The season may be over for climbing the lower peaks on our list, but the higher peaks are calling. Enjoy them!

Thanks to Jerry Keating, I learned of the death of an early member of our section, Katharine June (Kilbourne) Hakala, who was on a climb of the Coxcomb Mountains in 1952 and was mentioned as a new member in a 1953 issue of the Sage. She was a teenager then. To read more, see the “Passages” item on her in The Sierra Echo at https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/sierra-peaks-section/Newsletters/2019_v63-2_13MB.pdf, page 30, compiled from the Reno-Gazette-Journal obituary and other information provided by Jerry Keating.

I received one comment regarding Cerro Pescadores and the other Mexican peaks. Thank you, Barbara Lilley, for responding. Here’s what Barbara had to say:

“I agree that Cerro Pescadores should be removed from the DPS list. It’s far too dangerous. When it was added decades ago, conditions in Mexico were quite different. Perhaps this could appear on the next DPS ballot. The remaining Mexican peaks could be left on for the time being, as they are more remote and better protected in national parks. Mexico should be commended for creating these national parks, and perhaps by visiting them we are offering our support.”

The management committee will be discussing the issue further and will probably put the issue of delisting Pescadores on the 2020 ballot. Look for pro and con arguments in future issues of the Sage and please contribute to the discussion if you have a point of view that hasn’t been expressed.

See you at the banquet May 19th at the Reef in Long Beach! I’m really looking forward to Ron Bartell’s talk about climbing peaks in Death Valley that aren’t on our list.

Happy Trails,
Tina
## The Desert Peaks Section

explores 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.

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### Desert Peaks Section Leadership for the 2018 - 2019 Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected Positions</th>
<th>Appointed Positions</th>
<th>Mountaineering Committee</th>
<th>Mountain Records (Summit Registers)</th>
<th>Newsletter Editor (The Desert Sage)</th>
<th>Webmaster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chair</strong></td>
<td>Archives</td>
<td>Mountaineering Committee Chair</td>
<td>Sandy Lara</td>
<td></td>
<td>William Chen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina Bowman</td>
<td>Barbara Reber</td>
<td>Sandy Lara</td>
<td>5218 East Parkcrest Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>25005 Magic Mountain Parkway, Apartment 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>283 Argonne Avenue</td>
<td>PO Box 1911</td>
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<td>92647</td>
<td></td>
<td>(626) 484-2897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach, CA 90803-1743</td>
<td>Newport Beach, CA 92659-0911</td>
<td></td>
<td>(562) 716-9067</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gregrg1955@verizon.net">gregrg1955@verizon.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(562) 438-3809</td>
<td>(949) 640-7821</td>
<td></td>
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<td>William Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com">tina@bowmanchange.com</a></td>
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<td>25005 Magic Mountain Parkway, Apartment 434</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vice Chair / Outings / Safety</strong></td>
<td>Conservation Chair</td>
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<td>William Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandy Lara</td>
<td>Dave Perkins</td>
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<tr>
<td>5218 East Parkcrest Street</td>
<td>1664 Buttercup Road</td>
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<td>(626) 484-2897</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Beach, CA 90808-1855</td>
<td>Encinitas, CA 92024-2451</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:gregrg1955@verizon.net">gregrg1955@verizon.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>(562) 522-5323</td>
<td>(818) 421-4930</td>
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<td>William Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:ssperling1@verizon.net">ssperling1@verizon.net</a></td>
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<td>25005 Magic Mountain Parkway, Apartment 434</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Guidebook Editor</td>
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<td>William Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diana Neff Estrada</td>
<td>Jim Morehouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>138 La Fortuna</td>
<td>3604 Plano Vista Road, NE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newberry Park, CA 91320-1012</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:gregrg1955@verizon.net">gregrg1955@verizon.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>(818) 357-1112</td>
<td>(702) 528-3712</td>
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<td>William Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:hikinggranny@aol.com">hikinggranny@aol.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com">desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<td>25005 Magic Mountain Parkway, Apartment 434</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Mailer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Newman</td>
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<tr>
<td>11755 Entrada Avenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porter Ranch, CA 91326-1933</td>
<td>Hawthorne, CA 90250-8473</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com">desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>(310) 675-4120</td>
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<td></td>
<td>William Chen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program / Banquet</strong></td>
<td>Membership Records Chair</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Fleming</td>
<td>Ron Bartell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(805) 405-1726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>538 Yarrow Drive</td>
<td>1556 21st Street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com">ronbartell@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simi Valley, CA 93065-7352</td>
<td>Manhattan Beach, CA 90266</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com">ronbartell@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jimf333@att.net">jimf333@att.net</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com">ronbartell@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>goes to DPS Webmaster William Chen. The photo was taken on February 17, 2019 from the summit of Corkscrew Peak on a scheduled DPS climb. Please see the story on page 17 in this issue of The Desert Sage.</td>
<td>Laura Newman</td>
<td>11755 Entrada Avenue</td>
<td>Porter Ranch, CA 91326-1933</td>
<td><a href="mailto:desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com">desertpeakstrainer@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>MAY 3-5</td>
<td>FRI-SUN</td>
<td>Wilderness First Aid Course at Harwood Lodge</td>
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<td>MAY 4-5</td>
<td>SAT-SUN</td>
<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Anchors and Systems</td>
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<td>Navigation: Beginning Clinic</td>
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<td>OCT 9</td>
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<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Knots and Basic Safety</td>
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<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Belay Skills</td>
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<td>Advanced Mountaineering: Rappelling</td>
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<td>OCT 26-27</td>
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<td>NOV 1-3</td>
<td>FR-SUN</td>
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<td>NOV 9-10</td>
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<td>Indian Cove Rock Checkoff and Practice</td>
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<td>Indian Cove Navigation Noodle</td>
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**Trips & Events**

**May 2019 — December 2019**

Please visit the DPS website for an even more up-to-date listing of upcoming trips and events at [http://desertpeaks.org/](http://desertpeaks.org/).

