

## Halloween in the woods

Leah Lubin

My name is Leah and I live in a redwood tree forest. The year 1993 found me relocating to Skylonda. Settling in and reestablishing my art studio from the city to mountain life were my first tasks. But don't let me make light of it. I had moved into a forest surrounded by towering old trees and forest life of a unique and forceful nature.



At night, very few neighbors would use outdoor lighting of any type, and it was a strange feeling to stand outside once the sun went down. Pitch black, darker than any city this city girl was used to. Immediately, in that blackness, my other senses kick in, feeling the space, checking for sounds (which are plentiful), after all it is the forest. Quite quickly, I came to the conclusion that at least this forest was not haunted, no bad vibes at all. Instead, there seemed to be this feeling all around of vast space, cool and controlled, but not negative. Enjoying plenty of

privacy, I was surprised to see over fifty children come to our door for treats on my first Halloween in the forest. In fact, we ran out of sweets and quickly started rolling pennies in packs of twenty wrapped in aluminum foil. This seemed to be well received, but next year we were better prepared with more treats. When around 9:30 p.m. our visitors seemed to wind down, having been busy for three hours I decided to step out and see how the forest was enjoying Halloween. Walking down Big Tree Way toward Elk Tree Road in my witchy, but colorful outfit, flashlight in hand, I felt as good as any "X-File" agent ready to check out any alternative energy around.

Yes, there was a buzz in the air most definitely, but what kind of buzz, I wasn't sure. Slightly eerie, but again, not negative at all. Definitely no "Blair Witch" in this forest.

On the corner of Elk Tree Road and Big Tree Way, one of our neighbors had hung three well-made ghosts or corpses (I couldn't decide) from a tree. High up they dangled and created their own little sideshow, with the forest kicking in some scary vibes to enhance the scene.

But that was about it. Asking long-term residents for stories of the unusual kind or any experiences that they might have had that were out of the norm yielded nothing. Until meeting up with Kathleen Peterson, when I once again asked, "What do you know about any unusual activity in this area?" It turned out that Kathleen did know a tale worth telling. She and her husband moved to Skylonda in 1976. A neighbor a couple of houses away had lived here since the thirties. He was very active in the community; in fact he was the neighborhood handyman. One of his good local friends was a widow called Mrs. Jensen who he would frequently visit and help care for her property. When she passed over, her estate was sold to The Gorilla Foundation, which moved from Stanford to our area. He was always very curious about the goings on at his friend's old place. But, as they allowed no visitors, he never got to see the place again. He passed on in the early eighties and his home was sold. When the new owners moved in shortly after his death, interesting and slightly bothersome activities started to take place, especially electrical phenomena, with lights going on and off for no reason. Plus, The Gorilla Foundation reported to Kathleen that they were experiencing some unexplained phenomena such as a rocking chair rocking with no one in it and a feeling of someone there. In fact, Dr. Penny Peterson and her volunteer said to Kathleen, "He's probably come to see what's going on here."



This all stopped after a few months and Kathleen sums it up by saying, "He was checking things out for the last time before moving onwards."

A fellow writer and talented comedian, Janet Periat, informed me that the woods of Pescadero were full of mysterious tales, and she would be happy to share them. We set up a phone meeting to give her a chance to tell her tales. We settled on three tales. "Which is your favorite?" I asked her.

A local house deep in the woods of Pescadero was built and lived in by a lovely couple who had many parties. After living there for thirty years, they passed on in the late 1960s. Since then, several families have lived in the house. Every family that lived there experienced the same phenomena: dishes rattling in cupboards, dogs would bark and corner something, yet nothing was there. Footsteps on the staircase and doors slamming were also reported. The trouble was, every family thought they were the only ones experiencing and seeing this to the point of going a little crazy. Janet, fascinated with these tales, talked to them separately, and revealed what she knew about the history of the house.

Then, there was the "Apple Man.". He would throw apples during the night at people walking along the canyon, especially around midnight. He was good at hiding because he never got caught. Eventually he stopped, and what happened to him nobody knows.

Janet's last tale was my favorite. She told me of a partially constructed house than no one had ever lived in. The local kids loved to go there on Halloween. One Halloween night on entering the house they found an axe hanging on the wall, which was swinging. At first, they just ignored it. Too busy having a good time until it came off the wall, and they swear (kids do) that it flew across the room and stuck into the floor next to one of the kids.

At this point, they ran screaming from the house in terror; that part their parents can confirm.

"Great tales, Janet! So how do you like living in the forest?" "I find it very enchanting," she said.