

# Them Were the Days

By Harriett "Petey" Weaver



Early days at Big Basin, Richardson Grove, Seacliff Beach and Big Sur by the first woman uniformed member of the state park ranger field force



The Ranger crew at Big Basin in 1945. Left-to-right: Harriett "Petey" Weaver, Arlan Sholes, Charles Fakler, Mel Whitaker, Roy Cushjng, Bill Weatherbee, Carl Saddlemire, Art Parvin, Darrell Knoefler and Lou Donaldson.

## Edited by Rodi Lee and Mike Lynch



150th Banner.  
(Courtesy of Rodi Lee.)



The original edition of *Them Were The Days* was produced in 1991 as part of the 125th Ranger Anniversary. This revised and updated edition was produced in conjunction with the 150th California State Parks in 2014.

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# Harriett “Petey” Weaver

Harriett “Petey” Eilene Weaver was born June 18, 1908 in Iowa. She attended high school and college in Los Angeles California.

Petey had many careers including teaching for 35 years, author of 10 books, 30 years with Sunset Books, and 20 seasons as the first uniformed woman in the early state park ranger field staff. Her best-selling book *Frosty, A Raccoon to Remember*, is still going strong. It was selected by State Superintendent Bill Hoenig for inclusion in his *Catalogue for Enrichment Reading for the Public Schools of California*. Her many books range from the redwoods and wine country to bulls and raccoons.

After retiring Petey lived in Fortuna in Northern California. She traveled and wrote, stating, “each year, I drive 6,000 – 7,000 miles solo back to my beloved Midwest and Rockies.” She added “I have been doing this for the past 23 years.”

In 1971, the California State Park Ranger Association chose Petey as an “honorary lifetime ranger” joining others that have made an exemplary contribution to California State Parks. Her name stands with other honored citizens such as Walt Disney, Joe Knowland, Laurence Rockefeller and Ansel Adams.

Petey died July 2, 1993 in California and in her memory at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, stands a coast redwood tree 355 feet tall dedicated to Harriett.

Petey observed, “What you’re living today will be the past tomorrow. Keep notes of observations of everyday life – that’s how things get started”

## Time Line

1908 - Harriett Eilene Weaver born in Iowa June 18. She moved to Colorado and then to Los Angeles where she went to High school and college.

1929 - graduated from University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)

1929 - began work at Big Basin - camping cost 50 cents per night, 36 wardens and custodians and 11 units in the State Park System, making \$30.00 a month.

1938 - Richardson Grove; along the Redwood highway 101.

1942 - Big Sur; south of Monterey Bay.

1944 - Sea Cliff Beach State Park, home of the old cement boat.

1945 - returns to Big Basin.

1946 - took the Ranger I Civil Service examination and was #1 on the list.

1950 - returned to Big Sur and then ended of her park career.

1950 - Petey moved to Fortuna where she spent many years teaching and writing. She also worked as a part time freelance cartoonist.

1970 - Petey received the California State Park Ranger Association as an “honorary ranger” award.

1983 - The *Humboldt Times Standard* of Eureka California, featured an article about Petey as a California State Park Ranger.

1993 - July 2nd “Petey” Harriett E Weaver passed away in Humboldt County California, she was 85.



*Petey and the real life Frosty*



*Cover of Petey's award winning book "Frosty".*



*Petey's badge and patch*



*Petey Weaver and the first full-time modern women ranger Paula Peterson in 1991*

# Introduction



*Susan Ross, 1990s*

1991 marked the 125th Anniversary of State Park Rangers and the original printing of this publication by Petey Weaver. As part of the California State Parks 150th Anniversary, this revised and updated version of Petey's story was produced. Susan Ross was a member of the 125th State Park Ranger Anniversary Committee at the time and

wrote this original introduction:

"Ten years ago [1981], I was hired as a State Park Ranger Trainee, one of a handful of female rangers in one of the last of the trainee classes. At that time, I felt I was a part of the "second wave" of females to enter the ranger ranks. The 1980s were just beginning, and this decade was to see tremendous strides by women into all levels of the ranger service. The "first wave" had begun in the mid-seventies when major ground was broken by women such as Paula Peterson, who was hired in 1972.

During my training, I was to learn of another woman who preceded us all by several decades, and who broke ground most of us would not have imagined existed. Harriett E. Weaver, although officially titled a recreational leader, was the first female ranger. She began her career in 1929 and served state parks and the visiting public for the next twenty years! Indeed, "Petey" Weaver was not the only woman ranger. Her love of nature, the park visitor, her memories recall the commitment each ranger has made through the years to protect the resource and serve the public.

The following account was written by Petey at the request of the 125th Ranger Anniversary Committee. Petey's memories recall her days at Big Basin, Big Sur, Richardson Grove and Seacliff State Parks. They provide an important link to our rich history which continues to guide our future. I once asked her how she came to be a ranger. With great reverence, she told of driving north from Los Angeles as a college student to view what she had been told were the biggest trees in the world. "As I drove through the entrance of the California Redwood Park and beheld the sign which read 'TO BE PRESERVED IN A STATE OF NATURE' I knew my life was to be profoundly changed forever. I knew I had to make this my life."

And, for all of us whose careers have followed in the footsteps of Harriett E. "Petey" Weaver and the early California State Park Rangers, this same has held true -- our lives have been profoundly changed, forever.



Harriett "Petey" Weaver

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*Petey Weaver on her first visit to the California Redwood Park at Big Basin in 1929.*



# In the Beginning Big Basin - 1929

I'll always remember the day my life changed direction. That was an afternoon in early June 1929 after I had finished my junior year at UCLA and headed north. My father had said that there were some awfully big trees called redwoods up near Santa Cruz somewhere. Why not go see? So I set out.

I didn't expect much, for hadn't my parents and I three years ago moved out from Colorado? What on earth could California have that would remotely compare with the Rockies and their glorious forests? One year more of university and I could at last head back to all that was really great.

So I thought until I drove under that rustic arch that read: STATE REDWOOD PARK. TO BE PRESERVED IN A STATE OF NATURE.

Now on down into a forested basin of tree giants the likes of which I had never dreamed – and into a whole new world. Never had I heard of living things as massive or as tall, their home as soft with the natural litter of centuries, as friendly with bush and ferns and wildflowers.

The dirt road ended beside a peaceful, opalescent creek. On the bank there were two big old buildings. One was signed as the Warden's Office; the other empty. I learned later that it had housed a stagecoach full of state governors who had come to see if reports of such massive trees were actually true. Not far away stood a picturesque log inn, its tiny cabins and post office, and a dilapidated old shack that had once served as a barbershop. Then I noticed a campfire bowl and its little stage. Exploring a bit upslope from there I discovered a meadow, surrounded by the greatest of living trees, giants massive and towering. They awed me to the verge of tears.

