

RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bohemian Grove, Monte Rio, CA and Mary Moore, Activist

by Susan Teel - 2015

There was an article in the New York Times published July 27, 2010, written by Dan Barry, entitled, “Redwoods Hideaway for the Elite Goes On, but Protest Days Fade”. This article is about the San Francisco-based Bohemian Club, which dates back to 1872. Mr. Barry states, “For more than a century, thousands of men have shed wives and cares to hike, listen to lectures, drink, discuss current events, celebrate the arts, drink, share frat-boy traditions, enjoy boon companionship no women could understand, and drink. Predominately white, affluent and Republican, they stage theatrical acts, enjoy like-minded company and imbibe, amid mature redwoods and old posters from past gatherings.

Some of the 125 camps within have their own valets, and there is even a gift shop. The opening Cremation of Care ceremony, an elaborate production in which hooded characters burn “Dull Care” in effigy at an altar, is meant as a cathartic release of life’s worries. And the club’s motto, “Weaving Spiders Come Not Here”, reflects the prohibition against any conducting of business. The protesters, led by Mary Moore, believe, however, “that if you corral thousands of privileged men and throw in some fine wine and food, they cannot help but make valuable connections and, occasionally, public policy.”

Mary Moore moved to a wooded Sonoma County enclave in the mid-1970s. She lives within a few miles of the Bohemian Grove site. Ms. Moore’s activism began in the 1960’s civil rights movement. She founded the Bohemian Grove Action Network in 1980 to organize protests at the grove gates that took place on and off for about 30 years. Ms. Moore scaled back her involvement in 2001, but began working in the movement again in March 2012 on Occupy Bohemian Grove, intended to “expose the 1%”, she said.

Over the years, Ms. Moore and other Northern California activists have gleefully exposed the private encampment, and publicized the membership lists of the Bohemian Club. The Bohemian Grove protest movement has had a colorful history. In 1992, a contingent of 14 police cars and a helicopter surprised protesters, moving them away from the gate where they had traditionally collected.



BOHEMIAN GROVE

In an interview by Susan Lamont on July 11, 2012, Mary Moore talked about the July 14, 2012 protest. Ms. Moore said, "It's always been a coalition." "Members of Occupy Portland will be involved. Code Pink has expressed interest, and other grassroots peace and social justice movements ("the usual suspects", she says) are expected to join. Native American drummers will open proceedings, as they have every year."

Ms. Moore's home includes thousands of counterculture documents and periodicals plus cultural relics that include stacks of counterculture comics and elaborate masks she brought back from Africa. Ms. Moore has stated that, their eventual home will be UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library. "It's a whole history of 50 years. Maybe people can learn from other's mistakes," she says. She goes on to say, "It's all the same struggle. Right now all you can do is hold hands with the ones who are getting the worst of it. It really is about human suffering." (Quotes are from Susan Lamont Interview with Mary Moore on July 11, 2012.)

Editor's Note: Bohemia's Gate, "The Bohemian Grove Action Network hijacked by conspiracy theorist again", by Leilani Clarke was published on July 17, 2013. Ms. Clarke states, "A group that called themselves the Bohemian Grove Action and Resistance Network was at the gates of the Bohemian Grove this year, handing out flyers on so-called smart grids and Google technology."

Sean Ackley, a Republican from Brentwood who helped the original protesters, Bohemian Grove Action Network (BGAN), set up a Facebook page, led the small gathering. Ackley has ended up making himself an official administrator of the Facebook page, adding "Resistance" to the name and taking over the operations.

Moore says that while, "anyone has the right to protest," they do not have the right to "appropriate the name we've had for 33 years," and thus confuse the public. The Bohemian Grove Action Network has enlisted the help of a local attorney to help them trademark the name; they can then send a cease-and-desist letter to the Ackley-led group.

"I hate the idea that we have to do this kind of establishment move," says Moore of the trademarking and legal process. (On July 12, the Facebook page name was changed to "Resist the Grove—Bohemian Grove Action and Resistance.") BGAN has decided to refocus their efforts on research and education rather than on protesting, because "we don't want to fight with these Tea Party people", Moore says."

