



Fall is a walk down a long trail of shadows, a pause in the shortening light of evening, a glance over the shoulder at the field of summer memories withering to husks and chaff. The heart prepares for the dark time ahead, yet lingers briefly, casting backward at things gone. I like fall trips over old ground. In that spirit, my friends and I rolled north bound for Port Townsend. We crossed the Columbia River, spinning along the causeway to the voice of Greg Brown singing travelling music of a time past:

"It's November of '63 and the brand new Dodge is a '64... Jesus loves our President, even though he is a Catholic, there is a lot for a boy to think about as he walks along the railroad track. It's a brand new Dodge."

For many years we travelled seasonally to Port Townsend at the close of summer. It seemed right, somehow, a chance to leave our place and recover from the tourist blues, pull a turnabout and play the fool in someone else's backyard. In September, the Traditional Wooden Boat Festival occurs there, the salmon return to Puget Sound, Hoods Canal ruffles in the light airs of autumn. Port Townsend and our own Cannon Beach share many qualities: a real or perceived artiness, major bodies of adjacent water, a genial, "mellow" citizenry, and a strong natural tourist draw.

We slip through the foothills south of Willapa Bay, the once densely forested slopes of old growth reseeded into scruffy second and third growth "plantations," a forest product industry catchword for experimental gardens of mixed forest (a "working forest" of raggedy conifers and alder thickets). The old giants were ripe. Their harvest necessary. The ghost of Jerry Garcia joins Peter Rowan on the car stereo for a few verses of "Old and in the Way" as we pass through Shelton, Washington:

"Old and in the way, I thought I heard them say, they used to heed the words he said, but that was yesterday."

We skew off eastward toward Hoods Canal. Near the canal the W.P.S./Satsop nuclear towers loom above the bottomland, huge ice cream cones of concrete from a gone time.

Finally we reach Hoods Canal, a long glacially scoured waterway that we skirt north to the Sound and Port Townsend. In transit we pass through a flea market of townships: Hamma Hamma, Quilcene, Humpulips, Duckabush, and the Skokomish Reservation. Thunder Boy and Sky Warrior Fireworks stands, convoluted and rust scarified car bodies, and "DMSO For Sale Here" signs line the roadway through Skokomish. Gambling casinos appear sure to follow for the descendents of the first people. I shudder to myself and succeed in nodding off.

On the West Coast, many special places, if not reached by water, require you to actually "drop in" from above as you approach from a distance. The prospect startles you suddenly; the panorama, pleasing, unfolds at your feet. Cannon Beach, Carmel, and Port Townsend are notable examples. Port Townsend, like Astoria, had grand plans and flourish in the days of sail. Remnants linger. Renovated Victorian buildings dot the hills above the city. The Upper Town which existed separate from, and above, the prim and proper Downtown business district, served the carnal needs of maritime visitors in days passed. The bordellos and palaces of pleasure now provide bed and breakfast lodging for tourists in sleek German sedans.

Downtown, at wharfside, the traditional wooden boat craftsmen and salty atmosphere linger, despite inroads made by merchandising and tourist pandering. The sheer concentrations of tourists/visitors here seem less overwhelming, less abrasive, than at home. But the mechanisms are in place for a push toward accelerated growth. A new Safeway Market and related mall have appeared. Several tiers of condos slipped shoreside since my last visit. Espresso kiosks and t-shirt shops have popped up like pimples. We stop to inspect a 40's vintage Indian motorcycle, beautifully restored. It exudes romance and vibrates adventure. The horn is sculpted and fashioned in the image of an Indian warrior with full-feathered headdress. As I stare at it, I can't shake the image of the new, block-long gambling casino we passed north of Port Townsend, its acres of parking filled to capacity on Sunday morning.

We leave town for the seclusion of Discovery Bay. Greg Brown's "Boomtown" appears on the car stereo's menu. I listen and ponder the fate of towns like Port Townsend and our own Cannon Beach:

"Here come the tourists with their blank stares,

And their fanny packs--they are penny millionaires.

Something interesting happened here long ago.

Now where people used to live their lives

The restless come and go...It's a boomtown."



Christians hold that their faith does good, but that other faiths do harm...What I wish to maintain is that all faiths do harm. We may define faith as a firm belief in something for which there is no evidence. When there is evidence, no one speaks of faith. We do not speak of faith that two and two are four or that the earth is round. We only speak of faith when we wish to substitute emotion for evidence...We are told that faith could remove mountains, but no one believed it; we are now told that the atomic bombs can remove mountains, and everyone believes it.

Bertrand Russell

4 UPPER LEFT EDGE OCTOBER 1995

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Manzanita: Manzanita News & Espresso, Bayside Gardens, Cassandra's, Pacific Coast Books & Coffe & Nehalem Bay Video

Rockaway: Sharkey's

Tillamook: Rainy Day Books

Pacific City: The River House

Oceanside: Ocean Side Espresso

Lincoln City: Trillium Natural Foods, Driftwood Library, & Eats 'n' Stuff

Newport: Oceana Natural Foods, Don Petrie's Italian Food Co., Café DIVA, Cosmo Café, Bookmark Café, Newport Bay Coffee Co., Cuppatunes, Bay Latté, Ocean Pulse Surf Shop, Coastal Coffee Co. & Canyon Way

Eugene: Book Mark, Café Navarra, Eugene Public Library, Friendly St. Market, Happy Trails, Keystone Café, Kiva Foods, Lane C.C., Light For Music, New Frontier Market, Nineteenth Street Brew Pub, Oasis Market, Perry's, Red Barn Grocery, Sundance Natural Foods, U of O, & WOW Hall

Corvallis: Not Necessarily News, & The Environmental Center

Salem: Heliotrope, Salem Library, & The Peace Store

Astoria: KMUN, Columbian Café, The Community Store, & Café Uniontown

Seaside: Buck's Book Barn, Universal Video, & Cafe Espresso

Portland: Act III, Barnes & Noble, Belmonts Inn, Bibelot Art Gallery, Bijou Café, Borders, Bridgeport Brew Pub, Capt'n Beans (two locations), Center for the Healing Light, Coffee People (three locations), Common Grounds Coffee, East Avenue Tavern, Food Front, Goose Hollow Inn, Hot Lips Pizza, Java Bay Café, Key Largo, La Patisserie, Lewis & Clark College, Locals Only, Marco's Pizza, Marylhurst College, Mt. Hood CC, Music Millennium, Nature's (two locations), NW Natural Gas, OHSU Medical School, Old Wives Tales, Ozone Records, Papa Haydn, PCC (four locations), PSU (two locations), Reed College, Third Eye, TransCentral Library, & YWCA

Long Beach, WA: Pacific Picnics

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Citizens pay their taxes, and then they abdicate. They have lost their skills as citizens; they have contracted them out to public employees.
 E.S. Savas