

Memoir of a Cabin  
September 1, 2011

Some cabins are much more than a body of wooden ribs and a fireplace for a heart. About an hour-and-a-half drive southeast of Portland, I still stand where I came into being as Cabin 20 on Road 20D on almost a half-acre about ten miles west of Government Camp. The exact year I joined the Forest Service leasing family is unknown, but it was in the 1960s. When Ed, my current caretaker, adopted me in November 1978 for \$35,000 in cash, he'd heard that students enrolled in a shop class at Sandy High School had raised my original rafters and nailed together my decks. This part of my birth certificate is lost to history, but what I know for sure is that Ed's been taking care of me now for the past 33 years. Let me tell you about Ed. He was born in Northern Maine, went to school in Boston and Berkeley to become a civil engineer and then moved to Portland in 1971 to help erect the Fremont Bridge—that's the big green arch between the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railway Bridge 5.1 and the Broadway Bridge. Ed, a construction engineer for his entire career, worked with Portland Ironworkers Local #29 to put Fremont together, including raising Fremont's 6,000-ton center span off barges in the middle of the Willamette River—the largest bridge lift in the world at the time. Fremont opened in 1973, but by then Ed was hooked on mountain climbing, hiking, cross country skiing, and the people of the Pacific Northwest. He joined the Mazamas Mountaineering Club in 1972 and eventually bought a small ranch house on Fairmount Boulevard in the hills of Southwest Portland. He traveled in his job, putting together oil platforms and bridges in other parts of the world, but when he was home he made many commutes to Mount Hood (as a younger person he eventually summited this 11,249-foot- tall stratovolcano seventeen times), and to other Northwest mountains and slopes. By the time Sharon came along in 1993, I had been majorly made-over by professional contractors: new ceramic tile floors in a remodeled kitchen and bathroom, new carpets upstairs and down, a new woodstove, rebuilt walls and decks, and electrical fixtures. The white tiles in the bathroom, hand-painted by elementary students in La Paz, Mexico, were installed in the late 1980s. The backsplash behind my fireplace was one of Ed's few home engineering jobs, but you can tell by the lack of seams it was designed anatomically correct. Sharon interviewed Ed for a newspaper story about Fremont's twentieth anniversary in 1993, and the next thing I know they are replacing my roof in time for their wedding reception out under my Douglas firs in 1998. It was a great party with a big banner hanging off one of my main rafters that said, "Celebrate." After that Sharon, born in Oregon City, and Ed visited me often, as did the grandchildren—so many grandchildren that they decided to rehab a full-time cabin at Brightwood, seven miles down the road, one with twice as much as my 700-square footage. I will miss them, but they really weren't coming to see me often enough these past few months. I do like it that they've spiffed me up for my next custodians—I have a new secondary heating system, one that's thermostatically controlled, my back deck has been rebuilt and dressed in a new coat of preservative, as has been the rest of my wooden surfaces. Ed and Sharon have also promised to wave every time they come up Road 20D, the backbone of one of their favorite walking loops no matter where they live.

Sharon and Ed's favorite Cabin 20D Walking Loop:

Total distance walked: About two miles.

Time: One hour, depending on your stride.

Walk up Road 20D (southeast) until it dead-ends.

Walk around the gate and past a neighboring Forest Service cabin; continuing about 300 feet on a well-cleared path with many beautiful overlooks along the Zig Zag River.

This path eventually curves right and comes out at Road 20E.

Turn right on Road 20E, passing the Flag Mountain trailhead\* on the way to Road 20.

Turn left on Road 20. You will be under a full canopy of large firs and cedars as you continue to the Still Creek Bridge, down Road 20 less than one-quarter of a mile.

Ed and Sharon have seen big luncker salmon spawning in their birth waters under the Still Creek Bridge in September two different years.

Cross the Still Creek Bridge. Turn right, following Still Creek Road about one mile downhill towards Highway 26. Turn right off Still Creek Road and cross the lower Still Creek Bridge.

Just past the lower Still Creek Bridge, turn right on Marion Road. Follow Marion Road about one-half mile to where it dead-ends at Road 20.

(Instead of turning right on Marion Road, you can also choose to continue across the Dick Dopp Suspension Bridge over the Zig Zag River and walk along Highway 26 uphill to Road 20.)

Turn right off Marion Road onto Road 20; walk one-quarter mile to Road 20D.

Turn left on Road 20D, which takes you back past me, Cabin 20D. Feel free to wave.

\*Flag Mountain, located between Still Creek and the Zig Zag River, is a big hill located southeast of Cabin 20D. The walk is about 5 miles, with an elevation gain of about 500 feet.

This is a description from REI's website

<http://www.rei.com/guidepost/detail/oregon/hiking/flag-mountain-trail/14988>

***Flag Mountain Trail*** - Although mostly a forest walk, the rarely traveled Flag Mountain Trail includes at least one good viewpoint that is an ideal lunch spot. Another benefit of this trip is that the stiff climb in the first mile ensures that you'll get a good workout, despite this hike's short distance.