The **Ponderosa**

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Winter 2000

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Fourteen Boys on a Wilderness Outing

I am the forest. I am the creek and the pebbles along its banks. I am the wind. And I am unhappy. Who are you to hurt me? The deer chew on my leaves and drink my water, and they do not hurt me. The coyote steps on my back and breathes my air, but I feel no pain. Who are you to hurt me?

You did not even see me, but I saw you. You traveled with your city under your arms and on your backs, and as you walked, you dropped wrappers along the trail. Were they too heavy to carry home? Did you not see how out of place they were next to the fallen leaves?

Your noise went before you and behind you and to all sides of you. The animals ran and hid. And those that didn't run peeked from vantage points of safety, from far off, at the tops of the trees, even at the edge of holes in the ground near your feet. Yes, even the little mole whose eyes see only dark and light, saw you and heard the thundering of your voices. The jay atop the ponderosa pine scoffed at you and echoed my dissatisfaction, "Who are you to hurt us?" You did not see her nor did you hear her scoffing because you did not know that silence is sweeter than noise.

You built fires and burned plastic and other things not meant to be burned, things that fouled the air and the land. You buried your fire so that no one would see you had made it, but I saw, and the coyote that you heard saw, too. You drank from bottles and ate from cans, and then you used your BB gun to break the bottles and put holes in the cans. Your broken glass was left lying in my blood, in my creek, and to compound the injury, when you were done, you left all your filth, pounds upon pounds of garbage and litter and ashes, on my back. And the ugliness of left garbage is only part of the hurt. What about all those things you left in the garbage that I gave up to you that you never thank me for, the things that could have been used again. The scores of beer and soda cans, the glass bottles, and the paper and plastic could all have been recycled. Who are you to hurt me?

I see many of your kind who walk softly and quietly. People who treat me with gentleness and kindness. They see my face and know my beauty. They treat me with respect. They see the bluebirds in the oak, and the bluebirds do not fly away. They see the deer in the field, and the deer do not flee. They

Inside this issue . . .

The history of the Dowdy Ranch

A surprise wedding at the park

Major revisions of the Visitor Center expansion plans

Announcements of upcoming events for PRA members

. . . and more!

Printed on recycled paper.

smell the freshness of the air and the warmth of the sun and know it is good. They see the fields of swaying grass and the reflections of the forest in the placid pools along the creek. They see the deer trail, littered only with dead leaves that have started on a long journey, a journey that we all will follow. In the sounds around them they hear the peace, the silence. And although they may not hear my voice, they are so very close, for my voice lives in the silence. You did not even hear the silence.

I am the feather of the bluebird. I am the new green grass and the dew on its back. I am the wind, and I am unhappy. Who are you to hurt me?

The Dowdy Ranch
by Teddy Goodrich

"Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are."
Jose Ortega y Gasset

The westward migration of the Dowdy family from their home in North Carolina in the first half of the nineteenth century reflected the restlessness of much of the population in a nation that was rapidly expanding its boundaries. For John and Ellen Dowdy, the political and social turmoil created by the slavery issue must have also been an important factor in their decision to move west.

By the time their last child, Mary, was born in 1844, they had settled on a homestead in Daviess County, Missouri. While they were living there, their son, Perry, married Icy Ann Frost.[1] Perry and Icy Ann's first two children were born in Missouri: Nancy in 1850 and Franklin Pierce, named for the newly elected Democratic president, in 1852.

About 1850, Icy Ann's father, Daniel Boone Frost, and some of the Dowdy men, probably John and some of his older sons, came west alone to look at the country. Liking what they saw, they returned with their families in 1853, traveling in covered wagons by way of Oregon to northern California. They settled in Portola, in Plumas County. Finding the winters there too cold, they moved the following year to Gilroy.

Orren, Perry's older brother, squatted on land near the headwaters of the South Fork of Orestimba Creek in Stanislaus County. Since he was already on the land, after the first federal census was completed in 1881, he filed a preemption claim for 150 acres in section 2, T9sR5e. He received his patent on June 30, 1883. On November 9, 1891, he received a second homestead patent, this one by cash entry on an additional 149 acres, also in section 2.

