

Adventures in McCloudland

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Chapter 28

April, 1994

We returned to McCloud every two weeks or so. The show of spring coming up the mountain often made our mood darker. Glorious mounds of blossoming flowering quince began in Redding. As we came up I-5, showy redbud in bright shades of purple vied for attention with bright yellow golden rod. A few weeks later, the redbud would begin to fade. It was replaced by flowering dogwood at the lower elevations and later on up the canyon, clear into McCloud.

I'm not sure what it is about dogwood in bloom that is so appealing. More than any other flowering thing, it tugs at my emotions and reminds me that something larger than us is at work. Their lacy layered blossoms look fragile and delicate like they had been individually created in some protected environment, yet they survive in the harshness of an uncultivated natural forest. They are truly awesome. I'd take great pleasure at scanning the mountain sides through the canyon trying to spot another patch of them among the green. I'd try to take something away, like a more positive sense of hope about the project. But often I'd just feel more melancholy.

We'd turn the corner and come up Main Street and admit that the building looked worse than when we'd bought it. The porch rooms had been removed, but the railings were temporary and crooked. The windows had been moved, but they had left a roughly patched place where they had been. It was truly sad.

We'd meet with Ron who had agreed to continue working on the plans so they would be ready when we were. The building department was having none of this fast track stuff. They wanted to see the entire project plans before they would issue any permit. We appreciated Ron's willingness to continue but felt more guilty every time we saw him.

Ray was also continuing to refine the estimates based on the new scope of work and the ever-changing requirements of the building department. The latest wrinkle concerned the sprinkler system. We had fully anticipated installing fire sprinklers in occupied areas. But the building department was demanding that we install them

throughout the entire building from basement to attic and all the exterior porches. The cost of construction kept going up and we were now looking for a \$750,000 loan.