The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Early Spring 2007

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Connections

Back in the late 1800s, Henry W. Coe Jr. probably knew Andrew P. Hill, the well-known photographer and artist from San Jose. Coe was also familiar with the Thomas family who homesteaded property west of Coe Park. Although Andrew P. Hill probably never met any members of the Thomas family, there's an interesting connection that ties them together.

Henry W. Coe Jr. took up a homestead in Cold Valley (which was later renamed Cold Flat), and his brother had a homestead a little to the west on the side of Blue Ridge. To establish a viable cattle ranch, the brothers decided they needed more land. Henry had his eye on some good grazing land on the east side of Cold Valley, but circumstances prevented him from obtaining the land at the time.

Coe was good friends with Preston Thomas when Preston lived on Oak Flat Ranch, the homestead of his father Eleazar Thomas. (Oak Flat Ranch is in the long, pretty valley you drive through along the road about three miles below Coe Park.) Preston Thomas wanted to buy land of his own, and he took up a homestead on the very land Coe had been hoping to acquire in Cold Valley. When Coe found out what Thomas had done, he was outraged. Back in the 1970s, Preston's son, Leon Thomas, told us the story of how Coe reacted to what he considered a betrayal of friendship.

Incidentally, Leon was one of the first members of the PRA board of directors, and the first PRA meeting was held at his house. Leon also used to come up to the park to give evening programs about the area's ranching history.

Leon, just a young boy at the time, recalled Coe galloping up to the Thomases' Oak Flat ranch house. Coe skidded his horse to a stop in front of the ranch house, causing rocks to clatter on the walls of the building. Preston and Leon came outside, and Leon watched as Coe, sitting silently on his horse, glared at Preston for about five minutes, according to Leon's estimate. Not a word was spoken. Finally Coe wheeled his horse around and left. Shortly after that encounter, to spite Thomas, Coe sold his Cold Valley land to a gun club. The Laurel Springs Gun Club still owns Coe's original homestead land.

Speaking of Cold Flat, we recently made an interesting find there. Teddy Goodrich and I have wanted to know where the Coe's homestead cabin once stood. We approached members of the Laurel Springs Gun Club and got permission to look for the cabin.

We have an interesting old photo of a painting of Cold Flat.

Inside this issue . . .

The spider people of Herricoa!!

Date set for opening the Dowdy Ranch entrance

Introduction of two new rangers in the sector

Death of Walter Patrick Walsh, pioneer homesteader

. . . and more!

The cabin in the picture is said to be Coe's cabin. Using the photo, we searched for the cabin site but were unable to find it.

Several months ago Teddy and I made a second trip, but this time our search party included Bob Patrie, who had served on the PRA board along with Leon Thomas. Bob brought a metal detector and some 1881 survey papers that note the cabin's distance from a survey line. Again, we started our search based on the photo, but the photo just didn't work. Bob checked the survey information and concluded that the cabin should be somewhere to the west. But the area in question, a somewhat narrow, picturesque canyon, seemed an unlikely location for a cabin. Up in the canyon on a small flat area, we found a pile of rocks that looked like the piles of rocks we've found at other cabin sites, the remains of an old chimney. Bob got out his metal detector and was able to pick out a rectangular cabin-sized metal debris field, nails left from a burned down or dismantled cabin. The mystery was solved.

Now, back to the Thomas family.

In the late 1990s, when the state was attempting to purchase the Coit and Gill Mustang properties, members of the Thomas family approached the PRA and state officials to see if the state would be interested in purchasing their Cold Flat property, an extraordinary 1,100-acre tract of land north of Coe Park. The land touches Coe Park at only one infinitely small point.

State officials and members of the Pine Ridge Association were invited to tour the property on a beautiful spring day. All participants were enormously impressed by the beauty of the landscape and the fine park qualities the property had to offer. At the time, State Senator Alfred E. Alquist was working on a bill that would appropriate money for the purchase of the Coit and the Gill Mustang properties, and the PRA wanted to add the Thomas property to the bill. Alquist's people told state officials and the PRA not to try to add the Thomas property to the bill; they argued that including the property might weaken the bill's prospects. The PRA disregarded the warning and pushed for the addition, and Bob Patrie testified about the value of the addition before an assembly committee. In the end, the Thomas property was purchased along with the Coit and Gill Mustang properties.

Although the Thomas addition is not accessible to the public, the land is protected for all time, and I'm sure we'll eventually be able to make it accessible.

In 1899 Andrew P. Hill took photographs of a fire in the redwoods near Los Gatos, and he sold the photos to a British magazine. The magazine commissioned Hill to get more photographs of the giant coast redwoods. Shortly afterwards, Hill took the train from San Jose to Felton, lugged his heavy equipment into a beautiful grove of old-growth redwoods, and began taking pictures. Before long the owner of the property came upon Hill and demanded that Hill give him the glass negatives of the pictures he'd taken. Hill was so angered by the incident that he began thinking about how to make the redwood forests part of the public domain. On his second photography attempt, Hill went deeper into the redwoods, into an area called Big Basin. He took many photos and was so awed by the forest that he set out in earnest to protect the magnificent trees. He and friends started the Sempervirens Club, an organization that has been spectacularly successful in saving large areas of the coastal redwood forests.