The Surveyor General's map of 1881 shows "Dowdy's house and yard" just north of the present day Orestimba corral, and "trail to Dowdy's" passing southeast of his ranch through sections 12 and 13.

His ranch in the Orestimba was isolated, but he had neighbors. Between 1887 and 1891, Perry and his sons, Frank and George, filed for homesteads on 378 acres in sections 24 and 26, T9sR5e. Perry's sons, John and William, and his daughter, Melissa, filed for homesteads on 468 acres in section 30, T9sR5e. To the north, Eli Robison[2] had already established a ranch along the South Fork of Orestimba Creek. His house and barn are shown on the 1881 Surveyor General's map, and he received a patent for 160 acres in section 18, T8sR6e in July 1889.

Orren Dowdy never married. He died in 1893. His ranch buildings were probably burned in one of the wildfires that swept the Orestimba around the turn of the century. Today the only traces of his ranch are two shallow, rock-lined depressions that may mark the location of his wells. There is no proof, but it is quite possible that his corral stood where the Orestimba corral stands today.

Meanwhile, Perry Dowdy purchased land in odd-numbered sections from the Southern Pacific Railroad, bringing the total number of acres in his ranch to approximately 6,000 in Santa Clara, Stanislaus, and Merced Counties.

Frank Dowdy was superintendent of the ranch; his brothers John, George, and William helped in its management. Though their father had a farm on Day Road in Gilroy, the brothers spent most of their time at the ranch, which they

called Burra Burra Ranch. They attended to the seasonal round of responsibilities required by a large cattle ranch: calving, feeding, gathering, branding, and shipping cattle to market. Shipping cattle required the combined effort of many of the neighboring ranchers, as the cattle had to be driven by men on horseback from the various ranches down to Bell's Station and then along Pacheco Pass to the railroad depot in Gilroy.

Dowdy ranch house in 1982 before it was burned

Their social life revolved around the restaurant and tavern at Bell's Station. They were also enthusiastic participants in deer hunting season when it came around each fall.

Perry Dowdy died in 1899. After their father's death, the sons continued with their ranching operation. The Dowdy brothers had become well known for their ability as stockmen, their integrity in business, their loyalty to their friends, and their generous hospitality.

The Dowdys remained in their beloved hills for more than half a century. What they found there satisfied the wanderlust that had drawn them across a continent. John died in 1916, George in 1923, and Frank in 1926. Like their Uncle Orren, they had never married. According to Dowdy family descendants, the death of Perry's three oldest sons caused the ranch to be sold in the late 1920s to settle the estate.

The ranch house, built around the turn of the century, is gone, burned in a training exercise in the 1980s. The barn and a shed that served as a garage still stand.

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[1] I suspect a parental sense of humor and a cold winter! Icy Ann was born in January.

[2] Poor Eli Robison! He left his name on the land—Robison Canyon, Robison Creek—only to have it changed by a latter-day surveyor to Robinson Canyon, Robinson Creek.

The author is indebted to Sharon Burke, great granddaughter of Perry Dowdy, for providing much of the information in this article.

Park News

by Kay Robinson
Park Superintendent

Hold on to your hat! There's been a change of thought for the Visitor Center. Our review of the Visitor Center began with a review of the entire ranch complex on the hilltop. With the availability of the Ranch House for house museum and/or office space, we decided to take another look at the functions provided and needed for visitors, volunteers, and staff. With the help of museum specialist Richard Clark and exhibits designer Robin Holmes (both from State Parks in Sacramento), Mary Stokes, Carolyn Fatooh, Barry Breckling, and I met to discuss the existing facilities and brainstorm future possibilities.

