Chair’s Corner
by Tina Bowman

Even though I’m no longer pursuing The List, I’m looking forward to being in the desert during the high season for our peaks. The desert can be so magical, so gorgeous. Thanks to the excellent, never-ceasing efforts of outings chair Sandy Lara, we should have another very robust offering of outings. What a great way to stay in shape, spend time with friends, make new climbing friends, enjoy the expansive views, and feel exhilarated by being out in the wilds! For social outings, it’s hard to match DPS trips and the car camps that go along with most of them.

We’re always looking for new members, more leaders, and more outings. Ideas for a great banquet venue or speaker? Ways to reach out to people who haven’t experienced climbing desert peaks? If you have suggestions for improving the section, please let me or another management committee member know.

Please mark your calendars for the 2019 DPS banquet on May 19. The Vallecito Country Club in Newbury Park was a wonderful venue with its spacious room and fantastic view for our 2018 banquet, but it was far away for a number of members. We are looking into other locations and hope to make our choice soon. We may return to Vallecito in 2019 before that option is no longer available to us. If you have a suggestion, perhaps of a place where the fee for the space is low and we can have a caterer bring in a buffet-style dinner, please let banquet chair Jim Fleming or me know.

Happy trails,
Tina

THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 9, 2018

As the Desert Peaks Section’s Mountain Records Chair, I’m responsible for keeping track of the condition of summit register books and containers. Please email me after climbing a DPS listed peak and advise me of their condition. My email address is:

hbmark58@yahoo.com.
**Desert Peaks Section Leadership for the 2018 - 2019 Season**

**Elected Positions**
- **Chair**
  Tina Bowman
  283 Argonne Avenue
  Long Beach, CA 90803-1743
  (562) 438-3809
tina@bowmanchange.com

- **Vice Chair / Outings / Safety**
  Sandy Lara
  5218 East Parkcrest Street
  Long Beach, CA 90808-1855
  (562) 522-5323
  ssperling1@verizon.net

- **Secretary**
  Diana Neff Estrada
  138 La Fortuna
  Newberry Park, CA 91320-1012
  (818) 357-1112
  hikinggranny@aol.com

- **Treasurer**
  Laura Newman
  11755 Entrada Avenue
  Porter Ranch, CA 91326-1933
desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com

- **Program / Banquet**
  Jim Fleming
  538 Yarrow Drive
  Simi Valley, CA 93065-7352
  (805) 405-1726
  jimf333@att.net

**Appointed Positions**

**Archives**
- Barbara Reber
  PO Box 1911
  Newport Beach, CA 92659-0911
  (949) 640-7821

**Conservation Chair**
- Dave Perkins
  1664 Buttercup Road
  Encinitas, CA 92024-2451
  (818) 421-4930
david.perkins@csun.edu

**Guidebook Editor**
- Jim Morehouse
  3272 River Glorious Lane
  Las Vegas, NV 89135-2123
  (702) 528-3712
desertpeaksection@gmail.com

**Mailer**
- Elaine Baldwin
  3760 Ruthbar Drive
  Hawthorne, CA 90250-8473
  (310) 675-4120
  DWBaldwin@aol.com

**Mountaineering Committee Chair**
- Sandy Lara
  5218 East Parkcrest Street
  Long Beach, CA 90808-1855
  (562) 522-5323
  ssperling1@verizon.net

**Mountaineering Committee**
- Ron Bartell
  ronbartell@yahoo.com
  Tina Bowman
tina@bowmanchange.com

**Mountain Records (Summit Registers)**
- Mark Butski
  6891 Rio Vista
  Huntington Beach, CA 92647
  (562) 716-9067
  hbmark58@yahoo.com

**Newsletter Editor (The Desert Sage)**
- Greg Gerlach
  23933 Via Astuto
  Murrieta, CA 92562
  (626) 484-2897
  gregerq1955@verizon.net

**Webmaster**
- Jim Morehouse
  3272 River Glorious Lane
  Las Vegas, NV 89135-2123
  (702) 528-3712
  desertpeaksection@gmail.com

**Cover Photo Credit...**
go to Sandy Lara. The photo is of one of the many wildflower gardens that Peter and Sandy Lara saw on their way to Ruby Dome. Please see the story on pages 12-13 of this issue of *The Desert Sage*.

**The Desert Peaks Section**
explodes the desert mountain ranges of California and the Southwest, stimulates the interest of Sierra Club membership in climbing these ranges and aids in the conservation and preservation of desert wilderness areas.
Trips & Events  
November 2018 — October 2019

A DPS ground on the way to Indianhead, which is located in Anza Borrego. Photo credit: Sandy Lara.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Rock: Checkoff and Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOV 10-12</td>
<td>SAT-MON</td>
<td>DPS</td>
<td>Tucki Mountain, Telescope Peak and Porter Peak</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOV 17</td>
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<td>NOV 17-18</td>
<td>SAT-SUN</td>
<td>LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS</td>
<td>Navigation: Mission Creek Navigation Noodle</td>
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<td>SAT-SUN</td>
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<td>DEC 9</td>
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<td>DEC 9</td>
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<td>JAN 12-13</td>
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<td>FEB 2-3</td>
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<td>DPS, HPS, WTC</td>
<td>Corkscrew Peak and Tucki Mountain</td>
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<td>FEB 16-17</td>
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<td>DPS</td>
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<td>MARCH 10</td>
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<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Anchors and Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 19</td>
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<td>DPS</td>
<td>DPS Annual Banquet—Save the Date!!</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCT 9</td>
<td>WED</td>
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<td>OCT 26-27</td>
<td>SAT-SUN</td>
<td>LTC</td>
<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Anchors and Systems</td>
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♦ NOVEMBER 2-4  FRI-SUN  LTC  
Wilderness First Aid Course at Harwood Lodge: For 35+ years, the Wilderness First Aid Course (WFAC) has been training students in first aid and medical emergency management when regular response services are unavailable. The three-day, 26-hour course runs from 7:30 am Friday to 5:00 pm Sunday. Fee includes instruction, lodging and meals. Proof of CPR within previous 4 years required to enroll. Fee $295 (full refund until 9/28/18). For sign-up and more information, instructions and application, please go to [www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org](http://www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org). Event Organizers: Steve Schuster, [steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com](mailto:steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com), 714-315-1886.