On my way in through the southern part of the park, I had noticed campsites already occupied and people here and there cooking on their rock fireplaces. Upon strolling among the trees of the center I encountered several elderly folk, mostly women as sociable as could be – Big Basin old timers. But here so early in the summer? Oh my yes! We got to talking. They and others around in the park had set their camps way back in April. Sure, and they'd be around until the rains drove them out in October or even November. Then Old Man (Elmer) Crawford or Charlie Lewis would store their gear in the park maintenance shops until Spring rolled around. Pretty soon most of the camps would be occupied. Folks always tried to return to their same campsites.

And all that firewood stacked beside our cook stoves? No, they hadn't

cut it. Fred Canham and dear Old Man Crawford did that. These two together with Charlie Lewis and Warden Dool comprised the park crew. Wonderful men. So like family.

Just then, heaving into sight, roared an ancient touring car, top down, a load of mops, brooms and buckets bouncing around; riding high at the wheel a big old gentleman.

"Here comes Charlie Lewis," one of the ladies exclaimed. "He cleans all the restrooms every day. One-holers throughout the park. He's a real old-school gentleman"

He was, all right. Pulling the heaving load to a stop, he got out, tipped his hat properly and introduced himself. That day he became a father figure for my Big Basin days, or years as it turned out. He showed me to a cozy campsite, cupped by the surface roots of several giants, just right for my umbrella tent. Then he helped me set up, store my groceries in the wooden cupboard, stack my box of dishes on the round picnic table and then he pointed out the nearest john and water spigot. While he was doing this, Fred Canham came along with a load of wood and stacked it for me. What a good, longtime friend he became!

Of course I inquired how much I owed them for so much help. Their replies would always be the same – to me, to everyone, "No charge for anything, and we hope you'll stay all summer and become a regular like the others."

It seemed that workingmen campers set up for their wives and children, went home to their jobs, then returned weekends to enjoy. And so it was every summer. This was their vacation heaven.

Before Charlie Lewis went bouncing away over roots and into chucks he further instructed me; "Young lady, there's



*Petey Weaver 's said her life changed when I drove under that rustic arch that read: "State Redwood Park -To Be Preserved in a State of Nature."*

nothing to be afraid of in this park – no bearS, no lions; just friendly deer and coons to feed. They'll come around day and night and hope for refreshments. You'll love'em. At 4 PM every day I feed the deer – sometime a couple a dozen of 'em – bucket or two of oats. You'll hear me call thru a megaphone. They'll come a runnin'. Come on down to park center and join us. And at 7 PM everyone gathers at the campfire circle, where we light up a big one and tell stories of our experiences. And then whoever can entertain does. There's a beat up old piano on stage – and before the summer is over, it'll be tuned by one of the campers. That's what he does for a living. Want you to notice especially the little stage. You know, some years ago the campers themselves built the stage. They had passed the hat and collected \$250. Then they bought the lumber and went to it. How about that! Come this evening and see. Some folks toast marshmallows afterwards." Then Charlie added, 'Hey, can you lead singing? I don't do it very well.'

And so I not only attended my first campfire that night but had a ball leading the singing of old time favorites. The long log seats were well filled and everyone seemed to be enjoying like mad.



*Old-timer ranger Charlie Lewis became a father figure for Petey during her time at Big Basin.*

After that I rode with Charlie almost every morning from john to john. While he cleaned and re-supplied we talked. He told me all about redwoods, each giant to him a respected and loved individual, many of them named. He pointed out the different wildflowers and ferns and had me write them down so I could spell as well as identify them. The various trees and shrubs, too, became new friends. Before long I was showing them to new campers and day visitors, leading small groups around the park, down alongside the Waddell Creek, out to the historic Maddocks Cabin; showing them how to enjoy Park Center, especially the many deer that liked to gather in the meadow and come bounding when Charlie let out his booming call at 4 PM.

The following summer a Nature Guide would be added to our little crew – Rodney Ellsworth – and I would graduate from my tent to park housing, the best they had – the old barbershop with its ancient bed, stove, pots and pans, castoffs that had been stored there for years.

Along the way, the group of wonderful elderly women campers “adopted” me to protect me and see to my care and feeding. The leader among them, Jessie Johnson from Los Gatos, was referred to by everyone for many years as the Mayor of Big Basin. A dear friend also was the postmistress, Peg Bishop. All of “the gang” – a beloved half dozen, always sat on



*In the early days at Big Basin, rangers would feed the deer at 4pm each day for benefit of the visitors.*

the front row at my right at campfire, full of fun and pep.

I came to know well the concessionaires who operated the Inn – Mrs. Walters and her managers, Mr. and Mrs. Angel. They were all delightful, and every one of them remained my good friends until their passing years later. In fact Mrs. Angel turned over to me one of the Inn cabins – a great relief from the old barbershop that I had been sharing that summer with two big rats. It was then torn down and in its place appeared a tiny hotdog stand – an alternative to the beautiful Inn dining room, where the food was delicious, and a lunchroom, built at the upper edge of the meadow that was eventually transformed into the present museum.

By now I was well-established as a member of the park staff. As such, I was further honored with a big army tent that had been left over from days long gone and carefully stowed away in the park maintenance shops.

Before I was to leave my first tour at Big Basin near the end of the decade, the old hotel on the banks of Opal Creek had blossomed into a museum. On its porch we kept live and labeled plant exhibits; inside a number of early oil paintings and photographs that decorated the walls. Further, the old Warden Office had been moved upslope near the meadow to become the Warden's residence; next to it the present museum, gift and grocery store and post office. The road from Boulder Creek now crossed the top of the meadow past where Charlie maintained the deer happy hour and beyond a new headquarters overlooking park center.



*Big Basin campfire programs were very popular with the visitors.*



My duties increased as time wore on, but two were constant: I always planned the evening campfires, led the singing and storytelling, assembled the program that followed from whatever willing talent we had among us; sometimes gave a nature or historical talk if the Nature Guide took a night off, which was rare. We didn't have days off during any week. We didn't want any. We were afraid we'd miss something. Besides we were there to work!

During the day I checked camps after the \$.50 a night charge was instituted. Otherwise I registered campers and picnickers and answered questions at the window of the headquarters as well as greeting and welcoming the hundreds of newcomers with whom I came in contact. Often in the late evenings, I'd walk through the extensive camp area of over 200 campsites just to make sure everything was okay for the night. It always was.

In those days there was no call for concern, no loud talking or noisy fun after bedtime. No need for foot patrol, even though some camps were left unattended sometimes for days or weeks at a time while campers returned home to attend to family affairs. None of us ever heard of a theft. None of the staff ever thought of packing a gun.

For an hour after campfire evenings except Sunday, the little dance floor across Opal Creek was alive and hopping, a victrola doing the honors. And during the summer days several little boats

roamed the quiet waters of the creek.

My earliest memories remind me of Colonel Wing Chief of the California State Parks. His office was in San Francisco, the staff just himself and a secretary. Eleven units comprised the new California State Parks System, operated by 36 wardens and custodians, as we were called then. For several summers, I remained the unpaid member of the crew at Big Basin. Then one day Warden Moody informed me that now I was to receive \$30 a month. Was I thrilled!

