

## **We Remember Starr King**

Written by Marie Tolen, adapted by Ann Schranz (2010)

---

On January 10, 2010, several members of Monte Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation presented this play during the Sunday service in “Reader’s Theater” format. The play was written about 29 years ago by Marie Tolen, a long-time member of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco. Marie Tolen died around 1999.

### **Cast**

Narrator 1 - Male

Narrator 2 - Female

Thomas Starr King - 35 years, short, powerful speaker

Jessie Benton Fremont - early 30's

Charles Wendte - young to early middle age

Julia Wiggin King - 27 years, Starr King's wife

Francis Bret Harte - early 20's, poet and story teller

### **Costumes**

Full period costume for Starr King-(formal suit, hat; bathrobe for home scene)

Jessie Fremont and Julia King, full period costume and all others, except Narrators, who wear clothing of today.

---

- NAR 1: Unitarian - Universalists! Men and women of the Far West! Americans of every age - whoever you are! Today we remember a man who should never be forgotten; he never forgot us! He was the sixth minister of the First Unitarian Society of San Francisco during the 1860's - the years of the Civil War. The man of that troubled time in California - Universalist Unitarian THOMAS STARR KING!
- NAR 2: Excited at the prospect of a new ministry and the chance to explore the natural wonders and wilderness of the Far West, the frail 35 year old preacher sailed from New England with his wife, Julia and their small daughter. They intended to remain only a year in California, as a kind of "rest cure" for the over worked minister. They were quite unaware that Providence had set in motion events that would hurl Starr King into an orbit of vigorous activity along the rough and tumble Pacific slopes - activity so important for the whole country that his journey to California would someday be compared to the path of a blazing comet!
- NAR 1: The pulpit he preached from is still used in the San Francisco Church today. In the churchyard is his marble sarcophagus--only a few feet from one of the busy thoroughfares of the city. We believe that would have pleased Starr King. Yet he surely would not have missed the opportunity to make a witty remark about it. For his friends said Starr took such delight in just being alive that his joyousness was well-nigh irrepressible! Early in 1860, in a letter to a friend back East, he wrote: "At the close of my lecture 'Substance and Show', I drew a glorious picture of San Francisco, stretched out on its desolate hills, rubbing the dust out of its eyes and washing the fleas off its feet in the great Pacific basin!"
- NAR 2: Starr enjoyed swaying audiences with a flamboyant style of oratory that admirably suited his rich, mellow voice. But biographers agree there was nothing pompous about him as a private person. Remember, however, that in New England the King family had lived near Bunker Hill, and that Starr had been a minister in Massachusetts for over ten years before going to San Francisco. He was drilled in the passionate patriotism of such orators as William Lloyd Garrison, Daniel Webster and Theodore Parker. Thus Starr King was unprepared to hear serious talk about secession in California. Such talk offended his soul like blood-curdling blasphemy!
- STARR: What's wrong with this rebellion? I'll tell you what's wrong with it, my friends! This rebellion sins against our great country! It sins against the Mississippi! It sins against the ballot box! It sins against oaths of allegiance! It sins against a beneficent peace! Worst of all, it

sins against the corner-stone of American history--the sacred rights of man!\* [use All or Humanity] I say it's time-- high time-- to repeat that soul stirring call of Daniel Webster: "Liberty and Union! Now and forever! One and inseparable!"

NAR 2: When Starr arrived in San Francisco, in April of 1860, the State was leaning heavily toward the South. Only seven of the area's fifty-five newspapers were pro-Union. The rest were blatantly for secession. So was California's Governor John P. Weller, who said:

NAR 1: If Lincoln wins the election, the South will surely secede. And I would consider Californians less than men if they did not secede!

NAR 2: California's Senator Latham voiced the feelings of many when he said:

NAR 1: California will go with the South, or set up her own Pacific Republic, separate from both North and South!

NAR 2: Even some of the local clergy lamely attempted to placate both sides. For they knew that forty percent of the inhabitants of California were now Southerners or Southern sympathizers!