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**May 3-5**

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<tr>
<th>FRI-SUN</th>
<th>LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS</th>
<th>Wilderness First Aid Course at Harwood Lodge</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>The 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. The fee is $305.00 (full refund until 3/29/19). For sign-up and more information, instructions and application, please go to <a href="http://www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org">www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org</a>. Event Organizers: Steve Schuster, <a href="mailto:steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com">steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com</a>, 714-315-1886.</td>
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**May 4-5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT-SUN</th>
<th>LTC</th>
<th>E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program: Anchors and Real World Application</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>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: <a href="http://www.advancedmountainingprogram.org">http://www.advancedmountainingprogram.org</a>. Leaders: Dan Richter (<a href="mailto:dan@danrichter.com">dan@danrichter.com</a>); Patrick McKusky (<a href="mailto:pamckusky@att.net">pamckusky@att.net</a>); and, Matthew Hengst (<a href="mailto:matthew.hengst@gmail.com">matthew.hengst@gmail.com</a>).</td>
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**May 18**

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 miles, 500’ gain. Send sase, phones, rideshare info, $25 deposit, refunded at trailhead (Sierra Club) to Leader: Diane Dunbar (<a href="mailto:dianedunbar@charter.net">dianedunbar@charter.net</a> or 818-248-0455). Co-Leader: Richard Boardman (310-374-4371).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Desert Sage 4 May-June 2019
MAY 18-19  SAT-SUN  LTC
M/E-R: Alabama Hills Rock Checkoff 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 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). Co-Leaders: Daniel Richter (818-970-6737 or dan@danrichter.com) and Matthew Hengst (949-264-6507 or matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

MAY 19  SUN  DPS
O: DPS Annual Banquet: Join your fellow DPS members and friends for a wonderful evening at The Reef Restaurant located in the city of Long Beach. The DPS is honored to have as our speaker long time member and three time list finisher Ron Bartell, who will present “Beyond the List in Death Valley National Park.” Happy hour starts at 5:00 p.m. and dinner starts at 6:30 p.m., followed by awards. Please see page 8 of this issue of the Sage for more information, or to sign up for the banquet.

JUNE 15-16  SAT-SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle: Navigation Noodle at Mount Pinos 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 Sheilds. 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.

SEPTEMBER 29  SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle: Navigation Noodle at Mount Pinos to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address and phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Ann Sheilds. 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.

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  LTC
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 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.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 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.advancedmountainingprogram.org. Leaders: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com); Patrick McKusky (pamckusky@att.net); and, Matthew Hengst (matthew.hengst@gmail.com).

♦ NOVEMBER 1-3 FRI-SUN LTC,WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
Wilderness First Aid Course at Harwood Lodge: The 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. The fee is $305.00 (full refund until 9/27/19). For sign-up and more information, instructions and application, please go to www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org. Event Organizers: Steve Schuster, steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com, 714-315-1886.

♦ NOVEMBER 2 SAT LTC, WTC, HPS
I: Navigation: Beginning Clinic: Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 miles, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, rideshare info, $25 deposit, refunded at trailhead (Sierra Club) to Leader: Diane Dunbar. (dianedunbar@charter.net or 818-248-0455). Co-Leader: Richard Boardman (310-374-4371).

♦ NOVEMBER 9-10 SAT-SUN LTC
M/E-R: Rock: Indian Cove Joshua Tree Rock Checkoff 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 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. Leader: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321 or pamckusky@att.net). Co-Leaders: Daniel Richter (818-970-6737 or dan@danrichter.com) and Matthew Hengst (949 264-6507 or matthew.Hengst@gmail.com).
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 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 Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

I: Navigation: Indian Cove Navigation Noodle: Navigation Noodle at Indian Cove in Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address and phone numbers), 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 Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

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.

Special Offer to New DPS Members and Subscribers

Beginning in 2018 the DPS would like to welcome new members and subscribers (who don’t yet meet the criteria for membership) with a year’s free subscription to The Desert Sage. New members as well as new subscribers should send the membership application form to the Membership Chair, Ron Bartell, by email (desertpeakssection@gmail.com) or USPS (the form with the address may be downloaded in Word or Adobe Acrobat format at http://desertpeaks.org/aboutus.htm), or may be found in this issue of the Sage. Although the Sage is available to all on the web site, members and subscribers receive an email with a link as soon as a new issue is published.
Ron Bartell presents Beyond the List in Death Valley National Park

Ron has been a member of the Desert Peaks Section for over forty years and has finished the DPS list three times. He and his favorite climbing partner, Christine Mitchell, especially enjoyed climbing the peaks in and around Death Valley, so they kept going to Death Valley, looking for non-list peaks to climb. This led to the creation of a list of peaks in Death Valley National Park. The program will feature climbs of peaks in remote areas of the park and Ron’s explanation of his choices of which peaks are “worthy” of being on this list.

