



Forestry service lookouts feed chipmunks in this squirrel wheel.

Loma Prieta, Great Dark Hill Towering Over Five Counties, Gives Visitors Surprise Thrill

The Dark Hill broods in its lonely height.

Only the tiny white structure on its table top is inviting to those earth-bound dwellers of the five counties which lie at the foot of Loma Prieta.

For those who have not ventured up its steep slope to make friends with the great mountain do not know that the heart of The Dark Hill is light and merry; that the peak, tall and blue-black in the distance, dances in the sunlight of a world 3791 feet above Santa Cruz.

For centuries it has smiled in kindly amusement at the scurry of activity of the many creatures who have sought to change materially the great area it surveys.

Ships have come and gone on the blue ocean which sparkles in the sun or plays hide and seek in the fog 3806 feet below.

Man has cut the great redwoods from the slopes but more have grown in their places.

Great road projects have made mere pencil marks on The Dark Hill's great sides and neighboring slopes.

Man-made lakes glitter like jewels in dark green settings along the course of age-old streams which run like a silver thread through Loma Prieta's cloak. But the mountain holds its head high above these artifices.

When the California State Division of Forestry established the forest fire lookout atop The Dark Hill nearly a quarter of a century ago, it welcomed the ranger and his tent to the community of lizards, snakes, chipmunks, bees and other creatures of nature which share the table-top.

Earthquakes have dealt it occasional body blows and storms have battered its proud head, but The Dark Hill has never reeled.

For centuries to come as for untold ages of the past, it will tower like a beacon to guide the adventurous and to serve as a haven for nature's wonders: the grasses, the flowers, the shrubs and the trees of many climes and the creatures—from snake to man.

Many mountains are deceivers who appear to be just beyond the next rise but who keep backing away from human approach. Not so, The Dark Hill with the light heart.

An hour's drive over 22½ miles will take the motorist from Santa Cruz to the mountain's top.

First are the four miles from Santa Cruz to Soquel, over the Santa Cruz-Watsonville Freeway (Highway 17), by Old Highway 1 or a number of other roads in the thickly-populated area.

From Soquel the Loma-bound travel the Old San Jose road north through an area well-stocked with interesting sights. Past beautiful suburban homes, mountain ranches, camps, the sturdy rock-trimmed Mountain school, past the Olive

Springs road turn-off to the right (which makes an intriguing side trip into Hinckley basin), on northward and upward past the Hester Creek school.

The invitation of The Dark Hill coaxes the traveler past the Laurel Glen road which turns left to the historic little village of Laurel; past the Miller road, which turns to the right to quaint Skyland, a mile away; past the Miller Top Cut which leads to Highland Hall.

When the urge to see The Dark Hill is satisfied, these side trips into the picturesque villages of the mountain dwellers are pleasant experience.

Then the signs says eight miles to Loma Prieta.

Other access roads to The Dark Hill's thoroughfare are marked: 11 miles to Los Gatos, 11 miles to Mount Madonna and 15 miles to Corralitos.

Leaving Old San Jose road to take Loma Prieta road, the motorist begins the transition from the verdant coastal mountain area to the sunland of the mountain top. Redwoods disappear from the scene. Ferns no longer fringe the roadside with a lacy pattern.

As the road climbs up and up, past orchards and vineyards and mountain ranches, pine trees people the forest, shrubs which like the dry upper reaches of the continent skirt the roadside.

The delighted gurgling of springs no longer is heard.

A swimming pool in a bare yard around a house perched high on the slope strikes a note of incongruity. A lovely flower garden marks another homestead in this strange land above the fog-cooled sea breeze.

Lizards doze in the sun, unperturbed by the automobile which creeps at little more than snail's pace because of the steepness of the climb and the caution of the driver.

Manzanita, its gnarled branches a polished red, and chaparral pea, its fragrant blossoms alive with bees, remind the visitors of desert vegetation.

Then with trees left below, shrubs take over the landscape.

The air is still except for the hum of insects.

The sun insists that visitors shed their jackets.

And across a skyline, the peak wearing its white lookout tower like a crown smiles its invitation—only a couple more miles up the narrow road and the world is at the visitor's feet.

Only the driver keeps his eyes on the winding way, watching that he takes the middle road at the three way intersection and after, going through the gate, takes the right road at another intersection.