NAR 1: As the Civil War crisis drew nearer, the fiery preacher intensified his efforts to rekindle the fading thirty-first star of our flag, the star of California. He often preached twice on Sundays - morning and evening - and somehow managed to deliver his popular lectures in many other meeting places---other churches and lecture platforms, even on the sand hills and in the rough mining camps of California, Nevada and Oregon. He got used to seeing guns and knives in the front row!

STARR: Patriotism is unselfish devotion to the idea of a nation, its Heaven-inspired soul. Anything lower than this form - any attempt to defend every act of every administration as "patriotic" - is an abuse of a noble word. If a country such as ours is to rise no loftier, then we may say: Here is America, but where are the Americans?

NAR 2: And all this while, with amazing versatility and fecundity, Starr King kept on preaching his Universalist Unitarian Christianity, realizing that he was one of very few liberal preachers on the Pacific Coast.

STARR: Creeds may be false, Bibles may be mistaken, but this is certain - the spirit that has a sense of justice quick and large, and lives with it in relation to his fellows, lives deeper than the man of intellect and infinitely deeper than the man of pleasure. Truth is wasted when it is not turned to account to make men (and women) more reverent.

- JESSIE: (SOFTLY) I remember that sermon! I think Starr King wrote that in our garden at Black Point. He read it aloud to me.
- NAR 1: Black Point! Then you're Jessie Fremont! Wife of the famous pathfinder Colonel John Fremont, who later became a general in the Union Army!
- JESSIE: Jessie Benton Fremont. My father was Missouri's abolitionist Senator Thomas Hart Benton. And my husband - John Charles Fremont was one of California's first two senators. Being so fathered and so husbanded, is it any wonder I became a politician?
- NAR 1: I believe you had a great deal to do with California's State Constitutional Assembly in Monterey, back in 1850. You were a power behind the scenes -- entertaining wavering delegates - a lobbyist for the Union - way ahead of your time! Isn't that true, Mrs. Fremont?
- JESSIE: Well, I certainly helped draft and push through the anti-slavery cause in the new State Constitution, even before we were admitted to Statehood. (RECITES WITH VIGOR) "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this State."
- NAR 1: Then of course you were delighted with the Emancipation proclamation.
- JESSIE: Delighted? Thirteen years later? I thought Mr. Lincoln should have proclaimed it much earlier! And I told him so!
- NAR 1: Fearless Jessie! But let's get back to 1860, if you will. You and Colonel Fremont were among the first good friends of Starr and Julia King. What was your first impression of Starr?
- JESSIE: I dare say you'll find it uncomplimentary. My husband and I had heard about the exciting new minister over at First Unitarian, so we went to hear him. The old church was just an auditorium and a vestibule, you know, and when we got inside we could scarcely believe our eyes. People were jammed into every inch of space. And this at a time when many churches were half-empty. Presently Reverend Thomas Starr King walked to his pulpit. I was really distressed. He was frail, beardless youth, painfully thin even through his ministerial robe. And that lank yellow hair! I looked at my husband. Was this the spellbinder the city was flocking to hear?
- CHARLES: I know how you felt, Jessie. Your husband was a strong, handsome man, while Thomas Starr King was short and frail.
- JESSIE: Charles Wendte! Such a good friend of Starr's! More than a friend -- I know he considered you his protégé'. Well, Charles, you remember how he looked. Am I exaggerating?

