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I travel south along Big Sur, my heart in my mouth as the highway lunges over precipices and around death-defying corners.

And now, the Redwoods (Sequoiioideae), the first on this long, winding road. Here, they are “only” 6-feet in diameter, rising 250-feet, arrow-straight into pockets of creamy cerulean sky, statue-ing (new verb), in this case, in the front yard of the Henry Miller Memorial Library, a hippie pocket of respite in an ostentatious world of box stores, fast food and homogeneous personality disorders, enabled by constantly-in-your-face cellphone dysfunction.

These trees, titans with thick, shaggy bark like bear hide, leave me flummoxed as to who and what they are. Are they sentient? Are they wise? Do they project fear, or hope, or dignity to different creatures? Certainly they are persistent, as are the Western cedars in our lush Pacific Northwest. The few, the proud — they may live 1,500 years and beyond, those lucky enough to survive the onslaught of



Otters at Monterey Bay Aquarium

Weyerhaeuser or MacMillan Bloedel and the chainsaw clear-cut massacres, all stained with human fingerprints.

But let us not depart into heartache. Let us, if only for today, praise frond and fern, surf and ocean, needle, limb and soaring trunks of heartwood.

Aspiring, inspiring, often tongue-tied, we transcend into the transcendental.

And, forfeiting my infernal yakking, I might instead indulge my eyes and wits, set aside the pen and marvel at the yin and yang of my heart's desire: the wilderness of our ancestors.

INTERLUDE

Carmel-By-The-Sea

A sleepy, clean, tree-laden, exclusive, expensive town. Charming and very, very pretty with ocean views and fairy-soft air. Attended an innkeepers' meeting with old friends with old inns and old stories. We ate and drank far too much. The Cypress Inn was charming, the hospitality remarkable. This is Doris Day's hotel, hangout and museum. Her movies are shown in the bar. The Innkeepers' consensus was that, throughout the city, the quality of food was overmatched by the tariff, though I did fine at the Cypress.

Best meal

A Japanese restaurant called Ginger Café in Gilroy, the garlic capital of America. The best dumplings I ever ate. One, shaped like a stingray with a crab claw stinger, radiated on my palate with

tender morsels of lobster and salmon. Left me tilting in near-ecstasy. And all this in a strip mall. Be ready to be surprised on the long, winding road.

17-mile drive

Voila! For seven of the 17 miles, sea and sandy coves, and sculpted rocks, and a thousand blue, gray and silver hues overwhelmed the senses. (No, I did not play golf at Pebble Beach.)

Monterey

What an aquarium. What a lovely bay. The town is pasted over with John Steinbeck history. “Cannery Row.” (Please read this novel!) It all happened here.

Where there are sardines, one finds Italians. This was their town. Authentic. Few tourists. I miss the small, colorful fishing boats.

I fell in love with the jellyfish floating listlessly in saltwater tanks at the aquarium. They reminded me of Frank Herbert's fantastical novel “The Jesus Incident,” in which jellyfish float like gas-inflated bags as their tendrils drape onto the landscape of Pandora, held in place by large boulders. I preferred the Monterey variety with dangling day-



Jellyfish at Monterey Bay Aquarium




Cypress on the 17-mile loop close to Carmel-By-The-Sea

glow sticky fingers swaying ballet-like in an aqua bath.

One couldn't help noticing the aquarium's commitment to an ecological model, dedicated to the preservation

of Mother Earth and her ocean creatures.

And on a wonderful afternoon with dear friends, we float like butterflies on the four Siouxan winds. 

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