The passengers are silent with awe as The Dark Hill's world unfolds below them.

Then the top!

The forestry service lookout, C. J. Richey, waves a welcome from



The many varieties of shrubs are labeled.

high in his tower, which was built in 1934-35 to replace the tent and later the cabin which served as shelter for the sentinel charged with sounding the warning at the first curl of smoke in the forest and grass lands below him.

Richey, a veteran of the forest service, is proud of The Dark Hill's command. He invites the visitors to sign his official register, to visit his lofty perch to see the instruments with which he works and the refrigerator and gas stove which are the pride of his bachelor quarters.

He helps visitors, too, to become oriented in this strange "top of the world" setting, pointing out Lick Observatory on top of Mount Hamilton in the mountain range beyond San Jose and the Santa Clara valley.

In addition to Santa Clara county, the peak commands a view of Santa Cruz county, San Mateo county, San Benito county and Monterey county, and the Pacific ocean.

If the east is clear a rim of the Sierra Nevada is visible.

A rare sight, Richey tells the sightseers, is the thread of light made by cars crossing the San Francisco-Oakland bay bridge. The night must be dark and clear for this phenomenon.

Richey mans the lookout throughout the fire hazard season. On infrequent occasions he is relieved for a few days. Last week Bob D'Antoni was on duty there as his substitute.

The United States Geodetic Survey crews use The Dark Hill for their frequent survey expeditions along the coast. For a time they had a tall steel tower on the peak. This has been removed, however, and a wooden structure, much like a small stage has replaced it. This is situated a short distance north of the forestry lookout.

The lookout is linked to the forest fire protection network by both telephone and radio. Official United States Weather Bureau instruments are a part of the equipment.

At the northwest edge of the table-top is a sheet of metal, resembling a big billboard. This was erected several months ago by radio dealers as an experiment in deflecting television waves into Santa Cruz.

The forestry service has transformed the sunny top of The Dark Hill into a recreation area unique in the Santa Cruz mountains. There are pathways to the North Point and to Grand View Knob. Stone benches have been built around shrubs. Slabs form short stairways leading to vantage points from which more of the great panorama is visible. There are a couple of small fireplaces built of rock. Two restrooms are maintained for the convenience of visitors.

There are out-croppings of rock, which, along with the magnificent views, make Loma Prieta a photographer's paradise.

Even the lizards are eager to pose, watching alertly with their beady eyes as the camera's lens is focused.

In recognition of the strangeness of the vegetation to most Santa Cruz coast and mountain dwellers, many of the shrubs are labeled.

There are Whartleaf Ceanothus (wild lilac in a stunted, strange form), Yerba Santa, California Scrub Oak with its tiny leaves resembling English holly, Coffee Berry, Chamise Greasewood, Fremont Silk-tassel (also known as the quinine bush), Eastwood Manzanita, the low-growing Pine Rose and the desert-dwelling Golden Fleece and Chaparral Pea.

And off to one side, away from the paths, is that outcast of shrubs bearing a faded label—Poison Oak.

Long after the descent is made, the thrill of The Dark Hill's awe-inspiring panorama remains.

And those who have climbed to Loma Prieta's table-top will always remember that within its blue-black, brooding bulk beats a warm and friendly heart.

Court To Decide Constitutionality Of Loyalty Oath

San Francisco, June 2 (AP) — The California State supreme court announced yesterday it will decide the constitutionality of the University of California's controversy-ridden loyalty oath.

The high court accepted consideration of the oath on its own motion, but indicated that its decision won't be forthcoming for many months.

The high court's action amounts to an overruling of the university's board of regents. Only last Friday, the regents voted for the second time in little more than a month not to appeal the oath issue. The vote was 11 to 10. Two advocates of appeal were absent.

The appeal issue arose when the third district court of appeals in Sacramento ruled that the regents' special loyalty affirmation as a condition of employment was unconstitutional.

The decision evoked question about the legality of the state's leveraging act which requires a loyalty oath of all state employees.

Simultaneously with declaring the oath unconstitutional, the Sacramento court ordered that 18 professors who were fired for refusal to submit to the oath be reinstated. They had requested the appeal.

Yesterday's action by the high court leaves their status in doubt. Prior to last week's regents'