- CHARLES: No, Jessie. Most people were disappointed at their first glimpse of Starr King. But when he began to speak....
- JESSIE: ... when he began to speak, he was just transformed. His luminous eyes were so direct, so penetrating. I was riveted to my seat. His deep, mellow voice was easily heard in the far corners of the room. I felt shivery and I know I clutched my husband's arm and held on.
- STARR: The color of the world is part of the gospel of the world. It is an utterance of love. It is a prophecy of grace. God hides his power and vents his awfulness in opulent beauty. The most rugged and desolate wastes are chosen to display the rarest beauty. Think of the loss to human nature if the summits of Mont Blanc and the Jungfrau could be leveled and their jagged sides--now covered with snow and flaming with amethyst and gold--should be softened by the sun and tilled to vines and corn! Where then would be the crops which the intellect and heart need? Need and now find waiting for them in the upper desolation or the hills! And your Yosemite---this instant temple in which man (humanity) is a mite. Great is granite and Yosemite is its prophet!
- JESSIE: Charles, my husband, was moved almost to tears. After the service, we went to pay our respects to Starr King and I found myself inviting him and Mrs. King to dinner at Slack Point, our home on the promontory across from Alcatraz Island. That very first evening together, we four seemed to sense that our lives would be intertwined.
- CHARLES: You were staunch in your loyalty to Starr King and he to you, Jessie. But I'm curious to know how you and Julia became such good friends.
- JESSIE: Well, it happened like this---
- JESSIE: Good afternoon!
- JULIA: (RISES TO MEET JESSIE) Good afternoon, Mrs. Fremont.
- JESSIE: (WARMLY) Please call me Jessie. May I come in, Julia?
- JULIA: Please do -- Jessie. Won't you sit down? (BOTH SIT, CENTER. JULIA CALLS OFF STAGE TO HER DAUGHTER TO COME IN.)  
Come in, Edith.  
Jessie, this is our daughter.  
Say hello to Mrs. Fremont, dear.
- JESSIE: Hello, Edith. My, what pretty hair! I have a daughter, too, you know. We call her Lily.

JULIA            You may run along and play now, dear.

JESSIE:        (CALLS OFF STAGE.) See you again soon, Edith. (TURNS BACK TO JULIA) My goodness, you' two look more like sisters!

JULIA:           I married very young - sixteen.

JESSIE:        So did I - seventeen. Over strenuous parental objections.

JULIA:           We have that in common, then.

JESSIE:        Yes.

JULIA:           Won't you try one of these teacakes?

JESSIE:        These are delicious, my dear. I get so homesick for Eastern ways, sometimes. Then I wish I were back in Missouri. Do you miss your friends and family back east?

JULIA:           Oh my, yes! (SIGHS) Of course I miss them. And so does Starr! He still feels responsible for his brothers and sisters. And he writes letter after letter to friends, and to ministers who advised him and recommended him for Lyceum lectures in other cities back there. I hated to have Starr travel so often, but He couldn't live on his minister's wages. Even now he is writing articles about the beauties or California for the Boston Transcript.

JESSIE:        Did you husband study for the ministry at Harvard?

JULIA:           (SMILES) No, he didn't, Jessie. Harvard Divinity School did award Starr an honorary degree, back in 1850. But if you ask Starr what college he attended, he may tell you he is a graduate of the Boston Navy Yard! (BOTH WOMEN LAUGH) He had a job there before he was twenty.

JESSIE:        The more I hear about your husband, the better I like him, Julia. But if he was never trained in a school of theology, how do you account for his obvious learning -- his vocabulary, and his knowledge of foreign languages?

JULLIA:        Both his parents were scholars. Thomas Farrington King was a Universalist minister and he died when Starr was fifteen. His mother, Susan Starr King, studied with her son evenings after he returned from work. To this day, Starr would rather speak or read than eat or sleep. The older ministers, especially Dr. Edwin Chapin and Dr. Hosea Ballou, believed in Starr's dedication and his gift for oratory, and they really tutored my husband and helped him through his early ministry.