All along I had been uniformed like the men – jodhpurs and black boots, khaki shirt and jacket, - and housed after a fashion, you might say. Then unexpectedly, Mr. Moody turned over to me a small cabin upslope from the Warden's residence. It didn't have a bathroom, but there were public facilities closeby. A year or two after that, my pay was increased so I would be on par with the men. A goodly return for the times. And it continued to be fair and ample throughout the rest of my twenty summers.



*The CCC working at Big Basin. (Courtesy California State Parks.)*

In the early 40s our uniforms were converted to gray, but only for a while. We brightened when they were changed to what they are today and we could then no longer be mistaken for the Greyhound bus drivers.

The CCC boys of the thirties improved many things in the Basin, making it more convenient and enjoyable for our over half a million visitors a year. Lots of construction work they did. They built the present Park Headquarters, cleared new trails, repaired, changed, converted and were thoroughly delightful to boot, their Scotch foreman a real character.

One year I returned to find THE latest model restrooms well situated around the park, replacing the aging one-holers. After we were told that each had cost many thousands of dollars, we called them our Flushing Palaces. Times were indeed marching on.

Never changing though, was something special for the campers. With empty cans or open milk cartons hanging from their necks, they picked their way among the prolific huckleberry bushes that populated the central area, gathering the ripening fruit. Huckleberry pie then became the pride and joy of the season. Even the Steller's jays, deer, chipmunk and coons came to dinner in droves.

Happy days those first summers in Big Basin. Wonderful men to work with; for me the opening up of a new life – a world of bug-eyed visitors from everywhere over the country and various parts of the globe, some of them very famous, all overwhelmed by the cool shady magic of our giant forest. To become one of those who could contribute a bit to their vacation enrichment became the big boost in my life. And that feeling stayed with me throughout all the state park years that followed – at Richardson Grove, Big Sur, back to Big Basin and finally downcoast to Big Sur again.

How fortunate can one get!



*Colonel Charles Wing, first Chief of the Division of Parks.*



*Petey in the entrance station.*





The Richardson Grove Ranger Station was right on the Redwood Highway, now U.S. 101.



*1122-CART. RAN* "Elsewhere in the world: There are no trees like these." Richardson Grove State Park, Calif.

The Redwood Highway running right through Richardson Grove.



# Richardson Grove - 1938

And so one day in early spring 1938, I was visited in my home in Southern California by Jack Covington, Secretary of the State Park Commission. He had been a good friend through those first years at Big Basin and now had an idea in mind as to my future.



*Bill Kenyon was the chief ranger at Richardson Grove when Petey was assigned there from 1938-1942.*

How would I like to try Richardson Grove up north on the Redwood Highway this coming summer? Bill Kenyon had been appointed Chief Ranger and Jack felt sure we'd make the right team for the park's special needs at that time. A bit reluctantly I accepted the challenge.

Richardson Grove turned out to be another whole new world, not

picketed off to itself like Big Basin. Rather, the magnificent heart of it straddled US 101, the famed Redwood Highway.

It took some adjusting for me to absorb the sight of all the many visitors clustered there on the porches of the concession and the adjacent park headquarters as well as the campfire bowl across the road, everyone dodging cars as they hurried from one side to the other of the busy two-lane highway. Fortunately, traffic wasn't wild as it is now and I never heard of an accident the entire time I served beside it. Drivers just naturally slowed as they entered the grove from either direction. Had there been any mishap it surely would have come from the drivers sticking their heads out the window in futile attempt to see how far up into the clouds those stately giants stretched their tips. When I arrived, I parked alongside several other cars and for a few minutes just sat and scanned my new scene.

All construction was log, low slung: the long gift shop and grocery and tiny post office; beyond a great hollow giant, Park Headquarters. On Headquarters porch I saw a

counter, around it a swarm of people – some registering for a campsite or picnic spot, others asking a million questions. They had parked wherever they could find room. Mostly they had tucked in between the buildings and the edge of the road, only a dozen feet clearance between them and the traffic flow. Yes, there was a place to eat, all right. At the rear of the concession was an outdoor dining area backed by a circular indoor café.

Jack had told me there were cabins to rent. I didn't notice any right away but I discovered them later on the flat high above the campfire bowl across the road. The tents of the campers you could see alongside the Eel River both north and south of park center. The rangers occupied rooms at the rear of headquarters and shared an eight room barracks with the concession help. These overlooked the Eel along the north bank. One of the rooms was to be my lot during that first summer. Bill and Mabel's home was nearby.

To me Bill Kenyon became a real delight. He ran the park with a stolid firmness that was sometimes deceiving, for he had a sense of humor that wouldn't quit – more endlessly enjoyable than anyone I had ever known. He and Mabel, a great cook, had me eat my three meals a day with them and during those times I laughed so much and ate so well that I added fifteen pounds that first summer.

My work? Well, as always the campfire – leading the singing, inviting visiting talent to perform, either beside the campfire or up on the little platform stage with its piano; always to tell stories of their experiences. Then the Park Naturalist's talk and his announcements of upcoming nature walks or perhaps a caravan field trip to a nearby wonder. That first summer it was Raymond Waldo, biology teacher in San Pedro during the school year. Everyone at campfire would convulse when he invited them to accompany him north to Fields Landing to 'go through a whale'. There was really an active coastal whaling station there at the time.

The nightly gatherings of several hundred around



*Petey leading a campfire program at Richardson Grove.*



the campfire were always a relaxing way to end the day. Entertainment was even more available and ready there than it had been at Big Basin. Well, with so much varied talent from all over the country that passed along the Redwood Highway just a few yards away, no wonder. Never were we without at least one willing pianist; and never on Sunday evenings did we lack for the more subdued, the more classical and inspirational talent that became what I felt to be appropriate for Sunday night. I sometimes even wore my uniform skirt for those weekly occasions.

Saturday evenings we specialized in noisy, romping songs that everyone in those days knew and loved, such as *Old McDonald Had a Farm*, *She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain*, *Man on the Flying Trapeze* and various rounds and active numbers.

Always from the first Big Basin summer on and on, I concluded each evening with everyone singing *God Bless America* and then standing for my special benediction:

“Dear father, hear and bless  
 These trees, Thy beasts and winging birds.  
 And guard with all Thy tenderness  
 Small things that have no words.”

Those three happy summers at Richardson Grove still glow in my memories. Bill ran a tight ship and the crew worked hard but well. That was fortunate because it seemed that the whole world either came to camp or picnic – at least stopped or passed thru our park center. We loved welcoming all of them.