♦ NOVEMBER 10-11  SAT-SUN  LTC  
M/E-R: Rock: Sheep Pass/Indian Cove Joshua Tree Rock Checkoff & Practice: M & E level rock checkoff and practice for LTC leadership candidates wishing to pursue a rating or practice skills. Also open to Advanced Mountaineering Program students wanting to solidify what they learned in the course. Practice Saturday and optionally checkoff Sunday. Restricted to active Sierra Club members with previous rock climbing experience. Climbing helmets and harnesses required. Email climbing resume to leader to apply. Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321 or [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)). Co-Leader: Daniel Richter (818-970-6737 or [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)).
NOVEMBER 10-12 SAT-MON  DPS
I: Tucki Mountain (6,726’), Telescope Peak (11,048’), and Porter Peak (9,101’): Join us in Death Valley over Veterans Day Weekend for any one or all of these interesting peaks. Saturday we will do a cross country climb to Tucki Mountain, 7.5 miles and 2,970’ gain RT, then drive to the Mahogany Flats Campground which is the trailhead for Telescope. (2WD can camp at Thorndike Campground, adding an extra 1.5 miles RT) Sunday we will enjoy a 14 mile and 3,200’ gain RT hike on trail to Telescope Peak, one of the seven DPS Emblem Peaks, from which one can see both the lowest (Badwater, -282 feet) and highest (Mount Whitney, 14,505 feet) points of the contiguous 48 states. As Monday is a holiday, we will continue our adventure with a short climb to Porter Peak, 2.5 miles and 2,100’ gain RT. High clearance, 4WD vehicles needed. Please send contact info, experience, current conditioning, and vehicle type to Leader: Tina Bowman tina@bowmanchange.com, Co-leaders: Sandy Lara and Peter Lara.

NOVEMBER 17 SAT  DPS
I: New York Butte (10,668’): Join us on this very strenuous, very steep climb of a high peak on the Inyo Crest east of Lone Pine. We’ll take a ridge-top variation of DPS Route A which is 8 miles and 6,500’ gain round trip, very steep with some loose talus and scree, a brutal climb that will likely start and end in the dark. Participants must be in top physical condition. High clearance 4WD required to get to the trailhead but the camping area is accessible by 2WD. Email Sandy Lara at s sperling1@verizon.net with contact, vehicle type and carpool info, recent conditioning, and experience for trip status and details. Leaders: Sandy Lara, Megan Birdsill, and Peter Lara.

NOVEMBER 17-18 SAT-SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Navigation: Mission Creek Preserve Navigation Noodle: Navigation Noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills, refresher, altimeter, homework and campfire. Sunday checkout. To participate, send email with contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Ann Pedreschi. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

DECEMBER 1-2 SAT-SUN  LTC
M/E-R: Alabama Hills Rock Check-off and Practice: M & E level rock checkoff and practice for LTC leadership candidates wishing to pursue a rating or practice skills. Also open to Advanced Mountaineering Program students wanting to solidify what they learned in the course. Practice Saturday and optional checkoff Sunday. Restricted to active Sierra Club members with previous rock climbing experience. Climbing helmets and harnesses required. Email climbing resume to leader to apply. Leader: Patrick Mckusky (pamckusky@att.net). Co-leaders: Daniel Richter (dan@danrichter.com) and Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

DECEMBER 9 SUN  DPS
O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: Join us at the home of Christine and Ron Bartell in Manhattan Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Christine at christinebartell@yahoo.com.

DECEMBER 9 SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Navigation: Warren Point Navigation Noodle: Navigation Noodle at Joshua Tree National Park for either checkoff or practice to satisfy the basic (I/M) level or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To participate, send email with contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written
The Desert Sage

November-December 2018

exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

- **JANUARY 12** SAT  
  **LTC**  
  **M/R: Navigation Workshop on 3rd Class Terrain:** This navigation workshop is limited to individuals participating in the Indian Cove Navigation Noodle and is intended to explore special navigation issues that arise on 3rd class terrain. Class 3 rock travel experience required. Restricted to Sierra Club members. Helmets and medical forms required; group size is limited. Send email, Sierra Club number, class 3 experience, conditioning, contact info to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Co-Leader: John Kieffer.

- **JANUARY 12-13** SAT-SUN  
  **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**  
  **I: Navigation: Indian Cove Navigation Noodle:** Navigation Noodle in Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday is for practice, skills, refresher, altimeter, homework and campfire. Sunday is for checkoff. Send email/sase with contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leadership Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

- **FEBRUARY 2-3** SAT-SUN  
  **DPS, HPS, WTC**  
  **I: Corkscrew Peak (5,804') and Tucki Mountain (6,726'):** Join us for a mid-winter weekend in the Mojave Desert at Death Valley National Park for a couple of moderately strenuous climbs of two classic desert peaks. Saturday expect about 7.0 RT miles and 3,200’ of gain for Corkscrew Peak, and on Sunday 8.8 RT miles and 2,700’ of gain for Tucki Mountain. Festive Happy Hour – Pot Luck Saturday night under nearly moonless night skies!!! High clearance, 4WD vehicles are required to reach the trailhead for Tucki Mountain. This DPS outing is co-sponsored by WTC and HPS. Email Mat Kelliher at mkelliher746@gmail.com with contact, vehicle type and carpool info, recent conditioning, and experience for trip status and details. Leaders: Mat Kelliher and Neal Robbins

- **FEBRUARY 16-17** SAT-SUN  
  **DPS**  
  **I: Nopah Range High Point (6,394') and Corkscrew Peak (5,804'):** Join us for two peaks in the eastern Death Valley ranges. Saturday we'll climb Nopah Range High Point, either 10 miles, 4,200' gain RT or 14 miles, 4,000' gain RT, depending on the route we choose (If it has rained recently, we'll go for the longer route, which doesn't involve driving through a mud pit). Sunday we'll enjoy a jaunt up Corkscrew Peak, 8 miles, 3,300' gain RT. Email Leaders with contact and recent conditioning info. Leaders: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmanchange.com) and Gary Schenk (gary@hbfun.org).

- **MARCH 10** SUN  
  **DPS**  
  **O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Tom Sumner in Sylmar for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Tom at Locornnr@aol.com.

- **APRIL 14** SUN  
  **DPS**  
  **O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Larry and Barbee Tidball in Long Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Larry or Barbee at lbtidball@verizon.net.

- **APRIL 17** WED  
  **LTC**  
  **E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Knots and Basic Safety Systems:** First of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This will be an indoor workshop held in the evening reviewing ropes, harnesses,
helmets, basic climbing gear, and knots in preparation for later workshops. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see http://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

♦ APRIL 20 SAT E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Belay Skills: Second of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This workshop will focus on belaying and related principles starting with standard sport climbing all the way up to advanced techniques to move large groups across dangerous terrain. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

♦ APRIL 27 SAT LTC E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Rappelling: Third of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This workshop will focus on rappelling using a variety of techniques with a heavy emphasis on redundancy, safety, and efficiency. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

♦ MAY 4-5 SAT-SUN LTC E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Anchors and Real World Application: Fourth of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing, both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on building anchors and applying previously learned skills in real world climbing situations and multiple participants. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

♦ MAY 19 SUN DPS O: DPS Annual Banquet: Save the date for this great event. Additional info to follow in a future issue of The Desert Sage as well as on the DPS website.

