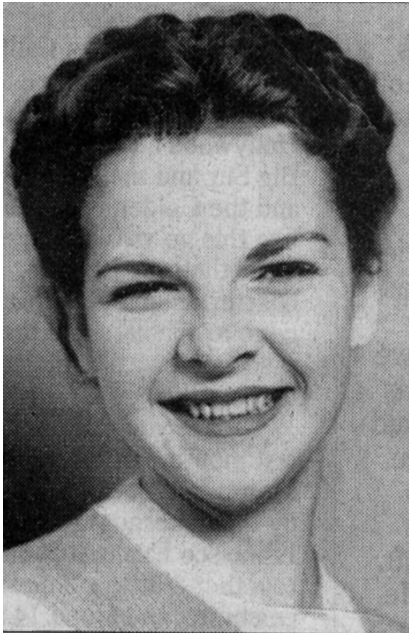




Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



THE PASSING OF A TRAIL BLAZER

Tonja Cole, born during 1933, died on Sunday, November 18, of a pulmonary embolism, while recovering from surgery at Los Robles Hospital.

Tonja was a long time Trail Blazer, who gave of her time and energy as best she could for the last eight or nine years. She set up and manned first aid stations, sign in tables and refreshment tables during California and National Trails days and was ever ready to help even though her health did not permit her to hike or work on trails. She will also be remembered for her many services to the community over the years.

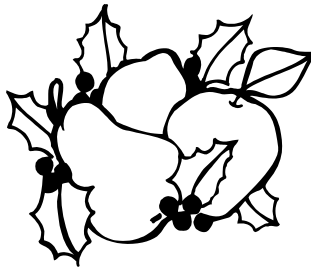
DECEMBER WORK PARTY

Our next work party will be held on **Saturday 15 December** on the **Hummingbird Trail** in Simi Valley.

Although some lopping will be needed, most effort will consist of trail tread work.

Meet on Kuehner Dr. just north of the 118 Freeway at 8:00 AM. We will work from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

Work Parties Chair



HOLIDAY POTLUCK

The **Rancho Simi Trail Blazers Holiday Potluck** will be held on **Wednesday, December 19th** starting at 6:30 p.m. at Al and Marty Richards' home at **2086 Elmdale Avenue in Simi Valley.**

Elmdale is about one half mile west of Sycamore Drive south of Cochran Street just past the dip on Cochran and one block east of Justin Avenue.

Please call Marty at **(805) 526-4414** to discuss what you should bring. We look forward to seeing everyone. Our thanks go out to Al and Marty for again opening

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Alexander J. Berger
Bill Geller
Matthew Carman



THEY SAVED THE OAKS

Eucalyptus trees began being imported into California from Australia as early as the 1860s. They were prized as ornamentals and for possible utilitarian uses such as pier pilings and later as railroad ties. The railroads invested heavily in them, in part because they had plenty of land on which to experiment with this new crop. Alas, they didn't make good pilings or ties.

Then, in 1905 something dramatic happened which changed the fortunes of eucalyptus and native oak trees in California forever. The United States Department of Agriculture published a paper in which they predicted that eastern hardwood forests would be exhausted by the early 1920s. Consequently, the American hardwood industry, primarily furniture manufacturers, would be severely impacted. Americans rushed to find a substitute for oak, hickory, maple, etc.

Promoters quickly settled on the eucalyptus, which was rumored to be used suc-

Cont. on Page 2, Col. 1

Cont. from Page 1, Col. 3

Eucalyptus trees of many species were imported along with their seeds and were sold to investors. Tens of thousands of acres of eucalyptus trees were planted, especially the faster growing species, i.e., blue, red, and sugar gums. As economic ventures, the whole thing was a bust. The eucalyptus trees that were being used in Australia in the furniture industry were 400 year old specimens with well aged heart wood. The furniture was not very satisfactory by American hardwood industry standard. Eucalyptus of all species tended to warp and to crack. A little judicious investigation would have determined that - but then the promoters were only interested in selling trees.

While all this was going on, people in California continued to heat and cook with wood. By the 1920s wood cutters around towns like Fresno were having to travel 20-30 miles away from the City centers to find oak trees to harvest to satisfy the demand for fuel wood. Before long, native oak trees in much of settled California would be gone and only a memory. Then came the eucalyptus frenzy and many farmers planted eucalyptus on part of their land. In the end, those plantings made good firewood and were quickly replace by the rapid growth of stump sprouts. Eucalyptus trees could be had close in to urban areas and every farm had a wood lot.

As it turned out, the Department of Agriculture was wrong. The hardwood supply in the east did grow thin, prices did go up, and because of increased prices, we have yet to run out of hardwoods.

Oak trees continued to be cut to clear the land for crops and for grazing purposes. Frequent fires and livestock generally get seedling oaks. But, the advent of the eucalyptus fiasco slowed the great oak tree slaughter and helped preserve those monarchs of the west.