From 7 AM until 5 PM, noontime off for lunch (now and then a PM swim in the river), I stood at the counter on headquarters porch. Before I started doing that, however, Bill had me take a couple of days to go north as far as Crescent City to see and learn the sights, record the mileage from the Grove to each, and become acquainted with everything a passerby could possibly want to learn such as our other beautiful state parks up the line, the private vacationing spots and the people who ran all of them; fishing information, assorted available activities and possible problems; in general, where to go and what to see



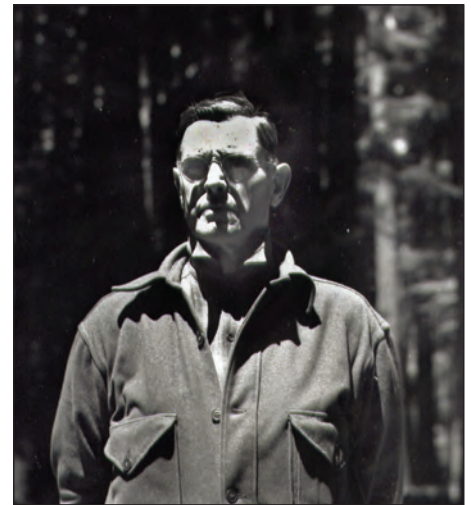
The Warden's Office at Richardson Grove.

along the Redwood Highway. I had already learned much about things south of us. So on my Mondays off, I added bits and pieces week by week. Gradually I came to know the Redwood Empire well – as well, indeed, as I had the Santa Cruz area while at Big Basin.

I always went alone. I found that by the seventh day of the week I was quite ready to shut up and look. I explored every nook and cranny from the highway to the sea – to Shelter Cove, then only a tiny grocery and owner's home. Always thrilled I was to hurry back to the park and the boys, eager to catch up on all I had missed, which was usually plenty. Refreshed, I could hardly wait for duty Out Front come morning – but not until after one of Mabel's delicious breakfast and Bill's humor.

The concessionaire, it turned out, was Viola French, wife of towering Percy French, our District Superintendent – folks who had really lived long in the redwoods. Built like one, Percy was widely known as “Mr. Redwood.” He knew every tree in our forests and Viola ran a most efficient and friendly concession.

Among her summer employees was Phyllis Benbow and a half dozen of her Pasadena Playhouse fellow students who contributed greatly to our evening campfires with



State Park “Superintendent Percy French was widely known as “Mr. Redwood.”

their many talents and hilarious comedy improvisations. Area residents came from far and near to enjoy with us. World travelers showed slides and told of their adventures. Musicians of all kinds entertained generously. Talent abounded along with a nice willingness to share. Somehow I was able, from my post Out Front, to secure, assemble and plan our two-hour evening fun around the big crackling fire, though sometimes by forays through the campgrounds.

My three summers at Richardson Grove were all delightful. Park personnel changed somewhat with each season, but Bill and I stayed on, working together wonderfully well. Malcolm Bryce, a UC Biology grad, came on as Park Naturalist the last two summers, also volunteering as the pianist at our songfests. The appearance of handsome Jack Knight, a recent Forestry graduate from UC, really set the young women among us to oh-ing and ah-ing. As anyone in the state park service remembers, Jack went on from there to the top. He was a dedicated and able park man from his first day to retirement many years later.

With awe sometimes we watched the passing parade, the coming and going, the strolling around the natural redwood





*Petey wearing the first state park uniform.*

shrimp of a man jump out, rush up to me with eyes bulging and start pounding on the counter. His teeth were bared. We were eyeball to eyeball.

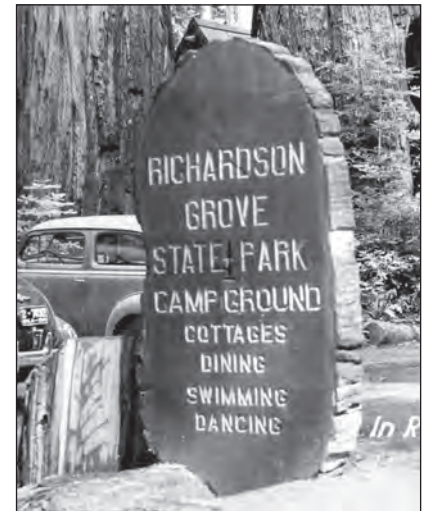
exhibits across the road, where one could count the rings in a cross-section and see what earthshaking event was taking place while the tree formed that ring three or feet in from the outer bark.

Well I remember the day a man literally exploded before my eyes. There was only one obstruction to parking along the front of the concession and headquarters. Between the buildings and the edge of the pavement stood a redwood cross section sign. On it, engraved in large letters was RICHARDSON GROVE; in smaller letters below, "State Park, camping, cabins food".

I heard a car screech to a halt, then saw this

"Ranger, will you please explain to me why you bury a man right out there alongside this highway?" he ground out in one breath. 'Don't you know there are burying grounds called cemeteries? Look out there at that traffic! Now does that look like a place for a man's last peaceful sleep? There's a guy just drove over him. Richardson deserves better and so help me I'm going now to Sacramento to see the Governor and demand an explanation!" With that our visitor let out a snarl, spun on his heels and tore back to his car. Me? I just stood there, trying to figure it all out, breath all gone and along with it, words. And then the light dawned. The man had read our beautiful sign as Richardson Grave. Perhaps he should have been complemented for his concern.

People of every nationality, every disposition, every interest came to see and marvel at the giant of our grove and all the others along the Redwood Highway. We were busy from dawn until dark. Our evening campfires were fun, our interpretive walks and talks so enjoyable and informative; daily swimming in the smoothly flowing Eel so pleasant and safe. In such a happy way, I passed my three summers at Richardson Grove.



*A visitor misread this sign as Richardson Grave.*









# Big Sur 1942 - During WWII

By 1942 World War II was well under way. American life was changing fast. Food and gasoline were rationed and people considered themselves lucky just to be able to carry on day-to-day near home. Going any distance for fun had to be relegated to the bottom of their list of priorities. Yet the parks remained adequately staffed for those who could managed enough gas to drive that far – mostly folks from the locales close around.

In the spring of '42, Bill Kenyon called to say that he and I, for special needs, had been assigned to Big Sur State Park in the little coastal valley below Monterey Bay at the southern tip of the redwood country. I was ready to go wherever, but the question kept hitting me that how in this very isolated and remote spot could we expect visitors from even the nearest towns – tiny Carmel and Monterey, about 25 miles north, much less from the nearest points south almost 100 miles away. Who could muster enough gas to cover those distances – and get back home again?

As it turned out very few could or did. Civilians that is.

Upon starting up Highway 1, I found out that above San Simeon who would populate the park that summer and the three succeeding ones. The Army. Suddenly an armed guard challenged my passage up coast. Because I was a woman he was doubly suspicious of me. Until I showed him my uniform he wouldn't let me go. And at several more places on up that narrow twisty road along the mountain face high above the sea, guards challenged me. By then I knew that the entire coast was being well patrolled – in fact had been officially declared a combat zone; the

road, the ocean, the air.