Several issues were taken into consideration. We need adequate office space for park staff and volunteers as well as handling PRA business; there will need to be an elevator in the new expansion (as determined by the office of the State Architect); a visitor center entryway should invite people to explore the park rather than be a bookstore; we would like to expand the interpretation of life at Pine Ridge Ranch; there seemed to be a "force-fitting" of the accessibility ramps into the upper level. When all was said and done, there were several changes proposed:

- the Ranch House will become a house museum (no office space)
- the office in the visitor center will be expanded to about double its current size
- the parlor will become the bookstore (with as many artifacts as possible shifted to the Ranch House to interpret Pine Ridge Ranch life) complete with enlarged counterspace for greeting and serving visitors
- the dining room will remain, juxtaposing the life and furnishings of the main Coe family ranch in San Felipe Valley with Pine Ridge Ranch life (fine china vs. everyday ware)
- space will be provided for a free-standing all-park relief map
- an elevator will be added for interior access to upper and lower floors

- the tile floor area will be raised one foot, eliminating the need for interior ramps (but, unfortunately, creating problems outside for adequate ramp access)
- the main (upper level) entryway will be extended to become a "mud room," covered by a gabled roof complementing the gabled roof over the new expansion

There is money in this year's State budget to provide expanded/revised architectural plans. It is anticipated that these plans will be complete by the end of the summer. There is also support from Sacramento after all these long years for major support from the State's budget for the expansion. I am actively pursuing this avenue. Such support could come from Proposition 12, which will appear on the March 7th ballot. **Three major projects for Coe come readily to mind: the purchase of the remaining Lakeview Meadows property, the Coe Visitor Center expansion, and major capital outlay development at Dowdy Ranch. But that's another story . . . .**

The funds already raised by the Pine Ridge Association would be applied toward planning, design, and construction of exhibits, which are expected to equal if not exceed capital building costs. These last two months have brought forth a whirlwind of ideas and plans. They are exciting and frightening all at once; a new concept and new work ahead of us. Bear with us as the California State Parks, the Fundraising Committee, and the Pine Ridge Association Board of Directors go forward with these revised expansion plans.

Proposition to Appear on March Ballot: Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act

by Barbara Bessey

In March, we will have the opportunity to vote on Proposition 12, the latest in a long line of park bond acts dating back to the 1920s. Its purpose is to improve the quality of life for all California residents by providing cleaner air and water, recreational opportunities, safe places for children to play in, and new wildlife preserves. It was placed on the ballot by the Legislature and Governor Davis. Although the measure is diverse, this bond act is similar to those that were passed by the voters in 1976, 1980, 1984, 1986, and 1988. It provides funds for all of the state agencies that protect land and recreational resources for future generations, and it also makes grants available to local agencies that perform the same functions.

Approximately $940 million of the bond monies would be earmarked for local agencies to use for local recreational, cultural, and natural areas. The remaining $1.16 billion would be used by the state for recreational, cultural, and natural areas of statewide significance. Portions of the state allocation are intended to be spent to buy, improve, or renovate recreational areas; to acquire and preserve natural areas; to acquire and preserve fish and wildlife habitat; and to pay the California Conservation Corps for work on projects funded by this proposition. Some monies are earmarked for a trail that would connect the Bear and Mendoza Ranch area with the adjacent Coe Park land; this would require cooperation from the state, Santa Clara County, and the Santa Clara Open Space.

The Planning and Conservation League (PCL), along with other conservation groups, are actively supporting the passage of this proposition. PCL has set up a special website that is devoted to information dissemination about this proposition. Also included is a list of endorsements; these endorsements come from a wide range of groups, including civic organizations, conservation organizations, parks and recreation organizations, and public safety organizations, among others. If you would like to read more about the proposition and how the bond monies would be allocated, check out the PCL website at: *www.safeparks.org* or read the description of this and the other state initiatives on the state website: *www.lao.ca.gov/initiatives/2000/12_03_2000.html.*

Regardless of whether you decide to support this initiative, don't forget to vote on March 7!

7th Annual Coe Thanksgiving Saturday Potluck

by Aileene Edsinger

Our Saturday Thanksgiving potluck dinner on November 27 in the white barn turned out to be a delightful and memorable event for some sixty of us who attended. Preparing for this annual get-together, Barry and other hardy volunteers could be found in the barn setting up the lanterns and tables for our late afternoon feast. While the early birds gathered at the appetizer and beverage table, sipping wine, beer, and soda, munching on the delectable shrimp salsa, chips, nuts, stuffed mushrooms, and other fancy goodies, the setup continued until dinner was finally announced. People kept on coming, bringing more salads, hot dishes, and desserts, and we did manage to have some turkey gravy, thank goodness, since only half of it spilled on the floor of Barry's Honda. The most acclaimed dessert of the event was John Prior's chocolate walnut pie. I missed it this year but not next year.

