

Thank you, trailblazers, for clearing a path to Heaven on Earth

April 25, 2022



I went to Heaven last Saturday using the handicapped entrance.

Last Saturday, May 21, the Redwood National and State Parks opened the trail to the Grove of the Titans.

This wasn't just your usual trail through the trees. It was a trail that even those with mobility issues, but who can still walk, can navigate the entire ¾-mile trail to its end and back again. You might think of this trail as sort of a "handicapped entrance" to one of the most spectacular places on this Earth, a place so sacred that it is a vital feature of a United Nations World Heritage Site.

National and State Park employees, Tolowa Tribal leaders, supporters and protectors of the wilderness and redwoods gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony beneath a cathedral of ancient giant redwoods at the end of this trail.

The Grove of the Titans trail was built by a team of trailblazers who surveyed, engineered, designed, cut and built a trail so friendly that this sacred forest is now opened to so many more visitors. It is certain to become one of Del Norte County's top tourist destinations. And it is right at our doorstep.

The Grove of the Titans is the home to ancient trees as high as the sky, some of the largest trees in the world, and by far the largest living things that God ever created.

Until last Saturday, the path was treacherous, steep and uncertain. And the health of these magnificent trees were threatened. The roots and lower trunks of these great giants were no match for the lugged-sole hiking boots, sharply pointed walking sticks, and the ambitions of selfie-seeking adventurers who wore away the fragile centuries-old bark and root system with every step.

The trailblazers came up with the answer. They cleared a wide and relatively level natural trail that led away from hazardous and slippery mountain slopes, and built a series of elevated stairs, trestles and bridges to bring adventurers even closer to the trees without threatening their base and root system.

The combination of wide, safe, level trails, and sturdy nature-sensitive structures has made the trail to the Grove of the Titans traversable to many mobility-impaired individuals who otherwise might be left behind in the parking lot while their companions enjoyed this magnificent gift from God.

While not ADA-compliant, the entire length of the trail was navigated last Saturday by one woman with the use of a crutch, a feat that became possible because the work of the trailblazers.

Those among us who are closer to age 100 than we are to age 20 will forever appreciate this handicapped entrance to Heaven.

Thank you, trailblazers.

Daniel J. Schmidt

Editor