That evening during a get-together welcome party at Bill and Mabel's residence near the park entrance, I met the rest of the crew as well as a dozen or so of the local residents –

some of them pioneers, many of them artists and writers; most of them delightful elderly folk who had chosen to build and retire here and there out on the cliffs. During the lively conversations, all talk centered around the possibility that we could be invaded by the Japanese at any time; that some of the coves I had noticed on my way up here were perfect for landing parties. In fact a submarine had already been

seen in one. So the few cliff-dwellers were well armed and at every household 24 hours a day someone was standing watch with high-powered binoculars. Furthermore, there were almost no campers vacationing in our park.

After my arrival there, Bill took me out to my quarters – to a little house that was a part of an old abandoned CCC Camp a half mile upstream from Headquarters, the checking station and Bill and Mabel's house. It faced a large meadow and was roomy and comfortable but a loner. So I thought until the next morning.

I was awakened by some unusual noises outside. Peeking out my bedroom window, I saw several hundred helmeted GI's creeping stealthily through the tall grasses. Bill hadn't told me that over the little "risin' back of the house, at the mouth of the gorge, an entire battalion from Fort Ord was bivouacked.



*Big Sur Ranger staff in 1947: (L-R) Fred Oltman, Al Whittington, Keith Carpenter, John Mason, Theodore "Mac" McMillen, Lester "Pinky" Ransom, Chief Ranger Wayne Cox and Paul Griffith.*



*All kinds of military drills and exercises went on at Big Sur during the war.*





*Assistant Ranger Lloyd Lively had charge of two tame bears at Big Sur in the early 1940s.*

And that wasn't all. In the campground across the Big Sur River, a small Signal Corps unit had set up. I discovered that on my walk to work. Checking on a rustle in some bushes close by, I noticed a GI crawling along on his stomach, stringing some wiring, and talking quietly into a little black box. By the time I reached Headquarters, I was commencing to perceive the trend of our summer's work. Certainly, this summer, and no telling how many more, were not to be like any others we rangers had ever known.

At Headquarters I met with Bill and the rest of the crew – all fine young men about my own age. I remember Paul Griffith and Wayne Cox especially. Lloyd Lively came on as Assistant Chief Ranger the following summer. He and Chris had just married and were accorded one of the Lodge's nice cabins in the orchard above the checking station; two folks who were to become longtime friends.

Bill Raymond's concession cabins remained closed to the public. Except for the weekends when maybe a few families had saved enough gasoline to venture that far from home, we had a few people with us who were not military. They had most of the campground to themselves. These were predominately Sicilian commercial fisherman families from Monterey – noisy, musical, keeping to themselves with their own fun.

So campfires then were whenever I could assemble some of them, usually a night or two a week until the Army caught on and started attending now and then – whenever units happened to be bivouacked there at the time. The largest of these were the amphibians – almost always in the park for maneuvers and some R and R prior to shipping overseas. Other units were Signal Corps teams and Medics with their ambulances for some field practice. Often for a day's outing only came the Navy, also from Monterey.

Those were exciting days. Fifty to more than a hundred blue uniformed men and women took over our group picnic area and all of its facilities and had hilarious barbecues. Such eats! All the goodies we dreamed about, but couldn't get because we never had ration stamps enough, were there before us – steaks, chops, hamburgers, cakes, coffee and chocolate. From the first minute on, delicious aromas began wafting through the park. From behind trees we peeked, our mouths watering. But the services, not being allowed to give away or bring back any leftovers, calmly pitched all remains into our large trashcans and dumped the huge vats of coffee and chocolate out on the ground. We drooled and drooled. And just behind us, peering over our shoulders, deer, coons and foxes drooled too.

Being half-starved civilians, we dove into those trashcans (which understandably we always kept extra clean) as soon as our affluent visitors disappeared around the first turn. Then after we had gleaned the government luxuries, the wildlife gleaned the tidbits we left behind. All in all, every one of us lived pretty well during those war years.

The crew kept the park in fine shape, constructed and repaired and patrolled and cut firewood, stacking it for sale in the bins at the rear of the kiosk. Someone had to maintain that park entry from 7 AM until dark to keep track of comings and goings and meet whatever public had ventured that far afield. Most of the time that was my job. Whenever needed I patrolled, checked camps and of course led the campfires.

The military seemed to enjoy those evenings and came whenever they could – even participating once in a while. This stimulated the Sicilian fisherman to pitch in with their talents. Out little stage, set among the redwoods and ferns, with its footlights and piano together with a booming campfire, accounted for some really relaxing times. Always to be remembered, though, was the bucket of water stashed nearby with which to douse the fire should the coastline be ordered to blackout, and a number of times it was.



*"Other days we hosted other military exercises, this time with amphibious landing craft."*





*Petey's drawing of Big Sur.*

All kinds of military drills and exercises went on in Big Sur. Many times I was awakened in the early dawn by GIs creeping through the grasses of the meadow around my house. In a grove of young firs behind the house, a small band of pigeonaires were encamped sending messages back and forth to Fort Ord via the winged express. Amphibians were always sneaking around the barracks nearby, simulating attack.

At the checking station, I was often startled by GIs creeping past, capped with bushes for camouflage. Perhaps the same day – long lines of them and some army nurses would stride by and wave while counting cadence. They would be off on a long hike, heavy packs on their backs. Another day here would come a convoy of big "covered wagons" simply to turn around in the park and return to Fort Ord for hazardous driving exercises. An officer always stood in his keep near the kiosk to check out each one. Other days we hosted another driving exercise, this time for the big amphibious landing craft, the ducks, which could carry fifty men and on land move fifty miles an hour. At the checking station they would ease past, their decks and crew high above my head, even above the kiosk roof.

We found the men and women of the military at Big Sur the finest and friendliest. No problem at all.

Always there was plenty for us to do. We of course kept in close touch with the US Forest rangers nearby, who were patrolling the country back of us, and whether civilian or

military most of our days were full. Now and then, though, the park would settle into real quietude for hours – even a day or two at a time when neither camper nor GI would be around to liven things up. While we felt relieved temporarily, a rather scary feeling hung in the air.

So passed three wartime summers at Big Sur. Be sides the ever ominous possibility that we might be invaded, those months were, to say the least, most unusual. Still they proved interesting and enjoyable in an odd way. With Bill in charge, a great crew, the delightful residents of the Big Sur and the good food at Bill and Mabel's every day, I continued to thrive.

The last summer three of the boys and I had nice rooms in the concession help's barracks up in the orchard near Lively's home. Together we all shared the ripening joys of the apples and pears. Sharing with us were the wild ones who came to harvest all they could. A pleasant change from the lonely abode at the edge of the lower meadow.

In the late September of my last summer – 1944 – Lee Blaisdell, the District Superintendent, asked that since I had left teaching for the duration, would I stay on as a year-round relief ranger. I would, of course. So that fall he sent me to Seaciff Beach State Park on the northern curve of Monterey Bay south of Santa Cruz.