Sunday, May 19, 2019
5:00 Happy Hour, 6:30 Dinner
The Reef Restaurant
880 South Harbor Scenic Drive
Long Beach, CA 90802 • (562) 435-8013

Your Name(s): ________________________________________________
Phone Number or Email: _______________________________________

Number of Reservations:   $35 until May 9 _____   $40 after May 9 _____   Total _____

Entrée Choice (please indicate total number of each):

Chicken Piccata _________   Cheese Enchiladas _________

To order tickets by mail, send this form and a check payable to “Desert Peaks Section” to
Jim Fleming, 538 Yarrow Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-7352

Or you may use PayPal to pay for tickets (desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com), but let Jim know your entrée choice(s): Jimf333@att.net or (805) 405-1726.
**Outings Chair**
*by Sandy Lara*

Hello Desert Folk!

The temps are warming up and we will be transitioning from climbing the lower DPS peaks to climbing the higher ones. As there was so much snow this year, we may need to wait longer than usual to access trailheads or climb the higher peaks if not planning on snow climbs. If still trying to bag some of the lower peaks, make sure you have plenty of water. Also, be prepared for vehicle breakdowns. With all the rain the desert got this winter, there are a lot of roads cross-cut with steep washes, exposed rocks, overgrown bushes, and the like to hamper your trailhead access. The flowers sure are beautiful, though, and worth a special visit!

A word about rideshare expenses: Those who own capable vehicles have made a choice to be able to access trailheads. This choice also usually includes having to drive a less efficient vehicle on a daily basis so the vehicle is available to get to trailheads. It also usually involves more expensive tires, more maintenance expenses, and higher insurance rates, not to mention more car washes. DPS peaks require a lot of driving, so there are many, many miles put on the vehicle. Thus, the cost of transporting someone else to the trailhead isn’t just a fraction of the gas expense. Riders may not have considered these additional expenses but should do so when accepting a ride. It is reasonable to pay one mileage rate for highway and a much higher one for dirt road driving. For those who drive themselves to a meeting point and then ride with someone just for the dirt, please offer the driver something for making room in their vehicle for you. Just because they are going to the trailhead anyway doesn’t entitle you to a free ride. Be generous! Our membership is in need of more capable 4WD vehicles, so if you know that at some point you will be buying one, consider doing it sooner rather than later. You will enjoy having the freedom of not having to depend on others, and others will enjoy having trailhead access they might not have otherwise because you can help them!

As always, I welcome your trip submissions!

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**Treasurer’s Report**

*By Laura Newman*

DPS Account Summary from January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2019

**Income**

- Banquet Silent Auction $0.00
- Banquet Ticket Sales $210.00
- Donations $10.00
- Membership/Subscriptions $970.00
- Merchandise $15.00
- Outings Income $0.00

**Total Income** $1,205.00

**Expenses**

- Banquet Expenses $1,051.16
- Donation to Charity $0.00
- Merchandise Expenses $0.00
- Sage Expenses $294.16
- Sales Tax $4.76
- Web Page Expenses $0.00

**Total Expenses** $1,350.08

**Pay Pal Balance** $9.41

**Checking Account Balance** $3,431.20

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**SAGE PHOTOS AND REPORTS NEEDED!**

The 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.
California Desert Protection and Recreation Law

A bipartisan bill which will protect nearly a Half Million Acres of California Desert Lands was signed into law on March 13th, 2019 by the President. This law is Diane Feinstein’s signature piece of legislation that she has been working on since the 1990s.

The California Desert Protection and Recreation Act, introduced as S. 67 and H.R. 376, designates 375,500 acres of wilderness and more than 70 miles of wild and scenic rivers, and adds 43,000 acres to Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks. The bill, sponsored by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, both (D-CA), and Representatives Paul Cook (R-CA), Juan Vargas (D-CA), and Pete Aguilar (D-CA), establishes the 81,800-acre Vinagre Wash Special Management Area in Imperial County to protect ecologically sensitive areas and Native American heritage sites. It also designates the 18,840-acre Alabama Hills National Scenic Area in Inyo County for continued recreational use.

This law is complex. It seeks to resolve the many conflicts between conservationists, off-road vehicle riders, miners, cattle ranchers, military training grounds, and renewable energy interests.

The law also makes permanent six sites for off highway vehicles (OHV). The areas named in the bill are El Mirage, Stoddard Valley, Dumont Dunes, RBar, Johnson Valley, and Spangler Hills. Johnson Valley is slated to expand in the act’s text by 20,240 acres. In total, the bill establishes around 300,000 acres of permanent OHV area in California across the six sites.

“This legislation is a huge win for conservation,” said Geary Hund, Executive Director, Mojave Desert Land Trust. “It ensures that some of the most important natural and cultural resources in the Mojave Desert will be protected and connected in perpetuity. It contributes to the creation of an interconnected system of reserves, including Joshua Tree National Park, the Mojave Trails National Monument, and the Mojave National Preserve. These areas are critically important to maintaining the health of desert ecosystems and more specifically, they are important to iconic desert species, such as desert tortoise and bighorn sheep.”

2019 DPS Election Results

By Tina Bowman

Fifty-seven members voted on-line via the Survey Monkey ballot, and ten voted by mail. The three candidates received yes votes ranging from about 87 to 100% of those who voted for candidates (two did not), and no one wrote in candidates. The proposal to amend the bylaws in IV.4 to update the passage to delete “the Angeles Chapter Schedule of Activities” and replace it with “publication” and both proposals to add the wording for the Bill T. Russell Mountaineering Award and the Fran Smith Lifetime Achievement Award were approved resoundingly with only a few no votes.
### Membership Summary

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### Activity Report

**Achievements**

#### Second List Finish

#23 Greg Gerlach 3/10/19 Pinto Mountain

#### Emblem

#596 Mihai Giurgiulescu 9/15/18 Montgomery Pk

#### New Member

Stephen McDonnell Chuckwalla Mountains HP

#### New Subscribers

Ross Doering
Roger Lim

#### Sustaining Renewals

Gary Bowen 1 year
Jan Brahms & David Reneric 1 year
Steve Corona 2 years
Burton A Falk 1 year
James Morehouse & Lorraine Wadja 1 year
Don Weiss 5 years

**Renewals**

Ron Campbell 1 year
John Fisanotti 1 year
Terry Flood 1 year
Mihai Giurgiulescu 1 year

The DPS also congratulates Mihai Giurgiulescu on obtaining his DPS Emblem on Montgomery Peak.

