

2002 Year-end letter by John and Mary Lou Tanton

At Year's End 2002

Looking back over our daily diaries for 2002, Mary Lou and I found that much more had transpired than we remembered. Here are some highlights that may be of interest.

CALIFORNIA AND A COASTAL REDWOODS TOUR: We have long wanted to see the coastal redwoods, having seen the larger (in diameter) mountain variety some years ago. The coastal variety is mostly in northern California, above San Francisco. We started our trip in Los Angeles, visiting friends along the way, while we can still see and be seen. We traveled up the coast on California's famous and sometimes treacherous Pacific Coast Highway Number 1. We stopped for a tour of William Randolph Hearst's sumptuous San Simeon Estate. That was certainly a worthwhile stop, for all that it reveals about the development of California and life in the west 75-100 years ago.

A beautiful drive up the coast takes one to Monterey, where the fine marine aquarium has a wonderful display of jellyfish. The coastal redwood forests start here, and we hiked in several of them.

After enjoying the hospitality of friends in the San Francisco Bay Area, and visiting some college chums, we traded in our rental car for a 26-foot motor home. We have done this several times in the past, and find it an ideal way to visit natural areas, as it allows us to stop for the night whenever and wherever we choose.

We visited Point Reyes National Seashore north of San Francisco, which sits astride the famous San Andreas earthquake fault. We have wanted to see this park ever since writing letters in the 1960s encouraging its formation. No trembling of the ground while we were there! We saw an example of oak sudden death disease, apparently a new disease that is affecting live oaks, which are the signature of this part of California. A black ooze came from cracks in the bark, signaling the imminent demise of the tree. Sad.

We drove up California's lovely Highway 128 to Mendocino on the coast, where friends had loaned us a cottage for several days. That gave us a chance to get things sorted out and in order for the rest of the trip. We were interested in learning something about birds in particular, and so had taken along a CD of bird information and songs, which was very helpful. Amazing- in this part of California, people still wave when they pass you on the road! There are some fine display gardens of local flora in this area, together with great hiking trails in the state and county parks, over the hills and along the stream bottoms.

At the Westport-Union Landing State Beach, just above Fort Bragg, we parked our camper in a small park on a bluff above the Pacific, hiked the beach, and watched the sun sink into the ocean. It was one of the most memorable stops on the trip.

The next day took us into the heart of the redwood kingdom, and the Avenue of the Giants. Since we have supported Save-the-Redwoods League for many years, this was like a homecoming. One needs to travel slowly through this area, taking a lot of time for hikes back from the road. Here we were able to stay at another backcountry campground (Albee) and hike among some of the biggest trees of all, in Rockefeller Forest along Bull Creek.

We moved up the coast to the Eureka/Arcata area, where we again visited old friends and hiked among blooming azaleas. Then it was on to our favorite park of all: Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. We stayed in the campground, and hiked 14-plus miles roundtrip to Fern Canyon - Mary Lou has a special interest in ferns. The trees along the way were magnificent - many of them over 250 feet tall. I'm sure we looked like rube tourists in New York City, walking around with our heads cocked back and mouths agape, looking up at tall trees rather than tall buildings! The Redwoods League has just purchased 25,000 cutover acres of the Upper Prairie Creek Watershed (for 67 million dollars!) to reforest it so that the lower watershed, where the big trees are, will not be damaged by flooding. It is amazing to contemplate that the federal government sold off these lands under the Homestead Act for \$2.50 an acre!

Crossing into Oregon, we visited more college friends in Ashland. In Eugene, we had the pleasure of meeting Walter Youngquist, author of one of the books - *Geo-Destinies* - that we recommended last year. It is about resources in general, and energy in particular, both of which will be key to our country's future. We again recommend it as very important reading.

Nearing the end of our trip in Portland, we visited the very nice Silver Falls State Park, where I lost my wallet. I report this detail only to relate that it was turned in fully intact, a heartening event in today's world.

The trip was 28 days and 900 miles in total. A camper home is a fairly economical way to travel; it costs about \$100 a day for one's transportation and lodging, and carries with it a chance to prepare your own meals rather than eating out all the time. We would like to repeat this trip, and spend even more time, especially on the sector from San Francisco north to the California/Oregon border.

ON STRIKE: I left the practice of medicine none too soon. Nine months after retiring in June of 1998, the Burns Clinic - where I had worked for some 30-plus years - declared

bankruptcy. Now the nurses at the hospital have been organized by the Teamsters Union (!) and have gone on strike. Picket lines are up, with no end in sight. I still walk to the hospital and back for lunch three or four days a week - it's a nice half-hour stroll, and gives me a chance to maintain old acquaintances and visit the hospital library to stay abreast of things scientific. Mary Lou takes her exercise in a thrice-weekly class.

FIFTIETH REUNION: Last summer, Mary Lou and I attended my 50th high school class reunion, and it was a fine time. Of the 38 in our class, 33 are still alive, and 23 made it to the festivities. We had a nice dinner cruise on Saginaw Bay, a delightful sunset, and a lot of heartwarming conversations and reminiscing. I'm already looking forward to the 55th! **DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES IN PETOSKEY:** Petoskey is under siege with development pressures as are many other areas, but we had some singular successes protecting our area during 2002. Fifteen years ago, a by-pass was proposed for Petoskey, which many of us felt would fuel development, close stores in the downtown district, and generally detract from our area. This past fall, after countless meetings, studies, and environmental impact statements, the state highway department announced it was giving up the project! Now it is up to our local communities to come up with more creative solutions to transportation problems, and that effort is well under way.

