

Muir Woods

Warned by a bad experience in Los Angeles. Captain Allison arranged to go with an organized tour to Muir Woods when he got to San Francisco. Accordingly, immediately after breakfast he joined the party from his rocket ship. The cars were waiting for them at the gate to the launching pad in Hayward. Unfortunately, Captain Allison was put in the front seat next to the driver, Witherspoon, who was a sallow restless and unhappy looking man. He smoked Camel cigarettes continuously, one after the other. When he lit one he took both hands off the wheel; often he did this at corners and he drove so fast that Captain Allison's bus soon out-distanced all the other cars on the freeway. When they nearly rear-ended a truck he gave a savage laugh. Witherspoon never smiled except at the corners. He was an orphan, as he explained to Captain Allison, brought up in New York by the Salvation Army. He had been to London once; that was a good town, full of very rich people. Did he like his present job? What else was there to do in a stinking place like California. His immediate ambition was to ship out.

They drove to San Francisco in an underground freeway, eight lanes of fluorescence, then above ground and across the 70 year old Golden Gate bridge and on to Sausalito, once a small fishing village on San Francisco Bay but now a maze of giant housing projects. Captain Allison and the bus driver lunched at a motel managed by Germans and ate hamburgers and drank coffee. Muir Woods is a new city. The whole place seemed in a rudimentary state of construction. At every corner there were huge half-finished buildings, some already abandoned; on others, crews of ragged blacks and browns were still at work. Muir Woods extends over four or five miles of what used to be a beautiful valley and forest. Down the center of the main thoroughfare runs the freeway, bordered on either side by a great over-head pedestrian walkway and at each end there is a huge shopping center; at frequent intervals are corrugated iron sentry-boxes, inhabited by drowsy, armed policemen.

Up on the slope of the mountain behind is a small grove of redwoods.

As Captain Allison emerged from the bus he came upon a large party of Canadians dragging their feet under the leadership of a ranger, across the street from the parking lot. Captain Allison fell in behind them.

"This was once a vast forest." the guide explained.

On either side of the path ranged the redwoods; they marched

along very solemnly the full 75 yard length of the park; the guide counting the trees aloud for them, "one, two, three...." Number three was a bit small; there were 22 of them. Most of the Canadians counted them aloud with him.

What a funny lot they looked, trooping along that pathetic gallery of trees, asking stupid questions.

"How old are they?" Asked the woman next to Captain Allison.

"The oldest is 500 years old." Said the guide.

"How much are they worth? Asked an old man.

"Priceless!"

"How tall is the tallest?"

"189 feet."

"How many did there used to be?" Asked a little boy.

"Well now," the ranger guide said, "Dr. Davis over at the University estimates that in this area alone there were perhaps 50,000 redwoods at one time."

"What killed em all off?" Asked the same little boy.

"We did!" The ranger said solemnly.

-- Don Brown

Piedmont CA

Miniaturization

Pet Shop. Big sign in front about if you buy a mammal from us, if anything "natural" goes wrong with him you get an immediate replacement, same breed, same size, same markings, same temperament, gait, bark-pattern

If, on the other hand, the death or injury wasn't "natural" ... well, the whole second part was about cars, poisons, drownings, shootings and the like.

Two girls standing in front of the miniature panda's cage -- one tall, the other short.