THE PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION • HENRY W. COE STATE PARK •

The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Winter 2002

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Life's Blood

Slowly I rose to the sun's warm pull and the steady push of the wind. Higher and higher I ascended. Far below, the vast blue sea stretched from horizon to horizon, in constant turmoil, crashing upon itself. Others joined me in the air, and we crowded closer and closer together.

As we continued to grow in number, we were warm, but eventually we encountered a giant wedge of cold air that began to push us eastward. Soon we could see the land, and then we were above it, billowing up over its mountains.

We grew darker and denser, colder and heavier, until the air could no longer hold our weight. We fell in a torrent, like millions of tiny bombs. We crashed into the meadows and forests, refreshing and cleansing the earth.

I landed in a tall pine, was bumped by a companion, and fell 200 feet to the forest floor. I was pleased to find myself once again in the company of a tree so grand. Cool, leeward shadows of such trees had held me in a frozen condition several times in the past.

Soon I was joined by more companions, and we began to move together just below the duff. Down, ever downward we traveled, surfacing in a silver rivulet, joining other currents in a pebble-bottomed brook, and finally gathering in a small creek. Slower, ever slower, we flowed.

On a previous trip, I fell from the air to the earth and joined a group that flowed into a gopher hole and began to sink into the earth. We flattened into a narrow sheet that was first vertical, then horizontal, and farther on slightly inclined. Some of the spaces we filled were as narrow as a couple of feet, and some were as wide as 50 yards. At one point, I was absorbed by a porous rock and spent a week squeezing through, all by myself, before I rejoined my companions on our journey.

Slowly, ever downward we traveled until all of a sudden we were grabbed by capillary action, which began to pull us upward toward the surface of the earth. Up, ever upward we rose, until we poured out of a spring at the upper edge of a small meadow.

I've done things that many do not know I have the capacity to do. Sometimes, I've been held in reserve or done simple, monotonous, repetitive things. But there

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have been times when I've found myself involved in exciting, dynamic processes.

Once I was caught by the roots of a redwood, mixed with sugar, rose hundreds of feet through the tree, and was expelled into the air as part of the faintest of mists, not even a shadow, almost a spirit. Eventually I became part of a cloud and once again fell to the earth.

Once I found myself in the core of a beautiful white flower. The flower soon shed its petals, but I remained in its heart as it grew slowly through the summer. By fall I was part of a bright red berry that early one morning caught the eye of a hungry cedar waxwing. I traveled slowly through her digestive system and then circulated through her body as part of her blood. I spent time in her strong wing muscles and in the muscles of her tiny feet.

It wasn't the first time I'd found myself inside an animal's body. Countless times I've flowed in the blood of animals, helping to relieve the discomfort of wing muscles that ache or feet that throb by delivering fresh oxygen.

The cedar waxwing and I traveled great distances together. She deposited me more than 2,000 miles from where she'd found me, and 25 years passed before I returned to my mother the sea.

My companions and I continued to flow gently and slowly in the little creek, passing through shady corridors under the friendly umbrellas of alders and bays. Here and there we rushed through a narrow spot or fell in a sheet over a smooth rock face, but mostly we flowed slowly through crystal-clear pools. In places, disease organisms joined us, but as we bubbled over rocky shallows, the ultraviolet rays of the sun killed most of them.

As we meandered through a meadow, our peaceful sounds entered the dreams of an elk bull dozing nearby. At a beautiful deep pool, a man lifted me from the creek with cupped hands and drank some of my companions, but I remained on his lower lip till he brushed me off, and I fell back into the deep pool.

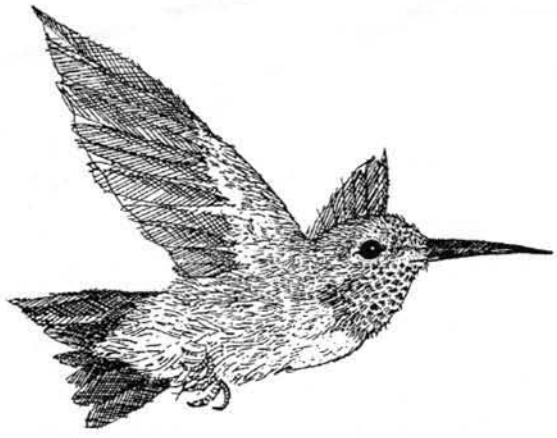
A coyote came to the pool for a drink, and I found myself hanging from his nose as he trotted off. A short way from the pool, I fell to the ground, sank into the soil, and was eventually drawn up through the roots of a scarlet larkspur. I traveled slowly through the plant as its internal valves stopped me here and moved me there. Finally I became part of the nectar in one of its flowers. The next morning, an Allen's hummingbird zoomed up to the flower and hung suspended in midair with wings a-blur. The sunlight reflected sequins of fluorescent-green color from the feathers on his back and a warm reddish-gold glow from the feathers on his bib. He sucked me up with his long slender beak, and I continued on my never-ending journey.