A gathering of souls hungry for another Thanksgiving meal, the friendship of each others' company, and the beauty of the setting at Coe Park is what this occasion is all about. And the occasion was made even more beautiful when, after we had stuffed ourselves with scrumptious food, Irwin Koff per-

formed his ministerial duties by uniting Connie Poloskey and Lee Blanchard in marriage. This was no ordinary wedding: no announcements, no tux, no wedding gown, no presents, no rice. Just the intimacy of a well-lighted barn and the spirit of love, which could be felt so intensely as Lee read aloud a wonderful poem Connie wrote to him during the early days of their courtship. Tears were flowing, hearts were singing, and goodwill was felt by all in the barn that evening. Their love touched us all, and we wish them our very best.

After the dinner, the wedding ceremony, and all the activities in the barn, we gathered in the old ranch house for live music by the Tarantulas and for coffee and more dessert. Robert George, Don Mason, Dave Perrin, Caree Gellinck, and Doug Meyers performed well into the night, playing the saxophone, guitar, drums, washtub bass, and anything else that made music. And they were good! Let's hope the after-dinner music becomes an annual tradition at Coe Park Thanksgiving Saturday. Some volunteers danced on the porch, and a swinging time was had by all.

Membership & Contributions through December

by Deborah Vajretti

We are pleased to welcome the new members listed below. Thank you for your support and welcome to the Pine Ridge Association

Jeri Allen, Los Gatos
Ivor and Kirsten Barber, San Jose
Bedard Family, Morgan Hill
Patrick F. Bergeron, San Jose
Mary Bernstein, Palo Alto
Raphael Cardet, San Carlos
Johan and Huib de Ryke, Morgan Hill
Mark Deger, Gilroy
Stephanie Flaniken, San Jose
Fred Fluke, Santa Clara
Emil Frates, Morgan Hill
The Gilmore Family, San Carlos
Pete Henshaw & Holly Harper, Cupertino
Jodie and Linda Keahey, Morgan Hill
Lenore M. Luscher, Watsonville
Lewis and Chris Mathis, Hornitos
Dennis Mc Elligott, San Francisco
Sheila Pastore, San Jose
Ted Robinson, Gilroy
Anne Rosenzweig and Jim Williams, Morgan Hill
Jeffrey Rowe, San Jose
Paul and Nora Rudy, San Jose
Linda Smith, Saratoga
Roger Winters, Morgan Hill

We welcome the following new **life members:**

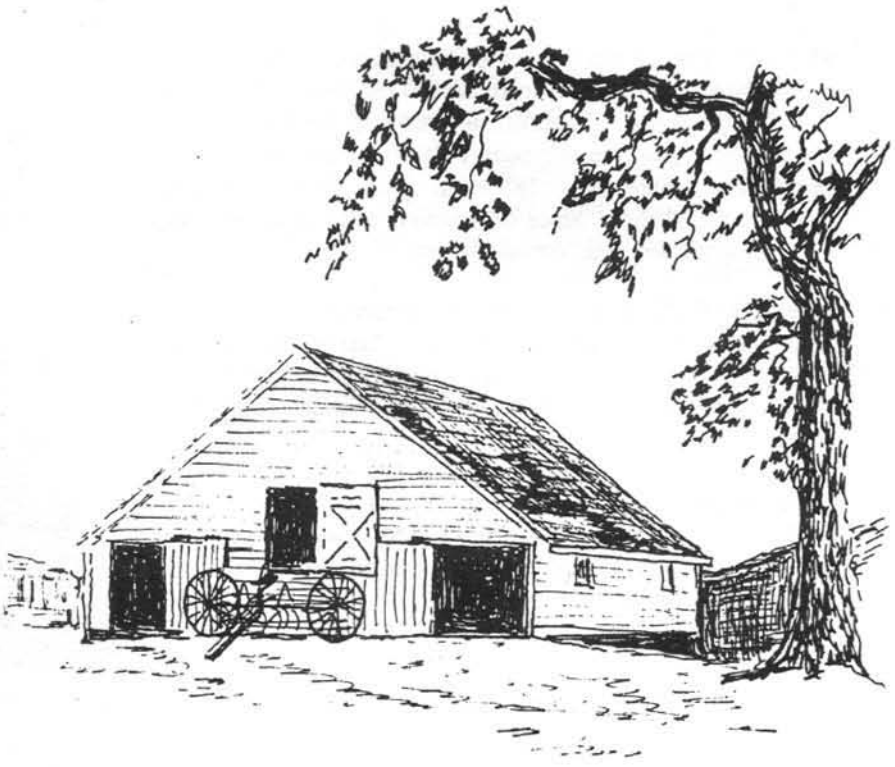
Ted Robinson, Gilroy
Bob and JP Puette, Saratoga

