

Adventures in McCloudland

By Marilyn J. Ogden

Afterword

January 2003

A New Introduction

Alice has nothing on me. My strange adventure into the wonderland of relocation and restoration surprises me every day. With its madness and nonsensical characters habituating this strange place, I continue to try to figure it all out...to make sense of this hole I've fallen into. Like Alice, I struggle to understand the rules. I'm an intelligent, capable person tossed into a situation where I not only don't have any control, but those who do seem mad with power. They're having their own tea party, and I'm never invited.

Perhaps Alice's whole lesson was learning to expect the unexpected ...and dealing with it. Every encounter was a chance for her to learn. We tried to do that, Lee and I. We talked about how we were going to have some unexpected twists and turns restoring this building and running an inn. We decided early on that we were strong enough to do it. After all we'd been married 34 years. We'd restored our own home just the year before. We'd survived it just fine, thank you. This was similar, only a few more bedrooms.

Long ago, in what seems like some previous life, my psych professor had lectured about unexpected outcomes. He believed that if we were just smart enough and thoughtful enough we could figure them out, count them and deal with them. I think he forgot why they called them unexpected.

Almost two years after first seeing this hotel, on the night before we opened, I met with our nervous staff and assured them that we could expect the unexpected. We reviewed a host of possibilities for the coming first day and night. We talked about maybe a guest losing his keys, or having a heart attack (none of us had had a chance to take CPR....I'd

wanted to, just hadn't had the time)...now I was nervous of being so unready. We played this "What if"...game in total seriousness. We wanted to be ready. To plan for the unexpected. But not in my wildest dreams did I even consider the ludicrous rather than the serious. Alas, we failed to consider the possibility that the wallpaper would slip off the wall in Suite 216, Nor did we imagine the bed falling through its frame in room 106, and landing with a resounding thud not easily ignored in the nearby lobby. Never could I have predicted the look of embarrassment on our guest's face when he tried too many times to explain, "All I did was sit on it, and it fell to the floor." Meanwhile, the guest in 216 asked if we'd like to see the wallpaper...then let her know what we wanted her to do about it. "Should I just leave it there, or try to pull it down?" she asked. Indeed, Juanita and I ventured to the room and saw most of the printed border paper which encircled the room at the ceiling was now hanging in long flowing ringlets like a little girl's hair.

So our frightful but exhilarating venture of 21 months getting the hotel ready to open was not coming to an end, but only making a left turn from the wonderland of restoration and stepping into the looking glass of inn-keeping.

We should have known it was going to be a mad ride. I should have had a hint when, after focusing on opening day for so many months, and planning a glorious breakfast, my new manager asked, "So, what are we going to do for breakfast tomorrow?" I remember looking at her in total dismay. "You mean we have to do this again tomorrow?"

I've been collecting stories and images for a novel about McCloud for the 10 years we've been here. It was to be called Mother McCloud's Hotel. No, I'm not the mom. It's how the mill workers used to refer to the mill...Mother McCloud, because it's how the mill took care of them. She was, I'm told, sometimes a loving mom and at other times the epitome of tough love. The book was to be a compilation of stories from folks who had lived here when this was still a company-owned town, then a personal story of its restoration and finally its new life as a Bed and Breakfast. But I never quite finished it. I couldn't...I was living it until three months ago. As I sit here in December, waiting for escrow to close this spring 2003, I realize I can now finish the book.

So I'll combine Mother McCloud's Hotel with recipes we've served and guests have loved as there seems to be a constant command for our cookbook. Moms cook and nourish their children, after all. Even for selfish reasons.

To begin with, we must remember that the McCloud River Lumber Company was a business...not a social service agency. And however quaint the nickname Mother McCloud might be, the company's goal was to make money for its shareholders. (But

we will revisit this issue later.)

Backing up... the snapshots and memories of the last 10 years have been written on scraps of paper, stored somewhere in my head or still floating around waiting to be snatched and included here. Of course I can't include them all...nor can I include items in their proper context as I didn't learn about McCloud that way. Neither are they footnoted and unbiased as this is not an historical thesis.

So like a tale with many little stories within, what follows is not a story with a beginning and an end of this hotel, its town, and its restoration. Instead, I have been urged to share many little stories of our adventure and some of the folks who we met along the way. And, yes, we do have Twiddle Dum and Twiddle Dee...and The Crazy Queen meting out power without mercy...The Cheshire Cat who's always smiling but all the while is perched where he maintains the most control. Like all adventures, it's sometimes precariously scary. Other times, the view is breathtaking. Mostly it was just putting one foot in front of the other. The alternative to continuing, as we reminded our sons frequently, was to stay in some scary dark hole forever...and go a little mad.

I'll try to give you a sense of this town and its history. At least my sense...that's all I have. I hope you'll find it's a good read.

Marilyn, January 2003.