Today I found myself once again being pulled up out of the sea and drawn eastward over the familiar mountains. My companions and I billow up and form a dark, powerful thundercloud. All of a sudden, we become hail and plummet to the ground, crushing and freezing new green grass. We join a torrent of mud and debris and tumble and spill way down through a steep canyon till we reach the familiar creek at the bottom, where we begin to flow in darkness toward the beautiful deep pool. As our progress slows, disease organisms join us, but on this trip they flourish in depths that can't be reached by the cleansing rays of the sun.

When I reach the deep pool, I discover that things have changed. The pool is filling up with a stagnant black ooze, and the surface is now hundreds of feet above me. I become lodged in the ooze, which will imprison me for perhaps a thousand years or more.

A coyote takes a drink at the edge of a new reservoir, and a man sights in on him with a rifle. The bullet punctures the coyote's left lung and speeds on to a flowerless hillside, where brilliantly colored, tiny feathers fly as the bullet rips through the body of an Allen's hummingbird.

"Damn the coyote! It's worth more dead than alive," the man mutters as he reloads his gun.



A Booming Good Walk

by Mike Meyer

I walked down slope to the trail kicking poison oak whippets and feeling their stiff resolve through my trousers. The poison oak seemed to like that side of the hill because the whippets were tight against one another. Around the other side, in the sun, had been chaparral on the upper slopes with a few small oaks stuck in for the decoration of it. That brush thicket was fine for a boar or coyote or rabbit, but not one of us uprighters. I'd had to go back to the old ways and walk on my hands and knees and even pull myself up on my forearms through the flaky clothed branches and spiny but soft leaves of the dry-side brush.

That was nothing, though, just a dip, a baptism to the day ahead. It got me into the way and method and mindset of off-trail travel. I'd gone up then and found the patch of grassy hilltop circled by the chaparral on the one side and trees and thick other brush on the other, and gone down and hooked up with the trail. From this part of the trail, if the trees weren't so high, the near full bowl of the canyon below would be visible. Bet you don't know which trail it was, though. No, I ain't a' gonna tell you, neither. But the trees were high and fairly thick, as were the bushes, vines, mosses, grasses, lichens, rocks, logs, and assorted other forest members. Well, but it was my business to drop down the hillside well below the trail. So upon surveying the openings through the assorted forest members, I detoured a few yards then went down onto the soft grass leafy forest floor, which was an un-flat floor for a floor. It sloped pretty good. I passed a bushy bay tree and cut over a log and dropped easy down looking far down ahead over the shaded terrain through the trees. I had a hundred feet of elevation to lose, according to the map, but lit on a good pig trail and followed it south on the contour mostly. Still, pigs go around trees and fencing just like people do, so the foot-wide path edged downward. I followed watching it closely for holes and other reasons for spraining an ankle and looking downhill in quick glances for ribbons but didn't see any. You're always looking ahead, watching, glancing up and down and left and right to see where to go when you go cross country through a foresty canyon-type place. You don't want to box yourself in with brush, nor have to backtrack. But it was pretty nice in there, and I kept going, following the trail, then dropping down more and picking up a new one, pig trail, that is. The pigs knew the bowl canyon pretty good because they had trails, streets, driveways, hallways, patios, and such all through it every ten feet or so. They also had nice nests with dirt pushed up maybe six or seven inches and forming a good wall around the oblong shaped pads. They weren't dumb, those pigs, and one wondered what they'd do with hands like ours and maybe if they talked with their mouths instead of their noses. I figure that way they'd have a little more of a language because there aren't so many syllables possible using the nose as with the mouth. Maybe someday there'll be Homo *Pigians*, who knows, and they'll have a technology, though the planet'll likely be all technologied out by that time.