Contributors to the **Visitor Center Expansion Fund**

Everett Allen
Peter and Julie Barney
Michael Brookman
Betsy Crowder
Clyde Dedmon
Sheila Pastore
Responsible Organized Mountain Pedalers (ROMP)
Jeffrey Rowe
BMC Software

Special Contributions

Arlene "Azz" Azzarello
David Baumgartner
Julie Chase
Daniel H. Greene
KPMG on behalf of Julie Chase
Pacific Gas & Electric on behalf of James Gregory
Robert Patrie and Toni Hill
V. E. and Joseph P. Reader
Veritas Software on behalf of Arlene "Azz" Azzarello



BMC Software Donates to Expansion Fund
by Barbara Bessey

In November, the Pine Ridge Association received a check for $5,000 from BMC Software to help fund the Coe Park Visitor Center expansion project. This project, which has been ongoing since 1994, will provide additional space for interpretive exhibits, including a special exhibit room devoted to the interpretation of the Native Americans who inhabited the park. Barbara Radd, PRA Treasurer and a BMC Software employee, made the request. Three other BMC Software employees have also been active in Coe Park activities: Dennis Pinion, Judy Breckling, and Ron DeFalco. Dennis has been on the PRA board of directors for nine years, Judy serves as the webmaster of the Coe Park website, and Ron participated in a PRA project to raise funds for the Visitor Center expansion. All have been active in the volunteer program at Henry Coe Park. Barbara, Dennis, Judy, and Ron are associated with the company's research and development office in San Jose.

BMC Software is among the world's largest independent software vendors, a Forbes 500 company, and a member of the S&P 500. The company provides management solutions that ensure the availability, performance, and recovery of business-critical applications. Founded in 1980 with five employees and two products, the company today has more than 6,500 employees worldwide. In fiscal year 1999, revenues exceeded $1.3 billion. More information can be obtained from the company's web site: *www.BMC.com*.

Last year, BMC Software established BAY CAP, the Bay Area Community Assistance Program. The mission of the program is to honor the volunteer efforts of BMC Software's employees by fostering relationships with charitable organizations.

Thanks to BMC Software for believing that our Visitor Center expansion is worthy of a donation! BMC Software will be recognized on the "donor tree" that will be displayed in the new Visitor Center.

Membership Renewals
by Debbie Vajretti

Enclosed in this issue of *The Ponderosa* is a PRA membership form. Please check the mailing label on the newsletter to determine whether your membership expired at the end of December. You can renew your membership by returning the enclosed form to Coe State Park. Also, there will be a membership table at the annual PRA meeting on Saturday, February 5, for your convenience in renewing.

We have recently been through a software conversion for the membership records. If any information on your mailing label is incorrect, please leave a message at park headquarters, 408/779-2728, or send a note to PRA Membership at Henry W. Coe State Park, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038-0846.

Over the Hill Hike
by Bonnie Lemons

Start getting in shape now for this year's Over the Hill Hike, Sunday, March 19—first day of spring and the night of a full moon. It's a rough, tough 14-miler with approximately 4,000 feet elevation gain on Blue Ridge for everyone turning 50 this year and anyone who wants to join us. (There's a rumor that if you keep doing this hike, you'll never get old.) For more information, e-mail me at Bonnie@SFGate.com or call me at 650/726-7547.

