

Getting around the county:

Spring was yesterday

By M. L. FISCHER

SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Often the ephemeral nature of things precious make them all the more precious, creating a deep longing. Momentary beauty and wonder tug at the heart and cast a shadow of memory far longer than the experience.

Such is spring's brief climax.

The winter storms slowly wind down, leaving a fresh carpet of green over ground that had so recently been bare.

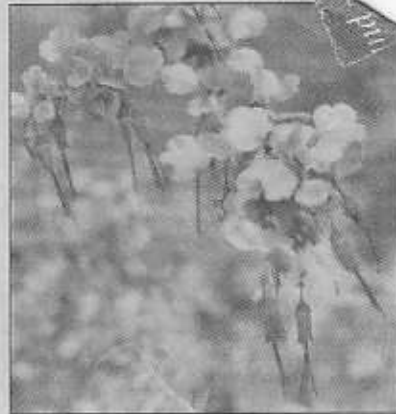
Naked tree limbs start to bud and then to bloom. We catch this brief drama on our way to work, to shop, to take care of the myriad little

chores that frame our daily lives. We wash the car, paint the house and weed the garden — and the days get warmer and redolent of floral mysteries.

One day we stop for a moment and recognize the drama unfolding around us, and we take ourselves to some hillside, some meadow, some piece of public land.

We arrive, prepared to drink in the rebirth of the life cycle, and we find remnant stands of flowers and patches of brown. The butterflies and bees are few, and the warm air faintly hums, rather than sings. The creeks roll slowly and leisurely in their beds.

The land is ripe, perhaps like a banana that's starting to spot. You find a ranger or a docent and



A pleasure of the woods.

remark about the lush scenery around you.

She sighs and says, "You should have been here yesterday. The flowers were so thick. Today's heat, it feels like summer's coming on."

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And so we seem to live our lives, striving for things that last so long they become a problem, requiring an eventual yard sale or a trip to the dump.

All the while, the things that enrich the heart and bring music to the soul are put off for a more convenient day; and if we miss that day, we wait a year or forever.

I've witnessed nearly 60 springs, and each one is still as magical as the first. Each turns me into a wide-eyed child again and fills me with wonder and primal longings.

The first bud on a tree, the first blade of new grass, the first wildflower — and I'm returned to my innocence. I see the world newly minted. I am a baby chick emerging from my egg, an adolescent in the throes of first love.

I never allow myself to take daily life so seriously as to miss that moment of wonder when the heady energy of spring explodes in joyful reaffirmation. I have my favorite places, little Edens where the drama is so intense as to be almost painful.

One of these places is Garland Ranch, a park in Carmel Valley. Set where the Carmel River meets vertical mountains, Garland, at the right moment, is a floral insurrection, an anarchy of color.

I arrived at one of those moments and walked among monkey flowers and Indian paintbrush. Lupine and poppies made an ebullient quilt across the meadow.

Along each bend in the trail, baby blue eyes, wild morning glories and a dozen other flowers kept time to the gentle breeze.

Under the shifting light of marching clouds, I walked among humble and bumble bees, butterflies of every hue, effervescent birds and sunbathing lizards.

There wasn't an inch of that park that wasn't dancing wildly and beckoning me to abandon myself and join the celebration.

Then there was the amazing climax to a breathless day. Walking in the deep woods, I stopped at a small pond. I sat at the bench on the bank, looking over the water.

Most of the pond was in the shade, but a small patch was bathed in sunlight. The light breeze sent ripples over the surface. There was a sycamore on the bank, hanging over the sunlit spot.

As I looked at the tree, I saw light running up the trunk and out the underside of the overhanging branches, rivers of light.

It moved like a stream, a constant flow, upward and outward, running off the tips and into space.

The liquid light rushed, bubbled, cascaded and poured.

I watched this brilliant upside down river for 15 or 20 minutes before heading down the hill to my car.

That was yesterday, and yesterday was spring.

M. L. Fischer is a Corralitos writer and teacher, whose books include "Shattering the Crystal Face of God" and "Cosmic Coastal Chronicles."