Hill garnered help from many influential people in the fight to protect the redwoods, and a bill was introduced in the state legislature that would provide $250,000 for purchasing redwood forests. The night before the vote on the bill was going to be taken, it became clear that the bill did not have enough votes to pass. At midnight that night, Hill walked three miles from Santa Clara to the Herald newspaper office in San Jose. The newspaper editor published a special edition that included some of Hill's photographs of redwood groves. Hill boarded a train for Sacramento at 4:30 a.m., armed with copies of the newspaper edition. Before the legislature met that morning, Hill had placed a copy of the newspaper on each legislator's desk. The bill passed unanimously, and the first California state park, California Redwood Park, was born. In 1927 the name was changed to Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Years later, the very grove of trees that Hill had been kicked out of became part of Henry Cowell Redwood State Park.

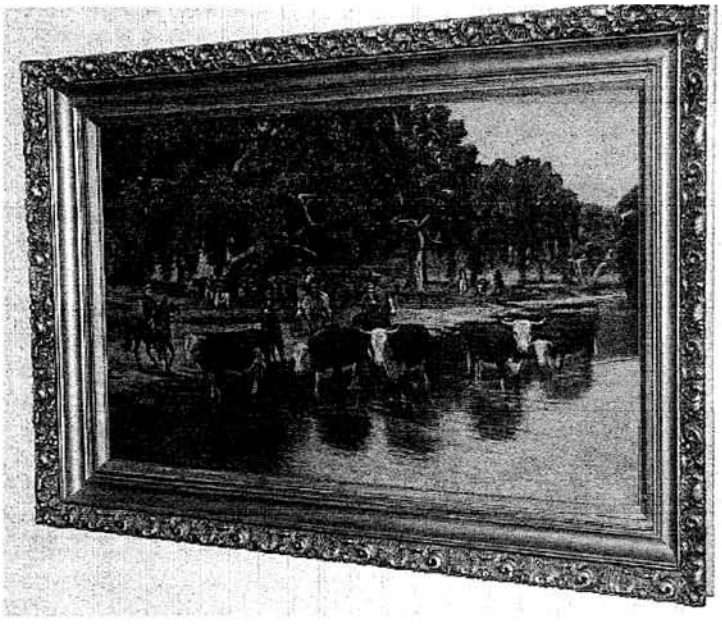
On December 14, 2000, George Thomas called me on the phone. George is one of Preston Thomas's four sons, younger brother of Leon Thomas. (Another son, Gene Thomas, once worked as a resource ecologist for state parks.)

George told me that he had a large oil painting that had previously hung behind the bar in the Madrone saloon for many years. The saloon had been owned by one of George's relatives, Pat Kirby. The painting was removed from the saloon, and it eventually ended up in George's possession. George had considered giving the painting to the Morgan Hill Historical Society. Besides being a PRA board member, George's brother Leon had been a member of the Morgan Hill Historical Society for many years. But George thought it might also be appropriate for the painting to reside at Coe Park.

Ranger Nedra Martinez and I drove to George Thomas's house in Morgan Hill. He showed us a large oil painting in a massive frame leaning against the back of a couch in a dark corner. We immediately concluded that it was an impressive piece of art. The painting was of some fine looking Hereford bulls standing in a sycamore-lined stream. In the background were more cattle and a few cowboys. In the middle of the picture were a couple of cowboys that looked strangely familiar. Nedra and I could just barely make out the name of the artist in a dark corner of the painting. The artist was Andrew P. Hill, and before long we learned that the two familiar cow-

boys in the middle of the picture were Henry W. Coe Jr. and his brother Charles.

The painting now hangs in the dining room of Coe Park's visitor center.



