

That Was The Way It Was — Part 3

Work At CCC Helped Bring Today's Amenities

By BILL NEUBAUER
Sentinel Staff Writer

The ecology-minded UCSC student ascended tentatively a flight of concrete steps that leads nowhere but to memories of CCC camp days in Big Basin Redwoods State Park during the Great Depression.

"I could never enjoy this," she said, "had I been an enrollee here during those horrible days."

Interestingly, however, former camp enrollees return to the park from time to time with their wives and families to say: "This is where I worked. This is where I slept. This is where I ate."

Most of the men seem not to look back now on a time of poverty and stress, Big Basin Area Director Tony Trigeiro said recently.

"Those I've talked to seem proud of the work they did here," Trigeiro said. "There was one man who showed his family some of the table foundations he built and he seemed pleased to know they were still being used."

The attitude of former enrollees may be explained, a sociologist once wrote, by the fact that the CCC provided not charity, as such, but useful work opportunities. Although the work was "made" in the sense that it was provided as a relief measure for desperately needy young men, it clearly had other value to them.

For the work conserved not them alone. Appraisal of the national program's work results generally attributes to the CCC material wealth through protection of forests and wildlife, flood control, soil conservation, and development of new state parks for future and luckier Americans to enjoy.

This accomplishment is a record of which the men feel proud. And the successful conservation of both human beings and natural resources explains why many authorities agree that the CCC enterprise was the sublimest of all conservation battles fought and won by the nation.

But at the Big Basin camp there was also fun as well as work.

There was for a time, for instance, a band that held jam sessions in the church-library-school building. The band was organized by a "Professor" Long, an enrollee who acted as a recreation specialist of sorts and was also an artist. The band had its devotees, and on more than one occasion the fellows danced with one another, the "girls" making those exaggerated mincing steps not necessarily made in real life by real girls.

Another popular attraction was a lemon extract drink made by Mess Sgt. John H. Hromek. Hromek was considered a past master in creating this libation, which he cooked and prepared each night for his friends—and he had many friends. Hromek topped the scales at better than 200 pounds, no small achievement in depression years. He was fond of saying: "Every flabby inch of it is solid muscle."

There were no regular church services held in camp. Camp trucks took the enrollees to Boulder Creek for church services and a general Sunday change of scene. But every few weeks, according to information given in 1964 to camp historian John H. Plimpton, State Park Ranger I, a Catholic priest would come to the camp to hold services.

During each service this priest carefully stressed that he did not believe a person should be forced to attend church.



Built by a man named Paselk during the Great Depression, these concrete steps are among the few evidences left that a Civilian Conservation Corps program provided at Big Basin Redwoods State Park a chance for desperate young men to survive and learn and become useful citizens. From these barracks emerged disciplined and

toughened young men who helped to break the power of the Axis armies in World War II and then helped to lift the nation to its highest level of prosperity in history. Their want, their efforts and their votes created the 40-hour work week, social security, unemployment insurance and other reforms intended to spare their children similar deprivation.

495,000 gallons of water, 14 sewage systems, two water springs, 3.2 miles of park road, and 22 miles of foot trails.

The National Archives in Washington, D.C. contains a report that states:

"Summing up the tangible and intangible improvements made, we find that because of the CCC, 600 more people can be taken care of in the Big Basin Park campgrounds, that 1900 more people may be taken care of on the picnic grounds and about 2200 on the trails. Adequate bathhouses and toilet facilities were made available for all campground and picnic area users. Laundry space is available for about 200 families."

Hand in hand with the work and the fun were regular classes through which educationally deprived young men could improve their minds and capabilities. These educational opportunities provided at most of the 2600 camps across the nation have been credited with stimulating in many young men a desire for higher education that led many, ultimately, to take advantage of the education

chances they were given following World War II by the GI education bill.

The post-war accomplishments of these and other of Depression's Children, as they have been called, are of course better known than their almost forgotten deeds when 16 million Americans were jobless and the nation teetered on the brink of revolution.

The children of these CCC young men, and other youths and girls of the 1930s, now take for granted a way of life which to their desperate parents would have seemed unbelievable wealth in the long ago.

This explains, perhaps, why Depression's Children, older and more prosperous now, grit their teeth or cry out angrily when the good things achieved since the Great Depression began seem to be valued little by young people who have never hungered, or ridden a freight train's rods to the nowhere, or protected the nation from dreadful foes, or clamored and struggled and fought for such amenities as a 40-hour week, minimum pay, social security, unemployment insurance, insured bank savings accounts, or the right of a person who wants to work to find a job at a decent wage.

"Isn't it strange," the ecology-minded UCSC student said, "that the term conservation once meant something so different than it means now?"

She gazed at the concrete steps built in the long ago to the barracks by a man named Paselk as a cumshaw job during the Great Depression.

Then she smiled and said: "Thank you so much for an interesting walk down memory lane. I think, maybe, I understand The Establishment a bit better now."

Moore To Address Demo Committee

Members of the Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee will hear observations on the black community by Bill Moore when the committee holds its regular monthly meeting Wednesday at 7 p.m. in Room 907 of the Cabrillo College Center.

Other business will include committee vacancies in the fourth district, voter registration, and fund raising.

Pajaro Trustees To Meet Tuesday

City Negotiations

given in 1964 to camp historian John H. Plimpton, State Park Ranger I, a Catholic priest would come to the camp to hold services.

During each service this priest carefully stressed that he did not believe a person should be forced to attend church. However, before each service he, the company commander and the 1st sergeant went through each barracks, rounding up all personnel regardless of their faith and marching them off to the church in Barracks No. 1.

There was solid, meaningful work always, however.

During their years at Big Basin, for instance, the CCC boys built 250 campstoves, 250 table-bench combinations of octagonal concrete, woodsheds, three swimming pools and 250 cupboards for the use of campers.

Twenty acres of campgrounds were developed, with 150 campsites.

Other improvements that benefit the more affluent society of today include 33 miles of telephone line, 80,000 feet of pipeline, storage capacity for

fourth district, voter registration, and fund raising.

Pajaro Trustees To Meet Tuesday

Pajaro Valley Unified School District trustees will hold a special meeting Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in rooms 54-57 of the language arts building at Watsonville High School.

The board will receive a budget analysis prepared by the staff of the California Teachers Assn. for the district's negotiating council. Following the analysis, trustees will hear comments by district administrators.

CHIROPRACTIC SPEAKER

Marshall J. Kandell, a Los Angeles public relations man, will address the Monterey Bay Chiropractic Society on April 9 at 8 p.m. at Monterey's Del Monte Hyatt House. His topic will be "Projecting the Proper Image."