- JESSIE: I believe you inspired him, too, Julia. And I hope you both can go home for a long visit. I know I intend to see my beloved family again.
- JULIA: (SMILES) Back in Boston, when Starr asked me how I would like to move to San Francisco, I said, "Whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge." Starr threw back his head and shouted with delight, "Julia, that was spoken by a widow to her mother-in-law!" Of course I knew it was Ruth.
- JESSIE: Of course you did! I must tell John Charles about your saying that to Starr. (PAUSE) Julia, you're worrying about something, aren't you?
- JULIA: Mrs. Fre--Jessie, I want you to know Starr is pleased to have your encouragement and advice. He feels it's almost essential in a new ministry. He works so hard on his sermons and lectures and I'm just wondering how he can think things out and write new sermons with so many interruptions. Someone at the door all the time wanting to see him or asking him to go off to speak. When he's at home, Starr refuses to permit me to send anyone away. When we do invite someone in - Jessie, I hope you won't think this ungracious of a minister's wife - but some people linger, and Starr is such a talker. He loves to repeat his favorite witticisms.
- JESSIE: And enjoys the telling just as much every time!
- JULIA: Yes, he does! (THE WOMEN CHUCKLE)
- JESSIE: Well, Julia, if you will permit me, I have a suggestion. Over at Black Point you saw the seclusion and quiet of our garden and the bench beside the bay, where we watch the glorious benediction of the setting sun.
- JULIA: We love that beautiful name your husband gave the channel at sunset -- The Golden Gate!
- JESSIE: All of our friends like it. I think everyone we know calls it the Golden Gate now. Julia, when Starr needs privacy and quiet to work on his sermons, why can't he come over to Black Point for a few hours? As often as he wishes. Will he come over if I ask him? Or would you ask him for me?
- JULIA: I cannot speak for my husband, but to me it sounds like an answered prayer! (RISES) God bless you and Colonel Fremont!
- JESSIE: (RISES) Thank you, Julia dear. John Charles and I can use your blessing. (BOTH WOMEN EXIT.)

CHARLES: Starr King gladly accepted the Fremont invitation to use their secluded garden for his writing and study. And soon it became a habit. Jessie Fremont became Starr's most helpful critic as he began to write lectures for his Western audiences. It was at the Fremont home that he met a young journalist named Francis Bret Harte and got him a job at the Mint. Working regular hours, the budding author could write poems and stories. As a matter of fact, Reverend King also befriended me at a crucial time in my life.

NAR 1: Yes, Charles. We'll wait and hear about that later. (PAUSE) Just seven months after Starr and Julia King arrived in San Francisco ... in November of 1860. Abraham Lincoln was elected President. Then Starr King had little time to write tender, reflective sermons; for in December the State of South Carolina seceded from the Union. One by one, the stars of our flag began to blink out. In January 1861, a saddened minister faced his congregation. Despite the odds, he was determined to keep the star of California firmly fixed within the American flag.

STARR: My dear and good friends -- whatever of theory we entertain, or party loyalty - or personal ambition or prejudice in this great hour -that may have to pass away. But it seems to be the Will of the American people that this Union of States shall not pass away. I shall defend the Union and take my stand beside our embattled President, Abraham Lincoln.

NAR 2: His congregation immediately supported their minister. Loyalists such as Leland Stanford, Charles Murdock, Bret Harte and the Fremonts raised the flag over the Unitarian Church as Starr King's eyes glistened with proud tears. This action was called to the attention of the President, and he wrote a letter of commendation to Starr King.

NAR 1: Early in February, in Montgomery, Alabama, Jefferson Davis was elected President of the Confederate States of America. California was tense. The newspapers battled each other daily in printed diatribes. Rumors flew that Rebel sympathizers planned to seize Alcatraz Island and the Presidio of San Francisco. Colonel DeWitt Thompson, head of the State Militia and a Unitarian, planned a series of mass meetings for the Union cause. Of course, he was counting on the one man who could work his special magic with the people -- the Reverend Thomas Starr King, but Starr was very weary. Friends like Bret Harte and Jessie Fremont begged Starr to rest, but he would reply, "I have one life to live - I may as well spend it now."