By the way, the oldest eucalyptus tree in the City - the one with the largest trunk - is located on the Hummingbird's Nest Ranch. It was probably planted by Charles Emerson Hoar during the 1870s or



Hiking Cheeseboro Canyon Trail in the rain. From left to right: Arlene Altshuler, Martin DeGoey, John Sabol, Chuck Portoghesi, Mike Kuhn, Margarita Marsh, and

CHARLES EMERSON HOAR'S HOME ON THE HUMMINGBIRD'S NEST

Charles Emerson Hoar settled on the Hummingbird's Nest Ranch in 1872 or 1873. He was said to have been Simi's first gentleman farmer and probably the first college graduate to live in the Valley.

I recently had the privilege of examining the site of Mr. Hoar's home on the Hummingbird. A portion of the existing structure was built on the foundation of Mr. Hoar's home and probably used the original floor joists and flooring. It is a very modest two room wood frame structure to which a living room with a fireplace was added at a later date. Rough cut 2" x 6" floor joists appear to have been placed directly on the ground - a common method of construction in pre-termite times. The wood flooring was attached to the joists with square nails. The wall studs were 2" x 3" rough cut wood that were ripped from the 2" x 6" lumber.

On a rock outcropping adjacent to the home someone carved the initials "C E 1909." Since Mr. Hoar died in 1912 and often signed his letters "C E" for

Cont. from Col. 2

"Charles Emerson," it is quite likely that the initials and date were carved by him. Nearing the end of his life on the Hummingbird, Mr. Hoar may have felt compelled to leave some indication on the Hummingbird that he had passed this way. In a sense, all graffiti is so motivated.

Mr. Hoar placed his home outside of the very large area rendered perpetually damp from spring flow. His home is immediately next to the site of the Pucillo Adobe - now reduced to an area of "adobe melt." Juan Pucillo and his mother had lived on the Hummingbird before the coming of Mr. Hoar and remained to work the land. Some of Mr. Hoar's plantings may still be present, including the largest blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) in Simi Valley. A relict olive grove may or may not predate Mr. Hoar's occupation.

The one immutable and lasting knowledge that come down to us relating to Charles Emerson Hoar is his love for the Hummingbird's Nest. He wanted to be buried there. It was not to be - a sad footnote to the history of the place.

Cont. in Col. 3

OUR HERITAGE TREES

The Simi Valley of today is covered with trees, which manage to survive in this Mediterranean climate, with its summer drought, primarily as a result of irrigation. Trees from all over the subtropical and temperate worlds thrive here, creating an exotic forest island surrounded by hills covered by largely exotic grasslands, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral vegetation associations. Among those trees are many outstanding specimens, both native and exotic, that are worthwhile looking at and cherishing.

The largest oak tree in Simi Valley is the "Heritage Oak." Located on the north bank of the historic channel of the Arroyo Simi, the tree is a coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Its trunk is approximately ten (10) feet in cross section at breast height, measuring along the east-west axis, and its dripline was approximately 100 feet in diameter when I measured it during the 1980s. It is approximately two thirds the size of the largest coast live oak ever recorded. It is a Ventura County Historical Landmark. Because its trunk has a cavity, its age cannot be determined. However, judging from other trees of the same species whose age has been determined, it may well be over 1,000 years old. The tree is being preserved as the center piece of the Heritage Oak Business Park, so it is not threatened by development. To see the tree, take the first right hand turn south of the Arroyo Simi off of Tapo Canyon Road. It is something to

Cont. in Col. 2



Cont. from Col. 1

The largest California sycamore tree (*Platanus racemosa*) in the City has been preserved within Sycamore Canyon between the north and the south-bound lanes of Wood Ranch Parkway. The tree looks much the same today as it does in a picture I have seen that was taken during either the late-1880s or the early 1890s. This is surprising since sycamores are fast growing and are generally not long lived. Drive by the tree. You can't miss it. It too is a wonder to behold. What you see is one tree!

As an aside, I stopped under the tree in about 1987 with Ron Bissell, an archaeologist, and Pat Havens, our City Historian. As we discussed the possibility that the Chumash Indians camped under the tree at some time in the past - yet no evidence of their passing had been found - I noticed that I was standing on a "pestle", which had been used by a Chumash woman to crush acorns and other vegetable material. That pestle is now at the Strathearn Historical Park and is testimony of a way of life that has disappeared and of people who knew that sycamore well. Sycamore Canyon is named after that very tree because it so impressed early resi-

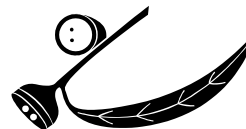


There are many cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) in the valley. The largest specimen is located along the northern side of School Street opposite Simi Elementary School. The tree is on private property. However, if you have never felt the bark of a cork oak, you will nonetheless recognize the feel. It is a tactile treat. Yes, cork is derived from the bark of the cork oak tree. Some of us still remember when thermos bottles had "corks." The exploitation of cork oak forests is still a major industry in Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean fringe of western North Africa. A few young cork oaks are present in the First Street median south of the Arroyo

Cont. in Col. 3

Cont. from Col. 2

Finally, the oldest blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) tree in Simi Valley has been seen by few residents. It probably was planted during the 1870s by Charles Emerson Hoar and is located on the historic Hummingbird's Nest Ranch.