# Seacliff Beach - 1944

A week or so after Labor Day I reported to Seacliff Beach – to Charlie Hight, the Chief Ranger. He and Mrs. Hight were living in the only residence at the beach, a nice home not far from the head of the pier and the office.

I really loved this elderly couple from the moment I met them. Soft spoken and kindly, like home folks, they immediately made me feel welcome. Furthermore, they turned over to me their guest room for my own. It looked out on a beautiful stretch of beach and waters of Monterey Bay; in my experience a scene new and delightful.

And I was to eat at their table, too. Well I remember how happy I felt here with them and their talkative parrot for what turned out to be the three months I would be substituting for one of the rangers on leave.

The three man crew was mostly maintenance, Mr. Hight explained as he took me for a walk over the park and its mile of beachfront. Along the northern stretch was a small campground of perhaps a dozen sites; to the south several ramadas that sheltered the picnic tables and stone fireplaces. For me, though, the really exciting part was the pier and the 435-foot-long cement ship.

Charlie went on to say that this big vessel, affectionately called “The Old Cement Boat,” was not a float at all. During WWI it and several others had been built in the Oakland Estuary to serve as tankers at a time when steel was in short supply. The war ended, however, before the vessels could be pressed into service, so they were dismantled and left where they were. Finally, in 1930, the Cal-Nevada Stock Company bought this one (called the Palo Alto) and towed it downcoast to Seacliff. Maneuvering it into line at the end of the pier, they pulled the seacocks and let it settle onto the sandstone shelf. Why all of this? Well, it was then turned into a pleasure boat complete with dining, music, and dancing until the state took it over for recreational fishing.

Gazing at the forlorn old ship, its decks no more than 20 feet or so above the waterline, I felt a deep sympathy for it and was glad I was going to be there to keep it company. I could hear the water sloshing around in the hold below and noted that the decks were barren of everything except the masts, some superstructure, and a big winch at the bow; and oh yes, two small counters along the sides with sinks so fisherman could degut and wash whatever they had caught.

“What fisherman?” I asked, for there wasn’t a soul to be

seen anywhere – not on the ship, not on the pier nor in the camp or picnic areas. Just about then I really began to wonder what I was going to be doing here anyway.

“Oh, mostly patrol the pier and ship, meet the public, collect fees – just be on deck to answer questions, give out information, help everyone enjoy themselves,” Charlie said.

No evening campfires, of course. Just lots of camping and picnicking and beach fun. People came here to fish because the



*Petey developed “enduring love of the Old Cement Boat.”*

pier and the boat were on solid earth and you could cast a line and enjoy a whole day without having to deal with a lurching deck and an unhappy stomach. It was a popular spot, Charlie added. Everybody loved it.

Just about then I began to wonder some more. Was this park patronized only by ghosts?

“You wait until the weekend,” Charlie urged, “and see how many people turn up here. You’ll be surprised. This little hut here on the pier does a land-office business supplying bait and tackle and assorted goodies.”

With these sketchy but optimistic assurances in mind, I started to work at Seacliff the next morning – Wednesday. As directed, I patrolled the pier, crossed the gangplank and “did” the old ship from one end to the other all morning, back and forth. The only change that whole day – a gull sitting on the rail got up.

About mid-morning the fog rolled in and from the pier, I could no longer see the superstructure of the ship. A half hour later, I could hardly make out the little bait hut on the pier. Only the washing of the waves on the hull, the tumbling of the surf on the sand, and an occasional cry of a gull disturbed the gray world. Then came the weekend, as Charlie had predicted,

the throng arrived en masse – and en massed all day long. With them came some sun to light up the world on the happy fisherfolk – men, women and children of all ages, many with poles and sack lunches, others with tents or picnic baskets and beach towels. Everything to pleasure the heart those two days of hoarded gas stamps. Most were from the nearby Santa Cruz-Watsonville area and a few who had long been regulars from over the mountains on the San Francisco Peninsula. I could feel my blood starting to circulate again, for I was busy those two lively days.

But Monday followed Sunday again, and then the rest



*Even with gas rationing, the Seacliff campground was filled most weekends.*

of the week along with it a growing tendency in me to lose my mind. I asked Charlie for a pogy stick and bucket so I could pick up trash left on the pier and boat. That would be something to do besides strolling in the fog from one end of the pier to the other end of the pier and making clucking sounds en route to persuade some gulls to notice me.

Charlie assured me in his always understanding way that I was already fulfilling a need. Besides, he just didn't believe it becoming for a women ranger to do such a thing as picking up trash left by the public. Bless him. He meant so well.

The Portuguese concessionaire, who owned and operated the bait and tackle hut tried to help, too. Anytime someone came walking past with a fishing pole he'd call, "Two bitch for baits! Two bitch for baits!" He even got to keeping open his little stand sometimes during the week. Finally Charlie had a kiosk moved out on the pier so in dull times I could sit in it and write while keeping watch.

Then one day, out of the dense fog and onto our beaches roared more than 100 ducks loaded with attacking amphibians from Fort Ord across the bay. This was an invasion I was told by some of the brass who had already jeeped overland, raised signal flags from our masts that could be seen in any fog, and now stood on the ship, observing and evaluating.

The forces stayed all day. That night they warmed their motors full blast from 1 AM to almost daylight, then took off back across the bay in another deafening roar. For us, several days restoration ashore with less sophisticated machinery awaited. Yet it had been a new and exciting break in the monotony, for we literally swarmed with GIs who couldn't imagine a cement ship.

Still well remembered are the moonlit nights at Seacliff when the Hights and I would take short walks along the beach. The surf was just beautiful as it splashed gently onto shore, especially those nights of the red tide, when the breakers seemed brightly electrified.

I'm so glad I served at Seacliff while the dear old ship was still in one impressive piece; before the violence of winter storms broke its back and rendered it unsafe for fishing from its deck anymore.

Sometime in late October the ranger I had temporarily replaced returned to Seacliff. Lee Blaisdell then told me that now I was needed at Mission San Juan Bautista for several weeks to come. Would I?

Not a bit willing to while away war years in the seclusion of an old Spanish mission, I had to say the only no in all my park years. Two weekend fishing officers from Camp McQuaide, a few miles further around Monterey Bay, had suggested I go to work there for the War Department, teaching illiterate troops of the Ninth Service Command. So, with

the understanding that I would be free, come June, to return to Big Basin, already promised by Lee Blaisdell – I accepted.

With me, from Seacliff, went an enduring love of the Old Cement Boat. I never returned to the Santa Cruz area without stopping to see her. After all, we shared some unusual times – both lonely and exciting. Certainly unforgettable.



*The Seacliff picnic area.*





*Petey at the Father Tree in Big Basin.*



# 1945 – Back to Big Basin & Big Sur

On leave from Camp McQuaide, I returned to Big Basin in early June of 1945, there to begin five of the happiest and busiest seasons of my life and to work with Chief Ranger Roy Cushing and his crew of ten. Wonderful men, all of them – some to become lifelong friends. I remember especially Mel Whittaker, Bill Weatherbee, Clyde Newlin, Bob Crawford, Tom Spencer, and Jim Whitehead.

