

The Rise of Ronald Reagan

The book *The Rise of Ronald Reagan* by William Boyarsky tells of the inside political maneuvering in Sacramento as the Mineral King controversy unfolded. In an economy drive, the large park expansion program initiated under Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown was cut 90 percent.

Forests and open spaces . . . were a side issue with Reagan. He was more interested in cutting down the cost of state government. But his first year was not quite the resources disaster that conservationists had expected. Because he was more concerned with other matters, he allowed his administrators wide latitude, and instead of destroying the state's resources, they surprised critics with several imaginative ideas. Reagan introduced his first resources appointee one morning

when he walked into the news conference room across from his office followed by a tall, gawky, middle-aged man in a rumpled suit. He was Norman B. Livermore, a fourth-generation Californian who had just resigned as treasurer of the Pacific Lumber Company to accept a new job, that of administrator of the state agency that controls all of California's resources—the rivers, the forests, the lakes, the wildlife and mineral wealth. He was a Republican. His brother was the Republican county chairman in San Francisco. Livermore's lifetime had been spent in the lumber business. On the surface, it looked like another surrender to the lumber industry. But Livermore was also a member of the Sierra Club. He had grown up in the Sierra and led mule trains along its rugged trails. "I've spent a thousand nights in the Sierra," he said. "Being up there gives one a chance to be by himself away from telephones, and the camaraderie around the campfire is one of the greatest things of all . . ."

Livermore quickly told the lumber industry that he wanted stricter enforcement of laws governing their logging operations and that he was unhappy with the way they had been carelessly clogging streams with debris. "The lumber companies have a long way to go in scenic forestry," he said. "The leaders in the industry will admit they have been laggards in the past." Reagan, in his campaign, had defended the past conduct of the lumber industry, yet he now backed up Livermore. He backed him up in another important issue, the preservation of the Middle Fork of the Feather River . . .

Some of Reagan's other appointments were just as surprising as Livermore. Once again following Livermore's advice, Reagan retained Governor Brown's director of fish and game, Walter Shannon, who had alienated the lumber industry with his criticisms of their logging practices. Reagan had been under heavy pressure to appoint someone more friendly to private business. And for parks director, Reagan reached to the San Francisco Bay area and hired one of the most imaginative parks men in the nation, William Penn Mott, Jr. [William Penn Mott is presently director of the National Park Service.]

During the Mineral King controversy Ike Livermore considered the overall ski proposal too big. An alternative he recommended was a cog-assisted rail route from Lookout Point to complete the upper half of the access; presumably that would satisfy the concerns of Sequoia Park.

The existing plan for access was to improve the old state highway, which follows rugged terrain and would be unsuitable for a large development even with major improvements. In the face of steadily increasing costs and increasing reluctance in Sacramento, Livermore sided with assembly Democrats and

confronted the director of the state highway department in a heated telephone exchange with Governor Reagan listening in. The highway was dropped from state highway status to county road, and it was all over for the Disney project.

The issue Livermore tackled with the most enthusiasm was to help block the proposed Minarets highway east of Fresno.

As one of the many influential characters whose ideas and actions laced the modern history of Mineral King and the High Sierra together, Ike Livermore played a major role from 1928 to 1978; his influence still continues in a more quiet form. We shouldn't have expected anything less with his background of Thatcher School, Mineral King packer and Sierra Clubber. The governor's hands-off style left Ike with all his options.

*Meeting in Visalia, April 1988,
from left, Norman Ike Livermore,
Delora Buckman, Henry M.
Brown, Virginia Livermore,
Charles Morgan.*



*This reminder of the past is along the upper slope
of Lone Pine. Two miles farther, the Horseshoe
Meadow road starts. Right center is Mount
Whitney. This mountain view has been the back-
drop for countless movies, including the classic
"High Sierra" starring Humphrey Bogart and
Ida Lupino. In the movie, the mandatory outlaw
chase and shootout begins on the Horseshoe
Meadow road and continues across Carroll
Creek, up the switchbacks to the high meadow.*