Mike Kuhn

NOVEMBER WORK PARTY

Nine workers turned out for the November work party and completion of the re-route of the Rock Ridge Trail East in Oak Park.

We tied the new section into the remaining portion of the original trail that runs north/south along the top of a ridge. Care had to be taken in one section to avoid harming several clumps of Chaparral Beargrass, *Nolina cismontana*. This plant, which looks very much like our familiar Yucca, *Yucca whipplei* when not in bloom, is on the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) 1B list (Plants Rare, Threatened or Endangered in California and Elsewhere).

We also encountered a small group of wooden grave markers on the ground near the ridge. Although the markers were weathered and inscribed with late 1800's dates, it is suspected the wooden tablets were Halloween decorations or props from a movie set. To be sure, the Rancho Simi Park District was notified and will determine their authenticity.

We worked from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM in very warm weather and everyone was happy to knock off and head for Chuy's. Many thanks to the following workers:

Arlene Altshuler, Jim Anderson(NPS), Bill Cespedes, Gary Cremeans, Martin DeGoey, Tom Frye, Mike Kuhn, John Sabol and Tom Seibert.



December

2001



| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| | | | | | | 1 Saddle Creek Trail See Schedule |
| 2 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule | 7 | 8 Pt. Mugu Cabin Trail See Schedule |
| 9 <i>Chanukah</i> Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule | 10 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Robert Galletly</i> | 11 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Rae Knapp</i> | 12 | 13 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Bill Cespedes</i> <i>Gary Valle</i> | 14 | 15 Hummingbird Creek Work Party See Schedule |
| 16 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule | 17 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Heidi Addison</i> | 18 | 19 RSTB Holiday Party See Page 1 | 20 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Rudy Saling</i> | 21 | 22 Wildwood Park See Schedule |
| 23 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule | 24 | 25 <i>Christmas</i> | 26 | 27 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule | 28 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Norma Martinez</i> | 29 Lang Ranch See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Gille Neilson</i> |
| 30 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule | 31 <i>New Year's Eve</i> | | | | | |



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

Hiking Schedule



- December 1 Saddle Creek Trail to Saddle Peak**
Moderate to strenuous 10 MRT hike with 1600' elevation gain/loss on a segment of the backbone trail between Las Virgenes and Stunt Road. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 qts. of water and lunch, wear boots.
- December 2 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 6 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 8 Pt. Mugu Cabin Trail (Danielson Memorial)**
Moderate 6 MRT hike with approx. 1000' elevation gain/loss. Visit a waterfall and old cabin site, view the Oxnard Plain and Channel Islands from Old Boney Road. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park district. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 qts. water and snack. Wear boots.
- December 9 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 13 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 15 Hummingbird Creek Work Party**
Help maintain one of Simi Valley's more scenic trails. Directions - 118 Fwy to Kuehner exit. Meet north of freeway on Kuehner. We will be working from 8am - Noon. Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves to work on the trail.
- December 16 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 20 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 22 Wildwood Park**
Easy to moderate 4 - 6 MRT. Check out the new growth that has sprung up since the last rain. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 qts. of water and snack, wear boots.
- December 23 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 27 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 29 Lang Ranch Exploratory Hike**
Strenuous, approx. 6 - 10 MRT hike on a recently built trail in the Lang Ranch area. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 qts. of water and a snack, wear boots.
- December 30 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)

For more information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400.

Special Note: - On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots. Hikes will be cancelled if it rains.

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| EXECUTIVE CHAIR: | MIKE KUHN | HM (805) 583-2345, WK (805)583-6776 |
| TREASURER: | PETER ELY | HM (805) 523-1409 |
| PARK DISTRICT LIAISON: | COLLEEN JANSSEN | WK (805) 584-4453 |
| WORK PARTIES CHAIR: | JOHN SABOL | HM (805) 583-2541 |
| WORK PARTIES VICE CHAIR: | BOB ALTIERI | HM (805) 526-6749 |
| HIKING CHAIR: | ARLENE ALTSHULER | HM (805) 581-9735 |
| WAYS & MEANS CHAIR: | MARTY RICHARDS | HM (805) 526-4414 |
| WAYS & MEANS VICE CHAIR: | CONNIE ANKROM | HM (805) 526-2747 |
| OUTDOOR EDUCATION CHAIR: | OPEN | |
| COMMUNICATION / PUB.CHAIR: | ARLENE ALTSHULER | HM (805) 581-9735 |

-----cut out and return with your payment-----

MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a New () or Renewing () member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of:

Single.....\$10

Family..... \$15

Name(s) _____ Birth Mo. ____ Day ____

Address _____

Email Address _____ Phone wk/hm _____

How did you find out about the RSTB _____

Please make out tax deductible member dues check for the year Sept.-2001/Sept.-2002 to:
“Rancho Simi Foundation” mail it to **“RSTB, P.O. Box 630399, Simi Valley, Ca 93063-0399**
Please list any extra names and birthdays of more than one member (Month & Day Only)



U.S. Postage

RSTB
P.O. Box 630399
Simi Valley, CA 93063-0399