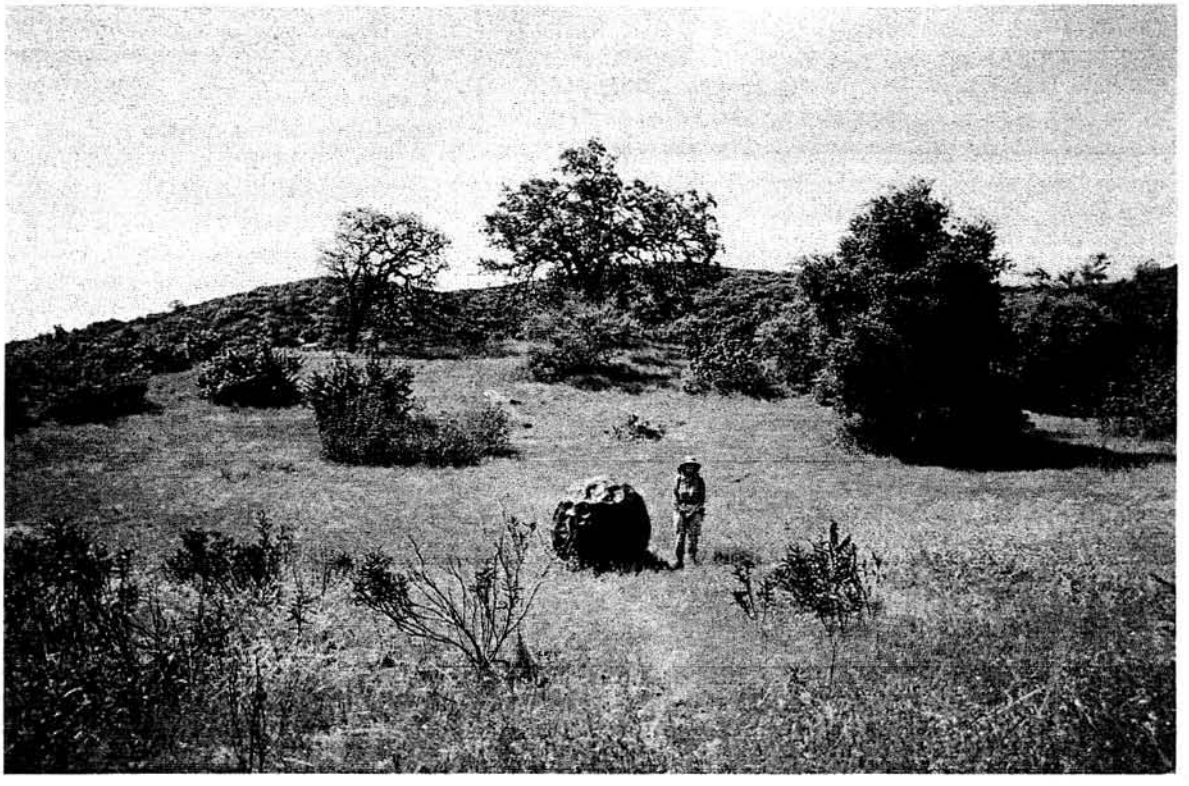
Backcountry Patrol

by Ranger John Verhoeven

A patrol loop at Coe Park is never dull or routine. The weather has been quite cold, as you might imagine during this winter of frost and ice throughout the state. While the park visitation is low for the most part in winter, there are still quite a few people who brave the cold weather and enjoy the park.

I still consider myself new to the park, since there is just so much to learn and see. Recently, I saw a wrecking ball sitting in a field on Willow Ridge, which is about ten miles or so east of the Visitor Center. It is not often you see a 4- to 5-foot diameter rusty ball sitting in a small meadow on a ridge top. How did that thing get there, and why was it brought out here? I was perplexed to say the least.

I continued my patrol and stopped next at Mississippi Lake to talk to a couple of backpackers. All three of us talked as we huddled in the cold shade as sunset approached. We sat on a picnic table near the lake watching the American Coots swimming and calling too each other on the lake. It appeared that the coots were competing with each other for territory. Whether for upcoming breeding in the spring or just for food, the birds were busy. One coot would start swimming diagonally toward another and when they were about 20 or 30 feet apart, they would lower their heads and approach each other until one would relinquish and fly away, using the water as a runway, taking off in a clamor of splashing water. Over and over again this battle for territory continued as if the birds



were using the last light of the day to settle a bet.

There was one mystery the backpackers posed to me, it was regarding a sound they couldn't identify. The sound was a continuous whooshing that was reminiscent of a jet airplane. All of us suspected it might be some of the numerous birds that were at the lake. We listened for a while, and then all of us heard it and saw a blur of birds in the twilight of the sunset. There were several groups of perhaps 20 to 50 Red-Winged Blackbirds flying around the lake. The blackbirds were quite noisy, with several different calls to each other. There were many "chucks" and then a longer call that is something like "oak a lee."—the "oak" being a lower steady tone, "a" being a higher steady tone, and the "lee" a vibrato call. Compared to the quiet of the top of Willow Ridge with the wind slightly breezing through the chaparral, Mississippi Lake seemed like a busy street corner of a city.

Then again came the whooshing sound and at that moment the flock of blackbirds swooped close to the picnic table. I imagine the collective sound is of the wings beating as the birds zigzag through the sky, one mystery solved.

I continued on my patrol, now descending Bear Mountain on my way to Coe Headquarters. As I crossed the East Fork of the Coyote Creek, there were patches of ice in the small, still pools on the edges of the flowing part of the stream. The sky had that dark purple color to it as stars began to appear. My mind lingered back to that wrecking ball, why was that thing there? I thought maybe it was used to keep a road clear or dragged for some reason. I just couldn't figure it out. Well, it was yet another question for Barry Breckling. I am sure Barry knows the history on that ball.

A few days later I asked Barry about the ball. Barry had a smirk on his face as he contemplated whether or not he should let me guess what the ball was used for. The ball was used to clear the chaparral that was so plentiful on the west side of Willow Ridge. When the land was privately owned by ranchers, they used to drag the ball on a long chain that hung downslope from the ridge to tear up the chaparral. The rancher's hope was that grass could be planted to make more of the land suitable for cattle grazing. It has been probably 50 or so years since the wrecking ball was in use, and the west side of Willow Ridge seems to have recovered well. For several miles it appears to be nothing but chaparral and manzanita with an occasional tree here and there. There are many jackrabbits and California quail in residence, which are a common sight along the ridgetop roads at Coe.