♦ OCTOBER 9 WED LTC E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Knots and Basic Safety Systems: First of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This will be an indoor workshop held in the evening reviewing ropes, harnesses, helmets, basic climbing gear, and knots in preparation for later workshops. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see http://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).
OCTOBER 12 SAT
E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Belay Skills: Second of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This workshop will focus on belaying and related principles starting with standard sport climbing all the way up to advanced techniques to move large groups across dangerous terrain. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountainingprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

OCTOBER 19 SAT
E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Rappelling: Third of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This workshop will focus on rappelling using a variety of techniques with a heavy emphasis on redundancy, safety, and efficiency. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountainingprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

OCTOBER 26-27 SAT-SUN
E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Anchors and Real World Application: Fourth of four climbing workshops aimed at developing skills for 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing, both as a participant or a future Sierra Club M and E leader. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on building anchors and applying previously learned skills in real world climbing situations and multiple participants. All participants must have prior roped climbing experience and commit to all four classes. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. the Monday two weeks after the final previous class outing. Please see website for cost. To register, please see: http://www.advancedmountainingprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

In order to participate in one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see http://sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or call 415-977-5528.

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. In addition, participants assume the risks associated with this travel. CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

THE REVISED DPS LIST IS NOW AVAILABLE!

The 30th edition of the DPS Peak list is now available. Please visit the DPS website at http://desertpeaks.org/ to download a copy. You can also request that a copy be mailed to you, for free, by contacting the DPS Merchandiser, Laura Newman, at desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com.
**DPS Membership Report**

*By Ron Bartell*

**Membership Summary**

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**Activity Report**

**New Members**

- Scott Barnes  
  Smith Mtn
- Rod Kieffer  
  Signal Pk
- Iris Ma  
  Picacho Pk

**Renewed Lapsed Members**

- Larry Goetz
- Tom McDonnell
- Don Weiss

**Sustaining Renewals**

- Jay Frederking  
  3 years
- Larry & Barbee Tidball  
  1 year

**Renewals**

- Mary Ann & Jeff Bonds  
  1 year
- Daryn Dodge  
  1 year
- Mat & Tanya Roton Kelliher  
  1 year
- John McCully  
  2 years

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**Treasurer’s Report**

*By Laura Newman*

DPS Account Summary from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018

**Income**

- Banquet Silent Auction  
  $579.00
- Banquet Ticket Sales  
  $1,685.00
- Donations  
  $130.00
- Membership/Subscriptions  
  $1,745.00
- Merchandise  
  $90.00
- Outings Income  
  $120.00

**Total Income**  
$4,349.00

**Expenses**

- Banquet Expenses  
  $2,433.86
- Donation to Charity  
  $120.00
- Merchandise Expenses  
  $417.11
- Sage Expenses  
  $739.56
- Sales Tax  
  $15.08
- Web Page Expenses  
  $191.76

**Total Expenses**  
$3,917.37

**Pay Pal Balance**  
$9.41

**Checking Account Balance**  
$3,195.75

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**SAGE PHOTOS AND REPORTS NEEDED!**

The Desert SAGE needs articles and photographs, including cover photos, that pertain to outdoor activities of interest to Desert Peak Sections members and subscribers. Please note that trip reports should include trip dates and identify trip participants and photos should indicate when and where the photo was taken, what it is of, who is in it, and who took it. Please email SAGE submissions to gregrg1955@verizon.net no later than the second Sunday of even numbered months.

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**Ruby Dome Access Update**

A wildfire has closed the trailhead access to Ruby Dome via the DPS Standard Route from the Spring Creek Campground. You may be able to find out more information by contacting the Spring Creek Property Owners Association at (702) 753-6295, Monday–Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Please see Sandy Lara’s Outings Chair column on page 10 for additional information.
Hey Climbers! Our main season is here! Cooler temperatures mean we can do those peaks that are excessively hot during the summer. However, keep in mind that fall brings transitional weather that can include thunderstorms, rain, hail, and snow. Always check the weather report for the area you intend to go and be prepared for surprises.

We are starting to get a line-up of trips. Leaders, will you consider leading “just one trip” to help fill out our schedule? It’s fun and your participants will appreciate you! Remember, if you don’t plan, you don’t go, so you miss out on the fun you would have had.

I’m sorry to report that there was a recent fire in the beautiful area from the Ruby Dome trailhead up to Griswold Lake (this is the area that is pictured on the cover of this issue of The Desert Sage). Laura Newman’s (our treasurer) mother lives in Lamoille a few miles from the trailhead. Laura reports: “They have closed Lamoille Canyon at the bottom until November 18th as the guard rails all melted. They are hoping to put wands up before the snow comes for the snow mobiles to still be able to use the area this winter. The trail from the trailhead to Griswold Lake is completely burned and covered in ash. The area north of Griswold Lake to Ruby Dome is presumably fine and likely untouched by the fire. There are plans now to wait until next spring to determine what clean up will be done and when. I would suggest any one to call the ranger. I’m also happy to find out from the locals as well”.

Happy climbing…and please write up those trips and send them to me or post on Campfire! Go out and be safe!

Sandy Lara
William T. Vollmann’s two volume work entitled Carbon Ideologies has two parts: No Immediate Danger, and No Good Alternative. Viking. $40 each, and both at about 600 pages.

The biggest question Vollmann proposes is whether our civilization can survive the extraordinary demands that we have made on our planet. As energy use has doubled and redoubled and as the byproducts of the production and use of energy have had the effects of trapping heat in our atmosphere and variously polluting our water, air, and soil, the next biggest question is how soon and in what form a sharp downturn in the livability of our planet will occur.

Volume one, No Immediate Danger covers the effects of manufacturing, farming and nuclear energy, and it took him into the restricted zone one mile from Japan’s ruined Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Volume two, No Good Alternative covers coal, oil, and natural gas.

The audience for his book, he says, is not today’s reader, but those in the devastated future. He repeatedly refers to the time “when I was alive.” He also discusses the enormous amounts of energy that have gone into the production of all the things that we use and the things that we do. He asks dozens of times, “What was the work for?” In addition, he scrupulously catalogs all the major unsolved problems that make up the juggernaut of climate change. Ultimately he is addressing human behavior and human nature. He asks how “we could not only sustain but accelerate the rise of atmospheric carbon levels, all the while expressing confusion, powerlessness and resentment.”

This book is not a read for the faint of heart or the easily discouraged, but it is an important book of a new type. It is a hard look at where we are with regard to climate change, and demonstrates the seriousness of our collective dilemma.
Far and High—The Summer of 2018
By Sandy Lara

My husband, Peter, and I have gotten hooked on the DPS list. At first, we were dabbling here and there as trips would be posted and we had availability. Then we both retired, bought a Four Wheel Pop-Up Camper to put on a lifted F-350, and it became too easy to go to remote trailheads and climb desert peaks. Initially, the peaks were combined with travel to national parks and other interesting places, but when we suddenly got about half way through The List, the reality that we could finish it lit a burner under us to go for it.

This past summer we planned to spend some time climbing in Colorado and visiting national and state parks up to South Dakota and back through Yellowstone. But we also “needed” some DPS peaks that were best climbed in summer. We wanted to get the farther and higher peaks done while the weather and trailhead access were conducive. So, we combined the two.

