

When The Mighty Sequoia Doffs Its Crown



Karen Hansen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Hansen, inspects the small fragrant "cones" of the Sequoia sempervirens, California's official state tree.

By Margaret Koch
Sentinel Staff Writer

The Douglas Fir is California's traditional Christmas tree. The soaring Sequoia is the official California state tree.

And this is the only season of the year when the redwood doffs its kingly crown to the popular fir.

Because with all its beauty of foliage and incense fragrance, the young redwood's limbs refuse to bear most ornaments gracefully. They droop.

The Sequoia sempervirens, over which men have fought bitter boundary battles, has always inspired awe in mankind. It was first sighted by the Portola party near Watsonville in 1769. The hardy Spanish explorers, headed by Don Gaspar de Portola, were the first to name it the "palo colorado" or "red wood."

In 1777 redwood trees were cut for the building of the Santa Clara mission. In 1791 they were cut by Costanoan Indians under the direction of Spanish priests, for the building of Santa Cruz mission.

Not until 1841 was the first power saw mill in California built near Mount Hermon at the confluence of Bean and Zayante creeks. Peter Lassen of later Mt. Lassen fame, was an iron worker by trade; he built the mill for Isaac Graham, pioneer lumberman.

And for the next 50 years lumbering was the leading business of Santa Cruz county.

The 13-mile-wide strip of redwoods which runs from Watsonville to San Francisco, during that time produced more than 10 billion board feet of lumber, according to figures compiled by former Farm Adviser Henry Washburn.

Valued at only \$20 per 1000 board feet, this would add up to an impressive \$200 million gleaned from approximately 650 square miles.

Except for state parks, most stands of virgin redwood were cut years ago. Today's cuttings are in "second growth" stands.

The Sequoia sempervirens and the Sequoia gigantea are natives of only one state—California. But in past centuries the redwood has been spread over a wide area of the United States, Mongolia, Europe and Greenland. Fossil sequoias discovered in Nevada date from the Pliocene and Miocene ages . . . 12 to 25 million years ago.

The coastal sempervirens thrives in fog-kissed groves reaching from Monterey county to the Oregon border. Tallest Sequoia known is at Bull Creek flat and it towers 354 feet in the air. Sempervirens live to be about 2000 years old.

The Sequoia gigantea grows only in about 30 groves in the southern Sierra Nevada range and has no commercial value. It acquires the greatest girth and lives longer, up to 4000 years.

The redwood has a definite advantage for lumbermen: it is the only known commercial

soft wood tree which reproduces from sprouts. It also grows to lumber size in about 70 years.

Another whole business—novelties—has grown up out of redwood burls. They are actually masses of distorted fibers full of little "eyes" which are dormant buds. When cut and polished they make beautiful objects. If left alone in a dish of water they sprout a miniature forest of tiny redwood "trees."

The brittle redwood is particularly insect and disease resistant except where fire damage allows heart rot to enter the tree.