Talking to Barry about this snippet of ranching history of Coe reminded me of the view from Bear Mountain. Near the top of Bear Mountain, you can see north quite a ways, easily sighting the telescope domes atop Mount Hamilton and seeing the broad ridge where Mount Sizer is located, not to mention the Sierras, which you can also see from park headquarters on clear days. I thought of all the land beyond the park, some of which has numerous roads and evidence of mining. Also, you can see evidence of ranching on the flat spots. I contemplated how Coe Park and the surrounding land have been changed by humans.

A feeling of hope and excitement came over me as I stood enjoying such a magnificent view, since so much of the land around Coe Park is open and relatively untamed. Much of the wildness is still alive in this place. The quiet and peace of a far away place is nearer than might be thought in our day-to-day lives.

Reminiscing about my day of patrol, I realized how precious places like Willow Ridge, Mississippi Lake, and the view from Bear Mountain are. The land at Coe Park has not been grazed for 30 years in some of the older portions of the park. Comparatively newer portions of the park are in a state of recovery from years of ranching and other uses. In some places in Coe Park, there are even native California bunch grasses making a comeback, which is extraordinary. The wildness is becoming more prevalent throughout Coe Park. I hope during your next visit to Coe Park or the next time you venture out into the wild, you are able to stop for a moment and let that wildness creep in and stay a while.

The Spider People of Herricoa

Dr. William H. Hamsandwedge, Jr.
Professor of Arachnid-Ethnographic Studies
University of Gavilan Polytechnic, San Martin campus

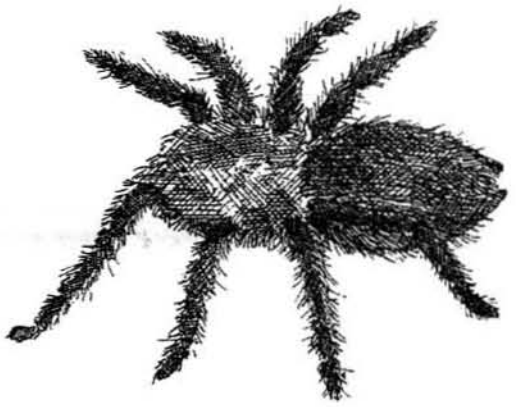
Dr. Hamsandwedge,

I hope this letter finds you well. As you may recall, I have spent the last two months studying an exclusive naturalistic society that resides in the mountains near Mt. Hamilton. As of recent, any attempts to communicate with this group of people have been extremely difficult. However, I was made aware of a unique gathering that occurs one time a year. Supposedly, the people of Herricoa pay tribute to a large, hairy spider native to this region. I was thrilled to learn that outsiders are welcome to attend this event. More than this, they are encouraged to participate in its rituals. Though I am myself of urban breeding, I would not hesitate to leave the comforts of our civilized world to trek into this frontier. I believe you will find my discoveries as startling and unusual as I did. For it was my visit with the Spider People of Herricoa that forever changed my perspective with regards to the limits to which human society may exist.

The journey to the land of the Herricoa was not without peril. The drive was forty-five minutes from civilization and contained many harrowing hairpin turns. In a terrifying moment, I had to swerve to avoid a daring ground squirrel. In spite of its relatively short distance from the modern world, Herricoa is

amazingly remote. The settlement is set near the top of a grassy ridge, dotted with pines. The locals call it Pine Ridge. There are few structures. The ones that exist are painted with a bright red hue—which makes them stand out considerably from the more aesthetically pleasing shades that nature provides. After a long drive on a rather empty road, I came upon a large parking area. It was there I had my first encounter with the Herricoa. Two sentinels greeted me rather politely and accepted my gift so I could enter their land. They both wore matching ceremonial clothing. Their legs were covered by what looked like jeans, but they were a handsome shade of forest green. Their tops were khaki. On both shoulders were charms or decorations that appeared to be sewn into the garment. From my findings I have made the determination that only the most devout Herricoans are adorned with ceremonial dress.

From the parking lot, I made my way along a lovely trail that was shaded by many varieties of oak. California Laurel trees filled the air with a pleasant, sweet scent. After a grueling half-mile walk on a flat trail through the savage wilderness, I came upon the event site. At least a hundred visitors, neophytes, and Herricoans surrounded me. Beneath a large oak tree were several wooden seating booths, which resembled primitive tables. They were set in a location that is typically used for recreational migration practices. Since I could not find a direct translation for this location, I have chosen to call it a Centralized Anterior Migration Place Situated Inside Tree Escarpment. While examining the ritual grounds, I was overcome by a most enticing smell, which was carried on the air by white smoke. I would learn that the Herricoa people are most fond of great feasts—a ritual with which I can easily identify. A big bearded man in overalls flipped sizzling animal flesh on a black, metallic grid, heated by glowing embers of wood.