The trails of the pigs ended abruptly oftentimes, where the terrain opened out or where the foliage did. Then there'd still be a route between a gooseberry and gray pine, for instance, and you could walk on across the opening, which usually ended in a crease with more trees and where the water ran downhill fast when it rained. I crossed a few such creases and nice shady spots, walking and lifting my feet over logs and branches, crouching under bay branches that were partly eaten of leaves and just kind of bangy on your head and so you lowered your face to keep from a slappin'. The bowl aspect of the canyon was coming into play with the travel now more to the east than south. I liked it, though I didn't think about it. You like going new places where you're finding your way and discovering it and having to figure out what it is because the map you were given was more like a puzzle than a strict direction piece,

especially since you still hadn't seen one flag yet. You see a crease ahead, and you get out the compass and put it on the map to see which way the draw of contour lines is going and compare that to the crease through the grass and trees and bushes and rocks. It's a mighty unsubstantial crease, and you think, could it show up on a map, not being a map maker and never looking into the doodads and whichamagiggers of map makers? There were about 14 of those creases and four or five of them on the map, and each one you thought, "ahh, here it is," or, "I'm either here or there." You saw across to the nice level place on the next little hill ridge in the canyon bowl full of little hill ridges with oaks on it and where you could see the yellow grass in the sunlight and how nice it would be to be over there. But the job was to find the ribbons and get on the trail of them, and so you went up the slope you were on, then down it looking left and right and up ahead farther than where you turned up for the ribbons, in vain. Ribbons was mighty expensive when these was tied on. It was an economy of ribbon that was impressive. So, I edged onward thinking, "this must be it," and, "I got to be close," and all sorts of other nonsense. The fact was that when I'd gotten all the way so I was trudging northwest I still hadn't found the "big" canyon on the map nor the ribbons. I went on, though, figuring I'd go to hell before giving off the chase, and found myself in a new bowl of greatly different habitat, full chaparral. Auhh, jeez! It was time to sit and eat lunch and let all the fantods and dumerangs of the hunt go. And it's what I did. I sat against an oak in the grass with the sun on my legs and hair. I saw the nice grassy hills, out and across the big canyon, the canyon of the big creek that actually went all the way to the reservoir way downstream, this being outside the bowl canyon place and where it empties into the big creek, which now had water in it, and it was all dark and shiny down there with the yellow hills rising and looking all walkable in the extreme. I saw the road going in a straight line up the hill and placed it on my map and tried to orient myself better for where I was on the map and where the map was where I was. It was the dangdest time.

I finished my lunch and thought about a doze, but that's all, and got up and went back up the hill and across the place where a crease that went down between two hills first started, that is, where it wasn't two hills yet but just the one and where I could look down into the beginnings of the hairy wet place between the two hills. It was nice to see how the one thing became the other that way. And I saw the place where I'd come into the new terrain and canyon and saw a nice big flat rock in front of a tree and thought I'd get a good clip of the entire bowl canyon from it. And I did. I located the "big" creek of the map on the land and followed its turns on both the paper and the land and oriented the spot I was looking for, the "good spring," as it was described in thick black letters on the map. I also determined where I was now, finding the two hills that went uphill and became just the one on the map and where that was in relation to the "good spring." Then I knew the route I'd take right directly and straight with no waver or doubt to it.

I walked over the nice levelly grassy oaky hillsides, and then I was studying a section of a large animal's backbone, turning it over with a stick to see if I could see the spinal cord and the central nervous system, even if they were just dried up black lines of gristle down through the middle of the bones. Nope, no central nervous system. Then just across a thick grassy little swale is the upper half with the skull attached. That is, with the skull minus the lower jaw attached. The eye holes are big and like a spooky jack-o-lantern's, all oblong and vacant, and I'm trying to figure out what animal owned it, and I see a broken down old spring box with the grayest water below and two old four-by-fours sticking out of the green slime, and then I look up at the trees telling myself, **is this it!** and there, on an oak limb is a faded-to-white two-inch hunk of ribbon stiff as a board. So, I found the spring and got on the "trail."

