



Waiting for the Drawbridge

An old bridge forces humans to enjoy its surroundings.

BY RICHARD CORRIGAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ED HALL

I could only guess why the man behind me was upset. Through my rearview mirror, I could see him grabbing hold of the steering wheel, squeezing it, pushing it away, pointing, then holding his arms out, palms open as if beckoning someone for the answer to a question. He looked like he was speaking vehemently, but I couldn't hear him. I'm sure he felt victimized. He probably had some important plans.

The woman in the passenger's seat sat stoically next to him — expressionless, eyes fixed straight ahead.

I looked ahead and into the car in front of me. I could see a man fumbling with something in the front seat, maybe his briefcase. He looked at his handheld cell phone and pressed a button. Within seconds, he was waving his hand. He reached down to the seat and lifted a pad of paper. He held it in the air and looked as though he was reading from it. He was using the delay as an opportunity.

Suddenly, he slapped the pad against the dashboard. His head and shoulders moved together from side to side and front to back as if he had fused disks in his spinal col-

Continued on page 151

WAITING FOR DRAWBRIDGE *continued from page 152*
umn. He seemed irritated.

Unexpectedly, from the right lane, crossing in front of the opportunist, dashed a small green car whose driver, her head bridled, her face red, looked determined to escape the two-lane parking lot and forgo any further delay. She made a U-turn and headed west. She was definitely attempting circumnavigation, not with Magellan's lofty purpose, but with theoretically similar intentions: to go around whatever was in the way. Presently, at this location, no one was traveling east.

Moving forward to take her place was a young girl who didn't seem to mind the delay as long as she could smoke a cigarette and blast her car radio. She had one of those speakers that sits in the trunk of the car and forces the pounding sounds of bass guitar into the private homes of residents along her route.

She appeared self-absorbed. She didn't care about the opportunist trying to conduct business from his mobile office, or the stoic or the victim gesticulating more than ever. She was living for the beat of the song and another drag on her cigarette.

Next to me, in the passenger's seat of a car dwarfed only by a stretch limousine, sat a

social butterfly. As I glanced over, she smiled a plastic sort of smile. Her teeth were as white as a brand new crayon still in the box. Though she snapped her head from side to side, looking around to determine who might see her, and stretching her neck to look into every car, not even a strand of her lacquered hair moved.

Her driver was an escape artist. He had been stationary for only five minutes, but he was sound asleep. His head was resting on his headrest and propped with his hand, his elbow resting on the door. His mouth was open. I could hear him snoring.

I looked ahead at what had caused the delay.

I guess in this day and age, when time is such a valuable commodity, it might make sense to get rid of the old dinosaur of a bridge and replace it with a higher, sleeker new span. Then traffic could race past the white sand beaches, the rolling waves, the ocean mist, the seagulls, egrets, herons, pelicans and lovers walking hand in hand along the shore.

But, I like the dinosaur. I enjoy the sound of the ocean kissing the rocks near the bluff when I'm forced to stop on the bridge. I feel sad for those whose life-journey hurries them past that which gives the journey its worth.

The old bridge forces humans to enjoy its surroundings. Stop and see the ocean – always moving, rolling, waving and lapping. Hear the birds as they fly in and out of the trusses. Smell the fish as they gather to feed, rising to the water's surface. Feel the ocean mist on your face. Taste the salt air.

A new bridge will be a selfish bridge. Don't stop. Don't see. Don't listen. Don't smell. Don't feel. Don't taste. Just . . . keep . . . moving.

The old bridge eventually became one again with the road, and the traffic began to move.

I watched as the escapist opened his eyes and yawned; the socialite smiled, winked and then checked her makeup in the mirror on the visor. The egocentric flicked away her cigarette, rolled up her window, cranked up the music and drove off.

I thought of the circumnavigator, who still had 45 minutes to go to be where she would have been in five. The opportunist continued to talk on his cell phone as he inched his car forward. I looked into my rearview mirror at the stoic. As long as we sat there, I'm not sure she ever blinked.

And then there was the victim. And even though his image was backward, the words "come on," came straight at me. *W*