Beyond the eating site were several huts filled with Herricoans, neophytes, and lookers-on. It was here that the sacred spider was encapsulated. This rather large, furry, eight-legged beast is known quite commonly as a tarantula. Most people I encountered possessed a natural fear of spiders—myself included. However, what I found among the Herricoans and the neophytes was an attitude most different. I saw a young boy laid flat on a wooden bench. An old shaman gently placed a tarantula on the child's arm and allowed it to crawl until it had reached a dead end. The shaman would then gently pick up the spider and place it on the child's face. The tarantula would gracefully traverse the boy's face until it could travel no further. I was astonished as to how docile the young man was. Perhaps this is an initiation practice of the Herricoa? The boy could not show fear in the face of danger. Since he showed his bravery, he was given a spider tattoo on his face, which many children at the event had.

As I was partaking of the ritual feast, an individual wearing what appeared to be a bear suit passed me. On his head was a wide brimmed hat. I found it humorous that he also wore blue jeans. What I came to learn is that this man portraying a modest bear was promoting an anti-combustion agenda for the forested regions. The gentleman I was sitting next to and I had a wonderful laugh together on the subject of bears wearing clothing. We also struck up an interesting conversation. As it would turn out, this gentleman was a Herricoan. I proceeded to ask him about the event and its significance. As he explained, the purpose of this event was simply to welcome visitors into the company of the Herricoans, witness their ritual practices with the tarantula, and convert neophytes to their religion, which he called "Annihilmentalism." Annihilmentalists are deeply connected with nature, and even less connected with the rest of humanity. They place the lives of animals and plants above that of human lives in overall importance. This is evident in how the spider was allowed to walk on top of the child during the initiation rite. The child must remain still so he will not offend the spider. The gentleman I interviewed has taken part in this event for years and loves the idea of converting new people to Annihilmentalism.

I found this attitude to be prevalent among the Herricoan. Yet, despite their primitive rituals, and the fact that they believe that animals and plants are superior to humanity, the Herricoans are quite friendly and inviting. I left the event feeling satisfied that I had witnessed a truly unique culture. And I wondered what might happen should this Annihilmentalist movement spread beyond the confines of this wilderness. What would change in our world should people value nature over the institutions that govern society? What if Annihilmental values replaced those of industriousness and the ambition for earning capital? I can scarcely imagine that world. And though I have tremendous respect for the primitive ways of the Herricoa, I am grateful I live in a world that truly values human life.

Sincerely,
Langley B. Pfefferspielen

Mr. Pfefferspielen,

I must say, without question, this is the worst piece of flotsam I have read in weeks. Your research is not only flawed, but you've misspelled and misnamed most of the terms you described. "Herricoa" is really Henry Coe. "Annihilmental-

ism?" I believe you mean environmentalism. You've characterized these ENVIRONMENTALISTS as a part of some sort of religion. Environmentalism may be a movement and consists of a set of values, but it is not a religion of any sort. Can you now see how you've misrepresented these people? You've labeled them as anti-humanity, which I am sure is not true whatsoever. The children, like everyone else not involved with the event, were probably there for the good food and to see the tarantulas. Many kids are into big scary, furry things. And it's probably good that they learn not to fear such creatures in nature, so they may someday be more appreciative of them as adults and pass on their knowledge.

In addition, your ethnographic writing skills are painfully ethnocentric and leave much to be desired. As a matter of fact, I dropped you from this class two months ago. Why are you still attending class and turning in work? If I hear from you again, I'm calling the campus police. And stay off my lawn.

Sincerely,
Dr. Hamsandwedge

Patrick Goodrich submitted these letters to the Gavilan College Writing Contest and won first place, including a monetary prize. An excerpt from the beginning of the first letter was previously printed in The Gavilan Press Newspaper.

Park News

by Michael Ferry
Supervising Ranger

Happy New Year! As I enter my fourth year at Coe Park, this seems to be the coldest and driest winter yet for me (it will probably be raining bobcats and coyotes by printing time). The natural beauty that Coe Park offers during this time of year seems to be endless. I am energized by the people around me who share this wonderful experience. I am excited about the rapidly approaching season.

I am excited to say the Dowdy Ranch grand opening date has been tentatively set for Saturday, May 19, 2007. Mark your calendars, as this is sure to be a fun-filled day. A committee has been put together to help plan the event with lots of work still to be done. Activities planned for the day will include opening ceremonies (ribbon cutting event), a barbecue, wildflower walks, and more. Dowdy Ranch operational hours are still being determined but will be opened at least on weekends and holidays throughout the summer. The Dowdy Ranch looks like an ideal location to host special events. Contact rangers Cameron Bowers or Sheryl Neufeld if you are interested in volunteering out there this summer.