NAR 2: War clouds were rising ominously. As Starr King's influence became more widespread, his foes grew-more shrill and strident. The editor of the Sonora Journal said:

- NAR 1: This clerical charlatan, hypocrite, double-distilled h4mbug is still repeating his threadbare lectures on patriotism. Starr King! A representative of the rabid, fanatical, Godless school of Boston political preachers!
- NAR 2: On Washington's birthday, 1861, Starr King was scheduled to speak at Platt's Hall in San Francisco on the topic "Washington and Union." Long before the hour, every place was filled. And it was a mixed crowd, by no means all of them friendly to the Union. The gentle preacher was grim-faced as he began to speak.
- STARR: God tries every race once, to see if they are worthy of their great trusts. Now he calls upon us -- to earn our geography.
- NAR 1: Starr spoke for over two hours that fateful night and as he neared his closing, his audience was grave and silent, all eyes fixed on the minister's face as he said:
- STARR: To have peace in our nation, peace that will endure, we must send up one chorus - even though the line of the Potomac be broken, and Washington seized and sacked by vandals - NO TERMS WITH TRAITORS.
- NAR 1: Many are crying openly - not only Unitarians but also people of other faiths, and some belonging to no church at all. But tonight they respond as one people as their beloved leader pleads for unity. The next day, Starr's voice was completely gone! But there was no stopping him now! As soon as he could speak again, they clamored for a repeat of the Washington's Birthday address - in Stockton, and even in Marysville, stronghold of secessionists - then back to San Francisco.
- NAR 2: The black day dawned on April 12, 1861. Confederate guns fired upon Fort Sumter. Rebels flew the Confederate flag over the Plaza in Los Angeles. But the Stars and Stripes fluttered over the church of Thomas Starr King and the Unitarians as the little minister dusted off his "Daniel Webster" speech. Then it was time for the "Lexington and Concord" speech again. So it went - Starr King barn-storming all over Nevada, northern California and Oregon.
- NAR 1: That same year, a member of the First Unitarian Church decided to campaign for the Governorship. It was Leland Stanford who stepped into the fray. Everyone knew it would be a tough contest. We'll hear about it from Starr's young protégé's -- Bret Harte.
- BRET: I'll never forget the night Starr and Jessie Fremont and I were campaigning with Leland Stanford near Stockton. Starr was a torrent of eloquence----

STARR: California trusts nobody that plays the game of "Simon says wiggle-waggle" at the peril of the Constitution. She wants a Governor who remembers his Oath and keeps his eye on the Eagle and the Stars.  
(TURNS AND GOES QUICKLY TO CHAIR, SITS SLUMPED WITH HEAD IN HAND.)

BRET: He whipped that multitude of three thousand people into a whirlwind of applause. With the tumult still ringing in my ears, I ran out to the little anteroom. (GOES UP STAGE, CALLING) What a triumph, Starr! What a triumph! (REGISTERS STARR'S CONDITION, GOES TO HIM WITH CONCERN) Starr, how did you ever get through that long last sentence?

STARR: (WEAKLY) I hardly know, Bret, I felt quite unconscious of my surroundings. My mind developed sentences just moments before I uttered them (BRET HELPS STARR TO RISE, THEN STARR EXITS. DURING THE NEXT SPEECH STARR REMOVES MINISTER'S ROBE, PUTS ON HAT AND TURNS UP THE COLLAR OF HIS FROCK COAT).

BRET: All of us worried about Starr's health. In September, Leland Stanford was elected Governor of California and we all breathed a sigh of relief. It had been worth the struggle. Stanford's election seemed to give Starr King new energy. Now, he told us, there would not be treason in high places for a while! So we had out dear parish minister and friend...back again. But there, too, Starr could not give half measures to any problem. Edward Everett Hale said it very well: "Here was a heart as large as the world, so large you cannot make it understand it should hold back from any service to be rendered to any human being." One rainy night--- (STARR ENTERS, WEARING HAT, BENT WEARILY AND HOLDING COAT CLOSED AS JULIA ENTERS. THEY MEET.)

JULIA: Why, Starr, You're drenched! One would think you had ridden home on the outside of a stagecoach again! I'll bring your robe and slippers.

(EXITS, COMES RIGHT BACK. STARR REMOVES COAT AND HAT AND GIVES THEM TO JULIA. SHE GIVES STARR HIS SLIPPERS AND ROBE AND HELPS HIM INTO THE ROBE DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES):

I thought you had a meeting with Governor Stanford, dear.

STARR: And so I did, Julia.

