

Adventures in McCloudland

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The trips up I-5, that I once believed were total monotony, are opportunities to dream. We review every minutia of the project to come. We imagine how exciting it will be when the construction started.

Lee and I change room and bath designs nightly. We decide that a few suites with Jacuzzi tubs would be a great draw and include them in the plans. We talk with Ron weekly and review the scope of work to be done. As the details begin to develop, we realize that we won't be able to start out with just a few rooms and adding others slowly. With the projected costs of all the new systems, the cost of the "first room" would be astronomical. Even 10 rooms would never pay for the investment,

We'll have to do all three floors in their entirety yielding about 39 rooms.

As Ron starts on the drawings I begin shopping for lobby furniture and fabrics as I know I'll have the best selection in the Bay Area. We've got a vivid picture in our heads of the way we want the place to look, especially the lobby.

We need a lobby that beckons folks to sit a spell. So many of today's lobbies are spaces we only walk through, or pause while we're waiting for someone. Our challenge is to make people want to stop, sit, relax and unwind. One where folks wouldn't miss not having a TV in their room and come to the lobby to play a game of Chinese Checkers, Monopoly or Scrabble.

The enlarged space would allow us to include two main seating groups, one in front of the new fireplace. The other would be on the opposite side of the room with an old fashioned writing desk at the window. I want stationary with the hotel's name on it in the desk drawer so guests could sit and dash off a note or postcard to someone about our wonderful place.

We'll put an old fashioned 30's phone on the desk and folks could use it to make local calls. If a guest received a phone call, we could transfer it to the old phone on the desk (which wouldn't ring and disturb the other guests) and summon "Mr. Brown, you have a call" and the guest could then have a seat at a beautiful desk, gaze out of the window and talk about this wonderful place.

The sofas would be large and comfy. In the summer they'd have well-fitting slipcovers with big bold colorful prints, maybe flowers or fruit, and tied snugly at the corners. In the winter the sofa covers would be more subdued with earth tones and warmth. There would be several large comfortable chairs including a big club chair and a real person-sized wing back chair, all with horizontal cross-bars on the legs, so they'd look more informal. It would be the kind of a place someone would feel it was all right to kick off their shoes, put their feet on the sofa and curl up with a good book by a crackling fire with good music. It would be a wonderful place.

And we'd definitely need to find coffee tables that were sturdy enough to put your feet on. I like to put my feet up and as far as I'm concerned it isn't real if you can't put your feet on it.

I was sure we'd never use red velvet, gold tassels, or Victorian furniture. I'd never use sweet little flower bouquets on things. No ribbons or bows. No country. Those things just aren't me. It would be totally comfortable and guests would sit in groups and talk about how wonderful this place is.

We believed we could do it. There was nothing stopping us. And the drives gave us an opportunity to continue the dream.

We began to notice things on the long drive up. Hawks were perched on telephone poles and fence posts, staking out their territory and searching for small furry objects. (Maybe we should get a hawk.) I hadn't noticed them before.

Sometimes we'd see flooded rice fields with geese and other birds gliding in for a landing. I wondered how long they'd flown that day. From where. There was a noisy ruckus when they landed and, and once they'd said their greeting, settled in to gorge on the leftovers in the fields. There were long legged white cranes gracefully high stepping through the muddy fields. I was sure the high stepping was not to soil their beautiful white feathers.

As we'd enter the foothills north of Redding many of the trees were starting to turn. I had thought most of the forests were evergreens and was surprised to see so much orange and yellow. Big swaths of bright color paraded across the hillsides in a random procession. Wonderful big bushes decorated with long pods on their branches lined up along the roadside. Others showed off bunches of ripe berries.

Above it all was that amazing mountain. Even at the end of summer big splotches of snow covered much of the mountain. Sometimes, we'd spot it as far away as Corning and consider it our beacon, showing us the way. Other times it was shrouded in cloud cover, and we'd drive all the way to McCloud without seeing the mountain at all. We'd

feel cheated when that happened and kid that maybe it was gone; or just an illusion from the beginning.

This wasn't so boring after all. I just hadn't noticed.