The DPS welcomes new member Stephen McDonnell, who qualified for membership on Chuckwalla Mountains High Point.

The DPS also welcomes new subscribers Ross Doering and Roger Lim.
Not the Plan, but Stewart Point (5,804’) and Corkscrew Peak (6,703’)
By Tina Bowman
March 1-2, 2019

Nile Sorenson and I originally scheduled Manly and Needle Peaks for January 11-12, but rescheduled to Friday-Saturday, March 1-2. However, when the Westside Road in Death Valley we would use to access the Warm Springs Road and Butte Valley was closed, we switched to Stewart Point and Corkscrew Peak, two peaks Nile needed. For the record, I don’t “need” any peaks, and though I had led Stewart with Gary Schenk in February 2018 and Corkscrew, also with Gary, two weeks before, I was game to do them again. With the changes, we lost several participants but kept Rana Parker and Ben Uong. We had a great group!

Thursday night we camped separately in the area where the previous Chili Cook-Off was held along the Furnace Creek Wash Road. Friday morning we gathered at the parking spot on Highway 178 for Stewart and were hiking before 7:00. Nile led us at a perfect pace, and we took a break by the black rock dike, at the second saddle on the route, and on the ridge. On the summit at 10:25, we couldn’t find a register, though I thought there had been one there in 2018. Rats! I had a DPS book and pencil, which we left in a baggie and another bag donated by Ben under a good pile of rocks. We enjoyed rather hazy views and cell service because Pahrump, Nevada, is so close. Down we headed at about 11:10, reaching the cars just after 2:00.

We went back to Shoshone and enjoyed a late lunch or very early dinner at the Crowbar Café. On we headed then to “Slab City” near Pyramid Peak, 10.8 miles west of Death Valley Junction on Highway 190. A few people were camped in this area, but it is a large area with many slabs for trailers and good flat spots for tents. Camping at an area with a good fire ring and no one really close by, we settled in with Nile’s Suburban making a good windbreak for us and the campfire that Ben made and tended—a wonderful campfire!

Saturday morning a light rain started about 4:15. Nile and I left a bit earlier than the 6:00 departure time. I pulled over and stopped just before the Beatty Cutoff to confer with Nile and wait for Rana and Ben. Because it was still raining and looked as though it would continue raining quite a while, we decided not to go to Corkscrew. Then Nile, needing the peak, decided to go check it out. I waited awhile and then thought perhaps the others had passed us while we were stopped by the entrance kiosk earlier, so I went on to the parking spot by the Corkscrew sign (route B). I decided to join Nile, partly because I like Corkscrew, partly because I enjoy hiking and chatting with Nile, partly because I needed a lot of steps for my silly Walkadoo program. While I was putting my boots back on again, Rana and Ben arrived; they decided to be tourists and head home because they had done Corkscrew Peak twice and it was still raining. So we said goodbye till next time.

Nile and I hit the use trail at 7:19 and about twenty-
five minutes later stopped to shed rain gear—the rain had stopped. I really like this route B, which has two different ways to start, though those join up fairly soon before the trail drops into the main wash it follows before leaving it for the east ridge of the peak. Up we went, taking a break partway up the ridge to put on more layers; we were walking in a cloud with a wind coming from the south and east, shifting back and forth. Nile found a sheltered spot for the break, and on we went, enjoying many colorful barrel cacti but no flowers. We reached the summit before 10:00; unfortunately, we were still in the cloud and had no view. Starting down at 10:15, we eventually hiked below the cloud and had a nice view out to the Badwater Basin and rain various places in the distance. We met one woman on her way up, maybe about a quarter of the way up the ridge. She made a remark about, “Look at you hiking with the brace!” Sigh. She meant well, but if she had any clue how much I’ve hiked with that knee brace . . . . We took one very relaxing break in the wash with a nice backrest, really nice until Nile discovered a tick strolling on his pant leg. The tick was soon flicked off and no others discovered. Back to the cars before 12:15, we finally had a good view of the summit of Corkscrew. We would be in a canyon most of the way.

So off we went home till our next desert adventure. Maybe Manly and Needle in the fall or next year. We’ll see!

Richard Stover and I had come to Death Valley to explore Jayhawker Canyon and climb Pinto Mountain on a three day backpack. Our basecamp was to have been at about 4700 feet! What we found was a change of plans.

As we looked across the alluvial fan toward the mouth of Jayhawker Canyon we could see snow everywhere. Heading down the hill toward Stovepipe Wells we drove through flowing water three or four times. There was more standing water on our way to Furnace Creek. At the Visitors’ Center we learned half the park roads were closed due to flooding, snow, or mudslides. These included the Westside Road, Titus Canyon, Emigrant Pass, Dantes View Road, and more.

We spent the night in an almost unrecognizable Echo Canyon, much changed by water events of the past several years. In the morning we were still pondering what to do. We finally decided on a three-day backpack up Indian Pass Canyon, a lower elevation choice. Although we had no map of the area, I had a guidebook description which I carefully cut out of the book and stuffed in my pocket.

