

PACIFICA NOTES

Forestfarm marks 50 years—young, compared to the 80-year age of its neighboring Old Williams Post Office

BY PEG PRAG

This Pacifica Notes focuses on two items of historical interest: one 50 years old and one 80.

Forestfarm

It's *spring*, and Forestfarm is celebrating being 50 years young! It's time for plants and the best time to visit this great nursery.

Forestfarm was created by Ray Prag and me, Peg Prag. We met at the University of California, Davis, where Ray got his master's degree in horticulture. On our honeymoon (more than 50 years ago!) next to a granite-rimmed lake in California's Trinity Alps, we decided that, rather than take any jobs offered, we wanted to live in the country and be able to work together. Thus, though we little knew what we were getting into, Forestfarm was born!

Williams was chosen in part for its beauty and because the Siskiyou Mountains are such a wonderful, botanically rich area. Again, with little notion of what we were doing, we built (with the help of friends) our own house, in which we still live. The house is an old Quonset hut, bought cheap from a classified ad as a pile of metal...with no assembly instructions! For a week after the roof was finally up, we lived in our truck, not sure whether that roof would actually stay up! But there it still is today.

Forestfarm was a 20-plus-person-strong "family." We took care of each other and depended on each other to make things work. Between us we had innumerable potlucks and celebrations, all different and all delightful. One Christmas we sent the kids out with flashlights and radios to find Santa, who was lost in the fog. Another Christmas we had a wonderful talent show. As a group we also made two dozen very special quilts.

Forestfarm originally grew only western native plants for sale to nurseries and landscape or revegetation projects. Although natives are still a love and a

specialty, we found that our love for plants in general got the better of us. So, 40-plus years ago, the mail-order portion of the nursery was launched with a 10-page catalog! It grew from that to a listing of 5,000 to 6,000-plus kinds of plants in a catalog of more than 500 pages.

When we "retired" 10 years ago, we donated Forestfarm to Pacifica to provide for horticultural education and a stable backbone for Pacifica.

Forestfarm is *still* at Pacifica. Spring is a wonderful time to visit. It's open 9 am to 2 pm Monday through Friday. Call 541-846-7269 for more information.

The old post office

The Old Williams Post Office was in use from 1948 to the late 1970s. This 20-foot-square building was hand-built by Cleo Reel (the postmaster for around 30 years) and her father. This Old Post Office was saved and moved to the Pacifica property and is in the process of being made into a mini history museum. Here's some more information on other post offices in Williams:

According to government records, the first and only postmaster at Williamsburg (mining town) was PC Wood, who was appointed in 1860 and served for one year.

Following this early Williamsburg office, mail was brought in from Kubli's post office for redistribution in the Williams Creek area, often by horsemen, for more than 10 years.

There was no post office of Williams until around 1880, when David John became postmaster. Dave built a fine home for his family, just below the Williams Store. "David John in 1864...the year he married... bought 300 acres near the road where David served as postmaster for 22 years, until his death." (History from Olga Johnson.)

Williams resident Lester Sparlin remembers that the first Williams



Peg Prag at the twin-wheelbarrow potting machine putting plants into tin cans collected at restaurants.



The first phone at Pacifica was a "tree phone."



The old Williams Post Office as it currently appears at Pacifica.



One of many quiltings at Pacifica in the early days.

postmaster after David John was Fred O'Kelly, who had a store on the approximate site of the present Williams Store.

When that building was sold to Bill Fixley, he became postmaster.

From Fixley's building, the post office was moved to a store owned by Joe and

Maud Varner, at the junction of the East Fork and West Fork Roads.

In 1948, Cleo Reel, who had been serving as postmistress for two years, built the small post office at the same junction. That is the structure now at Pacifica.

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The Sequoia Sanctuary, a living cathedral

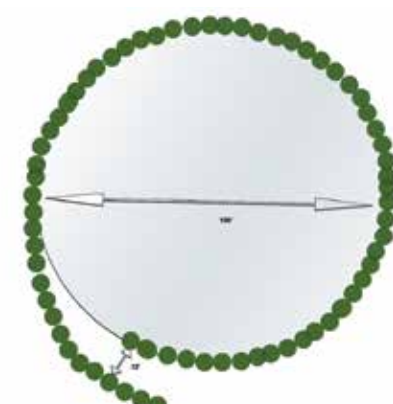
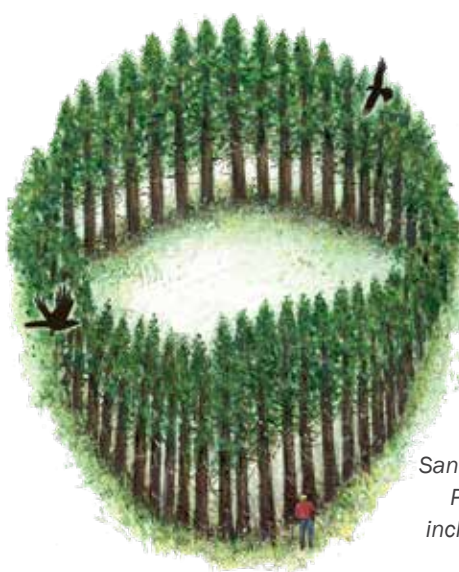
BY RICHARD REAMES

Imagine, if you will, giant sequoia trees, also known as *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, growing in a large circle, 100 feet in diameter. The trees have grown so large that the trunks have merged, creating a wall of living wood. A spiraling entrance (see diagram) opens to a green sanctuary surrounded by these living monoliths, a cathedral with green branches and red tree trunks for walls, blue sky for a ceiling, and soft green grass for a floor. Celebrations and various events are held within this space.

For more than 20 years, the seeds of this project have rattled around in my head. Now, thanks to the generosity of Pacifica, the green light has been given to commence planting. If all goes well, by the time you read this, our little trees have been planted.

The most massive trees on earth, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* can live for more than 3,000 years. This tree is considered endangered. Its natural range is in small groves on the western slopes of the southern Sierra Nevada of California. The groves have declined due to climate change and recent fires. Today fewer than 80,000 trees remain.

This new land-art project is located at Pacifica: A Garden in the Siskiyou, 14615 Water Gap Road, Williams. The plan is to plant 130 giant sequoia trees in a large circle. At this writing,



Photo, left: The illustration shows Sequoia Sanctuary as envisioned after decades of growth. Photo, above: The layout of Sequoia Sanctuary includes an overlapping curl so visitors can enter without leaving a visual gap in the ring.

I expect the little seedlings will arrive around the middle of February, and I'll invite the community to come out and take part on planting day.

The planting site is on flat ground, on the right side of the art trail about 100 yards south of the lake, opposite the bench. The star thistle has been mowed. Later this spring I will begin a star thistle eradication,

starting inside the sanctuary. Volunteers and ideas are needed for this effort.

If you find this project worthy, you can send a donation to me, Richard Reames, 1607 Caves Camp Road, Williams, OR 97544, or go to arborsmith.com/sequoia-sanctuary to donate using the PayPal button or the GoFundMe link.

To receive notices of work parties and project progress, leave your email on the sign-up list.

Richard Reames
Arborsmith.com
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Ed. Note. Read an article and view a short video about Richard Reames and his "arborsculpture" on the Oregon Public Broadcasting site (OPB) at bitly.co/HC17.