The sunlight came through the trees and lit the grass above the spring box like a moth-eaten gauze bandage was spread over the whole of the canyon. Some shade, some bright patches. The route drawn on the map came to a point at the spring box. You had to deduce that it veered sharply there, and I did deduce just this. I also did my best at figuring the new way of it, which may have been the map author's coyote teaching of the day. Up the slope I went under the spangled sunlight, and there tied to another low limb was a ribbon, faded from the red or orange to off-white, with a newer blue one twisted onto it. I followed a line straight southwest to another ribbon on a limb and went into a thicket of denuded poison oak and willow stems to look ahead down a slight drop and under a live oak, a patch of sunlit grass between them. Nope, not that way. The map didn't help. I climbed a different, more natural way, and there was the ribbon. Across a half-cleared patch, I crossed a log and had a feeling and an idea of the original people. I'd liken it to a smell that reminds you of a feeling you had when you were a kid of a place that had forged a strong connection of some sort for you. Have you ever longed for a place or a time or a situation with an ache in you for it? There was that in it, too. The map showed a dot on the edge of a drainage. I dropped down the opposite side of the small hill and considered things. My "sense" told me to go down into the dense brush along the drainage. My comfort zone said go back to the last ribbon and follow the map. I went back over the hump of the hillside to the previous drainage, found the ribbon, then dropped down through the forest of thinned bushes and live oaks and pines and bays. You could step across the creek, it was so small. It came down a lessening slope as if it had been landscaped and had a gray rock lining. There across it, where the creek turned from west to north was a flat place between two

straight-trunked modest oaks. The soil was churned in whips and tufts of old bleached yellow grass going off at askew angles, the green of fresh growth since the rains, and black-black soil. The canyon opening was blocked by a line of small bay trees, just over the little gray-rock-lined creekway. They stood the same height, maybe 20 or 30 feet, with behind them all manner of the jumbly kind of trees. You could see sun and gray pine and oak, with plenty of shade but plenty of sky, and a rock like a 30-inch cube in the middle of the flat, dark-earth place. I felt a hello from the other side of the senses, which I can only now appreciate but then was just a nice feeling. Moss had covered the depressions in the rock top, and a few oak leaves were like jagged-edged boats flipped over and tilted on the moss and off. I didn't scrape away the moss to see the places where the pestle had worn away the rock, but inspected the black of the soil, smelling and sniffing and wishing I could smell meat, but that would be a miracle or a hallucination. But it was so dark that you had to think people had cooked there for many, many springs to still have the coloration this many seasons past. Eons of seasons, 500, 1,000? And how many would it take to make such depressions in a rock? 1,000 or 2,000? And what did a family come way up the canyon wall for, and why did a family tradition continue down through the generations to come way up to this small place of the modest-est of creeks on two sides and nice lay of trees and land and of the rock? Or the holy man tradition perhaps, the shaman who came to quest, or the hunters who came, or whatever was the tradition that brought people to this remote spot high up on the canyon wall, high above the big creek way out on the big canyon, and for so long over so many centuries? Well, but this was just a quick wonderment, and I was tired and sat against the tree nearest the rock and fell asleep. That's a treat I wish on all my friends, which is to say everyone. When I came back to wakefulness, I tried to leave but walked around in circles, like I had unfinished business yet. I don't like lollygagging, but I lollygagged. It seemed I had some chocolate to eat at that place yet. So, that is what I did, can you believe it? But then something occurred to me, and I broke the chocolate into squares and ate mine and left theirs on the grass beside me. Then it was easy to leave, and I did leave down the hillside for the exit. The sun was still up high, but was on the side where it couldn't go any farther or it'd be in the north, so it had to start down.

Near the opening into the big-big canyon, I veered up a trail that led to a minor bluff over the opening and saw the rock with a bush against it, a holly bush, and with all the little cups and indentations in it. The indentations were only an inch and two inches across, and you imagined the long narrow pestles they used maybe for grinding seeds and dirt kinds of things that gave you colors for your buckskin or face, and medicines. The little holly bush hid the rock from the wide open big-big canyon, to keep the grave robbers from taking it for their collections. Tom Sawyer might conjure up a way to steal it if he'd discovered such a treasure that would have involved some major headaches for Huck and Jim, but so far, Tom had missed it.

I stood squatted over a pool in the river and saw into the clear, clean water. The water came down out of the Bear Mountain fork and the Water Gulch fork and the East fork. I unzipped my pack and took out the filter and pulled the neck string open. I had the bottle on a rock. The water looked clean, and I knew it was clean. I filled the bottle from the deep clean pool and drank from it, tasting the cold clean taste. I took two swallows thinking if I got the runs in the hills, I'd drop down to the river again and filter good water and drink some salt, which I kept in packets in the bottom of my pack. I was tired of filtering clean water, and I was glad that I'd drank some. If it was bad, you know, I wanted to believe it. This could be a bad course to follow, though, and I wouldn't recommend it to others.