We started out going to the far north peak of Mount Patterson (11,673’). This peak is up by Bridgeport, on the eastern side of Highway 395. We had one participant on our trip, Anne Rolls who lives near Mammoth and is a DPS list finisher—so who was leading whom? We had a gorgeous day on our walk up an old road to the summit where a US flag was flying in the stiff breeze. The views were great and we saw a lot of white lupine, something I had never seen before.

The next day we drove to the Route C trailhead for Boundary Peak (13,140’, Nevada highpoint) and Montgomery Peak (13,441’, DPS Emblem peak). We tried to rendezvous with Jorge and Diana Estrada but with fires and floods across multiple states they were not able to make it when we were there. The trailhead is on a saddle so we carefully aimed our truck into the wind so we wouldn’t be constantly broadsided all night. We started hiking up in the morning on the straightforward route to Boundary Peak and were the first to summit that day. Meanwhile, several others had made it to the trailhead after us and we watched them come up the ridge to Boundary Peak as we were traversing over to Montgomery Peak and back. None of the others did this fun traverse, apparently just interested in getting the Nevada state highpoint. They missed out! Montgomery Peak is higher and more spectacular than Boundary peak (the latter really more like a bump on the ridge to Montgomery Peak). The traverse is the best part of these peaks! When we arrived down at the camper we decided to spend another night there before moving on. What happened next was the most amazing thunderstorm that we have ever experienced in our camper! The lightning was coming every few seconds, the thunder was powerfully loud (even with earplugs) and the rain came down in sheets. We were glad to have a roof over our heads.

Our original plan was to climb Mount Dubois after a rest/travel day, but the forecast was for heavy thunderstorms so we skipped it and spent the day driving to northeastern Nevada to do Ruby Dome (11,387’), which is the farthest peak on The List from the LA area. The couple of occasions I have had to drive I-80 through Elko never gave a clue to the beauty hidden in the Ruby Mountains. They are spectacular! The Rubies apparently create their own weather and get quite a bit of snow in the winter. The route to Ruby Dome starts along a fast-flowing stream that provides water for thousands of wildflowers. It was a beautiful garden. I spent a lot of time taking flower and scenery photos, especially on the way up to Griswold Lake. If this area was in southern California, it would have been packed with people. Few other hikers were on the trail, and after the lake we saw only one. Above the lake, there isn’t much of a path. Peter and I are M-Rated leaders, so we enjoy route finding. We deviated to our own routes (does this happen with you and your spouse?) and met at the summit where we had fantastic views and the company of hundreds of butterflies. I’ve learned that butterflies living spread out in large wild areas would have trouble finding a mate, so they go to the tops of mountains to find each other. Pretty cool! On our descent we spoke with some backpackers who were going to stay at Griswold Lake and do a bit of fishing. Such a nice place to be! So uncrowded!

We had never been to Great Basin National Park and were interested to learn more about it. We got there in the late afternoon and were concerned that the Wheeler Peak
Campground (just under 10,000’) would be full, but we drove up anyway. We were pleased to find it was only about 2/3 full (in July!), so we had several sites to choose from. There was a fire ban so campfires weren’t allowed. The air was clear and fresh. We had a great view of Wheeler Peak (13,063’) from our campsite. The Lehman Caves (really only one cave, but its official name is plural) are near the entrance to the park, down at about 6,800’. The Park Service runs tours for a fee. Most tours are sold out, so it is important to book on-line ahead of time. I had gotten reservations for the following afternoon, which left the morning free to wander some trails to alpine lakes…in the middle of the desert.

Great Basin National Park is like a mini high-altitude island in the middle of the huge Great Basin that encompasses most of Nevada and Utah, as well as parts of Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, and California. The Great Basin is a large, self-contained drainage basin in the rain shadow of the Sierra, so it is mostly arid. However, with the higher altitudes around Wheeler Peak come snow, cooler temperatures, and alpine vegetation such as pine trees and even some bristlecone pines so you don’t have the feeling you are in the desert.

We took the Lehman Cave(s) tour which was interesting, but also disheartening. When the cave was first discovered, people would go in and squirm around to farther passages. Once they reached one room, they would paint their names on the ceiling or walls. This was a common thing to do at the time. As it would do more harm than good to try to remove the paint, the park service has decided to preserve the area for historical purposes instead. The names are still there for all to view. When the cave was first opened up to tourism, visitors were encouraged to break off a piece of the cave (stalactite, stalagmite, or other) to take home as a souvenir and to show their friends to hopefully increase business for the cave. Thus, unlike other caves I have seen that are well-preserved, there were many broken features in this one. It’s still worth seeing but go in knowing you will see this damage.

The next day we walked out from our campsite to climb Wheeler Peak. The normal trailhead is found on the road to the campground and is a couple hundred feet higher than the campground itself. We took a connector trail from the campground to this main trail. The trail is straightforward and goes all the way to the top. There were other hikers, but again not the numbers that we would see if there were a similar location in southern California. We were past the wildflower peak now. When we passed tree line the views opened up in all directions. On the summit, we chatted with people from many other US states. While Boundary Peak is technically 77’ higher than Wheeler Peak, Wheeler would have been a nicer peak to represent Nevada’s high point.

Peter and I continued on our larger itinerary at this point (Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming) but it was always nagging at us that we had skipped Mount Dubois. At 13,559’ and with a long, poor dirt road to the trailhead, we really needed to get it before summer was over as we had other plans for the fall. So, we decided to climb it on our way home. We were also interested in climbing in the Rubies again, so from Yellowstone National Park we stopped to climb Thomas Peak (11,320’), which is on the Great Basin Peak list (oh no, another list!), and then we headed to western Nevada to climb Mount Dubois. Our rig looks like it might be able to go anywhere, but it is long, wide, high, and heavy, so some of these roads present a challenge. We made it to the trailhead and prepared to start hiking at first light. Mount Dubois is among the longest day hikes we have taken to DPS peaks at 12 miles and 5,800’ gain. It starts out with a stream crossing on logs, then through brush, then up a scree gully about 2,000’ to a ridge. That was your warmup. Then you can get started. You follow the ridge for a few miles, dodging or climbing rock outcrops, and working your way around a very large mile-long lump. Then you get to climb up to a cross ridge. At this point, it is an easy mile walk to the summit, but you have to find the right bump. Then you get to turn around and go down it all. Can you tell it wasn’t my favorite peak? Not all of them can be. We had “weather” going on all around us, but only one or two drops actually landed on us. Fun to watch and not be inconvenienced! We had a great sense of satisfaction completing the six “far and high” peaks we had planned to climb over the summer. Now to plan and climb the next batch!
Death Valley National Park  
By James Barlow  
March 2018

What can I say? Since I moved away from the desert, I have missed it, especially during the dark and dreary Washington winters. So, with the support of my wife Becca, I headed to SoCal and met up with some DPS friends for a week and hiked some peaks, from well-trodden listed peaks, to the more obscure…

Owlhead Benchmark, March 12, 2018

Participants: Keith Christensen, Craig Barlow, Daryn Dodge, Kathy Rich, John Ide, Sam Hahn, Dean Gaudet, and James Barlow

