

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the San Francisco Bay Area, the flood in 1982 documented more than 18,000 landslides in the span of three days. Severe damage occurred in the hills and coastal ranges where flooding, mudslides, and debris flows destroyed homes and businesses.

In Bodega Bay, it took three days for help to arrive. The landscape changed forever. On Hwy One in the canyon south of town, mud flows sheared off the hills down to bare rock. Salmon Creek Bridge on Route One was destroyed, cutting off the people north of Bodega Bay.

Below Bodega Bay's Church, the creek was a rushing river, washing out Hwy One at the hairpin curve. The "river" created an island leaving residents stranded between Bodega Bay and Salmon Creek. The mud flow dumped three feet of mud into Porto Bodega destroying the main road connecting Bay Flat Road with Hwy One.

But Bodega Bay's strong community saw to it that the mail was delivered to stranded residents! By sheer tenacity our fearless postal workers led by Postmaster Shirley Ames, hoisted a line and pulley basket to carry the mail over the washed-out creeks.

## The Flood of 1982

*by Andrea Granahan*



As a long-time Bodega resident I was dismayed when I could finally make my way down off my hilltop in Joy Woods on Tuesday, 21 Jan 1982 and found my town looking like a war zone. My neighbors who were flood victims wept openly as they tried to clean up the wreckage of what had once been their homes, and the entire town was concerned for the families still stranded at the ends of blocked roads. Valley Ford and Bodega Bay were just as stunned. The first post-flood day everyone just helped each other dig out.

Outside help could not get through until much later in the day when more roads had been cleared and the Red Cross came to survey needs. By that time everyone was exhausted, cold, dirty, wet and hungry and for the most part, went to bed that way.

But by Wednesday morning the rest of the world knew of the victims' plight and donations began. Hot food and sandwiches arrived from other families and restaurants in the area. Supervisor Ernie Carpenter saw to it that some recently released federal surplus cheese found its way to the stricken area. Clover Dairy sent out 40 gallons of milk. Individuals arrived bearing clothing and groceries and often stayed to help clear the way for stranded families or clean up the muddy soup that was once a charming small town.

The Red Cross set up an office of sorts in the post office lobby and began interviewing victims and issuing vouchers for emergency food, clothing and shelter needs. Fifteen families in the town of Bodega were homeless,

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some temporarily, until repairs could be made; some permanently, their homes ruined beyond reconstruction.

News spread to other communities that help was available at McCaughey Hall in Bodega and homeless people from other towns began drifting in, grateful for a hot meal and even a pair of dry socks. Many of the people in the area were so used to being self-reliant that they found it hard to accept that they could use some help. One woman who had lost everything she owned including her small flock of chickens stopped in at the town hall and when asked if she'd like something to eat responded, "Oh I thought this was for other flood victims."

"The children stayed dry but could I borrow a pair of pants until my house is dug out?" A father asked. One truckload of supplies was sent down to the battered town of Inverness, where a group of CCC workers suddenly showed up in Marshall after a full day of hard work. A distress call was sent up to the Bodega hall asking for food, and those who drove the food south stayed to help cook it.

Over the next few days on through the weekend McCaughey Hall was the center of activity. Tears mixed with camaraderie as people gathered, comforted one another, spoke of how much worse it could have been, or suddenly burst into tears as another treasured possession was suddenly remembered and acknowledged as lost. Tears were shed again when people showed up to give money. "Here's \$20 for a family with children," "Give this to someone who needs it," "How can we thank them?" Was the constant response.

Teams organized to dry out salvageable homes or cart supplies into the ranchers still inaccessible by road. One afternoon a troop of Boy Scouts showed up with shovels and were promptly set to work.

By the weekend only one family, Charles 'Sunny' Welling and his wife Beverly were still digging out from the five feet of mud that had engulfed their road and demolished the bridges that connected them to the outside. Volunteers rode in on horseback to help them out. The last of the donated groceries



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had been distributed or cooked to feed those who still had no cooking facilities, and there were still so many clothes left it was decided to send them further south.

The immediate needs of getting everyone warm and

dry has been met for the most part. The Occidental Chamber of Commerce helped locate new furniture and household equipment for the families. The good part of a bad time in this case is that our communities discovered just how caring their neighbors were. ■

**FLOODED...  
with water,  
mud, then  
food, clothing  
and caring**

**Porto Bodega  
still mired in**

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**Progress and  
complications at  
Porto Bodega**

