



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016

Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association

President's Report



One may never know what motivates your thoughts and actions. Looking back, perhaps my call to volunteer service may have started as a young boy watching President Kennedy's inaugural address with the words: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

My first volunteer service was in the Navy. I was among a group of sailors from the USS Proteus that helped refurbish an orphanage in Chinhai, South Korea. Following my naval career, I volunteered at the Friends of the Oakland Public Library book store in Oakland, California. In 2004, I began volunteering in the HRIA Visitor Center.

The rewards of volunteering vary with the goals of each organization and each volunteer. However, it comes down to volunteering to help others. Each volunteer is important because each brings unique experience, knowledge and skills that forward the goal of helping others.

On May 29, 1979 seven individuals held a meeting to form the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association. By the next December the organization had received non-profit status. August 10, 1980 saw the opening of the first Visitor Center. Dyerville Area Manager Carl Chavez' opening statement distills the reason we volunteer:

"This is the recognition not so much of the physical structure itself, but rather to recognize the dedication and energy of those who conceived, planned, lobbied, created, bootlegged, contributed and enjoyed the labors of a cooperative effort, with the conviction that is no less matched by those before us who had the vision to preserve these redwoods."

Become a volunteer and join the cooperative effort that is Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association.

Alan Aiken



HRIA Happenings

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mission Statement

The HRIA is an educational non-profit group working in cooperation with the California State Parks at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Richardson Grove State Park, Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, Benbow Lake Recreation area and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park within the North Coast Redwoods District, Eel River Sector. The mission of HRIA is to provide visitors with stimulating explanatory information on the natural and cultural history; to help visitors see these parks not only with their eyes, but also with their hearts. We lead others from mere observation to inspire in them a sense of awe in which the human spirit finds meaning, wisdom and a connection with all living things.



Photo Contest Winner

This years photo contest winner is Laurel Franklin. Her winning photograph is pictured to the left. Laurel volunteers at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, and has spent the last three years living in southern Humboldt, surrounding herself with the majestic redwoods. Her photograph was taken at Bull Creek.

2015 Christmas Party

The annual tree lighting of our outside tree at Burlington took place on December 9th at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park Visitor Center. Along with the beautiful carols sung by the South Fork Choir, Santa Claus made an appearance, taking requests and photos with kids of all ages! Generously donated canned goods were given to a local food drive. Hope to see everyone again next year!



Upcoming in 2016

The new year brings exciting things for the HRIA Visitor Centers! Although rainy outside, the Humboldt Redwoods State Park Visitor Center is open every day for those brave enough to face Humboldt winter weather and explore the redwoods. Rain ponchos sold in the bookstore help! In addition, we have new toys and books for the kids. The Richardson Grove Visitor Center will be opening this year, as there will be a grand reopening party to kick off the festivities! The remodel is going very well, and the new center will be a wonderful spot to host events, as it is spacious, historic, and set in the beautiful redwoods. You'll be able to see for yourself soon - stay tuned for grand reopening details in the Spring Newsletter.

Winter in the Sinkyone

By Carla Thomas, HRIA Secretary

The rains are finally here. Please remember that roads and trails may become impassable during the winter and can close any time. It is a good idea to have an alternate plan in case roads and trails are closed. For more information on conditions at the park, visitors may call Richardson Grove at 1-707-247-3318 however, staff availability may mean a delay in getting a response.

On a bright note, the rain is very much needed. The park is green and the streams are running. Often the weather is beautiful between storms. The Sinkyone has had a good year, with an improved water system, electric system and new bridges, as well as the addition of our Ranger Krista Pelikan and Seasonal Park Aid, David Murray.



Additionally, we now have a set of shovel-ready engineering plans for the restoration of the Needle Rock Visitor Center fireplace and chimney. It is much deteriorated and also needs seismic upgrades. HRIA was able to obtain a \$5,000 grant from California State Parks Foundation Park Enrichment Grant to hire SHN Engineering and Geologists to create the plans. The plans were completed and delivered with a briefing from SHN in November. We are currently fund-raising for the restoration work.