A crop of trees came nearer and a small canyon in the grass above it, and again a critter trail went down then crossed cutting down the new hill, and I went wrapping around and over and onto its proper body way out in the grass and sun. The sun was lowered now and in my eyes when I walked, a yellow brilliance over the far ridges, but I left the hat off and saw the

sun's reflection in the grass and, when I was near them, glancing off the live oak leaves like gold glitter. Once, I crossed the road that came up from Los Cruzeros and went on across the land and came to some big oaks with straight trunks in the shade of the higher hill. There were good sized holes in the ground out from the trunks and at the trunks, and a couple had fresh, damp earth balls piled 18 inches out from the hole and falling down like a miniature dump truck had unloaded.

Then I came onto the road and crossed the land bridge you cross before dropping down the hill to Poverty Flat. I got off the road as soon as it was possible. I crossed the creek at the far end of Poverty Flat and went up the first rise of the climb up Pine Ridge. I opened my eyes to the trees and other sights all around me, seeing some horizon up high through the trees and being softened by what came in from the sides. Up the road wound, climbing quickly through the blackening forest of oaks and sycamores and bays. No wildlife anywhere, not a shrill scream or a snort. You liked the meanness of the climb because it was pure meanness and had no hand holding or pretending about its meanness, and in a way reminds me of the Republicans, who are just as honest in their meannesses and prejudices and greed as that climb out of Poverty Flat. There wasn't no tricking or covering or pretending of that mean climb out of the Flat, as the Democrats would most likely do, uh uh, nothing like the China Hole Trail, uh uh, it was pure mean and straight up.

And the trees pass slowly by now in your side vision, and they hold steady so that you know they are more than a television image, and each one by the side of the road passes that way. And the moment lengthens and expands, and then the climb is a walk and one continuous moment and you come out at the top. And just at the top and through the trees is a honey-white brilliance in the sky far up and away. Then it's hidden but you know it's there, and you walk trying not to gobble it up and anticipate it but with your eyes back on the horizon waiting for it to come and trying not to wait for it and to let it come in all its soft glow and softeninglyness.

I walked up into the light of the set sun on Pine Ridge. Two pigs wandered out of sight, then I heard like a dog growl so ran over the land until I could see the pigs. There were eight or ten of the dark forms on the land, and I stood watching until a pig stopped his foraging with a sudden look up in my direction. I stood my ground watching, and the pig gave a grumble, then they all stampeded in the opposite direction, for which I said a thanks.

The western sky was an orange cream on the horizon, and I walked with it in my soft vision and the moon chip above and over my shoulder. Another herd of pigs was up the road, their dark forms swarming near an oak by the road. They were all talking and having a social time with loud and unstopping snorting that set my teeth on edge. They moved like a flock east into the edge of the trees at the edge of the ridge, and every now and then one of them squealed a plaintive complaint while the rest went on with the loud and mucousy snorting. It was dark, except for the cream fritter on the western horizon, and I walked looking often to it, once seeing two ears, dog ears, then the top of a head. I saw two more bands of pigs, 30–40 in all, and figured if there were any oak seedlings left on Pine Ridge, they'd be gone by morning. Past the Corral Trail and Forest, Fish, and Flat Frog Trails, the road climbed into the trees and up the ridge. I didn't see any more pigs in the dark under the oaks and bays and now ponderosa pines, but walked the curves of the road seeing the soft orange lights of Gilroy then the orange light over the white barn and Barry and Judy's light. I saw the moon and the trees and the bank where the chert is prominent, though it was too dark to see that it *was* chert. I saw the gate, then the road was blacker in the light of the moon, and passing down over the blacktop I heard voices and saw a car pull onto Dunne Avenue, and I walked toward it past the stone "cool" house where the ranch folks used to keep their meat. The car stopped and Rainer and Heike peered from inside with big good smiles saying I was all day gone and that theirs was a good one and that they were on their way to a holiday party. I was glad for them and walked up the step into the yard under the flagpole, just plain glad.

Dams in Coe Park?