The Coe Ranch Blacksmith Shop exhibit rehabilitation plan has received final approval and will now be set in motion. The blacksmith and his shop were an integral part of the cattle ranch. The Coe Blacksmith Collection consists of many tools that were used at the Pine Ridge Ranch. Under the rehabilitation plan, these tools, which relate directly to the cultural heritage of the park, will be cleaned and secured for display. Basic preservation steps will be taken to protect the collection from detrimental environmental factors and provide future interpretive opportunities to the park visitor. A team of volunteers and staff will be taking on the job led by our district's Museum Coordinator, Kris Quist.

The Coe Blacksmith Shop and Barn will be getting a well-deserved exterior paint job. This project was originally planned to be completed by the volunteers but came to a halt due the hazard of the existing lead-based paint. The project has been approved and has been sent out to bidders. The project will consist of three phases; existing paint removal and containment, sealing and encapsulation, and then repainting. The project is planned to be completed this spring.

Staff changes always seem to be a part of the news. However, I am reluctant to tell you that Ranger Barry Breckling has officially announced his retirement in May 2007. Barry has put his time in, now its time to seek new challenges. Barry has well over thirty years of State Park Ranger service, with most of those years working at Coe Headquarters. His commitment and vision to make Coe a special place for all who visit has made a difference in all of our hearts. The Coe Volunteer program is recognized as one of the top volunteer programs in the department. I was asked not too long ago why the Coe volunteer program was so successful. I answered that Barry, the volunteer coordinator, had a special vision of what the program should be—a vision that emphasizes fun, not unlike family fun, and that all volunteers have a special gift to educate and enhance the park visitor's experience. Barry has accomplished much, far too much to mention here. We will have much more on Barry's accomplishments in the near future. Barry and his wife Judy have made lifetime friends over the years and have encouraged others to do the same at Coe. Barry's legacy will go on for years at Coe. I am sure we will see Barry and Judy in Coe Park for years to come. Expect to see Barry in the next volunteer class! (Sorry Barry, no exceptions).

Ranger Cameron Bowers and several volunteers are planning Barry's retirement party. The date and location is to be announced. I urge all of you not to miss this special occasion. Contact Cameron Bowers if you would like to participate in the planning.

May the New Year bring Peace, Health, and Happiness to all.

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Who's That New *(Old)* Ranger?

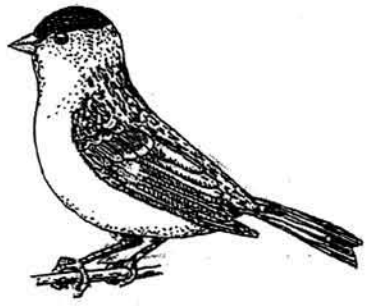
My name is Sheryl Neufeld, and I would like to take this opportunity to say hello and introduce myself to everybody. I have been working at Henry W. Coe State Park since October 2006 and have already enjoyed meeting many of the volunteers. You might find my last name familiar, since my husband, Randy, is the Gavilan Sector Maintenance Chief and has been working at Coe for four years. The last two years, I have been in the Gavilan Sector working primarily at San Juan Bautista State Historic Park (SHP) and Fremont Peak State Park (SP). I look forward to getting involved with a wilderness park again and rejuvenating my natural history interests.

I was born and raised in Santa Cruz right across the street from Henry Cowell State Park (yes, the park that often gets confused with Henry Coe). At an early age I became immersed with nature, thanks to my parents and a lovely place to grow up. I spent my childhood exploring my neighborhood State Park and hunting for wild mushrooms (when that was legal in State Parks—it no longer is). Then at the age of seven, my parents took me to Yosemite for the first time. It was there I met my first Ranger on a nature walk and said "when I grow up, I am going to be a Ranger." It goes to show that one brief moment with a child can be forever life influencing. I never let go of my childhood dream to become a Ranger. At the age of 23, I left Santa Cruz and moved to Sonoma where I went to Sonoma State University to get my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Natural Resource Management. I lived in Sonoma for six years. I always wanted to work for California State Parks more than any other Resource Agency or Park System. I got my foot in the door as a volunteer intern at Petaluma Adobe SHP. I was then hired as a Park Aide for Sugarloaf Ridge SP, Annadel SP, and Jack London SHP. Unfortunately, I came up against a long stint of State hiring freezes. I almost gave up on my dream. Then after four years of no Ranger academies, an announcement came out, "Hiring State Park Rangers." I was so excited, and I made the final cut. It was then I had to make my journey south. There were no Ranger openings in Northern California. I expected this and was willing to put in my two required years in Southern California. I was actually very pleasantly surprised when I accepted a job at Will Rogers SHP and Topanga SP in the Santa Monica Mountains. Wow, what a gorgeous place to work! This is where my two-year plan became an eight-year plan. Randy walked into my life (or I should say drove a yellow Ford tractor into my life, *that's another story!*). That was 1995, and we ended up getting married within the year. Then in 1998, our son, Rory, was born in Santa Monica. In 2000, our daughter, Collette, was born. In 2002, a promotional opportunity came available for Randy as the Maintenance Supervisor at Henry Coe. I urged him to apply, since I wanted to be back north again and near my parents, who live in Hollister. Randy got the job, and two months later I was lucky enough to transfer to Sunset State Beach (SB), Manresa SB, and The Forest of Nisene

Marks in Santa Cruz. Our family settled in Hollister, and after two years of commuting to Santa Cruz, San Juan Bautista SHP and Fremont Peak SP came available. I was so happy to get closer to home.

