

Seashore memories

Since we moved here to Howard Lake I keep seashells I used to collect stored in two boxes, and decorate my bathroom with.

I collected anything with a seashell motif, towels, bath soap, toothbrush sets, anything I could find. I even found a gorgeous blown glass lamp from France which floated four large seashells hanging from underneath the light fixture.

The bathroom we have now is not a master bathroom. It has one sink, a toilet, one closet and a medicine cabinet. And it is across the hall away from our bedroom so it does not qualify as a master bathroom. It's more like a long narrow windowless closet.

At home in California we had a true master bathroom, with a Jacuzzi whirlpool tub that was a hefty 75 by 42 inches. My husband and I could sit next to each other in it because it had a double lumbar jet, one for each of us.

Around the tub and several places that I built for ambience were window sills and tile space large enough to show off seashells collected over the years. Also, glass shelves with miniature lighting always showed off the best collection and made one see them in their true environment with colorful coral.

When I was a little girl, I loved going very early in the morning to the seashore because that was the best time to find seashells nearly intact.

It always annoyed me to watch early morning joggers running along the seashore trampling pristine shells before anyone got there,

Musings of a Transplant Maria Stolz Howard Lake

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such as myself of course, to enjoy collecting along the way. I regarded it as some form of mindless dismissive arrogance on their part to run or race through without a care about what they were destroying under their feet. So I got used to going very early in the morning to find my first of the pick.

Have you ever played games with yourself collecting seashells?

Let's see . . . How far can I walk the seashore before I find my first shell? How many can I find in the first stretch? Can I collect enough sea glass to play chess with? Can I collect enough sea items to make up a chessboard and play all day?

If you're with a friend, who could collect the most intact seashells, sand dollars, miniature sea conches and fossilized stones in the shortest amount of time? Didn't you wonder where its inhabitants go, leaving their homes behind?

Knowing how much I miss the ocean, a kind friend gave me a CD and DVD of ocean beaches around the world, particularly in the Pacific islands. Even as a little girl, I knew I was meant for the sea. I loved walking the shores of the Pacific Ocean and listening to the wind of the Ali'i Nui waiting for Mano the shark to bear her spirit back to Bora Bora. This is a legend from when the lov-

ing gods ruled the islands.

I play the CD as background noise while I do needlework and other things, like writing this column, because I am instantly transported to my home in Santa Cruz, where the shore breaks upon the rocks.

I am grateful to my friend because he knows how sensitive I am to the sound and sight of the seashore. For me, the sound of water crashing upon the rocks, rolling back to the sea, acts as a sedative against an intrusive world of cell phones, I-Pods and computers.

But most of all, I can lose myself in a place where I have felt lost for three years.

Yesterday, my husband took a drive around Howard Lake. It was a perfect warm day, but not humid.

While he drove, I watched for any stretch of lake one could go to for private contemplation, but it was not clear whether those spots with docks and chairs belonged to private people because many are across the road from residences, but are they open to the public? I don't think so.

But how do you approach people who have access to the shoreline for some time to sit and contemplate and have some privacy?

Isn't that what these places are meant to be, (i.e., private) to lake shore owners?

I guess my musing for the moment is how I can have access to Howard Lake and secure a private moment.

Then, I think, I could be happy in this place.