

A Beach Bum at the Hoffman Center

We moved full-time to the Oregon Coast in 2015. It was a bit of a culture shock - no good coffee shops, no movies, limited restaurant choices, and no writing community that I knew of. That is until I heard about the Hoffman Center in Manzanita and the literary magazine they produced - *The North Coast Squid*. That's some name, was my first thought. My second was, I wanta be a part of it.

The first story I submitted to *The Squid*, was a short memoir piece about the first time I brought my young family to the Oregon Coast, to Seaside to be exact. We had moved to Banks, Oregon from Seattle in 1982, so I could take a teaching job there. The story, which was titled "How to Get There from Here" described our initial disappointment with the town as we arrived on a cold, rainy winter night, my two young daughters hungry and whining, as my then-wife stared at me with a mixture of disdain and discomfort that said only, "Why did you make us come to this god-awful place?" The story ends with us pulling on raincoats and heading for the beach, weather be damned and ends with the proclamation: "It doesn't matter whether it's raining or sunny, or even if it's night or day. Or if you feel shitty and angry and not so sure about the people you're with. You go anyway and make the best of it because no matter what the weather, or how you feel, the ocean is still there, and the waves are breaking, and the air is clean and smells of seaweeds and salt and damn if you're not closer after a walk on the beach to what this damn life is supposed to be all about."

I was really pleased when the piece was accepted by *The Squid*, and even more pleased when I got to read it in front of an appreciative crowd at the Hoffman Center when Issue #4 was

released. I felt like I'd found my people, a group of appreciative readers and writers. And, I discovered, that I had a lot to say about living on the Coast, about the endless emotional pull of the Pacific, and about finally finding a home.

The second piece I wrote for the *North Coast Squid* is still one of my favorites, and one that inspired the writing of my current book, "Beach Bum: A Life in Pieces." That story was titled, "The Next Wave" and chronicled my return to surfing at the age of 70. I had surfed as a kid back in New Jersey (yes, there is surfing in New Jersey), but then had let it slip out of my life for almost 50 years. Then on my 70th birthday, with my wife and adult daughter as witnesses and potential rescuers, I rented a board and a wetsuit and went on out. The results were predictable. I fell - a lot. But also, by the time I gave up, exhausted and happy, I discovered that life is full of surprises and hidden joys. No longer would I be worried about what I should be doing or how it might look. Now I surf every day that I can.

I think until I wrote these true short stories for *The Squid*, I didn't fully realize how much of my life was shaped by being near the water and even being in it. From my earliest memories of life on the Atlantic Coast to our now and forever home (or until they drag me out) in Cape Meares, my life has been shaped by the sea. Writing about those times and places has helped me to understand that journey and to be a grateful Beach Bum. Thank you, Hoffman Center for helping me on that journey.