

Excerpted from *The View from John Muir's Window*, the newsletter for the John Muir Memorial Association, a supporting organization for the John Muir National Historic Site, Issue 26, March, 1980/
Editor: Karen Fong

[This letter didn't mention it, but the "door prize" referenced was a gift membership in the John Muir Memorial Association of Martinez, California. The printed letter was in response to a follow-up inquiry when Harold submitted the application for a gift membership.

A CELEBRATION FOR JOHN MUIR

It's good to know that John Muir's Birthday is being celebrated in other parts of the country. Mrs. Ellen Coburn [A leader in the John Muir Memorial Association] submitted the following letter she would like to share with you.

June 5, 1979

Dear Mrs. Coburn,

Thank you for your interest in my annual John Muir Birthday celebration I've conducted for four years in Seattle and Tacoma.

Actually, these have been pretty simple affairs, but I think have exposed the ideas and philosophy and life of John Muir to a number of new people, as well as pleasing those with great devotion and knowledge of the man.

The first one I held four years ago resulted in 50 people attending; but since then I have kept the size down to approximately 17 to 20. The people who come include: several Northwest environmentalists, officers of the Cascade Chapter or local groups of the Sierra Club (including two past or present national board members), students from the University of Washington (most of whom are active in the campus environmental group), and teachers, college administrative officers and persons from a variety of walks of life such as civil service employees (state and federal), military personnel, etc. This past year I had several law students from the University of Puget Sound School of Law, at which I am a third year student. Although most of the folks who come tend to be college age or a few years older, persons in their 50's and 60's also attend, and it is inspiring to see the camaraderie which results when John Muir is the focal point!

The celebration consists of a potluck dinner, held at my residence, which is decorated with John Muir and Wilderness posters, my collection of Muir books (and of course John Muir Memorial Association newsletters!) followed by a reading. I ask everyone to bring a favorite passage from the works of John Muir, and we go around the circle reading them to the group. Following this I award the door prize. The last two years I've awarded it by lot (pulling a number from a hat). The first year I tried it by having the winner be the person who used a Muir quote with "the greatest number of one of Muir's favorite adjectives - "glorious"! (Only one person had the word included!) The next year the key was a quote concerning Alaska (the campaign for the d-2 lands was getting hot at that time).

The persons who attend greatly enjoy this annual celebration, and there seems to be a core group of my friends and acquaintances who come every year, while I also make sure folks come who prior to my invitation never heard much of John Muir. I find hosting these celebrations to be a good way way of keeping the memory of John Muir alive, and I would hope that folks throughout the country are doing the same sort of thing. Please send me some application brochures when ready and I'll see if I can help the Association further.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Harold W. Wood, Jr.