

Inquiring Minds: Creating memories and meaning

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“Life is either a great adventure or nothing.” -- Helen Keller

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ADVENTURES IN BEAR COUNTRY

Last week my son David and I met at Dino and Julie’s home in Hanford just south of Fresno. We were planning to camp at Hume Lake in Sequoia National Park. As I was turning into their dairy ranch, we were almost side-swiped by a speeding vehicle trying to pass us.

That would be the first of several close calls which would challenge us on this short two-day trip. Next, the 100 degree plus heat overheated my 1995 Toyota pickup forcing us to stop several times before arriving at our campsite. Once there the “bear proof” boxes did not stop one determined black bear from getting our food that night and almost me as I ventured out prematurely to check on the damage. I was 10-15 feet away when this huge fur ball suddenly emerged out of the darkness and lunged four feet at me and stopped. I recoiled, fell backwards on my rear and then hit my head on the ground. Fortunately the bear knew its food was safe from this accidental and pathetic intruder, and I was not worthy of a mauling or a meal. Thank you, bear, for your good judgment!



Sharon and Jack serve us breakfast.

The next day adjacent campers Jack and Sharon who managed to save their food invited us for breakfast. Then David and I cycled around the lake, went for a swim and had a great time. We saw and thanked firefighters in the area, and were not surprised when the ranger said there might be an evacuation siren warning as the fire was getting closer. Without proper repairs done to our bear box and with



Walkway over the inlet at Hume Lake

the air quality deteriorating, we decided to leave a day early. I filled out the evaluation forms including copies of our food bill (good luck!), and we broke camp before dusk.

I was more miffed at the misinformation the park provided as to the safety of the food boxes, even as the very new and friendly ranger (Jeri) expressed her doubts. She said the officials in the park thought all the break-ins were because of people not closing the boxes properly, not that the bears had figured out how to enter them. Apparently many other campers had the same problem, but it was apparently easier to ignore and/or cover-up the problem than to fix it with a hasp and lock. I will Yelp them poorly, mainly to warn other would-be campers.

No overheating on the way down, but once on the flat grounds we heard a loud pop as my radiator ruptured. We were towed 46 miles to Hanford where had a nice dinner with our friends there and spent the night in a soft and safe bed. The next morning I had the truck fixed, and headed home to Redwood City, and David to LA. All’s well that ends well, but we were very fortunate. We will definitely remember this trip.

TWO NEW AND RELATED BOOKS ABOUT MEMORY AND HISTORY

The 100 Most Influential People of all Time by Michael Hart was a best seller written in 1992, and is still very valuable to anyone who would like to build their knowledge of famous people in history with brief 2-3 page accounts of their accomplishments

and some discussion of why they were so ranked as important to humanity. Awareness of history helps me (and hopefully others) appreciate the culture and humanity we have because of the work of others. To paraphrase the second most influential person in this book, Isaac Newton, I, too, see and appreciate further “because I stand on the shoulders of giants.”

Our daughter Aimeé gave me a book she found in a street library bin called *Moonwalking with Einstein* by [Joshua Foer](#). It deals with “the art and science of remembering everything.” She didn’t have time to read more than 30 pages, but thought I’d have the time and the interest to read it for us both. The author is a reporter who covers memory competitions, and gets engrossed in the reporting and research of what enables ordinary people (including himself) able to compete at that level. Good so far.

TIMES SLOWS DOWN WHEN HAVING NEW ADVENTURES

Awareness of history and expanding one’s own history expands one’s concept of time. From the book on m e m o r y above:

“Monopoly collapses time; novelty unfolds it.... It’s important to change routines



Can opened bear-style

regularly, and take vacations to exotic locales, and have as many new experiences as possible that can serve to anchor our memories. Creating new memories stretches out psychological time, and lengthens our perception of our lives.” William James said much the same thing in his *Principles of Psychology* in 1890.

OUR NEXT ADVENTURE will be the birth of a grandson in September. Your good thoughts and/or prayers for us are invited and appreciated. Thanks in advance, dear reader. -Joe