By Barry Breckling

The Santa Clara Valley Water District had two "scoping" meetings on their "Notice of Preparation: Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement, San Luis Reservoir Low Point Improvement Project, California" this last August. The meetings covered what the water district has called the Low Point Problem and the water district's Low Point Improvement Project that they hope will solve the problem. Among the solutions is a plan to build at least one new reservoir out of a list of five proposed reservoirs. Four of the proposed reservoirs would either require a dam to be built in Coe Park or would back water up into the park. The four reservoirs that would affect the park are:

The **Los Osos Reservoir,** with a dam a short distance upstream of Coyote Reservoir, would flood, in addition to other areas, all of Hunting Hollow and about four miles of Coyote Creek within Coe Park.

The **Coe Reservoir** (referred to by some as The China Hole Dam), with a dam a short distance downstream of China Hole, would back water up the East Fork of the Coyote Creek for about seven miles, up the Middle Fork about four miles, up Kelly Cabin Canyon about four miles, and up the Little Fork, Rock House Canyon, Little Long Canyon, Water Gulch, and other drainages for varying distances.

Pacheco "B" Reservoir would back water up to the area of Pacheco Creek Crossing (the Large Culvert) and a short distance into the park on the Coon Creek drainage.

Upper Pacheco Reservoir would back water beyond Pacheco Creek Crossing and a short distance into Mississippi Creek and up Cook Creek a short distance farther than the Pacheco "B" Reservoir.

If you have concerns or would like more information, contact any or all of the following:

Santa Clare Valley Water District
408/265-2600
www.ValleyWater.org
(To learn more about the project, search on their site with the words "low point.")

Kurt Arends, Senior Project Manager
Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118-3614
KArends@ValleyWater.org
408/265-2607 ext. 2384

SCVWD Board Members at LKeller@ValleyWater.org or individual members listed on their website under "Contact Us."

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Kevin Moody
12 N Street
Fresno, CA 93727
559/487-5179

Other resources. Some reports and maps are available for review at Coe Headquarters. Also available at headquarters is information about how to contact an interest group that is forming in response to the SCVWD plans.

Park News

by Kay Robinson
Park Superintendent

Just when so many projects are coming to fruition and potential projects being contemplated, there are changes in the air. I will be retiring at the end of this year and will be passing the reins to the next Park Superintendent. Temporarily, that will be Dennis Imhoff, Deputy District Superintendent, who will be Acting Park Superintendent for the Coe Sector of Four Rivers District until my position is filled. In normal times (read: no State budget crisis), it would be six to nine months for a replacement, given the State's requirement for salary savings. With the State's current financial crisis, it may take a bit longer.

My career has spanned 30 years, spanning the 70s, 80s, 90s, and the "aughts," from Northern to Southern to Central California, from lakes, to beaches, to historical monuments, to backcountry parks, from ranger trainee to park superintendent. All in all, I have had a varied, wonderful, and very satisfying career. I have made wonderful friends throughout California State Parks, not only the department's employees, but also volunteers, friends and neighbors of parks, and allied agency people.

The people of Henry W. Coe State Park hold a special place in my heart, and I will always remember the kindnesses you have shown and camaraderie that we have shared. I trust that all of you who are members of the Pine Ridge Association will continue to support your organization and Henry Coe State Park for the benefit of the park and its current and future-generation visitors. As a Life Member of the PRA, I will continue to follow with interest the progress of the park and return to share in celebration of new projects—and to hike its trails.

Still on the horizon of the park's operations are the acquisition of Gilroy Hot Springs (to come about in 2003), the development of day use facilities at Dowdy Ranch (slated for construction beginning spring 2003 and opening in 2004), coordination with the Department of Fish and Game for the use and operation of the Stevenson Ranch, replacement of the campground pit toilets with a restroom/shower building, expansion of the visitor center, expansion of the trail system into the new Lakeview Meadows property on Cordoza Ridge, completion of the pond study for maintenance, resource, and recreational values, and all of the on-going smaller projects that are required to keep the operation afloat.

As the song goes, happy trails to you . . . .

Coe ♬

by Barbara Bessey, President, PRA

As we celebrate the end of 2002 and herald the arrival of 2003, we should pause and give thanks that we are still free from harm and that we have a jewel like Coe Park where we can go to re-create.

You should be aware, however, that there are proposals in the offing that could affect the park. I hope that you take the time to read the article about the possibility of dams in Coe Park (see article on page 7). Please also take the time to become informed about the San Luis Reservoir Low Point Improvement Project sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Water District (check out the information on their website). As Barry mentions, public input on the scope of the project was solicited in August 2002. The issues appear relatively simple, namely, that the water in the reservoir drops over the summer to a low point such that water quality can become compromised, which affects both residential use as well as use in agriculture. However, the solutions to these problems are not so simple as you might imagine, and some have far-reaching consequences. Barry describes some of the possible solutions that would affect Coe Park.