Actually, a map was not necessary. I could see familiar landmarks all around. To the southeast was Nevares Peak which we had climbed on a backpack in 2010. To the north I could see Corkscrew Peak peeking above the foreground hills and of course, Telescope Peak to the southwest. Who could get lost? We would be in a canyon most of the way.

We left our truck at 11:00 a.m. on the side of Highway 190 north of Furnace Creek and hiked 4 miles up a gentle alluvial fan to the mouth of Indian Pass Canyon where we camped at 640 feet (much warmer than 4700 feet). We had started at 220 feet below sea level.

Our packs were heavy. Richard carried 2 gallons of water and I had one gallon in addition to another liter each. Although we knew there were springs in the canyon, we decided to bring our own water.
As we walked across the desert, we could see footprints on the recently wet ground. At least one belonged to a woman, I deduced because of their size. They were recent. Yesterday? Today? Would we meet others in this fairly remote place?

Sad to say there was no shortage of lost balloons. We found two before reaching the mouth of the canyon and three more the next day as we explored the canyon itself. At each find we recorded the GPS coordinates to send to Brigitta who is working with the National Park Service on a balloon survey of the park.

The actual mouth of Indian Pass Canyon is not apparent until one is very close to it giving us some navigation fun as we decided which way to go. We found a good campsite on a hidden bench near the canyon mouth. Long ago someone else camped here too although the area looked untrodden. When Richard set up the tent on one of the few level spots, he found an old tent stake. From camp we could see the pointed talus piles across the wash where sand and mud had fallen from the canyon wall. They looked much like Arabian tents to me or perhaps stalls at our local farmers’ market all lined up and ready for business.

We left camp the next morning at 9:00 a.m. for a full day of exploration. It seems other visitors were less certain of where they were or how they would ever find their way home, for we immediately began to encounter ducks, not the quacking kind but piles of rocks that create unnatural graffiti on the desert. After all, we were hiking between canyon walls on each side, how could anyone not know which way to go? Even the latest Park newsletter tells visitors not to stack rocks.

We began knocking them down.

We probably destroyed 25-30 ducks in the 4.5 miles we traveled up canyon. We did leave a couple of them which marked where hikers could bypass a large waterfall.

Above us we could see balanced cap rocks left by eons of erosion. The canyon walls were marked by rivulets of mud dripping on the face during wet periods.

Our first challenge was a dry 18-foot waterfall which we bypassed on the north side a little way back.

Farther up the wash we found pockets of water. Fantastic, amazing water in various sites. There were puddles, tinajas, and even a flowing spring. This seasonal gift supported wonderful...
vegetation even when the water was totally underground.

There were mesquite trees, “friendly” cats claw, coyote gourd, and all sorts of grasses and mosses. After climbing around a small pour-off, we chanced upon the makers of the footprints we had been following: Two young women, recent high school graduates, who were taking a gap year. One was from Massachusetts, the other from Montana. They had met on the road and joined forces to see the country. They were collecting water from a rainwater puddle to drink during their hike out that afternoon.

There are three springs in Indian Pass Canyon: Lower, Poison, and Upper. Only Poison Spring had an abundance of surface water. It is reported to be potable but very bitter. I didn’t verify since almost every occurrence had bighorn sheep droppings in the flow and puddles. Bitter water flavored with sheep poop is not on my tasting list.

Desert winter camping is very different from summer Sierra backpacks. In the summer one is rarely far from a cooling creek or lake where campers can clean their hands, rinse out sweaty clothes (sans soap) or jump in for a swim or substitute shower.

Here camped on sand and desert pavement we carefully dispense every drop of the precious water we have carried for many miles. Should we so much as sprain an ankle, we would need all our water and maybe more before we could hobble out or find help.

Over three days we hiked a total of 17 miles up and down the canyon which yielded many more secrets to us than I can recount here.

Cozy in our sleeping bags at night I jokingly say to Richard, “What am I doing here? We should be in a 5-star hotel.”

Richard responds, “We have way more stars than that.”

Indeed--we have billions and billions.

**Mitchell Point (attempt) and New York Mountains High Point**

March 9-10, 2019

By Sandy Lara

Leaders: Jason Seieroe and Sandy Lara

As DPS Outings Chair, I was trying to drum up some “business” and in the process emailed Jason Seieroe, who earned his M-rock rating last year, about leading a class 3 trip. He responded, suggesting that we lead New York Mountains High Point (which I did in 2013) and Mitchell Point (class 2 but one that I “need”). Sounded like a good plan! We picked dates and Jason submitted the MOC (Mountaineering Oversight Committee) application while I posted the trip write-up. Our trip was approved, and Jason began to collect participants. We decided to do Mitchell first so we could hopefully stay Saturday night at the
wonderful campsite with a stone and concrete table and benches that I had stayed at 6 years prior that is at the New York Mountain trailhead.

We had a bluebird weekend, a nice break in the weather between storms. Participants were Liz Aziz, Trevor and Christine Finneman, Peter Lara, Ryan Roleson, and Robert Turner. Friday night, two of us camped at the stone cabin ruins at the trailhead for Mitchell. The others arrived sometime after sunrise and it took awhile to get everyone underway. (I’m thinking already that I don’t know if we are going to make it to the summit and back, but quietly wait to see how things play out.)

It turns out that some of our participants are new at desert travel. We go at a moderately slow pace, but everyone is moving safely, and we are all having a good time in the fantastic weather. We are all wearing knee-high gaiters because the area is reported to have lots of cactus. We are glad, and have very few, minor cactus encounters.

