

## **Adventures in McCloudland**

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Chapter 43

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Lee just called from Redding to let me know the work on the van was finished and he was heading up the hill. It had been a full day and he'd been gone since morning. I immediately relived all the nights I had waited for his call.

They were terrible long weeks and the last day, Friday, was the longest. It'd get dark early and the solitude would sink to my core. I'd often just walk the dark halls with a flashlight. Something to do. Other times I'd just eat. Also something to do. Evenings were the times I missed our old friends the most. In the 2 years of restoration I never received one invitation for dinner ....or visit ....or anything from anyone in town. I was desperately lonely and alone.

At the same time I worried about Lee being on the highway in the dark ....with trucks ....when he was tired.

He'd leave Oakland after a full day's work in San Francisco around 7 pm and call from the van somewhere between Vacaville and Redding. I'd pray, as I lifted the phone, that he'd be closer to Redding. "Hi, Honey," he'd always say. "I'm in Cottonwood," or "Redding," or once in a while he'd say he was at the first bridge north of Redding and that would make it a very good night. He was only one hour away. Sometimes he'd say he was really tired and was going to pull over for a while. I prayed he'd be all right.

After the construction started my days were full and the week went faster. But Thursday was always tough and I was never able to shake the total aloneness I felt

He continued the weekly commute for almost a year after we opened. Juanita and I would run this place during the week, and Lee would be here for the weekend. Our evening phone conversations usually consisted of my most recent tale of frustration or exhaustion. It was a tough time. He'd want to fix it ....what ever it was ....but couldn't.

And I desperately wanted him to fix it. But I knew he had a full time commitment where he was. My self talk included nightly lectures about being able to do it myself. I had to be strong. I had to be sufficient.