I would also like to extend a heart-felt "thank you" from all of us in the Pine Ridge Association to Kay Robinson, our park superintendent who retired at the end of December. She worked tirelessly for Coe Park, and she donated many personal hours attending meetings outside of her regular full work day, including attending PRA board meetings, fund-raising meetings for the Visitor Center expansion, trail advisory committee meetings, backcountry event planning meetings, and so on. She was a great person to work with, and her counsel will be missed. Best wishes, Kay, on a happy and fulfilling retirement!

This is your organization. Get involved in something that interests you. Let me know if there is something you would like to participate in but you haven't yet seen an opportunity to do so. You can e-mail me any comments or suggestions (bbessey@air.org).

See you at the park!

Bay Area Open Space Council Honors PRA Members

by Barbara Bessey

The Bay Area Open Space Council has recognized the increasing use of conservation easements in the Bay Area. According to the Council, conservation easements accounted for approximately one-half of the new land protected in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1997, the Council established an initiative to improve the use and management of conservation easements. To further the initiative, the Council created a special award to recognize outstanding contributions to the protection of conservation easements through stewardship. Called the "Fulfilling the Promise" Award, it is given annually to individuals who are stewarding one or more easements, create a stewardship program, or participate in some other action that contributes to the stewardship of conservation easements.

In the Council's annual meeting in October, the 2002 award was made to the Michelson Ranch Team (of the Peninsula Open Space Trust). The team members being honored include: Don Savant, team leader and a uniformed volunteer at Coe Park; Al Huber; Tony Kramer; Tony Ferrari, who volunteers to help the Springs Committee at Coe Park; and Don Heath. The team is responsible for monitoring the 640-acre Michelson Ranch conservation easement each year. In operation since 1993, the team members have taken photographs, recorded field data, and assisted with the creation of very detailed maps of the residential and agricultural areas on the property. Because of the complexity of the property, property boundaries were difficult to identify. The property includes forests, agricultural fields, and both agricultural and residential buildings.

Congratulations!

In Memory of Chris Xydes

by Barry Breckling

Those of us who have been involved with the volunteer program since the early years remember Chris Xydes and his wife Rhonda. I'm sorry to tell you that Chris passed away on November 23 from a sudden illness at the age of 47. Chris was one of those special volunteers who was always involved in a wide variety of volunteer work, someone who had a love for Coe Park and the outdoors. Chris and Rhonda continued to enjoy the park after they left the volunteer program. Chris is survived by his wife Rhonda and their two boys ages 11 and 14. Rhonda would like anyone who was close to Chris to consider planting a tree at their home in Gilroy. You can call her at 408/842-5411.

PRA Calendar

Saturday, February 8, 2002: **The Annual Meeting of the PRA and the Uniformed Volunteers.** Invitations will be sent to all PRA members in early January. This meeting is always a highlight of the year, filled with presentations, a guest speaker, and a delicious lunch!

Saturday & Sunday, March 15 & 16: The start of the **Spring Programs at Coe Park.** The schedule will be included in the next edition of the newsletter. Generally, there are hikes on Saturdays, an interpretive program on Saturday nights, and two wildflower walks on Sundays throughout the spring and early summer season. Events are planned for both the Hunting Hollow and the main Morgan Hill entrances to the park.

Saturday, March 22: **Barbed Wire Fest.** Help remove barbed wire in the park. Please call coordinator Rob Glover at 408/778-3619 for more information.

Saturday & Sunday March 29 & 30. A special PRA-sponsored weekend outing to **Coit Camp/Redfern Areas to see wildflowers.** Please contact Barry Breckling at the Coe Park Visitor Center 408/779-2728 for details.

Saturday & Sunday, April 5 & 6: A special PRA-sponsored weekend outing to **Rock House Ridge** is being planned. Please contact Barry Breckling at the Coe Park Visitor Center 408/779-2728 for details.

Saturday, April 12: **Trail Day.** Help work on trails in the park. For more information, please contact Barry Breckling at the Coe Park Visitor Center 408/779-2728 for details.

Saturday, & Sunday, April 26 & 27: **Coe Backcountry Weekend.** Always a sell-out, look for the announcement about this popular backcountry event in the newsletter as well as on our website.

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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 94062-3512; or call 650/851-7813.

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