We have also received a \$3,000 grant for an Earth Day Clean-up Event on EsfcdVSk April 16th at Usal Campground and Beach. Fa 'a[geas a volunteer XdfZ[e 7ScfZ 6Sk X` 1bVW Register at i i i 1SbSd ead!WfZVSk

In Memory Of... Tom Ainsley



As a volunteer for the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association for 14 years, Tom Ainsley helped connect thousands of people to the redwoods and also made his way into the hearts of HRIA and park staff. He and his wife, Joan, began volunteering in 1999, and played a crucial role in the expansion and grand reopening of the Visitor Center. According to those who worked with him, Tom was a true asset to HRIA, as he was not only a lot of fun to work with but he was exceptional at breaking the ice and connecting with people. He may be remembered best on the deck by the coffee pot, teaching visitors about the redwoods with cheer and enthusiasm. Although Tom passed in 2014, his memory lives on within the HRIA Visitor Center.

The Oldest Living Christmas Tree

By Susan J.P. O'Hara, board member and James Garrison, Archivist for Humboldt Historical Society

Since the early 1980s, the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association has been celebrating the winter holidays by lighting a Christmas tree in front of the Visitor's Center at Burlington. Unknown to many is the fact that this continues a tradition started in the 1940s of tree lighting in the park.

The vision of "living" Christmas trees began in 1926 when Clarence F. (Sandy) Pratt of San Francisco decorated a tree growing outside his home, lifting the spirits of a sick seven year old neighbor. Impressing and delighting his community, it also inspired many others in the state to follow his lead. By 1930 50,000 outdoor trees were decorated in California and by 1933 this number had grown to 75,000. As president of the California Outdoor Christmas Tree Association Pratt continued to promote living outdoor Christmas trees. Some of the Association's official goals were to educate Californians about forestry, foster an appreciation of the state's natural wonders, and rekindle the Christmas spirit throughout the state. In an interview printed in the Sausalito News on November 20th of 1931, Pratt encouraged Californians to light more outdoor Christmas trees to "drive away fear and depression." Pratt and his Association envisioned lighted Christmas trees lining the state's highways, believing that they would "act as beacons to prosperity and spread this cheerful message of confidence." They pushed for "an outdoor Christmas tree for every California home; a mile of Christmas trees for every California city," as reported in the Sausalito News on 2 December 1932.

Pratt's message was responded to enthusiastically and over the course of the 1930s increasing numbers of trees were lit around the state. Pratt's idea found purchase in communities in Humboldt County. For example, Ferndale's outdoor tree, still lit annually to mark the season, is a tradition that began in 1934. Scotia had their own outdoor tree as well, a tradition that was maintained for decades by the company-town's long-time benefactor, The Pacific Lumber Company. This cherished tradition was only recently discontinued, after the acquisition of the Pacific Lumber Company's assets by the Humboldt Redwood Company.

By 1937 Pratt's Association set their goal at 100,000 outdoor trees in the state. Towns in California's redwood growing regions wasted little time in lighting their magnificent groves, and Humboldt was no exception. Sponsored by the California Chamber of Commerce, the Outdoor Christmas Tree Association's goal in 1938 was again set at 100,000 lighted outdoor trees "as a fitting forerunner to the 1939 Exposition." The Sausalito News of 15 December 1938 reported that in Humboldt Redwoods State Park the Founder's Tree near Dyerville and the "Molly Atkinson" tree were to be lighted as part of the state-wide campaign. The newspaper reported that, "Both trees are so high that professional tree toppers have been engaged to do the work." Founder's tree was thought to be the world's tallest tree at the time, however, it would lose this designation after a storm knocked the top out of the tree and a taller redwood was discovered by Humboldt State forestry students in Rockefeller forest.

In 1941 William L. Stevenson of the Fortuna Rotary wanted more than a celebration of the Christmas holiday, but also to have a prayer for peace and victory amid the struggles of WWII. He enlisted the help of Charles Fulkerson of Humboldt State College to bring the colleges a cappella choir to the candle-lit ceremony at Founder's Grove. In addition to the choir, Reverend Hudson of Fortuna lead the group assembled in prayer. The Founder's Tree was once again, according to the Sausalito News, "converted into a glorious, beautifully flood-lighted, living Christmas tree," illuminated by a number of 10,000 candle-power flood-lights. The Humboldt Times of December 9th reported that a test-lighting of the 2000 year old tree took place on 7 December 1941, the same day the Japanese fleet conducted their infamous assault on Pearl Harbor. The lighting was repeated each evening from December 11 to January 1, despite war-time fears of a coastal attack. These fears proved well-founded after the tanker Emidio was destroyed by a Japanese submarine off Humboldt's coast on December 20th. Even after this local attack the tree lighting continued.