Now, I am excited that Henry W. Coe has been added to my park coverage. Almost 90,000 acres to learn about and explore! I have already had exciting moments that will be lifelong memories at Coe. You can read about my green rattlesnake discovery in the next issue of *The Ponderosa*. I love driving Hobbs Road, and when I first drove up "the Shortcut," I felt as if I were on an amusement park ride, what fun! I am fascinated by the things I have read about Widow Hobbs. I looked around the remains of her cabin fireplace at Deer Horn. Then, standing on top of Bear Mountain brought a whole new freshness into me, as I studied the 360° landscape. One thing I hope to experience at Coe is my first mountain lion sighting. I have been so frustrated—after living or working my entire life in mountain lion habitat, I have never seen one! When I am patrolling through Poverty Flat, I feel like a mountain lion is staring right at me, but I can't see it. Perhaps, in one of the next issues, you will get to read about my first sighting. Keep your fingers crossed.

I look forward to meeting you all and sharing many Coe stories with you.



Lesser Goldfinch

Let Me Introduce Myself

My name is Derek Davis, and I'm 28 years old. I'm a new Ranger here in Gavilan Sector. I grew up in a small town in Northern California called Anderson. I had a pretty normal life with my mom and dad and two older brothers. During high school, I started playing guitar and getting interested in muscle cars. After high school I went to college to pursue a career in computer science. I got a job with the Department of Fish and Game as a scientific aide shortly thereafter. I spent two years at Fish and Game doing computer tech support while going to college.

After two years in an office staring at a computer screen, I decided that a career in computers wasn't right for me. I wanted to do something more exciting outside of the office. So, I spent the next few years looking for the right career. I tried several jobs, including restoring muscle cars. Eventually a friend from Fish and Game told me that State Parks was hiring rangers.

I immediately fell in love with the idea and began the excruciatingly long hiring process. With the hiring freezes and delays that lasted months and years, there were many times that I thought it would never happen. It was four long years before I started the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) academy in Ione. I was there for 20 weeks with CDF Captains, Game Wardens, and Park Rangers. It was the first time all three agencies have been together in one academy, an experience I'll never forget. I also spent ten weeks at Mott Training Center learning how to be a Ranger. I wouldn't give up my career as a State Park Ranger for anything. I actually get to work where everybody else spends their vacations. How many people can say that! Anyway, I'm living in the House on Fremont Peak, so that will be my primary park, but I will also be spending a lot of time in San Juan and Henry W. Coe State Park.

Walter Patrick Walsh
February 23, 1911–January 24, 2007
by Teddy Goodrich

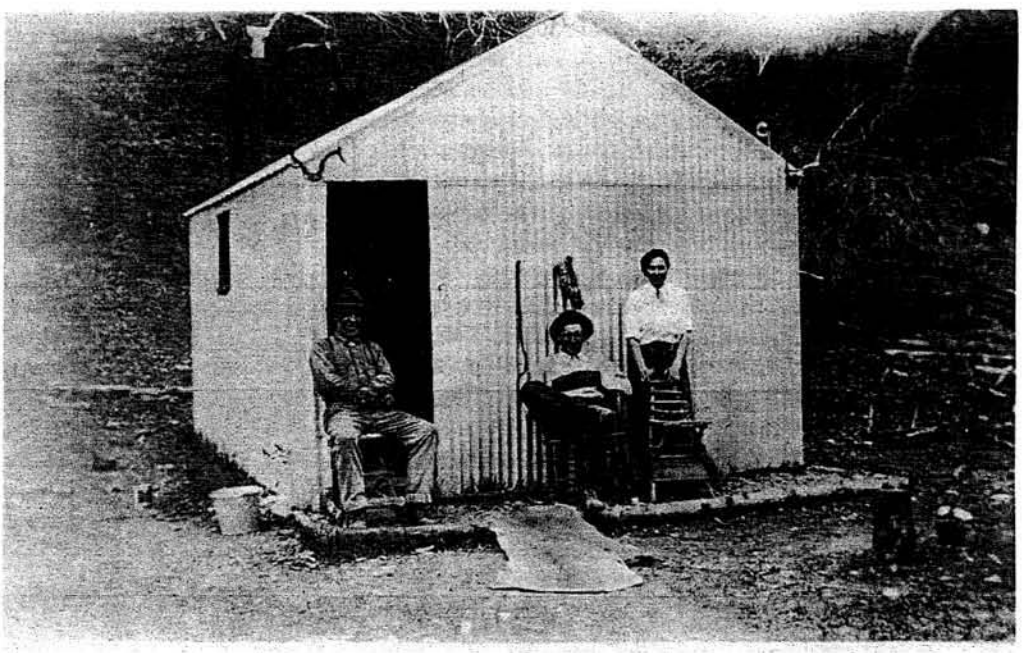
The park lost one of its pioneer homesteaders when Walter Patrick Walsh passed away in Gilroy in January. He was 95.