During my summers of service in the other parks, Big Basin had changed considerably. No more the little road down to the banks of Opal Creek. As today, the road, now Highway 236, continued on past Headquarters, on up by the North Gate House to the Saratoga Summit. The bowl and its seating capacity had been expanded and a larger stage constructed with a handy backstage area.

Concessionaire Gus Sgarlato had brightened and improved the Inn. A lunchroom had been added to the building, leaving the old site next to the gift shop and grocery to be developed into the Nature Lodge. That came after Naturalist Len Penhale joined our staff in 1946 and took over the following spring with his special expertise.

Between the rear of the Inn and the Park picnic area stood an old furnished three-room house, complete with a bathroom and porches, real luxury. It was to be mine. After all the odds and ends of living quarters over the preceding years, I felt as if I had really at last arrived.

The little park road that went into the maintenance shops and on up the mountain past Sky Meadow to an historic Old Lodge had been improved. In fact the meadow itself was about to become a ranger family residential area. Several nice looking homes were being readied for occupancy.

The war was still going strong, of course. That was brought to my attention by the sudden appearance of a jeep full of military personnel from Fort Ord. And here I had thought of us as being well out of reach of more maneuvers! Oh! This was no maneuver, Roy told me. It was the real thing. I noted our own crew tense, watching the sky.

“There’s one!” one of the fellows shouted, pointing up through the trees at a patch of blue. ‘See that funny looking balloon hovering – now moving eastward a bit? That’s from Japan on air currents, each carrying several 30 pound bombs that’ll drop on us somewhere, eventually to explode and set fires.’”

As it turned out, several did come down in our mountains, two within the park boundaries. Fortunately they didn’t explode. Each time an army demolition

squad located and deactivated them before they could do any damage. But the threat would be with us off and on that summer until the surrender August 10.

Being close enough to the Bay Area, Big Basin managed to keep alive very well during the war years. By the time I arrived, many of the over 200 campsites were occupied and several hundred day visitors were enjoying the big trees and staying for picnics. At night the campfire bowl was at least half filled and we never lacked for volunteer sing-along accompanists and entertainers, temporarily at least, relieving the stresses of the times.

June and July passed as happily as could be expected, and about the time we got well launched into August the feeling began to emerge in our country that maybe somehow Japan would give in. Sure enough, here came the atomic bomb.

I happened to be at Headquarters the moment Roy answered the phone call proclaiming Japan’s surrender. Elated, he leaped to his feet and yelled, “Petey, it’s OVER! They’ve surrendered! Push the siren button and keep it going!”

So I did and I think everyone in Big Basin came running to Headquarters, there to gather in happy exultation – dancing, shouting, whooping with joy. Having had a hunch that surrender might just be in the offing, I had already contacted a Santa Cruz minister and asked him and his robed choir to the campfire for a thanksgiving service at 7 PM of the day that the event would finally come about. He was delighted to come and with his choir arrived well before time. He also brought along two trumpet players – one for near the campfire circle, the other for high up on the mountainside.

That evening’s campfire was one to remember always: first a short talk by the minister, then the robed choir streaming



*Everyone at Big Basin “came running to park headquarters” as the siren sounded the end of WWII.*





*Petey leads the campfire program at Big Basin. "My leadership at the campfires was wonderfully facilitated by our electronics expert, Ranger Arlan Sholes [seen backstage in the picture] and off stage control of the first mic[rophone] we had ever known."*

down both aisles, singing, and continuing to sing onstage for a half hour of delightful songs of faith. Following that, the pastor gave a touching benediction. And then, with everyone standing, taps was sounded from among the big trees. Faintly, from the second trumpet high on the mountain came the echo heard round the Basin. There wasn't a dry eye or a whisper at the campfire as our robed visitors filed silently up the aisles and out of the bowl.

That night the reflections of leaping flames on the trunks of the giants fired a different and most special meaning.

By 1946, the summer after the war, our park center meadow had been converted into a large round swimming pool. And although it remained only a season or two it was enjoyed enormously. Then it was filled in and the area urged back to its natural association of trees, shrubs and grasses as seen there today.

Every summer sped by much too fast. As the years moved on and our California State Park System grew and developed, there were more and more changes not only in the number of units but also in the quality and variety offered and the public. The rangers took great pride in their work and thoroughly enjoyed helping all who stopped by for a look or to camp or picnic and hopefully to learn about and appreciate the world of nature that surrounded them. For us the days were long, but we lived up every hour.

Besides organizing and directing the evening campfires, leading the singing and telling of experiences, MC'ing each evening's entertainment, which I gleaned as I visited all camps every day, I also did my bit at Headquarters Information window.



*Petey and Naturalist Bud Reddick at Big Basin.*

One thing for sure – it was people all day and evening and I loved every minute of it. I had to learn to take Mondays off.

The Inn filled all the time as did the camp and picnic sites. Visitors from everywhere strolled along the Redwood and other trails, oh-ing and ah-ing at our majestic tree and taking pictures of everything – perhaps in for a day or even for an hour or two, offering tidbits to the deer, who invariably clustered in park center to bask in the glow of so much attention. Spirits soared; the release from stresses of was abundantly evident throughout the park.

Naturalists Don Meadows and Bud Reddick kept large groups informed and entertained on the trail walks by day and at the campfire of an evening. Sometimes Naturalist Len Penhale showed his slides of the wildlife. If Don and Bud weren't leading the walks they were busy in the museum lab, working with Len, the year-round super museum curator – the best in the state. Day by day during post-war years, he prepared exhibits for Big Basin and other state parks as well. So we were rich in everything from butterflies to live reptiles. Guiding it was a feeling of pleasure that permeated the massive but beauty of the scene – one of the most magnificent in California; altogether an enthusiastic exchange between the entire staff and the "great American public."

Along the way Roy Fulmer came in as concessionaire; Roy Cushing was transferred and Jess Chaffee took over as Chief Ranger for a year; following him Lloyd Lively. With all three we worked together harmoniously and with overflowing good humor – a real delight season after season. Adding to it all, here came Ed Dolder, the first state Supervisor of Conservation Education and who later became Chief of the Division. He really knew his stuff and we not only respected him for that but found him such a joy as a longtime friend. As for me, I couldn't help but thrive, especially after Mel and Mary Whittaker invited me to eat with them. What good food and camaraderie I was treated to around their table every day!

My leadership at the campfires during my second tour at Big Basin was wonderfully facilitated by our electronics expert, Ranger Arlan Sholes and his off stage control of the first mike we had ever



*Len Penhale produced beautiful natural history displays for Big Basin. (Courtesy California State Parks.)*





*Petey did several drawings, including this one of Big Basin.*

known. In the course of an evening there were many different voices and often instruments that for the greatest listening pleasure needed to be tuned to the best advantage. Arlan controlled that from backstage, and how much that did add to and smooth the varied sounds that went out over the bowl. Arlan, Bud, Don and I had a ball working together with our individual and team enthusiasms.