The candle-light ceremony at Founder's Grove was repeated the following year, but was much darker than in previous holiday seasons. By December of 1942 very real war-time fears led to military-enforced blackouts along the California coast. This dimmed the outdoor Christmas trees for the duration of the war in coastal communities throughout the state, including the festivities at Dyerville, as reported in the Humboldt Times of December 27, 1942. The lack of electric lights at the Founder's Grove failed to dim the spirits of Humboldt residents, however, who continued to put their best foot forward, maintaining their candle-lit observances in Dyerville during these war-darkened years. In 1943 the event was described in the Dec. 24 issue of the Long Beach Independent, "colorful yuletide activities were held in Southern Humboldt county . . . by the Fortuna Rotary and the state park commission. The world's tallest, and oldest, living Christmas tree, was a major attraction, reaching a height of 364 feet."

The celebration at Founder's Grove would not see its former holiday glory again until after the end of World War II. Humboldt residents joined the rest of the country in celebrating the war's end. According to the Sausalito News of December 6, 1945 Founder's Tree was lit up once again on August 17th of that year in observance of the Japanese surrender. More than 3,000 people signed the parks register during the event. Christmas festivities at the grove resumed with gusto on December 21, 1945 and Founder's tree was once again lit with 50,000 candle power of holiday cheer. The Pacific Lumber Company paid for the electricity, and the East Power Company of Weott supplied the power. The event, organized by both the Fortuna Rotary and the Redwood Empire Association, again featured Charles Fulkerson and the college's 25 member a cappella choir. Prayers were led by Reverend Hudson of Fortuna, and were followed by speeches from W.L Stevenson, who started the local event and Clarence Pratt, founder of the Outdoor Christmas Tree Association.



This tree lighting was the most spectacular of the World War II era affairs, in addition to the aforementioned elements, it was broadcast by KSFO radio from San Francisco. A crew of 5 radio technicians arrived three days early to set up for the broadcast. According to the Ukiah Republican Press, Bay-area writer Norman Kramer wrote the script for the event explaining "the history of the 364-foot tree since before the birth of Christ." Radio announcer Austin Fenger was the narrator of the broadcast that was heard not only in the bay area, but also nearly everywhere that U.S. troops were stationed around the world. The U.S. military re-broadcast the event throughout the globe, including Hawaii, the South and Southwest Pacific, the Philippines, China, Burma, India, Japan, and Alaska, and throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, and the South Atlantic. "The total potential audience for the program will number many hundreds of millions of persons." Local residents and park officials were also present at the festivities.

The response to the broadcast was very favorable, and was covered in local newspapers. The Ukiah Republican Press noted that hundreds of letters had been sent to the KSFO radio station in San Francisco in appreciation of the broadcast. The paper reported in January, 1946, that listeners hailed the show "as beautiful and impressive and unique in radio history," and that many of the letter writers wanted redwood seeds, not unlike today's visitors who also enjoy getting redwood seeds as a souvenir.

Pratt's vision brought cheer and hope to communities throughout the state during the dark years of the Great Depression and the Second World War and started a tradition of outdoor lighted trees that persists in many places to this day. While the annual tree lighting at Burlington remains a favorite with local residents, the modern lighting of the tree must pale in comparison with the magnificent spectacle of Founder's tree alight with 50,000 candle power of Christmas cheer and the incredible influence of an entire community coming together to hope for a brighter future.

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Interpretive Association**
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Return Service Requested

Winter 2016

HUMBOLDT REDWOODS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

You can help support the work of the HRIA by becoming a member. Funds raised through memberships, endowments and donations, enable HRIA to develop displays, purchase equipment, sponsor research, and publish interpretive literature and also to fund the expansion of the Humboldt Redwoods State Park Visitor Center and its quality exhibits. A critical element in the success of the Association is its membership and endowment program. Individuals and families throughout the country have long supported the Association. Member benefits include a 20% discount on all books, maps, posters, calendars and publications stocked for sale by the Association (Not available to Senior/Student members), the Association newsletter and tax deductible membership dues. Members also have the benefit of knowing that they are participating in an organization dedicated to expanding the awareness of one of the most unique ancient forests left on Earth.

Please enroll me in the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association at the membership level circled below:

Student/Senior	\$10	Patron	\$500
Individual	\$25	Endowment	\$1,000
Supporting	\$50	Redwood Crown	\$2,500
Sponsoring	\$100	Donation	\$_____
Life	\$250		

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