

## Postscript to *Images & Expectations*

After finishing the Autumn newsletter, another river opportunity unfolds on Sunday; sunny, 60 degrees, river level rises another few inches. *No wind*. That rarely happens. Perfect.

Head for a section further downstream. Leave the kayak & gear at Spray. Drive with bike 14 miles to Service Creek to cycle back to Spray, get in kayak, paddle down to waiting Subaru. It's a full day, my version of a biathlon. Sun's out, warming up from 30 degrees. Jubilant.



Everything's in order. Take the bike off the rack... with a flat tire. Goathead horns. Tiny little seeds with razor sharp points. The nemesis of inner tube tires in this area.

Pause.

Many miles from nowhere, no chance to fix the flat. Can't walk back, not enough time. Drove 80 miles to get here. *I want to be on the river*. There's a small rapid right behind me, singing... singing...singing. Regroup.

OK, hitchhike. Catch a 15 minute ride back to Spray, allowed 2 hrs. to bike. Get there by noon, still can pull out by darkness. Maybe dark:30.

Walk a quarter mile to the intersection: highways 207 &19. Stand.

Wait.

Not a lot of Sunday traffic at 10 a.m.

Stand some more.

Wait some more.

Plenty of time for the inner smile to all internal organs.

Wonderful opportunity to embrace the tree, as well as sun, rocks, rolling hills and the constant river rapids song.

Practiced the line and swing dance steps learned at a gathering the previous night. Wouldn't *you* pick up a line dancing hitchhiker on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere? I *thought* it would be a good advertising strategy. The sound of passing cars accelerating as they come near is very distinct. Almost like the click of automatically locking doors.

Patience.

To the left, a black, fluffy caterpillar with an orange stripe around the middle begins slowly inching toward the highway. Takes 5 minutes to get to the edge, when a car comes around the corner and right over it.

Motionless, looks like it might have been squashed. A few minutes later caterpillar begins moving, makes an 180 degree turn and heads back for the river. Takes quite awhile. Guess we won't learn why the caterpillar crosses the road.

More time to smile. A few cars go my way; none slow down. Hitchhiking can be a great meditative practice. Noticing the resistance to constant rejection of self - the image standing on the side of the road. *Hey, I'm not a scruffy transient, I'm a **kayaker!*** The drivers don't seem to make a distinction.

Wanting to be somewhere else; patience with what is occurring in the moment. The persistent voicing of *I'd really rather be paddling on the river.*

To the right, fluffy, black caterpillar reappears and heads out toward the highway again, this time a few feet upstream. Hmm... 5 minutes to the edge. A few cars pass. 5 minutes to the centerline. A few more cars. 5 minutes to the other side. Hmm... curious. Maybe it is not about getting to the other side. Could be about where/how we decide to cross.



Two hours of meditative hitchhiking; time to surrender.

Drive back to kayak, who is wondering why she is going back on top of Subaru and not in the water. She is all about the water. Heading home, it's still early, trying to come up with Plan B. This lake, no, too far. That river, no.

Passing through Kimberly and the fossil beds, signs to hiking trails beckon. Every other trip through here there hasn't been time to stop. Today...there is time.

Hike a few trails. Nice views. Lovely rocks. Not like paddling, though. Pulling into the last trailhead, simple little 1/2 mile, probably not worth much. Go anyway.



Nice walk up an almost dry creek bed, occasional small pools with blue-green water, minerals from the rock formations.

At the end of the trail, the energy noticeably changes. Here is a natural amphitheater, maybe a few hundred feet across, enclosed by fluted blue-

green rock columns/towers, maybe a hundred feet high. Ahhh....

Two junipers flank a wooden bench, perfect for sitting meditation. The resonance of this place, connection to earth & sky vibrates the physical body like harp strings.



Sit.

Just sit.

It is so quiet, a curious voice wonders if I went deaf.

Hmmm....

Ahhhhh.....

Thank you fluffy, black caterpillar with an orange stripe. We *think* we are going off in one direction; if listening, a natural way appears that is much more nourishing of spirit.

Listen. Quietness that nourishes the spirit. Held in the womb of the earth, sky an embracing blanket above.

Filled with the energy of this place, levitating back to Subaru. At Dayville, another subtle calling, turn off along the South Fork to Izee. A couple hours of driving dirt roads through the mountains and along the river, dusk flowing into cold, crisp night with a bright half moon guide. Walking along the river edge, touching the headwaters. Yes.

On through Bear Valley to Seneca by starlight on the way home. Returning home. Always returning home.

*Thank you for reading.*