This peak had been on my radar for a few years as it is pretty remote in southern Death Valley National Park, and has quite a bit of topographical prominence (1,994 feet, almost a P2k). A nice bonus is that not all that many peakbaggers have it. Many thanks to Sue and Vic Henney for sharing some of their beta about this hike as they had summited this peak in 2013. It was a worthy objective for many, so we mustered the largest group of the trip on a pleasant Monday morning for a nice walk through the desert. This peak is accessed off Hwy 127 via two major dirt roads heading west into the desert for quite a long distance, Saratoga Springs Road and Owl Hole Spring Road. Saratoga Springs Road is passable to any vehicle (when dry). Sam and I made it out there late Sunday evening following some HPS fun in the snow of the San Gabriel mountains with my son Aidan earlier in the day. Keith arrived not long after us and Craig joined us around 6am at the intersection of Saratoga Spring and Owl Hole Spring Roads to take Keith’s Jeep SUV further west to meet the rest of the crew who had driven to the trailhead the evening before. Owl Hole Spring Road is passable to any vehicle to the junction with New Deal Mine Road where the nicer road goes through a gate into Fort Irwin and the road gets a bit rougher as it heads into the national park. It only required clearance, not 4WD. We met John, Dean, Kathy, and Daryn at our trailhead: Point 785T on the old topo where an old road heads north towards a dry lake bed.

After assembling the group, we were off north for a few miles of flat to slightly downhill walking to Lost Lake. We would guess that few humans have seen this special place. From the edge of the lakebed, we worked our way northeast towards a wide, mel- low ridge, which cuts up to the main north-south ridge of the mountain range. As we departed the lake bed, we saw burros in the distance and what looked like water from the recent rain, though mirages can be a thing in the desert. The walk was pleasant open desert, with mostly mesquite and nothing prickly or thick. The group got a bit spread out on the ascent to the main ridge, but re-grouped at the small saddle between points 1234T and 1209T for the final push to the summit. As expected, a wonderful view of Death Valley National Park awaited us on top. Snow-capped peaks of the Panamint Range were visible beyond DPS favorites Needle and Manly Peaks. Charleston Peak was spotted to the east with snow atop and we are all pretty sure we figured out which prominent bump was Avawatz Mountain to the southeast.

The usual group photos that Keith loves atop the peak were taken and I got a good shot with my big brother Craig to share with our parents, happy to see us re-united on top of a peak in the desert. The descent was down into a gully just to the north of the broad ridge we had ascended. While this gave the opportunity to find some shade on the warming day, it was a bit more out of the way and the ridge would have been fine to ascend. The group crossed the dry lake bed on our return hike while John went ahead to the cars. Overall, it was a longer day as far as mileage, but easily completed within the March daylight hours.

The joys of hiking in the desert are seeing old friends, making new friends, and linking different friends together for future hikes. During the hike, John and Dean worked out a plan for both of them to join forces for an upcoming Baboquivari Peak ascent for later in the week. It was also my first time hiking with Craig and Dean, and hopefully not my last! Daryn, Craig, and Kathy departed for their homes, while Dean was headed towards Arizona for more peaks. John would do his own thing on Tuesday and meet us again for Manly Peak on Wednesday. Sam, Keith, and I continued onward towards Pinto Peak near Towne Pass. If the DPS is looking for a replacement peak for de-listed Maturango Peak, Argus Peak, or Navajo Mountain, Owlhead Benchmark is a true gem of desert wilderness and certainly worth the effort to reach its seldom-visited summit.
Pinto Peak, March 13, 2018

Participants: Sam Hahn, Keith Christensen, and James Barlow

Pinto Peak is notable due to its 2,188 feet of prominence and more importantly, it’s a pleasant hike from Towne Pass where one can gaze up towards Wildrose and Telescope Peaks or down towards Stovepipe Wells. It seems that the majority of the hiking parties ascend this one from Towne Pass, which is a great starting point thanks to its paved road and wide shoulders with plenty of room for parking. Keith, Sam, and I set out not long after sunrise as we had a bit of driving later in the day to meet the Manly/Striped Butte group in the afternoon. The initial walk across the wide open desert and the trick is finding the nice ridge to make the initial steep ascent towards the peak. The key ridge is located almost exactly due east of NPS B455 / Point 4962 on the topo map. If you check out our track (or tracks from Eric Kassan and Dean Gaudet) on peakbagger.com, you will be just fine. Once past the initial steep section, stick with the main ascending ridge as it turns southeast and then east, rising to a plateau and continuing southeast over a minor, but wide and mellow sub-peak. From a shallow notch, a final ridge strikes out east to the wide open and gentle summit. The register is full of the usual suspects from the DPS and the prominence worlds. From here, Sam and I had a good view of the north side of Telescope Peak, a possible Saturday hike, and decided that the high snow up there could be quite icy and dangerous. An easy enough objective with crampons and ice axe, another story entirely in hiking sneakers and trekking poles. After the summit lunch and photo op, we reversed our ascent tracks and made it back to Towne Pass at a very reasonable hour.

Following this fine hike, the three of us met up with Richard Carey, John Ide, and Laura Newman, making our way up past Warm Springs to camp at the edge of the Striped Butte Valley in order to accomplish our two peak day the next morning. After two nights sleeping under the stars, Sam and I opted to set up a tent here as there was a bit of rain as we ended our drive not long after sunset.

Striped Butte and Manly Peak, March 14, 2018

Participants: John Ide, Richard Carey, Laura Newman, Sam Hahn, Keith Christensen, and James Barlow

After a comfortable night in the tent, we all packed up and consolidated into just a few vehicles for the drive to Striped Butte. Richard would join us for this short hike before setting out for a solo ascent of Gold Hill, located at the north end of Striped Butte Valley, while the rest of the group headed for DPS and P2k Manly Peak. Striped Butte’s claim to fame is the coloration of rock bands that many DPS hikers have had the opportunity of viewing from nearby Needle and Manly Peaks. I had personally witnessed these bands before in November 2011 and looked forward to hiking up this seemingly steep, yet quite accessible ridge. From Eric Kassan and Dean Gaudet) on peakbagger.com, you will find the key ridge. But to the east where for protection on the ascent. John spotted me for the initial moves as I hopped on to the summit block on the left side, while most squeezed up the chimney. I set an anchor up top, using quite a bit of webbing to sling the summit and belayed John up peak. A dirt road leads to the mellow west ridge where the group made short work of the uphill and soon found ourselves on the summit looking at the summit of Manly Peak, enveloped in a cloud much to our chagrin. We parted ways with Richard upon our return to the cars, though Sam and I would see him later this evening as we had plans for a peak together the following day.