We have to take DPS Route D for Mitchell because the Providence Mountains State Recreation Area hasn’t been allowing cross country travel for several years since trails were wiped out by monsoon rains. Route D stays completely clear of the SRA. The stats for Route D aren’t bad, a mere 4.5 miles round trip with 3200’ gain. Shouldn’t take tooooo long, right? Well the terrain is difficult, not just from the aforementioned ever-present cactus but loose rock, steep slopes and ridges, narrow sharp ridges, and all the other things that make the desert the desert. By lunchtime we had reached point 2024m, where we could finally see the last half mile to the summit. There was no way our group would make it there and back to the cars without having some hours in the dark (we still had short days and were going to flip to Daylight Savings Time that night) and then drive 2 hours to the New York Mountain trailhead with any time left for Happy Hour.

So, we had a nice lunch with a view and turned around, getting back to the cars around 3:30. Our new desert hikers were now getting more the hang of it.

After driving to the New York Mountain trailhead area in Caruthers Canyon, we discovered that the desired campsite was already occupied by some 4WD trucks and drivers. We found a nice established campsite at the side of the road about a quarter mile before this that perfectly suited our needs. After a delicious Happy Hour and celebrating three of our birthdays that occurred within a one-week timeframe, we settled in for the night. One participant woke up with an ear infection and could not go. Another was still recovering from a very serious traumatic injury less than a year before. Another stayed back with the carpool-mate. So now we were down to five. We left at first light and walked up the road to where we turned up into the boulder-filled gully. After initially missing the use trail and beating through some brush, we were on our way up. Our group was moving faster and was having fun on the boulders and with the route finding. We put our helmets on here, perhaps more to protect our noggins from coming up under a branch or overhang. We arrived at the base of the summit block and took a break, putting harnesses on and getting everything checked. Then we headed up, Jason in the lead. This is what we came for, lots of fun! Up and over, around and between we negotiated boulders and (some) brush. Finally, we were at the class 3 summit area. Jason climbed first and started setting up a belay station. I helped the participants get prepared, then followed. Jason started dropping the rope down to belay the other three up. How proud they were of themselves, having never done anything like this before (they were gym climbers). Our view was spectacular in all directions. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of ladybugs covered many of the cracks in the boulders and pieces of wood on the summit. Mating season! After a relaxing lunch (although cold as it was going to snow that night), Jason belayed us down and then led the group down the way we came, arriving back at the cars mid-afternoon with a reasonable amount of time to drive home.
There are a little under two dozen DPS peaks with trailheads located on a paved road. Seven of them are in the eastern Death Valley area, including Nopah Range High Point and Corkscrew Peak. Not only are these two mountains accessible, but they also have great scenery and involve fun hikes.

Maureen Conn and I both live in Santa Clarita and we carpooled for this trip. Taking my Honda Civic up, we each got rooms in Pahrump on Friday night. On Saturday morning, we joined a DPS group, led by Tina Bowman and Gary Schenk, at an indistinct point on Old Spanish Highway. Here, we started a hike up to Nopah Range High Point.

The first part of the hike involves a very long walk up a wash. Eventually, Tina identified a ridge, which we ascended in due time. At around 6,250 feet, the temperatures were in the high-30s and we could see hoarfrost all over the varied vegetation of the dry desert environment. We reached the summit right around noon, had lunch, took pictures, and departed after 40 minutes of rest. From the top, we descended back down the ridge we came up.

After the Nopah hike, we all joined for dinner at the Crowbar Cafe and Saloon in Shoshone. Afterwards, Maureen and I went back to Pahrump, while everyone else stayed at a site off of California State Route 190 (across from the starting point for hikes to Pyramid Peak).

The next morning, we all gathered again at the trailhead for Corkscrew Peak, which was along Daylight Pass Road. We parked at the sign pointing to the peak. Corkscrew is a magnificent-looking peak. Its conical, screw-like shape is distinctive and catches the eye. With that view in mind, we set off along an increasingly well-defined use trail. The hike was fairly easy and did not pose much of a challenge, though our legs were obviously tired from the previous day. From the summit, there was a grand view of many of the sights of Death Valley, including Stovepipe Wells, Badwater, the high Panamints, and the Amargosa Range.

The downhill hike from the top of Corkscrew went quickly, and soon we were back at the trailhead. All participants had a great time and I always look forward to hiking more Desert Peaks.
It recently occurred to me that during the twenty years I’ve been reviewing desert-themed volumes for The Desert Sage, I’ve overlooked one of the most famous of them all, i.e., Mark Twain’s, Roughing It, first published in 1872. In fact, in terms of memorable observations of the early desert west, Roughing It, in my opinion, ranks right up there along with John C. Fremont’s, The Expeditions of John C. Fremont, Volume 1 (1845) and William Manley’s Death Valley in ‘49 (1894).

Growing up in Hannibal, Missouri, Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910), served an apprenticeship to a printer, worked as a typesetter, contributed articles to the newspaper edited by his older brother, Orion Clemens, and spent two years as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi. During the summer of 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, the twenty-six-year-old Sam Clemens began what was to be a well-traveled life as he left Missouri to serve as an aide to Orion, who had been appointed Secretary of the newly-created Nevada Territory. By 1865, with the publication of The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches, Sam Clemens was writing under the nom de plume, Mark Twain, and was well on his way to becoming a well-known humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. In addition to Roughing It, others of Twain’s more notable works include the humorous travelogue, Innocents Abroad (1869), his novels, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) and its sequel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), and his autobiographical, Life on the Mississippi (1883).

