

Day Eight - Homeward Bound



It is Wednesday. We have to turn Woodzilla in by noon on Thursday so today we need to get ourselves back to something within a couple hours drive of Novato. Our target is Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. It is in Sonoma County east of Santa Rosa and over the ridge from Calistoga in Napa County. It is going to be minimally a three-hour day of driving.

Susan wants to do it all herself to test what her current limits are. This is the person that used to drive from Santa

Cruz to Denver in one clip without a pee stop. We are not the women we used to be ...

We do a morning walk around the lagoon at MacKerricher. Lots of Marsh Wrens, Red-winged Blackbirds and Coots. The overpass is built with some REALLY big redwood timbers. It is interesting to learn that some of the biggest 19th century lumber tycoons were some of the biggest conservationists, Hendy and MacKericher being two of them who opted to preserve rather than cut some of the oldest and finest stands of coastal redwoods.



We take CA 20 back to US HWY 101. It is a slow road and we are slower. We are adjusting to being part of the "slower traffic must use turnouts" class. It is OK. We are not in a hurry. We got all day. HWY 101 north of Cloverdale is not a nice road. Great for breaking up kidney stones. No need to do this again. South of Cloverdale to Santa Rosa it is smooth sailing. We sort out, using our various high tech navigational devices and Susan's unerring nose, how to get on the road to Sugarloaf Ridge SP. This was a place that we had considered camping on the first night out after picking up Woodzilla. We are happy

that we did not make that choice. The road is so narrow it is not even striped. No shoulder. No center line. In most places, not even a fiction that it is a reasonable two lane road. No turnouts. Shouldn't there be warnings? (Note to self ... additional reports to the Governor.) I am in the cringer's seat as we wind our way up along steep outcrop walls of rock. I am finding this to be a whole order of magnitude more unsettling than the unkempt hedge hazards we have dealt with up to this point. I can see that Susan is a bit tired and tense although she has uttered only a few bad words. I try not to annoy or startle her so I suffer alone and in silence. Fortunately it is mid-week and there is little traffic so we make it safely up the road.

We have become accustomed to the quaint, old fashion charm of California State parks. Generally, they are not much different than they were when I first came to California forty years ago in a blue 1965 VW van carrying two adults, 2 large, pregnant dogs, a two burner cast iron propane stove with a five gallon tank, a cook set (featuring a cast iron skillet and an antique dutch oven), a 1969 Martin 0021 guitar, a five gallon jerry jug as our "fresh water tank" and a white gas Colman lantern which provided both light and heat. We had been traveling for weeks from New Mexico in December. (As noted above, we are not the women we use to be ...)

This park is somehow different. We pass by the unstaffed entry kiosk we expect in the offseason but rather than the quaint self pay envelopes there is a MACHINE. Like the god awful, credit card-taking pay for parking machines that are growing like a cancer across our land. We are not amused. We go find a spot and decide to just squat. "Come and get us" is our attitude. We are too old and cranky to use your damn MACHINE. We like it the way it was! Out-sourced, on-line reservation systems are bad enough. This is one step over the line. We want rangers to staff and manage the parks. We want first come, first served. We like it the way it was! ... Except ... we want to do it in this way-comfortable OMG RV with the heater and air conditioner on thermostats and the motorized bed and the refrigerator and bathroom ... When the nice fellow in the golf cart comes by we just pay our fee without whining and we get down off that high horse.



We are camped between a quite lovely meadow and the clear running headwaters of Sonoma Creek. There are only a few other campers but they all have obviously started partying about two hours before we got there at four in the afternoon. We note that in our younger days that may have been us now annoying us. How the proud have fallen! We discuss how we might be able to do this kind of travel for weeks at a time. We discuss how that is what we had hoped for. We discuss how we would have to burn some of our clothes after some number of weeks of this. We are OK with that.



We have a modest dinner of leftovers as the campground settles down for the evening and quietly reflect on the past week. Perhaps we have traveled farther in the last week than the mere miles suggest.

From the road ...
Jane and Susan