

The old town site, there's your first stop on the Coast Range tour. Just head west out of Falls City (30 miles west of Salem). There's only one road. Drive it for an hour or so, if you dare. You'll know you're there, if you're not swallowed by the maze, by big signs that read:

WARNING: THIS AREA IS HAZARDOUS. OLD VALSETZ LAKE BED CONTAINS HIDDEN VOIDS, UNSTABLE SOILS AND UNDERGROUND SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION FIRES

I used to camp out on Phanno Ridge, off to the east. On hot summer days, sure enough, there'd be a dull BANG! and a white flash down in the valley. Acetylene or propane or something even worse left over the mill, dumped in a shallow grave, igniting in the heat. Everything else is gone.

The rain still comes in the winter. The rain and the logging are the gift that keeps on giving in the Coast Range. In 1996, in Douglas County, four people were killed when a landslide roaring off an 80 percent slope that had been stripped of trees struck their house. Witnesses said the sound of the mudflow striking the house was like a bomb going off. In Myrtle Creek a clear cut gave way and swallowed five homes. On Highway 38 a debris avalanche struck three motorists, killing one of them. When the driver of a tractor-trailer swerved to avoid a slide he knocked a car with a mother and her two children inside into a river turned brown from sediment, where they drowned.

Where'd all the trees from the Siletz Valley get to? Maybe the next stop of this tour should be the suburbs of Tokyo. Check out the wood in the new homes: Tight grained fir from the Oregon Coast Range. Curtis LeMay's B-29s leveled every city in the country, and the Japanese didn't rebuild with local materials. The fourth Tokugawa



Shogun (not exactly the East Coast liberal politician type) banned logging on Japan's steep coastal mountains in 1666 — because landslides were burying too many of the peasants.

I once took the ferry across Japan's Yokohama Bay, one of the world's great harbors. This was in 1988, the highwater mark of Coast Range logging. A field of 7-

foot thick Douglas firs a mile wide and 5 miles long bobbed gently in the still water. I don't know how much money changed hands to send an entire forest across the Pacific, but it had to be a lot, and not a dime of it stuck to the town I grew up in.

My favorite old-growth stump in the Coast Range is about 8 miles east of Alsea.

fall. Freddy put in a chaw and said "Well, I guess that's the last fuckin' one of them!"

Do you hear me? No one goes to the Coast Range. The hiking trails are few and far between. Drive to the coast. Drive to Florence and buy some saltwater taffy. What would happen to you if you stopped at the top of the pass on the way there and tried and tried to hike somewhere? It is nothing but clearcuts on impossibly steep slopes as far as the eye can see. I have hiked those clearcuts, but not for fun. First I was planting trees for International Paper, then doing stocking surveys for Roseburg Forest Products after IP sold out. Me and a couple of rotten-toothed powder cases from Mapleton, making "Baaa-aaa!" noises at one another as we humped up the slopes (because we were mountain goats).

That's the people I grew up with. They kind of remind me a lot of landscape itself: Mostly unseen and extravagantly damaged. They aren't stupid; it's just that they only get to choose from a pack of lies what they're going to believe in. There are no friends, family, newspaper reporters or politicians who have ever offered up any truth.

Conflict is the norm for the Coast Range. A valley near where I grew up is named Socialist Valley after a radical IWW agitator who was murdered for trying to organize in the logging camps. It's as good a place to get shot at because of your politics now as it was then.

I've been involved in the Coast Range timber wars since before I could vote. I'm from the Coast Range. I've hiked the forest with congressional staff, reporters and foresters, too. The conservation group I

I watched a broken down old feller named Freddy saw through that tree with an 8-foot long chainsaw under the watchful eyes of a pair of Shinto monks in 1992. The tree was to replace a 2,000-year old beam in a shrine south of Tokyo. After Freddy dropped the tree, the oldest of the monks placed his forehead against the giant trunk for 15 minutes, humming softly. A light rain began to

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WELCOME WEEKEND EVENTS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
4:30 pm Orientation and slide show
6:00 pm Meet and Greet
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
11:30 am Brunch
1:00 pm Site Tour
4:30 pm Business Meeting

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