months) aged out of junior hockey. He skated to the glass, and retired his stick to grandson Landon, who cherishes it. He then reached for 3 year old Skylor, and took final laps on the ice at Selland Arena with Skylor in his arms.

Billeting players is not for the faint of heart. It is work taking young athletes into your home, but the benefits you gain far outweigh the hours of work you put in. The very hardest part is saying good bye.

If you’ve been considering hosting a player and just need a bit of a nudge, please don’t hesitate to contact me, and I can answer any questions you might have. We are still in need of homes for players he will be arriving in August.

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