(SHE HELPS HIM WITH SHOES AND SLIPPERS AND THEY SIT IN CHAIRS, STARR WHEEZING, COUGHING AND SHIVERING)

Where is Edith? Where's our pet?

- JULIA: She tried to wait up for her Papa . . . But you're so late, Starr. And look at your trousers! Did you and the Governor meet on a muddy street?
- STARR: I'm not surprised at your wondering, Julia. (WHEEZES AGAIN) I did have to wait a bit for Leland. Inside, however. And he was most cordial and understanding.
- JULIA: I'm glad. But what about? What was he so understanding about?
- STARR: Remember that young chap, Charles Wendte - new in town - came to me to ask a favor? He wanted me to say a word to the Governor in his behalf, so Governor Stanford would let him keep his job as secretary to the Port Wardens. As soon as I explained to Leland that Charles is the sole support of his mother and younger brother, our good Governor assured me that Charles Wendte could keep his job under this administration -- even if he is a Democrat. (COUGHS)
- JULIA: I should think so, Starr! After all your campaigning to get Leland Stanford elected!
- STARR: (GRINNING) Be glad I wasn't a liability! (LAUGHING BRINGS ON COUGHING) Dear heart, I did not "get him elected." I helped - along with Jessie and Bret Harte and some other good Unitarians.
- JULIA: Well, it might not have happened without my husband. Even Mrs. Stanford says so, Starr.
- STARR: (PLEASED) Does she now? Isn't that gracious of her, Julia? Typical good Unitarian woman. (WHEEZES AGAIN)
- JULIA: Starr, you still haven't told me how you got so drenched.
- STARR: What? Oh - oh, yes. Well, I had suggested to Charles Wendte that he come by this evening to hear the Governor's decision about his job. You know, Julia, I recall so vividly being in a similar predicament after my father died: I was only fifteen, and there was my dear mother and Ned and Angie and Sarah-and William and I - and I the eldest; very limited funds. Oh, what it meant to have a job, any job, at such a time.
- JULIA: Thomas Starr King! In this torrential downpour, do you mean to sit there and tell me you walked all the way to ... to ...
- STARR: Battery Street - the office of the Port Wardens. (APOLOGETICALLY). Guess the storm worsened as I was on the way. My umbrella was blown to bits at the corner. (GLOWING) But, Julia, I wish you could have seen that

young chap's face when I gave him the good news. It's a rare privilege to be that kind of emissary.

JULIA: (SMALL PAUSE) Starr?

STARR: Julia?

JULIA: I love you so very, very much.

(STARR PICKS UP HAT AND COAT AND EXITS WITH JULIA.)

NAR 2: As their concerned friends had urged, the Kings did plan a vacation back home to New England, but the trip had to be postponed. In April of 1862 a healthy son was born to Julia and Starr King. They happily named the boy for two good friends -- Frederick Randolph. Soon their peaceful family life was interrupted. This time a request came in an urgent letter from Starr's dear colleague and advisor, Dr. Henry Whitney Bellows of New York City. This is what the letter said:

NAR 1: My dear Starr: You are well aware, I feel sure, that our Union army was so hastily assembled in our time of crisis that it was ill-provisioned. War profiteers have dumped spoiled food onto the army, and food is rotting. I do believe, Starr, that disease has taken a greater toll of our valiant soldiers than confederate bullets. There are few trained doctors or nurses for these poor suffering fellows who have managed to survive. They have no sheets or blankets. They need medicine, bandages, clothing, food and cash for supplies. I know you will agree something must be done. It must be done with all possible dispatch. I am, therefore, endeavoring to form an organization to supply some of these urgent needs. Could you pass the word along to your wonderful congregation?

NAR 2: We all know the answer to that appeal. Starr King could and did tell his congregation. Unitarians began to gather supplies and sew garments and bandages, but in the matter of money, Starr decided to undertake speaking and fund raising once again. The result was almost unbelievable. There was a starting gift of a thousand dollars from Americans in British Columbia. With that beginning, the magnetic preacher managed to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars from the people of the Far West for Doctor Bellows' organization. That organization became the American Red Cross. And, wonders of wonders--through the efforts of Starr, the very State that had threatened to secede from the Union now contributed over a million dollars – 1/4 of all the money raised nationally! Little wonder Abraham Lincoln was astonished.