After campfire, about 9 PM, Arlan then took over at the little dance floor across Opal Creek for another hour. This was well attended, for he made his own sound equipment and played dance music for all ages, Moms and Dads as well as teenagers. He even had a Conga line.

After the war, in 1946, while at Big Basin, several of us received notices to appear in Stockton for a Ranger I Civil Service examination. All the fellows got a big kick out of the fact that after eighteen years on the job already, I was finally to be tested. They kidded me no end but tried to help by pointing out numerous bits of information that might be included in the questions.

So on the scheduled day a carload of us took off and joined a big room full of other candidates from Central California. Somehow during those two hours I must have answered something correctly, for later I was summoned to an oral in Southern California. And when the rating card came at last to my home in Santa Paula, I found to my amazement that I had made Number 1 on the ranger list.

Following that closely came a wire from Sacramento offering me a choice of openings at either Armstrong Redwoods, Stevens or Richardson Grove. I was horrified. ME leave Big Basin and the work I had been doing all those years? Never.

I wrote Director Chick Henning immediately to please ignore my rating and just let me go back to my old job, doing what I had always done. Graciously (probably relieved) he did.

So I was there in Big Basin the night of August 31, 1948, Labor Day weekend, when a roaring inferno engulfed Pine Mountain high above the tree tops of Park Center. Because we were loaded with holiday campers and Inn guests, every one of the crew sprang into action the instant of discovery. Chief Lloyd Lively and several of the men took off immediately to assess the situation.

Lloyd had already turned to me with the order, "Petey empty the park. FAST!"

So while others of the crew raced from camp to camp, waking everyone up,



*Don Meadow, Petey Weaver and Bud Reddick at Big Basin 1947.*



the dizzy speed of the exodus began. The campers who had no transportation began pouring into Headquarters and I started a night of telephoning – Santa Cruz Fire Districts, Forestry, the Sheriff, the Highway Patrol, Greyhound Bus and the Boulder Creek operator, asking that she call out whatever transportation and firefighter help she could muster; then please open up a refuge down there for our escapees. Big Basin old time rangers were summoned from their various current stations around Central California. Convicts soon arrived from Minimum Security Prison at Soledad. Speedily the park emptied of campers and Inn guests while skilled help from everywhere rushed in. Lloyd kept a steady hand on all operations as the fires swept through Little Basin, up to the Empire Grade and kept threatening the towns down the canyon as well as our own precious park. Day after day the flames swept over the mountains towards us on every p.m. draft from the sea. We never knew when we would be next.

All of the crew went many days and nights without sleep, standing lookout, fighting fire, meeting dozens of different needs. After the first night at the telephone I was stationed up at the North Gate to head off the curious from the Bay Area cities. These were hair-raising times, never to be forgotten.

Santa Cruz was covered with ashes. As Del Curtis told me later, “Before it was all over 20,000 acres of brush and timber had disappeared. Enough firelines were built to equal a 30 foot road from San Francisco to King City – 130 miles. And the time in man hours required to corral the Big Basin fire – one man 14 ½ years.” It burned from August 31, that wildly busy Labor Day weekend to November 30 before finally being declared OUT.

What I remember most vividly about the fire were the tireless and heroic efforts of our own Big Basin crew, who sweated on and on, beyond what seemed to me to be the



*Petey (knealing), Don Meadows and Len Penhale leading a night time coffee hike.*

limits of humane endurance. And we all remember, of course, the heartbreaking sight of animals burned and attempting to escape and our beloved giant trees giving up after all those centuries and crashing to the earth.

My final assignment came two years later, 1950, with a return to Big Sur, which was all right with me because I had meanwhile fallen in love with

a magnificent coastline, too. The wartime lull had long ago disappeared; the park, like Big Basin, was in full bloom; the crew all fine fellows but none I had ever known before except Wayne Cox, now Chief Ranger.

The Big Sur Inn had been enlarged and beautified and was operating well; the campsites filled most of the time. Although the park was lively with the comings and goings of the

traveling public fascinated with our spectacular two lane highway high above the sea, our redwoods, and our nature walks around the park, back to the Gorge, down to the coves, up Mt. Manuel. Every evening the campfire bowl was filled and all kinds of talent entertained after our usual sing-along followed by a talk and often slides by the park naturalist. It turned into a thoroughly enjoyable summer.

Near the end of it, staff from Sacramento came down to talk to me. It appeared that they favored men over women in my work as well as a much greater emphasis on interpretation over recreational activity such as singing together old favorites and whatever appropriate entertainment volunteered or recruited from our visitors themselves. No question about it, ALL of these things contributed to and were being welcomed as enrichment of vacation times. Combined, they offered an evening of rest and relaxation – some learning, some fun, some participation – a well rounded program. Something different and refreshing of summertime vacationing. As a longtime teacher I had found that the human can assimilate more information and thinking if his consciousness has first been relaxed and pleased and thereby readied to accept.

Anyway, that summer of 1950 was my last with the California State Parks. After twelve months a year at work for the past twenty, the time seemed right to return to my writing and to take a vacation of my own. And so I did, although with understandable yearnings; yet also with loads of happy memories that were to bring joy the rest of my life.



*Petey holding the real “Frosty” from her book “Frosty, a Raccoon to Remember”.*

# Them Were the Days!

By Harriett "Petey" Weaver



*Petey Weaver*

Petey Weaver is considered the first women ranger in California State Parks. In *Them Were the Days!* Petey recounts her park experiences that started in 1929. She brings to life not only the parks, but many of the rangers and other early park people who operated, protected, served and educated the visitation public.

Petey served in four parks, Big Basin, Richardson Grove, Big Sur and Seacliff State Beach, during her park career from 1929 to 1950.



*Petey Weaver*

*Richardson Grove State Park*



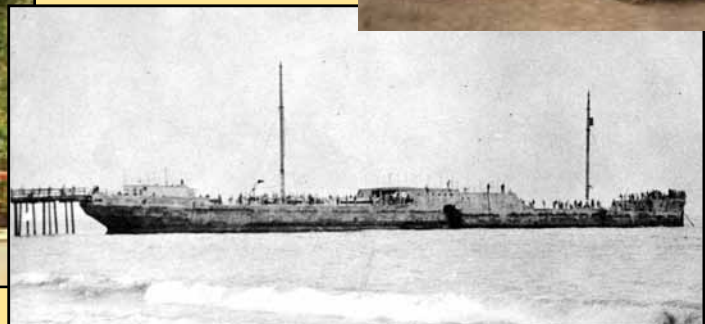
*Big Basin Redwood State Park*



*Big Basin - Park Warden Fred Moody*



*Big Sur State Park*



*Seacliff Beach and the Cement Boat .*