

Earthquake - 10 years later
GROUND ZERO FOR TEBMLOR

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Hikers get close-up view of 1989 quake epicenter

Area still sports scars on anniversary of Loma Prieta

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APTOS » Mother Nature has had a quarter of a century to heal the land around the epicenter of the 6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake.

A group visiting the site Friday in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, which was ground zero for the Oct. 17, 1989 earthquake, saw first hand that time has helped but not completely repaired the damage.

Gary Griggs, a professor of Earth Sciences at UC Santa Cruz and Sandy Lydon, historian emeritus at Cabrillo College led the Epicenter Adventure tour on the anniversary of the quake, which changed the physical landscape in the park.

The trip also included a discussion about the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which also reshaped the rugged terrain of the nearly 10,000-acre park.

The two led more than three dozen visitors to White's Lagoon, which was formed during an 80-acre landslide that occurred during the 1906 earthquake.

Centered near San Francisco, the 1906 quake struck in the early hours of April 18 and was felt as far north as Oregon and as far south as Los Angeles. Scientists later estimated the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.8.

The temblor caused a number of fatalities in what today is the state park. In 1906, the site included a thriving lumber operation. Coming after a wet winter, the earthquake caused a landslide, dammed a creek and buried the loggers camp under a lake that formed.

"The largest loss of life in Santa Cruz County during the '06 earthquake was at Hinckley Creek," Lydon said of an area in the northern part of modern day Nisene Marks State Park.

After leaving the lagoon, the group hiked the Big Slide Trail — named after the landslide that helped create White's Lagoon — and through the so-called crazy forest. Redwoods growing in the area slid downhill during the landslides triggered by the 1906 earthquake.

Many stayed rooted in the sliding soil and continued to grow after coming to rest at an angle. Griggs also pointed out several terraced areas caused by land sliding during the quake.

Hikers saw evidence of the Loma Prieta earthquake along the Aptos Creek Trail,



TERRI MORGAN — CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sandy Lydon, also known as "The History Dude" answers Tamara Santos' question Friday while heading toward the epicenter of the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

which leads to the epicenter area.

The ground ruptured in several spots. Despite 25 years of decaying leaves and redwood duff, small chasms were spotted parallel to the trail.

Geologists from the USGS calculated the approximate location of the epicenter shortly after the quake.

However, Griggs pointed out that 1989 earthquake was centered about 12 miles below ground, and caused a 25-mile-long rupture.

"It's sort of a bogus location, because we don't know precisely" where the center is, Griggs said. "We put a sign in the ground that says this is the epicenter, because people want that."

Thousands of people trying to make sense of the earthquake that upended so many homes, businesses and lives trekked to the epicenter area in the months and years that followed the 1989 shaker.

The original sign was placed near Aptos Creek below a 100-square-foot swath of hillside that had been knocked bare during the 15-second quake.

As the trees and branches broke during the shaking, they tumbled to the bottom of the ridge and ended up piled up like a giant version of the game Pick Up Sticks.

Today, the vegetation has returned to the hillside, and many of the broken tree trunks and limbs have either decayed or been removed. A new sign overlooking the creek, proclaims the site to be epicenter of the 1989 earthquake.

It didn't matter to many of the visitors if the site is the actual ground zero of the earthquake.

Just seeing the sign was enough to prompt sharing memories for some on the hike.

Many of the recollections, like the ones of people fran-

QUAKE TALK

UC Santa Cruz professor Gary Griggs and historian Sandy Lydon will host a talk from 7-9 p.m. Saturday in Room 450 at Cabrillo College titled "Are we ready to rumble? — The Lessons of Loma Prieta at 25." The event will include rarely seen videos, maps and photographs from the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes. Admission is \$22.

tically looking for friends on Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz, were somber. Others were more humorous.

"I was in a 100-year-old Victorian getting a haircut," recalled Lorraine Gaudin. Gaudin said she headed for home immediately after the initial quake. "I had half a hair cut for about a month."

Others described watching their wood stoves dance across the room while shock waves from the rupturing earth raced through their homes.

Several commented on how grateful they were that the quake hit on a warm day, and how much more devastating the situation would have been if they had fires going to heat their house at the time.

"To me, it's amazing how fresh the memories still are," said Bart Coddington. "It's a great reminder that anything can happen at any time."

Additional earthquake related events are scheduled for Saturday.

The Aptos-La Selva Fire District is hosting a free silver anniversary preparedness fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Cabrillo College in Aptos. The fair will be held in the quad between the 100 Building and the original college theater. It will include workshops and displays to help people prepare for floods, tsunamis, wildfires, drought, as well as for another major earthquake.