NAR 1: We must also remember Starr's humanitarian work for Californians -- speaking for the Seamen's Fund- the plight of the Chinese - the rights of Negroes - the cause of Labor.

Now there were plans for a new Unitarian Church; the old building was hopelessly out-grown. Starr and Julia wanted to contribute a new organ. So, once more, with his amazing will power, Starr began to plan another long journey -- the longest of all. He was fully aware of the precarious state of his health. He was also aware of his growing fame and the love he inspired among people everywhere he went.

JULIA: I was now able to travel with Starr. We left our children with good people to care for them. Starr longed to preach our liberal religion again. He had written some new Western sermons -- "Lessons from the Sierra Nevada" and my favorite, "Living Waters from Lake Tahoe". We headed North by stagecoach.

NAR 1: That was pretty rugged country, up in Oregon. Travel must have been very slow.

JULIA: Tedious. We stopped often, of course, in small places. We almost always found people waiting to see Starr.

NAR 1: I suppose they wanted to hear him as well.

JULIA: Yes. And he was just as eager to speak to them. And wherever there was a river, or a cataract [waterfall], we had to stop awhile. Nothing would do but we had to climb Mount Shasta, I remember, even if we missed the stage -- which we did. It took us twenty-seven uncomfortable hours to reach Yreka.

NAR 1: You went all the way to Canada, didn't you, Julia?

JULIA: Yes, we did. I heard my husband deliver the first Unitarian sermon in Vancouver, British Columbia. We were so thrilled and excited, I didn't realize until one hot day how weary I was. Starr managed to conceal his weariness from me. Of course, he was greatly overtaxing himself. After our journey he just never did regain his strength, I fear.

NAR 1: But you did have that one unforgettable journey together.

JULIA: I shall always take comfort from that.

NAR 1: Thank you, Julia King.

NAR 2: On January 10, 1864, Reverend Starr King proudly conducted his first service in the new church building on Geary Street, near Stockton in San Francisco. In it he said:

NAR1: We dedicate this House to the worship of God in truth.

NAR2: From New England, James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes sent special poems. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote this Hymn of Dedication:

*Amidst these glorious works of thine,  
The vast Sierra's cloud-hung pine;  
And awful Shasta's icy shrine, Allelujah!*

*Where swell Thy hymns from wave and gale,  
And organ thunders never fail  
Behind the cataract's silver veil Allelujah!*

*Suffice it now, thine eye shall see  
A holier altar reared to Thee  
And man Thy living temple be! Allelujah!*

NAR 1: One February Sunday, the church was closed. The now famous Minister of the First Unitarian Society of San Francisco ... the beloved Thomas Starr King, lay gravely ill with diphtheria. When pneumonia complicated his illness his ministry was over. Starr King died on March 4, 1864 -- only four years after his arrival in California. He was thirty-nine years old. The city was shocked and unwilling to believe the first word of his passing. Flags were lowered to half-staff on all public buildings, and even on the ships in the harbor. Storefronts were draped in black crepe and men, women and children - miners, shopkeepers, gamblers and aristocrats -- cried as they walked along the dusty streets.

NAR 2: On the day of his funeral, a golden sun rose over the blue Bay of San Francisco. Wreaths of waxen-white lilies hung in festoons around the Unitarian Church. The national flag draped the pulpit and hung in folds above the casket.

(SLOW DEEP BELL TOLLS AS NARRATOR CONTINUES)

All morning, a continuous stream of people passed through the church to see their beloved adopted son for the last time.

NAR 1: As the service began, the church was filled. Outside, masses of people stood hushed in the streets and on nearby rooftops and balconies. Tributes came from allover the nation and his friend, Doctor Henry W. Bellows,

spoke in eulogy. He said, "Starr King gave you himself. His heart and soul. He gave you his life. You had his all -- all that his scholarly, distinguished, laborious career had made him."

