

# PRESENCE

## Coastal Life

Story by MATT LOVE

“It was beautiful in a post card sort of way, but I much prefer mushy gray and rain and know many others share my preference.”

**S**onny the old husky and I made a pit stop at Neahkahnie Beach in Manzanita on a Friday. We were cruising south down the glorious Oregon Coast and wanted an early start to beat the unprecedented summer traffic on U.S. Highway 101.

It was 7 in the morning, and the sun lit up the waves, sand and crisp cloudless blue sky.

It was beautiful in a post card sort of way, but I much prefer mushy gray and rain and know many others share my preference. If we don't get a colossal rain year here on the coast, the traffic will only get worse, along with most of our moods.

While Sonny sniffed around the smoldering remains of a late-night beach bonfire, I walked west toward the water, and surveyed the scene: joggers, walkers, romping dogs, a woman doing yoga, a kite flying listlessly, and a few kids here and there

running in circles.

I turned around and walked toward Sonny and then they came into view: a magazine-cover vacationing couple in their 30s sitting next to each other on a driftlog and facing the ocean.

*That's great, I thought, you got up early to watch the world's greatest ongoing drive-in nature movie.*

I looked again and did a double take. They weren't looking at the ocean; they were fiddling on their phones. I stopped walking. I wondered. I was incredulous. I grieved.

They fiddled for a minute, then five, then 10, in silence. They were not taking photographs — there's a difference. They were absorbed by something far away. They modeled a perfectly indifferent human partnership.

I took a seat on a driftlog. Sonny came over to me and sat down in the sand. We stared at the sea, although she can't really see anymore. She does look for it, though, I can tell.

The couple continued to fiddle away as the greatest force on the planet rolled in and out a hundred yards away. They were glued to their phones while the ocean's colors, angles, smells, magic, art, poetry, music, math, evolution, science, spirituality and sensuality invited them with a crooked little finger to reflect, renew and reconsider.

Who was this couple? What were they watching? What was missing from their lives? What will become of them?

I was damn near ready to ask them because I simply could not fathom their actions. I was also damn near ready to sneak up from behind, snatch their phones, sprint to the ocean, hurl them into waves, dance a little jig, and then laugh like a madman.

Go ahead, call the cops! Oh wait, you don't have your phones! I destroyed them. I set you free! I healed you! Call me Dr. Love.

Yeah, let them explain their phone's destruction to a customer



Photo by Matt Love

On the beach with your cell phone? You better watch out for Matt Love.

service rep in India! Let them give the Manzanita police a description of me! The officer will feign concern as he's getting it all down on a notepad and then rip the paper into the garbage as soon as the couple is out of sight. I bet he'll do a little jig, too.

Attractive couple on the beach in Manzanita using your phones on a driftlog ... I was that close (raise up a middle finger for the approximate distance) to healing you. Or at

least making your summer vacation unforgettable. I might have even changed your life.

Next time.

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*Matt Love is the author/editor of 14 books about Oregon, including "A Nice Piece of Astoria: A Narrative Guide" and "The Great Birthright: An Oregon Novel." They are available at coastal bookstores and through [www.nestuccaspitpress.com](http://www.nestuccaspitpress.com)*



Submitted photo

Be present when you're on the beach. Take in the scene. Play with your dog. Dip your toes in the ocean. Leave your cell phone at home.