In 1936, Mr. Walsh homesteaded 600 acres on the North Fork of Pacheco Creek. Walsh Peak, which lay within his homestead claim, was named for him. Years ago he sold his homestead to Brem and Ryan, then owners of the Dowdy Ranch.

Recently he expressed a wish to see his claim and cabin once again, but unfortunately no way could be found to take him and his sister, Bernice, both nonagenarians, down the near vertical slopes to the homestead site.

A native of Gilroy, Mr. Walsh was a veteran of World War II.

In the picture of his cabin below, Walter and his sister, Bernice, are on the right.



New Members through December
by Jim Wright and Margaret Mary McBride

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

John Bacon, San Francisco
Vernon Edgar, Morgan Hill
Tom King, Morgan Hill
The Kohler family, San Jose
Christopher Kulp, Los Gatos
Assaf Litai, Mountain View
Robert Pringle, Menlo Park
Mari Tustin, Santa Cruz

We need your help to keep our membership list current and accurate. If you are a paid member, your *Ponderosa* mailing label includes an expiration date. (No expiration date for life members and organizations.) If you have any questions regarding your membership or if you would like to update your address, please contact us.

E-mail: PRA@CoePark.org
Snail mail: 9100 East Dunne Ave., Morgan Hill, CA 95037
Fax: 408/778-5749
Phone: 408/779-2728

PRA Calendar

Saturday, February 24: **PRA Annual Meeting.** All PRA members are invited to attend the association's annual meeting and graduation of the new class of uniformed volunteers. A flyer with more information was mailed separately.

Saturday, March 17: **Spring at Coe Park.** This weekend marks the beginning of the interpretive programs at Coe Park. There are hikes on Saturdays, an evening program at the Visitor Center on Saturday evenings, and wildflower walks on Sundays. Activities are also planned to start out of the Hunting Hollow entrance. The schedule of the spring programs is enclosed in this issue, or call the Visitor Center for additional information (408/779-2728).

Saturday, March 24: **Spring Trail Day.** Help work on trails in the park. We have two trail days at Coe Park; one in the fall and one in the spring. For information about what a typical work day is like, please look at our website: *http://www.coepark.org/trailwork.html.* For more information and to sign up, please call the Visitor Center (408/779-2728).

Saturday & Sunday, March 31 & April 1: **PRA Outing to Hike the Robison Loop.** Join Ranger John Verhoeven on a hike in the Orestimba Wilderness. We will carpool to Red Creek Road, then hike the Rooster Comb Trail, along the Orestimba Creek, and into Robison Canyon. From there, we'll follow a new route into Red Creek and then follow the creek back to the vehicles. This is a long 14-mile trip, but it doesn't have a lot of elevation gain. For those who want to make this a backpack trip, bring all your gear and spend the night with others near Pinto Creek in Robison Canyon. Sign up at the annual meeting or call John at 831/623-1948.

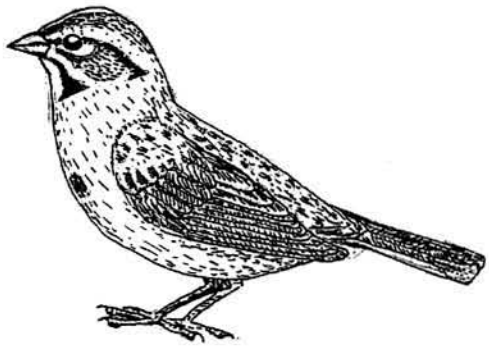
Friday–Sunday, April 27–29: **Coe Backcountry Weekend.** This very popular event fills up quickly; admission is by a lottery system. Information was mailed separately to all PRA members. Applications are now available at the Coe Park website. This year's event will again offer backpacking on Friday night, and the gates will open earlier on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Applications need to be postmarked by February 28 to be considered. For up-to-date information about the event, check out our website: *www.coepark.org/orestimba.html.*

Sunday, May 13: **Mother's Day Breakfast at Coe Park.** This year's breakfast again will be held at the Ridgeview campsite. Tickets for this event will go on sale at the Visitor Center on April 15. A form for ordering tickets will also be posted on our website in early April. The event sells out very quickly, so get your tickets early! For more information, please call the Visitor Center (408/779-2728).

Saturday, June 9: **Ninth Hunting Hollow 5K/10K Walk and Fun Run.** Join us for a day of fun and great exercise! Last year, more than 200 people participated in the event. To see photos taken at last year's event, please check our website: *http://www.coepark.org/hh-10k.html.* An application form will be posted on the website.

Barry Breckling's Retirement
by Ross Campbell

A mailer was recently sent soliciting donations for Barry's retirement. The PRA Board encourages individual donations for this event so that PRA funds will not be needed. However, the Board has been advised that it is permissible to fund any shortfall in donations from PRA funds.



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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 Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the natural history, 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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