



Remembering South Mt. Hawkins Lookout

September, 2002



South Mount Hawkins *a remembrance by Pam & George.*

You came alive in 1937, standing proud on your 30' wooden tower at 7,783' above sea level. You were staffed and tended to by various personnel until Sandy Delapp arrived in May 1952. She was your caregiver during fire seasons until September 30, 1980. You had various improvements through the years and saw much. How I wished you could have told me your stories. Then came the smog and the Forest Service financial cutbacks and you were closed down. Sandy I'm sure felt the loss so many of us are feeling now.

You were left unattended until the late 80's, when the Forest Service decided to take you down. Your windows were removed; then you were gutted and all that remained was your shell. Then came the day that you were to be pushed over and forgotten forever. But luck was with you. A retired Forest Service person was listening to his scanner and overheard the radio conversation between the dozer driver and the man in charge of taking you down. The quick thinking Forest Service retiree, who had come to love you also, called Mike McIntyre, who did not know this was happening to one of his historic buildings. Mike contacted the dozer driver and saved you. Then he questioned himself about what to do with you. He started by putting a chain link fence around you. In the early 90's Mike found a group of people who wanted to put you back together. Your shutters were put back on, your windows were returned and part of your wall was put back in place. With this work done, you were somewhat sheltered from the weather. Then the group lost interest in you and you were left to sit alone again.

In 1997 Mike made a phone call to a group in the San Bernardino National Forest Association to see if they would be interested in restoring you and Vetter Mountain. His goal was to staff both of you with volunteers and to use you - as you were built to be - as a fire lookout. George and I were asked to come along because of our experience in restoration of lookouts. I will never forget making that curve and seeing you standing there. George and I could see past all the wrong that was done to you: we could see you shining and alive again. So: with help from Bill Cone, Dick Cone, Jack Cone, Dave Walker, Kermit Eller, Jim Mayfield, George and myself: you had your windows, cabinets, walls, roof, floor, and guts put back in; along with a new landing and a new coat of paint inside. You were ready for your grand re-opening on September 4, 1999. But sorrow hit you again. The Bridge Fire broke out and it put you on hold. Unlike the last time, you were not forgotten or left alone; instead you got a new coat of paint outside which made you even more presentable to your public. So on September 19, 1999 you were called back in service by your old friend Sandy Delapp.

During the last few short years you have made a lot of new friends and written a lot of new stories. Your many friends will not forget you and what you have done. We lost you to a senseless wild fire. You are a loss I can never forget. You may only be a wooden structure but you brought meaning of life for me. To honor you we will rebuild and your spirit will live forever in our new South Mount Hawkins Lookout.



It was so enjoyable spending a day there. Ed Peschke

I feel I have lost a dear friend. Many fond memories of the lookout and the area are now very important to me. I hope that somehow, we will be able to harness the energy and resources to rebuild this wonderful tower. Jim Fleming

It seems like only yesterday that Kermit, George and I were painting and putting the roof on for the grand opening. I just can't believe it is gone. Dave Walker



photo by Bob Gregg

To all the ANFFLA folks...I'm so sorry to hear about the loss of the Hawkins Fire Lookout tower. I'm saddened because of the loss of so much history and the loss of so much of the restoration your group has done. The work you have put into the tower is to be commended. Thank you so much for keeping these towers alive. Charles Phillip White



photo taken 12/29/69 by Bob Gregg



photo by Woody McCauley

I can recall discussions about the lookout with Armen Denis before Crystal Lake was reopened for camping. Armen used to live in the house near the store across from the Visitors' Center. This was about 1995. I loved Crystal Lake and always admired the view of the lookout from the valley. Hal Croulet



photo by Tom Hunter



photo by Bob Gregg

We shall meet again,

Old friends.

We shall meet again.