Coe Homecoming

by Lee Sims

Mark your calendars. On the weekend of September 23 and 24, 2000, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the uniformed volunteer program and the 25th anniversary of the PRA.

Events will probably take place Saturday night the 23rd, and Sunday the 24th. We hope to get as many former volunteers, PRA members, and state park staff back to Coe as possible. Tentatively planned are good food, old photos, old memories, and tales of the early days of the park. But most fun of all will be meeting and seeing old park friends.

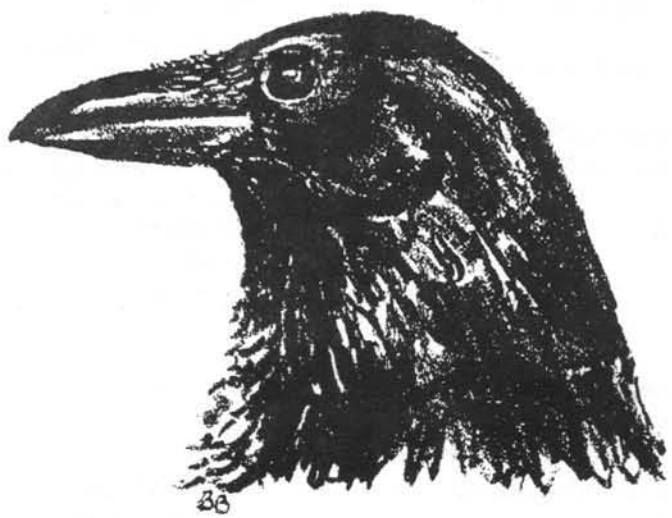
To get this rolling, two things are needed:

1. An organized and patient person with some time to locate as many old volunteers and to put together "class lists." This job will probably involve going through old files at the headquarters and tracking down those people who have moved, married, or gone underground. Contact Ranger Barry Breckling (408/779-2728) at the park or Lee Sims (650/726-7547), if interested.

2. People willing to form a steering committee for the event. People with ideas and enthusiasm. Again contact Barry or Lee if you are interested.

Dave Perrin (408/683-0415) and Larry Haimowitz (408/778-6088) have agreed to collect and compile photos for the homecoming. Please contact them for details.

But most important: save the date.



PRA Calendar

Saturday, February 5: **Annual Meeting.** The annual meeting of the Pine Ridge Association and the Coe Park Uniformed Volunteers. An announcement including location, time, and agenda will be mailed separately to all PRA members.

Saturday, March 18: The beginning of the **Spring Programs at Coe Park.** A list of all of the hikes, walks, and evening programs will be included in the next issue of the newsletter.

Sunday, March 19: The **Over-the-Hill Hike.** See the announcement of this popular hike on page 6 of this issue of the newsletter.

Saturday, March 18: **Barbed Wire Cleanup Day.** Join in the effort to remove barbed wire from various places in the park. For more information, call Doug Meyers at the Coe Sector Office (408/848-4006).

Saturday & Sunday, March 25–26: **Robinson Creek Backcountry Hike.** Join PRA members for an exploration of the Robinson Creek area. The weekend will be rescheduled (to April 1) in case of rain. Please call the park headquarters (408/779-2728) for additional information.

Saturday, April 8: The annual **Trails Day** at Coe Park. Help build and maintain trails in the park. For more information, call Doug Meyers at the Coe Sector office (408/848-4006). If you are interested in working on trails but are not sure what is involved, check out a brief description of trail work on the Coe Park website: *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov/trailwork.html.*

Saturday & Sunday, April 15–16. The **Coe Backcountry Weekend**. Entry to this very popular special event will again be by random draw. An application is included as an insert in this issue of the newsletter. Applications will also be available at the park headquarters and at various businesses by early February (or you can print an application off of Coe's website, *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov*). The deadline for application submission is March 23.

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The Ponderosa is a publication of the Pine Ridge Association with approximately five issues per year. The PRA's mission is to enhance and enrich the public's experience at Henry W. Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the history, natural history, and management of the park are welcome. Please send submissions to the editors at 127 Glenwood Avenue, Woodside, CA 94062; or call 650/851-7813.

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