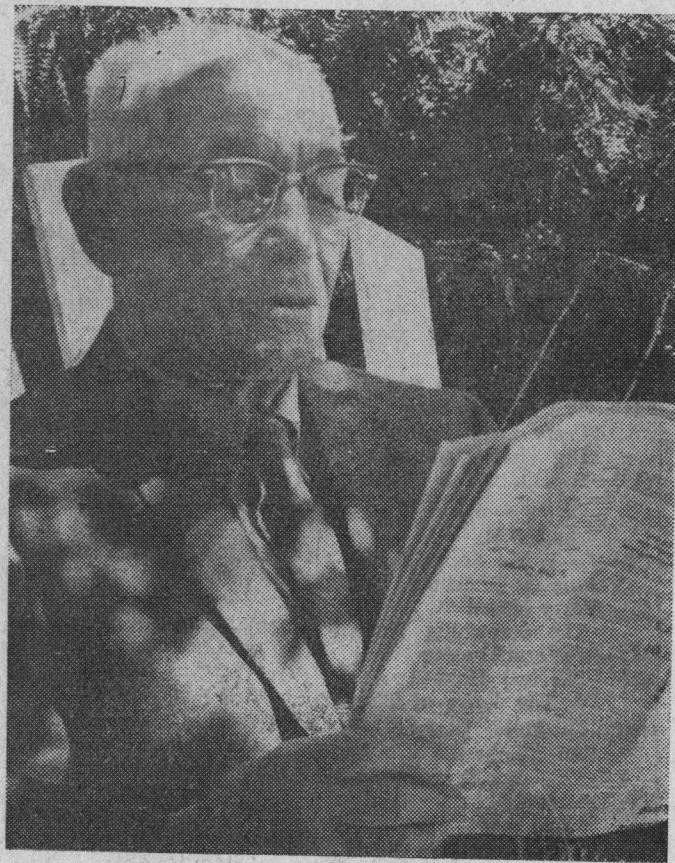


Boulder Creek

Thursday, July 3, 1969

Santa Cruz Sentinel -21

# 'Mayor' George Cress Of Boulder Creek Marks His 90th Birthday



George Cress on his 90th birthday.

By Bill Neubauer  
Sentinel Staff Writer

"Mayor" George D. Cress of Boulder Creek, an early-day settler who once operated a stagecoach to Big Basin Redwoods State Park, celebrated his 90th birthday Wednesday evening at a family dinner party in the Pine Street home of his daughter and son-in-law, Shirley and Kenneth Gleason.

Present were four generations of the family, including the county's Fifth District supervisor and his wife, George and Emily Cress, Judge Donald and Mary Jo May (a granddaughter), and Melissa and Molly May, great-granddaughters. Also present were John and Lena Montanari, longtime family friends who recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

Earlier on Wednesday Cress was saluted with a huge birthday card taped to the Boulder Creek Post Office when he arrived at about 11 a.m., as he has done for many years, to pick up his mail.

"They sang pretty well, too," Mr. Cress said later. "But Boulder Creek has always been warm that way."

Mr. Cress was born in Litchfield, Illinois, on July 2, 1879. He came to California with his

parents in 1882 and was raised in Sacramento and Napa valleys. He celebrated his 21st birthday in Nome, Alaska.

"I went to Alaska to prospect for gold, like a lot of young fellows did," he said. In 1904, with \$3000 earned in the goldfields, he came to Boulder Creek to visit Fred Moody, an old friend, and to look around for a likely business.

The friends launched a livery and transport business on May 1, 1905, in the great H. L. Middleton barn that still stands in Boulder Creek across Central Avenue from the Shell gasoline station.

Known far and wide as Moody & Cress, the firm had in its heyday 30 horses and a broad range of equipage, including a hearse and a stagecoach. The primary business was delivering goods for Boulder Creek merchants, transporting people and their luggage from the old railroad station to the town's three hotels, and hauling lumber mill workers to town on paydays for 50 cents the round trip.

In summer, however, the pride of Moody & Cress, a rock-away stagecoach, was dusted off and polished and put into service carrying passengers to and from the spanking new Big

Basin park. The stagecoach, which was later sold to a motion picture company, could accommodate 12 fares if two passengers rode up on top with the driver. Fare was \$1 each way or \$1.50 the round trip if the passenger returned the same day.

But progress bypassed horse-drawn transportation, and in 1911 the partners began stocking gasoline for the town's four automobile owners. The gasoline was dispensed where the Shell station is now, the site of Alpine House, one of Boulder Creek's three hotels in the 1890s.

Cress was destined to operate a gasoline station there for the next 56 years, first in partnership with Moody, then on his own, then in conjunction with his son George "Hoot" Cress and his son-in-law, Ken Gleason. The station was sold to Shell in 1967, at which time Cress complained that at the age of 88 he was suddenly unemployed.

Active in community affairs throughout his Boulder Creek career, Cress is a charter member of the SLV Chamber of Commerce and the SLV Kiwanis Club. He is a former Santa Cruz County supervisor, and attend-

ed his son's installation as supervisor last January. Many years ago Cress was introduced at a gathering by Carl Conelly of Ben Lomond as "mayor" of Boulder Creek, and so he is called by many to this day.

He said Wednesday before his birthday party: "I have a lot to be thankful for. I'm grateful I have such good health. I would not want to live any place else in the world. Of course, I still miss the horses. They were my first love. Every time I see one now I want to get my hands on it and just pet it. Maybe I earned a few dollars with the automobiles, but I just can't feel for them as I feel for horses."

Cress added: "I've lived in such a wonderful time. When I was a little fellow all we had were candles and lanterns. Then along came the gas lamp and electricity and radio and neon signs and airplanes and the telephone. Ever hear of the Rochester lamp? When my father bought one in Sacramento Valley we didn't believe the light it gave. It had a round wick, you know. We'd set it on the dining room table after supper and everyone could read by the light.

"And the flying machines and these new rockets they're shooting to the moon. Of course I think it's pretty foolish to spend all that money going to the moon. I was taught as a boy in school that the moon was a worn-out planet, and now they are going up there anyway. I sometimes think they're pretty slow getting there, all that money considered. But I suppose folks called Columbus slow, too."

Cress said that many changes have occurred in Boulder Creek during his 64 years of working and living in the old lumbering town. Gone are the lumbermills, the railroad station, the hotels, the wooden sidewalks, the city hall, and the brief years of the town's incorporation.

But the changes that mean most to him, he said Wednesday, are the forested slopes of the hills west and east of town.

"When I came to town those hills were bare," he said. "The lumbermen cleaned out all the trees. Nature has done a whole lot for this town, better than many people know."

Cress said he expected to have other changes to report when he reaches his 100th birthday.