With Keith’s Jeep, we were able to make short work of the road leading to Quail Spring. Keith and I had a previous attempt on Manly Peak from November, 2011 from Russell Camp. We had made it to the summit block, but were thwarted by icy conditions and lack of a rope which made the summit block a bit more than we were willing to accept for our safety threshold. Since then, it had been a topic of discussion on nearly every hike together from a slew of desert peaks in 2012 to Devil’s Crag’s in 2015 to our epic Catalina mountain bike in 2016. Enough was enough, Manly Peak needed to get on to the calendar so we could clean up the “attempt” on our record. We brought a 30m rope, some gear for the anchor, and a pair of climbing shoes to better stick to the rock for the lead climber.

The initial ascent from Quail Spring is steep and sandy, but never too painful. Once we crested the ridge, it was a bit windy, but not too bad. John and I struck out ahead in order to get the gear set up for the summit block climb. As it turns out, we made a mountain out of a mole hill. While we experienced icy conditions in 2011, this day was chilly but dry. I slipped on my climbing shoes and tied in for the lead, not that there was anywhere for protection on the ascent. John spotted me for the initial moves as I hopped on to the summit block on the left side, while most squeezed up the chimney. I set an anchor up top, using quite a bit of webbing to sling the summit and belayed John up peak. A dirt road leads to the mellow west ridge where the group made short work of the uphill and soon found ourselves on the summit looking at the summit of Manly Peak, enveloped in a cloud much to our chagrin. We parted ways with Richard upon our return to the cars, though Sam and I would see him later this evening as we had plans for a peak together the following day.

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Trip Reports - continued

after me. Next up was Sam. As Keith free-soloed up the chimney, John and Sam requested to descend as it was quite windy and cold up top and both were in shorts. I belayed them both as they down climbed. Keith waited for Laura to join us on the summit, so we could have partial summit victory shots with two waves of climbers. All three of us then made our way down the chimney, thankful for the multiple webbing slings at the top of the chimney for the rappel down. We all cleared the summit area to find a more sheltered location for our lunch in the trees just a few minutes below the top. We toasted Keith’s success in this unofficial DPS list finish.

Our drive out was enjoyable as we had plenty of time to explore the cabin near Anvil Spring and the old resort at Warm Spring. Sam and I bathed in the warm water as we still had a few days of hiking ahead of us and had the scent from a few days already spent hiking in the desert. John parted ways to head for Baboquivari Peak; Keith was headed back to Long Beach for work; and Laura would be meeting up with us again on Friday for New York Mountains High Point in Mojave National Preserve. Sam and I split off Warm Springs Road at the mouth of the canyon and where Richard Carey was waiting for us and took our vehicles south towards Anvil Spring Canyon for the next day. Due to the wind, we opted to camp down in the wash south of Point 434T on the topo map. Had it not been windy, we would have camped on the plateau NW of this point. This would be of significance the following afternoon…

Anvil Spring Point, March 15, 2018

Participants: Richard Carey, Sam Hahn, and James Barlow

Just before sunrise, we were up and at it, consolidating into Richard’s truck for the drive to Anvil Spring Canyon. The road down into the canyon is best left for hiking as there is a large boulder blocking progress not far below the ridge where we parked. This means 220ish feet of gain on the hike out, but that beats rolling a truck over the edge of an old mining road! We left the truck on the final ridge overlooking Anvil Spring Canyon, a few hundred yards from our previous night’s camp. The descent into the canyon was on a road, so it was easy going. At the first major fork near the word “wash” on the topo map, we headed south in order to make this into a loop hike. Due to the recent rain, the desert flowers were alive, and the wash was covered in yellow flowers at many points along our hike up. It made for a beautiful contrast with the desert rock.

Lost Spring was quite the oasis of green plants and life as we approached it. There are tall grasses and even some minor bush-whacking to make it past. Our feet even almost got wet! Past the spring, we eventually headed up a canyon that has a relatively sheer wall on the west side, eventually making our way up on to some steeper class 2 terrain that picked its way up the south face of the peak. We were treated with nice views of the north side of Sugarloaf Peak, another higher prominence desert peak that has been on my radar for about 7 years or so. Richard had Sugarloaf from 20ish years earlier, hence our decision to join up for the hike of Anvil Spring Point.

From the summit, we made our way along the main ridge, heading west, then northwest, then north. I would recommend this route for an ascent looking to avoid the steeper, looser terrain we encountered on the south side. The downside of this route is that you cannot then enjoy Lost Spring on your hike, which was quite a treat. On the descent, we actually missed Mesquite Spring, rejoining the main canyon just below it. The hike out the main Anvil Spring Canyon was uneventful.

This area had been of interest to me since I read about a German family that attempted to drive from the vicinity of DPS Needle Peak down Anvil Spring Canyon to Death Valley. They perished in this endeavor. I believe it was discussed in an issue of the Sage in the 2010-2012 timeframe. Overall, this was a great hike with a peakbagging legend. We covered a little over 13 miles and the adventure was not yet over!

Upon return to the previous evening’s camp spot, we loaded up the rental 2wd Rav4 and immediately had problems ascending out of the wash. The way they make these cars now, the tires won’t even spin, they just do nothing if they don’t have grip. We talked over our options. A less preferred option was to drive the Rav4 down to Anvil Spring Canyon and then down the main wash to the spot where the wash intersects Warm Spring Road. Nobody liked this option… Sam and I walked up the road and cleared as many of the large rocks as we could. Richard backed down the hill and we joined our 2 vehicles together with my 30m climbing rope. Luckily this rope is a bit older and was pretty close to retirement at this point. The initial tug ended up with Richard’s truck spinning its tires. A ruling start was in order. Sam took up position behind the rental for a push and I kept the pedal to the metal with it in 1st gear. At no fewer than
half a dozen places was the rope employed to pull this terrible vehicle out and up the hill. Once it flattened out up top, we ended up having to cut the rope as the figure 8’s had really cinched down. This rope was officially done for, but far cheaper than explaining to Hertz at LAX where their Rav4 ended up. When Sam paid me his half for the rental on Venmo, he aptly named the transaction “Richard’s dead weight” as this vehicle was barely more than dead weight on the drag up the hill out of the wash…

We called Adam Walker once we had a cell signal from our dinner location, the Greek place in Baker, asking him to bring his rope for the New York Mountains High Point the following day as he would be departing from his apartment in Las Vegas in the morning and would still have access to his gear before meeting us. We parted ways with Richard who set up camp near Warm Spring Road as he had plans for a few peaks the following day in southern Death Valley.

New York Mountains High Point, March 16, 2018

Participants: Laura Newman, Adam Walker, Sam Hahn, and James Barlow

We met Laura at the intersection of Ivanpah Road and the dirt road near Lecyr Well late in the evening. After letting her know we had arrived, we made camp under the stars, enjoying the higher elevations and crisp temperatures of Mojave National Preserve. Adam joined us just before first light, driving from his place in Las Vegas early in the morning. Success was not assured on this peak as it had a fresh dusting of snow up top where the scrambling is encountered. Adam and I had a September 2017 failure on Spire Mountain, Washington where we hiked 4,900 feet of a 5,100 feet gain route to get skunked by snow on a class 4 pitch, placing pro once or twice on the way up while Adam belayed me. The rest of the group joined me one by one. Adam went over to the secondary summit first, and we all joined him there. We covered both summits just in case one was higher, though the register is on the first summit. Between them was a bit of dry class 2, so no big deal after our snowy scramble up!