NAR 2: As the body of Starr King was lowered into a vault below the altar, the guns of Alcatraz and Union Square boomed out a final salute. In this land of big trees and gorging waterfalls, a frail, preacher had died. But his towering service to his country, his church, and his fellow humans matched the mighty mountains he loved so dearly. From St. Louis, Jessie Fremont wrote, "Please put violets over our friend who rests." Honors were paid not just at the time of his death, but continuing through the years as history began to record his achievements and the mark of his character upon the people of California. A favorite Sierra mountain peak is named Mount Starr King ... The White Mountains of New Hampshire also has a mountain named for Starr. A giant redwood in the Mariposa Grove bears his name. Twenty-eight years after his death, money was raised by the people of California for a bronze statue of Starr King in Golden Gate Park. It stands near the Music Concourse. The prayer of dedication, in 1892 was spoken by a minister who had known him well - the Reverend Charles W. Wendte!

NAR 1: Our denomination has a Starr King School for the Ministry, in Berkeley, California. A Masonic Lodge, city streets and public schools are named in his honor. A Hall of Fame was established in Washington, D.C. Each state was invited to name its two most illustrious persons. The people of California chose Father Junipero Serra, founder of the Missions; and the Reverend Thomas Starr King, who almost single-handedly saved California for the Union.

On March 1, 1931, there was an impressive ceremony in our national Capitol building. California's Representative Florence Kahn unveiled the stature of Father Serra. And the majestic bronze statue of Starr King was unveiled by a distinguished man in the dress uniform of the United States Navy - Starr's grandson, Lieutenant-Commander Thomas Starr King.

Sadly, in 2009, the California Legislature voted to remove the statue of Thomas Starr King from the national Capitol building and substitute the statue of Ronald Reagan. Just a few weeks ago, the statue of Thomas Starr King was dedicated in Sacramento.

NAR 2: As a final tribute today, we have chosen a poem by Bret Harte and a poem by Rev. Paul Sawyer. The poem by Bret Harte appeared, bordered in black, in the Daily Alta California, on March 5, 1864, the day following Starr's death. The poem is a conversation between two sentries as one is relieving the other of duty.

BRET:                   Came the relief. What, Sentry, ho!  
                           How passed the night through the long waking/?  
                           Cold, dark, as may befit  
                           The hour before the dawn is breaking  
                           No sight or sound?  
                           No, nothing save the plover from the marshes calling  
                           And in yon Western, sky, about an hour ago,  
                           A star was falling.  
                           A star? There's nothing strange in that.  
                           No, nothing. But above the thicket,  
                           Somehow it seemed to me that God somewhere  
                           Had just relieved a picket!

NAR. 1:               We conclude this presentation with the words of the Rev. Paul Sawyer,  
                           who served as an interim minister in this congregation. Rev. Sawyer  
                           wrote this poem on the occasion of the installation of the statue of Starr  
                           King in the Civil War garden at the California State Capitol in Sacramento  
                           last month:

silver-tongued one,  
 I awaken this sun-splashed morning  
 with you in my eyes.  
     ignobly they cart you  
     back in a box  
        that statue of  
        you  
     hidden down in the basement  
     of the national D.C. Capitol  
 to unveil you here  
 in the heart of the Sacramento  
     where you never left us  
 this Golden State  
 you held in Union  
     fighting  
        the enslavement  
        of man and woman  
        and child

This slowly evolving world  
     where  
 conscience has nearly died  
 Oh your small size bundled up  
 a giant of soul,  
 walked the San Fran driving rains  
 all night to bring all souls

back to One  
your heart  
bigger than all around you  
saw the grandeur of  
Mountains  
and lifted your voice to the  
highest prominence  
here in this golden land where  
you now remain  
treasure beyond measure  
a standard to look up to  
in this torpid and sleeping nation.

REV. ANN: May we remember forever the words and deeds of Thomas Starr King.  
May it be so!