

History of the Hippies of Takilma

By
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Part 5 Why Did They Come?

Dred Mikal came to Takilma with his young wife Kathy to have their first child. Tahiti was born with the help of the “Birth-mobile” in a small cabin on Hope Mountain given to them by Stanley and Fauna. Dred Mikal remembered, “They gave us this cabin and a horse came with it.” After purchasing the “old boarding house” Dred Mikal went on to raise his family there and got by with a variety of forestry jobs and seasonal fruit picking jobs. He had to repair and renovate the place and is still in the process of restoring the building.

When asked what it was like back then, Dred Mikal remembered a place up the river called the “Seed Company” which consisted of a group of people living in what was known as the “Octagon” and who had radical ideas about fixing the earth. “All these dreadlocked characters were living there in their green-houses.” A sign above their door said, “Plant the fruits of paradise” and they followed this philosophy by suddenly appearing at people’s houses and bringing everything needed to plant them a garden. “They never asked for anything, this was just their vision that we could all be feeding ourselves.”

Dred Mikal has been in Takilma for 36 years, raised his family and tried to attain a degree of self-sufficiency by growing his own food in his garden and greenhouse. He still has an old horse drawn cart and buggy in which he occasionally takes people out for a drive. He is an example of the pioneer spirit which is still alive in Takilma’s hippie movement.

Other reasons the hippies came to Takilma were more nebulous, because there was just a general migration from south to north and from east to west, as young people hitchhiked all over the country, commune hopping and looking for great places to be. They came from the cities to find a better place in the country, where they could find refuge in the small neglected towns and homesteads dotting the west.

Back when Robert was living in Marin County, he heard a lot of rumors of this mythical place called Takilma, just over the border in Oregon where it was still really wild. As Robert recounts, “So one day on the beach in 1971 I met up with Rainbow Bob (so called because one eye was blue and the other brown) and we just started hitchhiking up the coast. It took us 3 days, (which it seems we spent more of our time drinking wine on the side of the road) but we finally found Takilma and spent our first night across the river from the Mirage Garage. Charlie Two Shoes was there to welcome us and it was really different.” It was quite a happening back then and there were up to 30 people camping at different communes, and building more rough and unusual shelters to live in. Robert recalled, “On my first day I was spending some time up at Rowdy Ridge, when I saw six guys carrying a wood stove up the river, laughing and talking as they went. I just looked at them and thought; this is so wild and crazy! Takilma was a place where you could find yourself in a circle with lots of crazy, wonderful people who all shared a positive, communal energy!”

Soon, Robert was able to buy a piece of land on Takilma

Road for the amazingly low price of \$2,500. It had a small cabin, and was named the Funky Egg Company, after the 70 odd chickens that Robert had trucked up from California.

Early in 1973, there were no phones and little transportation so Ranger John Hoffman called a meeting, where he hand-picked a crew from the hippies and others that showed up for work. Robert, Otto, Randall, Ron T., Alan K. and up to 40 others found employment on the fire crew with the Forest Service. “That summer we were fighting fires all over and earning \$3 per hour. Suddenly there was work”, said Robert.

The next winter Ranger Hoffman again hand-picked a crew of 25 of the strongest hippies to do winter tree planting, a job which many American’s found too physically challenging. After proving their competence in the harsh conditions they banded together and formed a small company called “Green Side Up.” They got a contract with the Forest Service to plant trees for \$8.00 per hour. Eventually, after some financial backing from friends, they landed a \$100,000 contract and were able to keep people working locally on reforestation sites in Southern Oregon. Some of these places were the most inaccessible and rugged locations to be found and workers often had to climb steep hillsides. People’s skills and endurance were sorely tested.

Randall was one of the earliest tree planters with Green Side Up and recalls “I already had a background trimming trees with the Parks Dept., so they taught me how to rope climb to the

top of the trees. I attended Green Side Up meetings and got on a list. From then on I worked at planting trees for the reforestation program, and we worked at fencing, planting, tagging and mapping. By the time we were done those trees were worth about 200 bucks each! Each tree was two years old and species were matched up to a unit on an elevation basis. Everybody has heard of super trees. I was in the program of “cone heads”, only eight of us who would document and pick all the cones. I have worked in forestry for 25 years, from Gold Beach to Lakeview.”

Randall remarked, “I’m surprised that I was able to live and work here for so many years on such low wages, but I’ve always lived well and feel really blessed. Our weather is better than ¾’s of the world.” Randall enjoys a musical career these days as a guitar and dobro player in a band called ‘The Occasional Two-Timing Double-Crossers.’ He says, “We’re kinda rowdy and radical.” He adds wryly, “I just almost cut my index finger off. Now I have to use my other fingers more to play the guitar.” This kind of independent, hard working spirit is an example of the never-give-up attitude of the hippies.

Author Kindi Fahrnkopf is a poet and flower child of the 60’s who has lived in Takilma for 32 years. She moved to Cave Junction in 1979 with her husband and two little children to open the Caves Cobbler shoe repair shop.



Shelly, one of the first known female tree planters. Photo courtesy of Robert Hirning.

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