As I packed up the rope following the group’s descent, Laura and Adam headed for the lower crux (likely not a crux at all in dry conditions), and placed a sling for us all to use as an extra handhold to lower ourselves. We all opted for an alternate descent over Peak 1982T as the ridge between New York Benchmark and this unnamed peak looked quite nice. I would actually recommend this as a route for future hikers as it was more pleasant than the climb out of Keystone Canyon. I also love to run a GPS track over a peak with less than 300 feet of prominence (and unlisted) and not log it on the Peakbagger.com website, leaving it red. New York Benchmark is in the Zdon book, so that one had to turn green for me despite its low prom…. The hike over the sub-peak was quite pleasant, and we found the usual Lilley/McLeod register on top, with more entries than you would expect. From just below this sub-peak an old road took us right down to the main Keystone Canyon trail and then out to the car.

This peak was a fitting end to a fine trip in the desert! We covered DPS peaks, prominent peaks, and just plan obscure peaks on this journey. All were worthy of future repeat, though New York stood out due to the challenge we faced with the snow and Owlhead stood out because of the large, fun group to chat with and the peak’s relative obscurity. With all of the beautiful peaks that are not on the DPS list that my list finisher friends haven’t hiked, allowing us to share time in the desert together discussing the finer points of P-factor, why I am glad Navajo Mountain was de-listed, Canadian ultras, and plans for the next hike, I seem to be making slow progress on the DPS list…. I can’t wait for my next desert trip!
Mount Moriah (12,067’) sits in the northern section of the Snake Range located in eastern Nevada. The peak is part of the Mount Moriah Wilderness Area established in 1989. Separated from the better-known Wheeler Peak in the southern section of the Snake Range, Mount Moriah receives fewer visitors and provides greater solitude.

There are numerous ways to access Mount Moriah. We started at the Big Canyon Trailhead on the mountain’s west side. This is the shortest route into the wilderness; however, the 14 mile road to this point is rough, making a high clearance vehicle for the drive a must.

Plenty of camping space is available at the trailhead. The trailhead, bordered by aspen, has a view of the peak’s northwest face, plus provides a nice viewpoint for starry Nevada skies.

Bob Ralston, Ruby the dog and I left camp early and followed the trail as it drops into Big Canyon, then up as it switchbacks to a large flat plateau called The Table. This route passes through aspen, fir, and limber pine, ending with a stand of bristlecone pine prior to the treeless The Table. From The Table a short cross-country climb leads to a nice use trail that contours along the mountain’s east side with a final scree scramble to the top.

Mount Moriah is sandwiched between the Snake and Spring Valleys. The summit provides views down the numerous rugged canyons leading to these valleys, plus a sweeping vista of surrounding ranges. Even with lingering distant smoke, we enjoyed great views in all directions. The view south to Great Basin National Park, displayed Wheeler Peak and other Snake Range peaks. Looking west across Spring Valley provides views of the Schell Range and looking east provides views of western Utah Ranges. We lingered on the peak to enjoy these phenomenal views.

Heading down I spotted a lonely Blue Columbine in the scree slope. These beautiful delicate flowers always seem out of place in these dry rocky habitats.

On our return to camp, we were serenaded by bugling elk in Big Canyon. We camped here a second night to relish the solitude, starry sky, and another memorable adventure in the Great Basin!
Although Nevada’s Virginia City lies just beyond the northwestern boundary of the DPS peak list, the town played a huge role in the development of the desert west. Growing rapidly after the Comstock Lode—a rich deposit of silver and gold ore—was discovered nearby in 1858, at its peak population in 1873, Virginia City had a population of over 25,000 residents and was called the richest city in America.

Many of the area’s early settlers came from California’s mother lode country, veterans of the gold rush ten years earlier. The value of the Comstock’s production, most all of which was purchased by the federal government for use in coinage, totaled about $400 million—big money in those days and somewhere between $10 billion and $15 billion in today’s dollars. Mine owners who made their fortunes in Nevada spent much of their wealth in San Francisco. The Bank of California, for example, awash with money from the mines, provided funding for building the city’s financial district. The economic output of the lode supported Nevada’s bid for statehood, aided the Northern cause during the American Civil War, and eventually flooded the world monetary markets. More simply, Virginia City and the Comstock lode changed the history of the American West.

THE BIG BONANZA (1876), Dan DeQuille

Dan DeQuille is a nom de plume—and a clever play on words. The birth name of the Big Bonanza’s author was William Wright, a man born in Knox County, Ohio, raised and married in West Liberty, Iowa, and who in 1857 set out alone to find fame and fortune in California. In his introduction to the 1959 Borzoi Books reprint of The Big Bonanza, California historian Oscar Lewis wrote, “For the next year or two (Wright) lived the usual nomadic life of the prospector, first in the camps of the Sierra foothills, later in the Mono Lake region...Then, in 1859, the silver discoveries along the Comstock drew him, along with thousands of others into the steep and barren canyons northeast of Lake Tahoe, and there he remained for close to four decades.”

Wright had little success as a miner, but his fascination with the mines and the miners, and his early aptitude for newspaper work—he had a “facile pen and a liking for printer’s ink”—eventually determined his profession. In early 1862, he became a staff member of Virginia City’s Territorial Enterprise, where he remained until the paper passed out of existence in 1893.

DeQuille’s life was altered forever in August 1862, when he met a fellow writer who was destined for future fame and wealth. As Lewis explains, “a young man, newly arrived from a ninety-mile trek across the desert, strolled into the Enterprise office and was put to work. The stranger was Samuel Clemens—not until the next year did he adopt his nom de plume, Mark Twain—who had been knocking about the Nevada camps since the previous summer and, having failed as a miner, was hopeful of supporting himself at journalism.” DeQuille, age thirty-three, and Clemens, age twenty-seven, became friends, rooming together for a time during Clemens’ almost two-year stint with the paper. Clemens, more aggressive than DeQuille, went on to establish his own nom de plume and gain world-wide fame. DeQuille meanwhile plodded on in Nevada. “turning out his stint of copy day after day, as dependable and unexciting as a draft horse.”

Thirteen years later, in 1875, as DeQuille considered writing a book describing his by then world-famous hometown, Twain was having a similar idea regarding his old Nevada pal. Indeed, in the fall of 1876, thanks to Twain’s persuasion and DeQuille’s use of Twain’s Hartford, Connecticut home as a study, The Big Bonanza was published. Alas, as Lewis noted: “The probabilities are that the total number of copies printed was less than ten thousand...If Dan received the five per cent royalty Twain had promised, his financial return could not have exceeded
The initial discovery of gold or silver in the Virginia City area was made in the spring of 1850 by Mormon emigrants panning nearby streams. Unhappy with their results, as soon as the snow melted in the Sierra, they continued to California. By the mid-1850s, however, several prospectors were again active in the area, eking out livings by using “rockers,” machines that sifted out gold dust with a motion similar to that used in panning. The big strike occurred on or about June 1, 1859, when three men, including H. T. P. “Pancake” Comstock, prospecting in an area below present-day Virginia City, discovered a “stratum of rich decomposed ore...a great bed of black sulphureret (sulfide) of silver...filled with spangles of gold.” What they had found was the edge of the Comstock lode, a bed of several exceedingly rich ore bodies.

