

Marian Mountain  
Coastlands  
Big Sur, CA 93920  
Sept. 15, 1984

Dear Wendy,

Thanks for the long letter filled with commentaries, descriptions and philosophical musings. Good news about the new book that's beginning to form in your head. The quickest way to detach yourself from you manuscript is to get involved in a new book.

Jack and I stayed in town last week (in our trailer). We had a chance to visit with three of my girls and to see my newest granddaughter. We also combed junk yards and tire towns in three cities looking for used truck rims to fit an axle that Jack planned to use as the basis of a utility trailer. We drove over 100 miles and hunted through 7 junk yards and a dozen tire stores without success and then, just before we came home, I called one more tire store and they had just what Jack needed. We've been looking in the Want Adds for months for a large utility trailer but never found what we wanted. So Jack designed one and after checking out the prices of box steel, plywood, lights, etc we found he could built exactly what he wanted within our budget. He has begun to gather together all the materials and as soon as the November rains dampen down the forest enough to make welding safe he will build the trailer.

We've decided that instead of buying the aluminum boat, out-board and cartop rack we'll use the money we've saved to move out of Big Sur next spring--barring any unforeseen complications that might arise. The boat will have to wait until after we've settled down and saved up the money again. The area around Big Sur is getting much too crowded and expensive for our tastes and budget. There isn't any future here for Jack, or any more interesting challenges. Also we aren't getting any younger. We expect we might have to spend a couple of years of wandering around before we can find a place we like well enough to call home. But eventually the advantages of living where Jack can have all his vehicles and tools in one place and where he can have more opportunity to work at one or more of his trades will make up for the things we will be giving up here: our comfortable cabin, our mild winters, our privacy, our view, and our free rent.

Our plans are to move our stuff north to Crescent City, Cal., a small town near the Oregon border. Jack's parent's live there and they can take care of Jack's big tools and extra vehicles. We'll put our household goods in storage. It will take us two

or three trips to move everything. We'll live in a trailer court in Crescent City until we feel rested up enough to begin the second phase of our move. We thought we might leave our stuff in storage in Crescent City and spend the winter renting a furnished cabin or apartment somewhere in Idaho so we can see how we tolerate the cold winters. After we're sure where we want to settle down we'll move our stuff out of Crescent City.

Summer is almost over. The bugs are at their worst. Days are hot and muggy. Lizards are getting sluggish. Most of the summer transient birds have gone. In a few more days we will be returning to town to stay in our trailer for another week where Jack will put a new transmission in his 4-wheel drive. This will be the last major job he had to do on the vehicle. While he's working on the truck I have lots of sewing to do.

You asked how my novel was coming. As usual slow but steady. If we move next year that will slow it down even more. One reason I spent so much time firming up the synopsis was that I anticipated this kind of extended interruption. The book is divided into about 55 episodes. I've finished 15 episodes, have detailed outlines of 28 more and rough outlines of 12 others. I have to make a constant effort not to compare my progress with that of the average professional writer.

Received a letter from a reader in Oregon who said she read THE ZEN ENVIRONMENT non-stop. Also got an interesting letter from a reader in Thailand.

You were courageous (or foolhardy) to let your father read the manuscript of your novel. I think family members are the least likely to appreciate a writer's work, especially in the manuscript form. I wouldn't let anyone in my family read anything I wrote until after it was published. That way even if they don't understand the book or care for it they can tell themselves that because some expert thought the book was good enough to publish it must have something going for it.

About how we tamed our foxes. Before we found and patched all the holes in our cabin we often caught one or two packrats a day in traps under the kitchen sink. I threw the dead rats outside the yard. For a year we never saw the animal that snapped up the dead rats every night. Then we began seeing a fox now and then very close to the cabin. We began putting out

leftovers in a bowl and gradually moved the bowl closer to the cabin until it ended up on our front porch. It took a couple of years before the foxes became tame enough to lose their fear of us enough to show up regularly during the day.

I'm rereading Henry Miller's **THE ORANGES** OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH. It's been over 20 years since I first read the book and I'm enjoying it just as much as I did the first time. I wonder if there is any significance in rereading the book at this time when we are preparing to leave Big Sur. It was Miller's "Oranges" that first piqued my interest in the possibility of living a bohemian life in the mountains of Big Sur. My reasons for coming here were to live a more adventurous life. Our reasons for leaving are a little more practical.

Culling out books to the bare minimum of those I want to take with me. Among the ones I keep to reread is ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENENCE.

Love,  
Morris