

Scotts Valley's Tree Circus Is Back In The Public Eye

The future of the world famous Tree Circus in Scotts Valley has taken another turn as a strong effort has begun to declare the grove a cultural and historic resource.

Thousands of supporters visited the Scotts Valley Drive site Saturday to view the unique forest of twisted and turning trees that have been featured numerous times in Ripley's Believe It or Not. They trees were originally the brainchild of the late Axel N. Erlandson.

Nearly every person going through the Tree Circus Saturday signed the petition that is planned to be presented to the Scotts Valley City Council to begin the process of designation as a cultural and historic resource. The circus is open today, as well, for an admission of \$1.

Joe Cucchiara, representing the Friends of the Scotts Valley Tree Circus, has been involved with saving the trees

since March. He has recently joined current lessee of the grove, Joseph Cahill, in order to carry out their new strategy.

That strategy — designating the trees as a cultural and natural resource — became necessary, explained Cahill, when the owner of the parcel refused to give a written commitment concerning the possible sale of the grove to Cahill.

It is hoped government designation of the grove would establish the issues. The main one, of course, according to both Cahill and Cucchiara, are to save the trees from destruction.

At a press conference at the grove Saturday, Cucchiara explained the thousands of petition signatures will be presented to the council at an undetermined date in the future. If approved, the next steps involve approval from both state and federal agencies.

Cahill, a landscape designer from Sierra Madre whose designs grace the

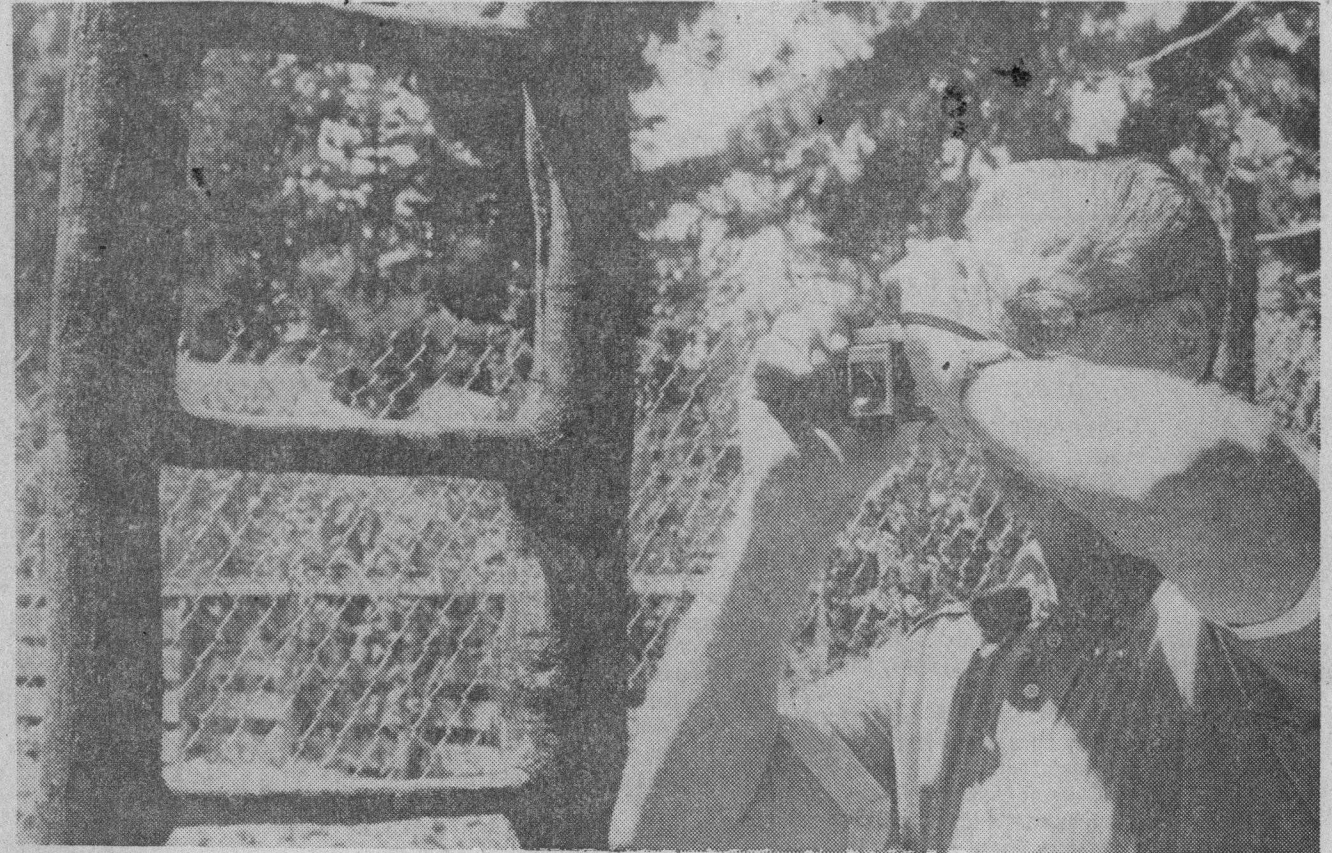
estates of Herb Alpert and Bob Dylan, has mortgaged his home in order to secure a two-year lease on the trees.

His original plans to move the healthiest of the 40 trees had to be changed when it was discovered each could cost up to \$10,000. The relocation, however, is still a last resort if present efforts fall through, he added.

A steady stream of camera-carrying supporters visited the Tree Circus Saturday. Many of the trees have names of the shapes they permanently hold — the watertower tree, a country boy's slingshot, the lightening tree, the boa constrictor and the four-legged giant.

The circus is located where Lost World used to be on the freeway side of Scotts Valley Drive. From Santa Cruz, take the Mt. Hermon exit back over the freeway and turn right onto Scotts Valley Drive. The circus is about three-quarters of a mile down on the right side.

It will be open until 5 p.m. today.



(Sentinel Photo by Dan Coyro)

Camera enthusiasts were on hand Saturday to take pictures at the Tree Circus.