Leaving Saint Joseph, Missouri by stagecoach, bound for Nevada in mid-July 1861, Sam and Orion made a two-day stopover in Salt Lake City, “the home of the Latter-Day Saints, the stronghold of the prophets, the capital of the only absolute monarchy in America.” There the brothers, on one hand, found themselves considered to be ignorant immigrants, while, on the other, they felt sorry for the Mormons who lived “a sad fate...exiled in that far country.” Nevada-bound once more, Sam’s first taste of true desert began as their stagecoach entered a sixty-eight mile “alkali” expanse, The Great Salt Lake Desert. “The sun beats down with dead, blistering, relentless malignity; the perspiration is welling from every pore in man and beast, but scarcely a sign of it finds its way to the surface...there is not the faintest breath of air stirring, there is not a merciful shred of cloud in all the brilliant firmament; there is not a living creature visible in any direction...there is not a sound—not a sigh—not a whisper—not a buzz, or a whir of wings, or distant pipe of bird—not even a sob from the lost souls that doubtless people that dead air.”

Arriving in Carson City, the capital of the new Nevada Territory, following a twenty-day, nearly two thousand-mile stagecoach ride, Sam described the town as, “located in a desert, walled in by barren snow-clad mountains...not a tree in sight.” The population was two thousand, and “the main street consisted of four or five blocks of little white frame stores...packed close together, side by side, as if room were scarce in that mighty plain. The sidewalk was of boards that were more or less loose and inclined to rattle when walked upon.”

Sam, inherently restless, soon left Orion alone to deal with Territorial affairs and was off to make his fortune by supplying timber for use in supporting the miles of mine shafts and tunnels in nearby Virginia City and Gold Hill. At Lake Tahoe—then called Lake Bigler—after he and a friend marked out a claim for three hundred acres of timber, they decided to take it easy by spending a few days drifting around the lake in a boat they had found. “We seldom talked. It interrupted the Sabbath stillness, and marred the dreams the luxurious rest and indolence brought.” Unfortunately, one night while Sam was cooking dinner over a campfire along the lakeshore, he inadvertently started a forest fire. “Within half an
hour all before us was a tossing blinding tempest of
flame! It was surging up adjacent ridges...burst into
view upon higher and farther ridges...and, presently
the lofty mountain-fronts were webbed as it were with
a tangled network of red lava
streams...”

Giving up his lumber idea and
following a brief stab at
speculation in mining claims,
Sam, once more grew bored with
Carson City. Sporting a faceful
of whiskers and a mustache, he
decided to try his hand as a
prospector/miner. “I would have
been more or less than human if I
had not gone mad like the rest.”
During the winter of 1861/62, he
and three other men left Carson
City to prospect near Unionville,
Nevada, a hundred and seventy-five
miles, and fifteen days to the
northeast. There, finding a
promising ledge and deciding to
sink a shaft, they “climbed the
mountain, laden with picks, drills,
gads, crowbars, shovels, cans of
blasting powder and coils of fuse...” After a week of
hard labor, however, all the men had to show for their
effort was a shaft a mere twelve feet deep. Discouraged, they began making—but not working--
other claims, giving them “grandiloquent names,”
then trading them with other prospectors. Soon they
owned shares in such claims as the “Branch Mint,”
the “Treasure Trove,” and the “Great Republic,”
prospects that “had never been molested by a shovel
or scratched with a pick.” Indeed, the area was filled
with prospecting parties that “swarmed out of town
with the flush of dawn, and swarmed in again at
nightfall laden with spoil—rocks. Nothing but rocks.
Every man’s pockets were full of them; the floor of
his cabin was littered with them; they were disposed
in labeled rows on his shelves...We had learned the
real secret of success in silver mining—which was not
to mine the silver ourselves by the sweat of our
brows and the labor of our hands, but to sell the
ledges to the dull slaves of toil and let them do the
mining!”

Eventually accepting defeat in Uniontown, Sam set
off again, this time to inspect claims he and Orion had
acquired in Aurora, the center of the Esmeralda
mining district, near Boundary Peak. The first leg of
the trip was noteworthy because, after being marooned for eight
days in an isolated inn by a flood
on the Carson River, Sam and his
two travel companions got lost
and almost died in a furious
snowstorm. “The snow lay so on
the ground that there was no sign
of a road perceptible, and the
snow-fall was so thick that we
could not see more than a
hundred yards ahead, else we
could have guided our course by
the mountain ranges.” As night
drew near, a failed attempt to build a
campfire scared off their horses,
and the men became convinced
“that this was our last night with
the living.” Faced with imminent
death, the men wept together.
They forgave each other. They
gave up their vices, wishing that
they had the prospect of a longer
life in order to be an example to the young. Awaiting
death by freezing, “a delicious dreaminess wrought its
web about my yielding senses...the battle for life was
done.” Next morning, however, the trio awoke to
find themselves camped fifteen steps from a stage
station. “The whole situation was so painfully
ridiculous and humiliating.” Within the hour, the
reformed sinners discovered each other behind the
barn—smoking, drinking, and playing cards.

Upon finally arriving in the Aurora area, Sam found
that his and Orion’s claims were worthless. Then,
runtime out of cash, he was forced to begin work at a
quartz mill at ten dollars a week and board. Describing the six-stamp milling process, he wrote,
“each of these stamps weighed six hundred
pounds...The ceaseless dance of the stamps pulverized
the rock to powder and a stream of water that trickled
into the battery turned it to a creamy paste.” The
“pulp” was then warmed and stirred in amalgamating
pans, then showered with mercury, which “liberated
the gold and silver particles and held on to them.” Sam, not surprisingly, soon became “aggravated” by the work. “There was always something to do. It is a pity that Adam could not have gone straight out of Eden into a quartz mill in order to understand the full force of his doom to ‘earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.’” After a week of labor, Sam told his employer that although “never before had he grown so tenderly attached to an occupation,” he needed a raise. “How much did I want? I said about four hundred thousand dollars a month, and board, was about all I could reasonably ask for...”

