

April 1980

THE PONDEROSA



the PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION NEWS LETTER



FROM UNDER MY BRIM

I spent a short but enjoyable time working at the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum in Walnut Creek California. The following is an article from the museum's April 1979 news letter. Mr. Valle-Riestra is able to capture and pass on to us the peace and beauty to be found here at Coe.

THE SCENE FROM A FOOT Henry W. Coe State Park

May these quiet hills
Bring peace to the souls of those
Who are seeking

How most decidedly appropriate is this simple exhortation, outlined in fading letters on a simple brass plaque in the midst of the wilderness, a moving memorial to a rancher who loved his land with a passion that many today would scoff at as idealistic, simplistic, too far removed from economic realities. You can rest here, atop a hilly prominence in the state park that bears Henry Coe's name, and contemplate, amidst the rock gardens of spring, the very same views that brought peace and fulfillment to the old cattleman's soul, the awe-inspiring rugged silence of the Mt. Hamilton Range cascading toward distant horizons southeast of the city of San Jose.

But what a penalty we must pay to reach Henry W. Coe State Park these days! For the drive from our homes in Contra Costa County seems endless and, indeed, frightening as we barrel along through miles of new developments where only yesterday meadows, swamplands, and truck farms gladdened the eye; where today our sensibilities are shocked by the cheap, mechanical sameness of the undistinguished brown boxes, unendingly bordered by that same phony adobe brick concrete barrier fence plastered with scrawled obscenities. At Morgan Hill, some twenty miles from San Jose, the highway jogs to join the new section of freeway 101, and soon thereafter signs point to East Dunne Avenue, the approach road to the park. The rising topography ahead holds promise of visual relief from the ravages of misguided progress, but no such luck -- first you must pass the banks of Anderson Reservoir, a poignant scene of urban crowding and rock-painting vandalism in a narrow valley which once must have held out such promise of secluded country living. But soon the road leaves this scene of discouragement, and the transgreenery of unspoiled wilderness.

The narrow, rough road wends its tortuous way some fourteen miles toward a series of ridges crowned by a by a curiously sparse growth of giant Ponderosa pine, our destination. Here, at the highway's end, perched above a precipitous canyon, are Henry Coe's old ranch house and barns, as well as a small visitor center; likely as not, you will be greeted by smiling ranger Barry Breckling, a decade ago a young worker in our own museum, who will be delighted to suggest an exploratory hike of the hiker's paradise around you.

A good introduction to this large 13,000-acre park is a hike that takes you across Pine Ridge and its small wilderness monument to Frog Lake, along the spectacular Middle Ridge, and back to park headquarters on the Fish Trail. The six-mile loop explores only one small corner of the park, but you are introduced, in rapid succession, to several distinct life zones, a representative microcosm of the coastal ranges between Monterey and San Francisco Bays. You will find the constantly changing scenery a source of exhilarating delight, and the April wildflower displays are stunning, from the depths of the canyon riparian zones to the oak savannahs high up on the ridges. You must understand that you will have to do a little work to earn all of these delights --after all, the coastal ranges are characterized by rugged parallel ridges separated by often awesome valleys, and the kaleidoscope of life zones is the result of a great deal of up-and-down movement. Indeed, the trails are extremely steep in places, but the transitory discomfort in scrambling up some particularly steep stretch is soon forgotten in the midst of astounding displays such as can be seen along Middle Ridge. This is the habitat of manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos glauca*) -- the largest most magnificent manzanitas you have ever seen; giant, tree-like specimens with crowns the size of mature blue oaks. And below them -- provided you do not wait until too late in April -- is the most incredible display of veritable carpets of Indian Warriors, with a sprinkling of Milkmaids, appropriately blushing, in their midst.

Allow four hours for a leisurely traverse of the loop. Sturdy boots are a must to cope with plunging gravelly paths and muddy canyon bottoms.

frank valle-riestra

Get out and experience it for yourself. Its easy to forget the value to be found here at Coe with our busy lives.

Barry

WHAT'S HAPPENIN'

- * SUNDAY APRIL 27TH - DAY LIGHT SAVINGS BBQ - Come enjoy the extra hour of light with good company. We'll be having a BBQ-potluck at Manzanita Point. Bring your own meat, beverages, plates, cups and utensils (we'll supply the heat). Also bring one casserole or salad or vegetable or dessert to be shared. Come join the company of association members, docents, and park employees around noon, we'll be eating around 2:30. Those wanting their food driven to Manzanita Point, have it at the museum by 1:00 p.m. (people not wanting to hike the two miles may get a ride in at this time and back out in the afternoon). There will be games for the kids. This year the association is inviting park employees from the Gabilan Mountains Area and from the district office as well as our docents.
- * EVENING PROGRAMS AT COE - Programs start at 8p.m. in April and 8:00 in May.
 - April 12 Mountain Lions- Rick Hopkins and Tom Smith.
 - April 19 Homesteaders- Leon Thomas
 - April 26 Nature Photography- Chris Burgman
 - May 3 Coe Ranch History- Barry Breckling
 - May 10 Wildflowers- Dave Hildebrand
 - May 17 Mountain Lions- Rick Hopkins and Tom Smith
 - May 24 Homesteaders- Leon Thomas
 - May 25 Dangerous Animals- Barry Breckling
- * LITTER GETTERS- We have a litter getter program. Kids can earn a patch by picking up a bag of litter. Sacramento has given us a neat silk screen to make the patches.



- * The following are some possible projects that the Pine Ridge Association members might work on in 1980. If you would like to do the leg work and supervise a project, contact Barry. The BBQ will be a good place to exchange ideas on this.
 - Repair the old corral ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the headquarters).
 - Replace the water pump at Madrone Soda Springs.
 - Replace and/or repair the Blackberry Spring water tank.
 - Trail work- we could set aside a day in June to up grade one of the trails.
 - Any other ideas?
- * THE PARKS DOCENT PROGRAM- We have 8 members who work in the museum on weekends, answering questions and interpreting to the public. Thank you:

Camille Clark	Bill Hardman
Lillian Connelly	Gary Keller
Steve Fend	Saelon Renkes
Teddy Goodrich	Lee Sims
- * MOUNTAIN LION- The association is paying for the tanning of a Mountain Lion skin received from Fish and Game. It should be in use at the park by the time this letter is out. We have already been using the skull for formal and informal interpretation.
- * NEW MAPS- Our revised brochure-map is scheduled to arrive at the park in June.

DIRECTORS MEETING: The PRA Directors met on March 31. With regrets we have accepted Leon Thomas' resignation from the board of directors for personal reasons. Leon is one of the founders of the Association and his service will be missed. Gary Keller was nominated and elected to fill Leon's term as a director. Other items of business were the planning of the Spring Meeting and approval of the cost of tanning of the lion skin for the museum

Dave Hildebrand



FROM UNDER MY LID

As a park maintenance worker at Coe Park I have occasion to observe the fascinating territorial behavior of homo sapiens. As the fox, mountain lion, or bobcat, the human must stake his claim when he visits the park. Man, however, eschews scat in favor of cigarette butts, which more readily identify the type of person who leaves them.

A Marlboro, for example, is usually stomped flat by a boot heel, indicating the virile macho man who smokes them. A Virginia Slims is often accompanied by the tell-tale smear of lipstick, the mark of a woman who has come a long way. Spots of blood may garnish the Taryton, an indication of a person who would rather fight than switch. And of course the Camel is left by the man who is one of a kind.

Some may still regard the behavior I have described as thoughtless acts of littering which detract from the beauty of the park, but I hope most will now see that the tossing of a butt is as natural as, and equivalent to, leaving scat.

Chris Burgman