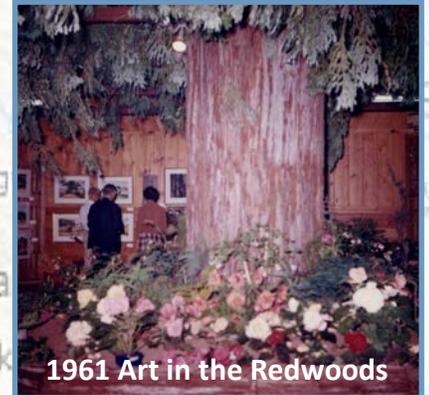


## *What a Long Strange Trip...*

A couple of ladies, Betty O'Neil and Kathy DiMaio, took a road trip to Oakland, California for a flower exhibition in 1960. On the wonderful twisty, inspiring Highway 1 drive home to Gualala they had a "conversation" about bringing that idea up to their community.

They talked of really stepping it up and not only having flowers and plants but inviting local artists and combining art, nature and food to present a really great party for all to enjoy.

Several "conversations" and a lot of hard work by many volunteers saw their vision become a reality in August of 1961 when they brought the first festival to the Gualala Community Center. They transformed the building into a magical Redwood forest for artists to blend art, nature and plants in an exhibit that would inspire generations. It was so successful the buzz started "what about next year?"



The festival actually grew into the redwoods where art was hung in the forest on live trees for several years, thus the name "Art in the Redwoods."

Another group of inspired people got together and their "conversation" centered on formalizing this concept into a year round organization and creating a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. In 1966 that "conversation" saw Gualala Arts come to fruition thanks to the dedication of the first Board of Directors.

Thousands of volunteers, artists, patrons, businesses and community members have expanded that first "conversation" on the road trip home from Oakland into what we now call the Gualala Arts Center. This magnificent 15,000 square foot visual and performing arts center, nestled in 12 acres of redwood forest, hosts well over 100 publicized events and close to 2,000 calendared activities every year.

Be careful with but be grateful for your "conversations" - they do matter. You never know where they may end up and how they may lead you to impact our community.

I am thrilled to be carrying on the vision and "conversation" of that road trip in 1960. I look forward talking with you at the 53rd Annual Art in the Redwoods.

*Indeed... what a long strange trip...*

David "Sus" Susalla  
Executive Director