



We don't stay at people's houses, even when we are welcome. Yoshi and I are up at all times of the night, and we couldn't possibly be unobtrusive houseguests. We always find accommodations nearby when visiting friends. Then we can eat, smoke, watch television and be as noisy as we please. Good friends Michelle and Stewart Moore own a handsome log lodge on the steep southern bank of Big Bear Lake in California's San Bernardino mountains. Above, a ris-

ing sun bathes the lodge. Mich and Stew live and work in coastal Orange County, and we see them often there. They rent the Big Bear Lake lodge only to vacationing friends and friends of friends. But this week, during the Fourth of July holidays, they stayed at the lodge themselves, and they invited Yoshi and me to join them. The standoffish Sellerses rented the cabin below, just down the hill from the Moores. Our cabin was "historical," originally a tiny log box with a roof, then expanded and modernized a bit.





It was the Fourth of July, so of course there had to be an American flag. At left, Stewart and Michelle drape a flag from their deck. Truth be known, this was the second draping. Originally, they hung it with the star field on the right instead of the proper left. An elderly military veteran spotted the mistake from his nearby condo, and he shuffled over to the Moore lodge and politely delivered a Veterans of Foreign Wars pamphlet showing the right way to do it. Mich and Stew immediately reversed the flag, and waved down to my camera as I stood outside my little cabin. It was hot as hell during those days at Big Bear Lake. Surprisingly so, since we were more than 6,000 feet above sea level. Everybody said, "Well, it's not as hot as it is down below." Maybe not, but I was here, not there, and it was hot enough here. A big help to us was an ingenious deck fan. It was hooked up to a water hose and sprayed out a fine mist of cooling moisture. Below, Yoshi takes advantage of it as she drinks a cup of Japanese green tea. The fan had to be directed slightly away from the table and chairs. Otherwise, you'd quickly get wet. A lamp is clamped to a protruding rafter above and behind Yoshi. I brought the lamp from home, so I could read on the cabin deck at night.





Night photography is a challenge for me. While dining on barbecued ribs and corn on the cob at the lodge's lantern-lit deck table, we watched fireworks explode in the sky above Big Bear Lake. A local radio station provided synchronized music, mostly patriotic. My digital camera hesitates slightly before it actually captures an image. This makes it difficult – for me, anyway – to snap firework bursts. So I was pleasantly surprised when I came away with the photo at upper right. Not bad. The next day, the four of us had a nice lunch at a lake-front restaurant. A blustery wind

came up, the sky turned gray, the lake choppy, and we thought for a while that rain would fall. Our hopes were dashed. A few drops and the blazing sun returned. That night, we were back on the lodge deck. More wine and ribs. At lower left, Stew lights Yoshi's cigarette with a new Zippo that I had picked out for him just an hour or so before. Finally it was time to go home. But Stew and I couldn't leave Big Bear Lake without first having our traditional breakfast at the Teddy Bear Restaurant. I've never seen a bear in Big Bear, but bears certainly provide the theme for the place, perhaps cloyingly so.



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