There was also a proposal for a huge new commercial and residential complex on the south end of town. It required a zoning change, which the township board voted down. Then, through complex maneuverings, a suit was filed, the issue went to mediation, the zoning change was agreed to, and was then referred to the voters for approval - which they turned down by a two-to-one margin! The message is that the local populace is protective of what we have, and aren't willing to simply sell it off to the highest bidder. Mary Lou's twenty years of service on the county planning commission was certainly a factor in nourishing this protective attitude. She continues this work by serving on signs and lighting committees, which attempt to keep signs to a less intrusive minimum, and to direct lighting toward the ground, rather than illuminating the night sky. Mary Lou also spends a lot of time on Scenic Michigan, whose main focus is controlling billboard blight and preserving scenic vistas statewide.

IMMIGRATION: In the wake of 9/11, there has been substantial progress on the immigration issue on which we have worked for, lo, these 30 years. We Americans have finally had it forcefully impressed on us that not everyone loves us, and there are those who would do us great harm. One result has been a substantial shift of attitude in the Congress and the administration. A proposal for an extensive amnesty for illegal aliens has been shelved, and we hope will be scuttled altogether. Procedures are being put in place for keeping track of visitors and students entering the country, and assuring that they leave when their visas expire. The Department of Homeland Security, just authorized by Congress, will cast a whole new light on immigration policy. Instead of being looked at as one of civil rights, it will be examined in the light of anti-terrorism and security needs. There are many other positive signs (which I have written up and would be glad to provide, should you be interested). We look for substantial progress in 2003.

OFFICIAL ENGLISH: There has also been substantial progress on the language front as well. In the recent election, Massachusetts passed by a two-to-one margin an initiative markedly limiting bilingual education. (A similar measure failed in Colorado.) The initiative limiting bilingual education in California that passed in 2000 has proved its worth. Several court cases have gone our way as well. If you would like the details on any of these events, or the organizations through which this work is being done, please let me know. In short, we seem to be backing away from our ascent of the Tower of Babel.

THE BIOGRAPHY: As generally happens in human affairs, these successes have stiffened the resolve of the opposition. One main event was the publication by a group called the Southern Poverty Law Center of its Intelligence Report designating yours truly as the "puppeteer" and prime villain in all of this work on immigration and language. I've enclosed a reproduction of the cover of their magazine. There have been other articles as well - and naturally, I have replied! If you're interested, I'd be glad to send you a copy.

Counterbalancing all the criticism, our friend John Rohe wrote our biography entitled *Mary Lou & John Tanton: A Journey Into American Conservation*, with a foreword by former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm. It is available from Amazon and the bookstore at <www.thesocialcontract.com>. John Rohe naturally looks at our endeavors in a more favorable light.

FAMILY: This past summer, we were pleased to have a two-week visit from our daughter Laura and granddaughter Olivia, age two years. She was just starting to talk, and now three months later, is jabbering away even more. Laura and her husband John live in Coconut Grove, Florida, where John is in the commercial real estate business. Our daughter Jane is an operating room nurse at University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor. Her husband Hugh works for General Motors, and over the past year, has been assigned to a GM plant east of Toronto, necessitating a great deal of driving. Fortunately that assignment has now wound down.

THE BEES: Beekeeping has been a big part of our lives. I started back in high school under the tutelage of my maternal grandfather. Later I became friends with a patient who was a commercial beekeeper. He continued my education. In recent years, bees all across the United States have come under siege from two forms of parasitic mites. In addition, this year, a bacterial disease (American Foul Brood) showed up in our hives. It limits reproduction and weakens the colonies. How this is all going to work out remains to be seen. I hope that come spring, we're still in the beekeeping business.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN BIOLOGICAL STATION: We continue to enjoy our association with the nearby UMBS, the University of Michigan's biological field station, where courses are offered each summer. I took a one-week insect course this past

June, which was very interesting, and also took a four-day botany refresher course in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. In addition to plants, it was notable for the number of mosquitoes produced by a cold, wet, and late spring. The "bug" camp, as UMBS is affectionately called, is on Douglas Lake, near Pellston, on which we have a small cabin. We sometimes paddle across the lake to the camp to for a meal, to take in a lecture, or use the library. Very nice.

WILDLIFE: We have been struck by the number of coyotes in our area, yelping in the middle of the night. This seems new, as does the bobcat that I jumped last summer while walking down our hill to the beehives. There are big flocks of turkeys. And, of course, there are deer - far too many.

REDS: A number of things turned up red this year. We had the best red raspberry crop ever, perhaps due to more rainfall than usual. The bell peppers grew so well that they ripened beyond their usual green stage into the red phase - Christmas colors! - as the enclosed photo shows. There was a great crop of red mountain ash berries as well, alongside the burning bush. Nature is consoling; life is good.

We hope this finds you well, active, and looking forward to 2003.

John and Mary Lou