As was usual for most boomtowns, Virginia City, perched at a 6,200-foot elevation on the eastern slopes of Mount Davidson, rapidly became a beehive of activity. By 1861, intricate tunnels and shafts honeycombed the ground under and around the town posing the question, how do we keep the ever-growing excavations from caving in? A German engineering consultant, Philip Deidesheimer, provided an answer by proposing a system of “square sets,” each of which would be a box of 12-inch square posts, 6 feet high, and 5 feet long. This solution, however, required so much lumber that suitable timber soon became in short supply. As DeQuille noted: “For a distance of fifty or sixty miles all the hills of the eastern slope of the Sierras have been to a great extent denuded of trees of every kind...Not less than eighty million feet of timber and lumber are annually consumed in the Comstock lode...The immense bodies of timber now being entombed along the Comstock will probably be discovered some thousands of years hence by the people to be born in a future age, in the shape of huge beds of coal...”

The quandary of transporting the logs to the area’s saw mills was solved by yet another environmentally-disturbing process. As distance between the source of the timber and the mines increased, giant flumes were built to float the timber up to twenty miles or more. As DeQuille described, “By means of these flumes tens of thousands acres of timber-land are made available that could never have been reached by teams.” To maintain a proper grade, “the flumes wind around hills, pass along the sides of steep mountains, and cross deep canyons, reared, in many places, on trestle-work of great height.”

The Big Bonanza’s seventy-two chapters discuss the fates of the lode’s discoverers—most of whom sold out too early and too low; troubles with the local Indians, including the Piute War of May 1860 during which eighty settlers and an unrecorded number of Piutes were killed; the dangers of working in the mines—in one mine fire, forty-five men were killed; the construction in 1869 of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad—a line which covered the 16-1/2 air miles between Carson City and Virginia City in 52 twisting miles, including six tunnels with an aggregate length of 2,400 feet; the employment of Chinese as cooks and laundry workers, and the resulting establishment of opium dens in the city; the increase in temperature inside the mines as they were deepened; and the great fire of October,1875, in which “(m)ost of the public buildings and the hoisting works, and many other buildings of the bonanza mines, were burned...About two thousand buildings were reduced to ruins, and hundreds of persons left homeless and destitute.”

By the late seventies the production of the lode began to decline. No new discoveries were made and, one by one, the big mines were shut down. By 1900, Virginia City’s population had shrunk to a mere 2,700.

Concluding with a chapter on the October,1875 fire, The Big Bonanza was published the following fall. In the late 1890’s, when DeQuille was close to seventy, he retired and moved to live with his daughter in West Liberty, Iowa, where on March 16, 1898 he died of pneumonia. In a bittersweet valedictory, one of his former associates on the Enterprise wrote: “He was one of the most efficient and valuable men that ever wore out his life in a newspaper office.”
Nicholas Clapp is a writer/historian who digs deep for information regarding mining areas of the Old West. Two of his previous works, *Gold & Silver in the Mojave* (2013) and *Bodie* (2017) were reviewed in the January/February 2018 issue of *The Desert Sage*.

Clapp continues his exploration of western mining towns by examining perhaps the most famous of them all. Employing a format similar to that used in his previous volumes, *Virginia City* is again more focused on the lives of the local residents than the factual details of the lode and the methods by which its ore was mined.

For example, in his chapter, ‘Josh & Julia,” Clapp tells the story of “two souls who sought their fortunes in Virginia and...were star-crossed in their chosen pursuits, one for the better, one for the worse.” Josh, in fact, was Samuel Clemens (later Mark Twain), who had been using the pseudonym “Josh” prior to arriving in Virginia City, where the *Territorial Enterprise* had offered him “a job filling in for reporter Dan DeQuille, who’d requested a leave to visit kin back east.” As for Julia—“her last name Smith, (or) maybe not”—a recent arrival in Virginia City doing well “as an ‘accommodating woman servicing a variety of gents...”

Clemens hastily left Virginia City two years later in October 1864 after being challenged to a duel by a reporter from a competing newspaper who accused him of slander. He continued on to California where he gained fame by writing ‘The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County’ and started using the nom de plume, Mark Twain. Meanwhile, Julia, who had changed her last name to Bulette, was not so fortunate. She, who as one historian wrote, charged $1,000 a night for her services, was found strangled in her bed on the morning of January 20, 1867. Although there is little to suggest that Julia and Josh ever knew each another, one somber event finally linked them together. On April 24, 1868, Twain, having just returned to Virginia City on a lecture tour, was witness to the public hanging of John Millean, Julia’s convicted murderer. In a dispatch to the Chicago *Republican*, published May 31, 1868, the one-time resident described the entire gruesome process in detail.

Another person considered by Clapp is Adolph Sutro, “a stout cigar salesman from San Francisco,” who in 1860 proposed that he could solve a major problem of the Comstock’s mines, where water with temperatures as high as 160 degrees flooded the lower levels “with thousands, nay millions, of gallons of water... (and) pumps ran round the clock, but barely diminished a spreading subterranean sea.” Sutro’s idea was to drive a 20,500’ inclined tunnel into a central mine shaft that drained nearly every major Comstock mine. Unfortunately, this proposal, although ingenious, came late in the life of the lode. The Sutro tunnel was finally completed in 1878, but by that time the mines had gone even deeper, were using newer improved pumps, and the ore was thinning out. Immediately upon its completion, Sutro sold his interest in the tunnel company and moved to San Francisco where he later became mayor and built the famous Sutro Baths.

Additional chapters consider “Amusements,” describing Virginia’s large selection of saloons with their mirrored bars, faro games and spittoons; “Kids,” proposing that the local children were well-educated, “whether they liked it or not,” with seven schools in Virginia City and another four in nearby Gold Hill; and “The International Hotel,” a 144-room establishment built shortly after the great fire of 1875, proclaimed to be “the finest hostelry between Salt Lake and San Francisco.”

In conclusion, Clapp proposes that even today you can, “Walk C Street an hour before dawn, and...rub shoulders with (Virginia City’s) ghosts, be they reeling from saloons or trudging to a morning shift in the steaming depths in the earth. Their triumphs, their shenanigans, their spirit in the face of adversity—all were epic.”

*Virginia City: To Dance with the Devil* is a coffee-table style book, chock-full of photographs of the area both at its prime and at present. It would make a great holiday gift for any desert history lover.
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EDITOR: Greg Gerlach, 23933 Via Astuto, Murrieta, CA 92562, email: gregrg1955@verizon.net.

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