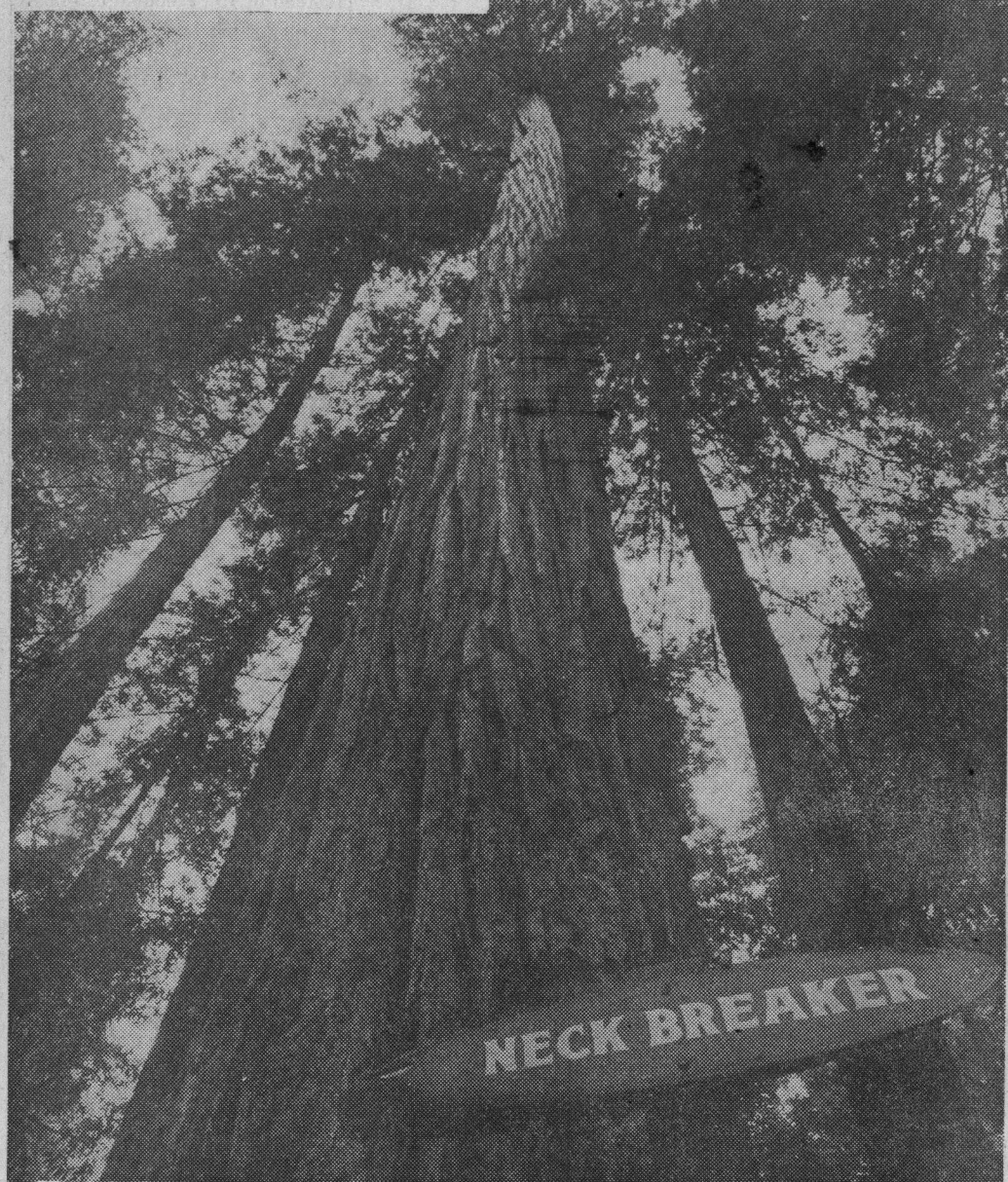
For years, fire has been labeled the redwood's worst enemy, in spite of thick, fire-resistant bark. But more recent research on the Sequoia gigantea points in the opposite direction: fire may be necessary for the survival of that species. When fire strikes, the great Sequoia is injured but has that remarkable ability to rejuvenate itself. Competing trees and shrubs in its area are killed.

In very young Sequoia sempervirens, the burl or "eye" is at ground level where it is protected and helps renew little trees after a fire.

In his eagerness to admire the state tree, man sometimes creates problems for it when he puts paved walking and parking areas too close. The redwood has no tap root and its widespread and shallow root system must be able to "breathe" freely.

From Santa Cruz, two of the state's finest stands of Sequoia sempervirens may be visited with a few minutes ride to Henry Cowell state park near Felton or Big Basin state park out of Boulder Creek.

There the interesting—and slightly mysterious—state tree is preserved in great groves for all to enjoy.



Through the years, unusual redwoods have been named. This is the "Neck Breaker" in Henry Cowell Redwoods

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state park near Felton. It is 246 feet tall, according to Park Supervisor Wayne Dennis, who with Assistant Supervisor Ranger Frank Hart,

keeps an eye on the giants. On this tree there are no living branches for a height of 133 feet.

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U.S. Fugitives No Longer Flying Down To Rio

By Edgar Miller

people and frequently cooperative police has made Brazil a wanted Americans. He estimates that years as many as 100 fugitives a year way to Brazil. The number has dwindled as Brazil slowly lost its status as a crime-proof paradise. Because of unfavorable economic conditions and some big-time fugitives who came to Brazil, the police decided to change about the situation.

They legally couldn't return home, the police were able to permit to accept a voluntary trip to New York for a possible jail sentence.

He was Earl Belle, a underworld of stock market turned into a man of fraud charges. He was in July 1958 and a year ago after being in a complicated case. He pleaded guilty to bank and fraud charges in Pittsburgh and is serving a five-year term.

Afee Birrell was last April 23 here five years. He was after a \$60-million

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