Sam and his good friend Calvin Higbie then decided to visit Mono Lake, the very antithesis of Lake Tahoe. Famously, Sam, writing later as Mark Twain, described the body of saline water as lying in “a lifeless, treeless, hideous desert.” Undaunted, however, Sam and Higbie hired a boat from a local ranchman and set out to explore the “two islands in (the lake’s) center, mere upheavals of rent and scorched and blistered lava (of a) dead volcano whose vast crater (an erroneous assumption) the lake has seized upon and occupied.” Their day-long trip was spoiled when they discovered that the water they had brought in their canteens was too brackish to drink. They desperately searched the larger of the two islands for a spring as “thirst augments fast as soon as it is apparent that one has no means at hand of quenching it.” Having no luck and parched to the bone they decided to brave the danger of an approaching storm and row ashore. Fortunately, in spite of “billows that ran very high and were capped with foaming crests, heavens that were hung with black and the wind that blew with great fury,” they made it safely.

Back in the Esmeralda area and prospecting once more, Sam and Calvin Higbie eventually found a promising blind lead, which could have made them rich. They failed to work their claim in a timely manner, however, and thus they lost title to a possible fortune.

Discouraged once again, Sam decided to accept a proposal from the editor of Virginia City’s Territorial Enterprise offering him a job as a reporter at $25 dollars a week. As Ron Powers notes in his excellent biography, Mark Twain: A Life (2005), “(Sam then) walked to his new job as a reporter. That is to say, he left Aurora...on foot in late September 1862, and hiked the 120 miles north to Virginia City with a bundle of blankets on his back. He was on foot because horses cost money, and being a gold and silver miner, he didn’t have any.”

Powers describes the Territorial Enterprise as, “easily the liveliest, if not exactly the most reliable newspaper on the American continent...In its three years of existence, it had attracted a coterie of brilliant, adventuring young poets and misfit writers who had found their way to the Enterprise generally by accident.” Starting off by reporting on conventional news items, Sam soon came under the guidance of Dan DeQuille, senior editor of the Enterprise, and author-to-be of The Big Bonanza. In his introduction to a 1959 revised edition of Bonanza, Oscar Lewis noted that Clemens learned the editorial ropes from Dan. “When the paper went to press at two o’clock each morning, there was usually an hour or two of beer-drinking and talk and horseplay before the staff went home to bed. In this congenial atmosphere a fast friendship sprang up between the two. For some months they roomed together...they roamed the town in search of copy, played elaborate practical jokes on each other in and out of print, and entered into friendly rivalry to see who could invent the more outrageous stunts for the entertainment and mystification of the Enterprise’s readers.” Sam, who had a streak of audacity a mile wide, thrived in this atmosphere. Indeed, as Powers notes, “Rather than focusing on the facts that any fool could observe and report, Sam reported facts that would have occurred in a better and more interesting world.” Here’s an
example of one of Sam’s imaginative Enterprise pieces: “A GALE—About 7 o’clock Tuesday evening...a sudden blast of wind picked up a shooting gallery, two lodging houses (bordellos) and a drug store from their tall wooden stilts and set them down again some ten or twelve feet from their original location...There were many guests in the lodging houses at the time...it is pleasant to reflect that they seized their carpet sacks and vacated the premises with an alacrity suited to the occasion.”

Eventually Sam’s sometimes unwise comments in the Enterprise rubbed a few locals the wrong way. Powers notes that the young writer’s stay in Virginia City ended abruptly on May 29, 1864 when, faced with a duel for slander, “Sam Clemens climbed aboard a stagecoach and lit out from the territory—from Virginia City to San Francisco.”

Once in the City by the Bay, but still writing for the Enterprise, Sam became acquainted with fellow western writer, Bret Harte, and the humorist and lecturer, Artemus Ward, both of whom became important influences on his later career. And that same fall, while visiting the Mother Lode Country, he came up with the idea for The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, a short story which, brimming with rough-hewn humor, and written under the nom de plume, Mark Twain, became his first widely published work. The newly-weds settled down in Buffalo, New York, became parents that same November, and Sam began writing Roughing It. Published in 1872, and dedicated to his former prospector friend, Calvin Higbie, the volume described his and Orion’s trip to Nevada, his life as a prospector, his career with the Territorial Enterprise, his days in San Francisco, and his journey to Hawaii. The volume became an immediate success both in terms of critical review and financial reward.

Roughing It glows throughout with Mark Twain’s sense of humor. Patricia Nelson Limerick, in Desert Passages, her 1985 review of nine important desert authors, proposes that Twain characterized himself as a fool in Roughing It because, “a fool’s position is that he can admit what the rest of humanity struggles to conceal. He can admit to his own sense of helplessness. When the fool feels vulnerable, powerless, deceived or tricked, he confesses it, and even exaggerates it for the effect of the joke.”

Returning to the mainland, Sam, as Mark Twain, spent most of the next three years touring the country lecturing on the islands. During the fall of 1867, sponsored by yet another newspaper, he embarked on a four-month cruise/tour of Europe and the Middle East, a trip which provided him material for his best-selling Innocents Abroad (1869). And in February, 1870, after a prolonged courtship, Sam married Olivia “Livy” Langdon in a ceremony which took place in Livy’s hometown of Elmira, New York.

For information, please contact me, Bert Falk, at the following email address:
burtonfalk@gmail.com
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