



# The Desert Sage

**OUR 75th SEASON**

**SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2016**

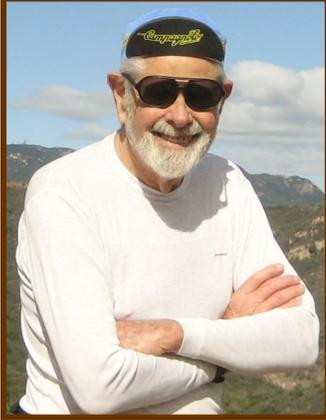
**ISSUE NO. 365**



<http://desertpeaks.org/>

# Chair's Corner

by Paul Cooley



The spirit of desert hiking and climbing: Find some bump on the horizon and go for it. And in our deserts, so many bumps to go for! Glass Mountain, for example, which I did solo a long time ago. Whipple Mountain, which was I think my last successful climb with DPS; as I remember, led by

Larry and Barbee Tidball.

Other excursions: Desert with my older brother Norm, after WWII, before he married; we went on several trips to the eastern Mojave and to the Sierra Nevada; I still have a couple of the geodes we found in the Mojave. Climbing, somewhere, with Jim Goren - I don't remember the circumstances, but do remember that he was better with one leg than I was with two, on rock.

El Picacho del Diablo, and how going up Diablo Gorge (or any other east side canyon) prepares one for the rock ascent to the peaks: confidence gained by endless scrambling in the canyon. Picacho again: the year or two, after a fire that more or less just burned free, and the pond in Diablo Gorge became a sand flat from the debris flows down the canyon after a rain. For one or two years you could just walk up to the little waterfall and scramble up it, no big deal. And from our first successful climb, which I wrote about previously, finding and bringing back a little piece of the mountain, a chunk of granite with mica inclusions. Still have that, too.

And: Sunrises, sunsets, the endless, quiet beauty of the desert - or sometimes not so quiet, as with the lightning storm to the north that we applauded from our chairs, lined up in camp at Joshua Tree's Indian Cove group campground.

Another time on El Picacho, with Richard Strandberg, from the UCLA Mountaineers (he also was a leader for the Angeles Chapter Natural Science Section for many years). We started too low, from one of the east

side canyons not Diablo Gorge, and bivouacked near the summit, did the peaks the next day, and were both very thirsty on the way down. If you find a nice desert fragrance, sage or some other plant, fantasizing about water with the fragrance works pretty well to slake one's thirst temporarily.

Not desert this one: climbing once at Tahquitz with Nick Clinch, who was briefly at UCLA or at least came out with us that time; of course, Nick, who died June 15 of this year, went on to wonderful things, organizing expeditions in Antarctica and the Himalaya and becoming president of the American Alpine Society. He was also an executive director of the Sierra Club Foundation from 1975 to 1981.

Mountains, deserts, seacoasts, the California redwoods both coastal and in the Sierra, other wild places; in the Sierra Club we are doing our best to save the natural beauty we have, and it is a continual battle. Let's keep at it.

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## **THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 9, 2016.**

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## Cover Photo Credit...

goes to Daryn Dodge. The photo is of the Funeral Mountains Wilderness High Point, which is located in Death Valley National Park; also, the photo was taken by Daryn on November 2, 2014 on a scheduled DPS trip.

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## 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.



## Trips & Events September 2016 — January 2017

**White Mountain from the north (photo taken by Kathy Rich on July 24, 2016).**

SEPT. 18	SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle
OCT. 1	SAT	LTC	Leadership Training Seminar
OCT. 5	WED	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Basic Safety Systems)
OCT. 8	SAT	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Belaying)
OCT. 8	SAT	LTC, WTC, HPS	Navigation: Beginning Clinic
OCT. 15	SAT	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Rappelling)
OCT. 22-23	SAT-SUN	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Techniques / Anchors)
OCT. 28-30	FRI-SUN	LTC	Wilderness First Aid at Harwood Lodge
OCT. 29-30	SAT-SUN	LTC	Rock: Indian Cove/Sheep Pass Checkout
NOV. 19	SAT	LTC, WTC	Navigation: Workshop on Third Class Terrain
NOV. 19-20	SAT-SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Indian Cove Navigation Noodle
DEC. 3	SAT	DPS, WTC	Nelson Range High Point List Finish
DEC. 11	SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Warren Point Navigation Noodle
JAN. 14	SAT	HPS	HPS Awards Banquet

◆ **SEPTEMBER 18**                      **SUN**    **LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle in Los Padres National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto: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.

◆ **OCTOBER 1**                                      **SAT**    **LTC**

**O: Leadership Training Seminar:** DARE TO LEAD!! Attend the Fall 2016 Leadership Training Seminar. What better way to step up and lead your favorite outing than by taking advantage of the training opportunities that the Angeles Chapter's Leadership Training Committee (LTC) provides each year. As home to one of the largest outings programs on the planet, the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter's many groups, sections and committees sponsor thousands of trips ranging from easy hikes to backpacks to world wide travel and mountaineering expeditions. Taught by experienced volunteer leaders, the seminar covers all the basics of leadership. You will learn how to plan a trip, prevent problems on the trail and make sure that everyone has a great time. You'll gain knowledge about good conservation and safety practices, along with tips for getting your "O" rating quickly and then, if you choose, pursuing more advanced ratings. The all-day class costs \$25, and will be held at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center, 1750 North Altadena Drive, Pasadena, California 91107. The application is available online at [angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc\\_leadership\\_seminar](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc_leadership_seminar). You can also pore over more of LTC's upcoming offerings and leadership information on the Angeles Chapter's website. Mail the application and check for \$25, payable to Sierra Club, to Steve Botan, LTC Registrar, 18816 Thornwood Circle, Huntington Beach 92646. You also can reach Steve by email ([ltcregistrar@hundredpeaks.org](mailto:ltcregistrar@hundredpeaks.org)) or by phone (714-321-1296). Applications and checks are due Sept. 17, 2016. Scholarships are available for those with financial need. Apply to LTC Chair Anne Marie Richardson [AMLeadership@gmail.com](mailto:AMLeadership@gmail.com).

◆ **OCTOBER 5**                      **WED**                                      **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**  
**M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP14): Basic Safety System:** First of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today's indoor evening workshop of four hours reviewing ropes, harnesses, helmets and basic climbing gear will take place in Pasadena. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)).

◆ **OCTOBER 8**                      **SAT**                                      **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**  
**M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP14): Belaying:** Second of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today, at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on belaying and principles of anchor building. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)).

◆ **OCTOBER 8**                      **SAT**                                      **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
**I: Navigation: Beginning Clinic:** Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor learning and 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 with 500' of gain. Send sase, phone, rideshare info, \$25.00 deposit (refunded at trailhead, check made payable to the Sierra Club) to Leader: Diane Dunbar (818-248-0455, [dianedunbar@charter.net](mailto:dianedunbar@charter.net)). Co-leader: Richard Boardman (310-374-4371).

◆ **OCTOBER 15**                      **SAT**                                      **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**  
**M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP14): Rappelling:** Third of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today, at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on rappelling. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)).

◆ **OCTOBER 22-23**                      **SAT-SUN**                                      **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**  
**M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP14): Rock climbing techniques and anchors:** Fourth of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on climbing and anchors. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)).

◆ **OCTOBER 28-30**                      **FRI-SUN**                                      **LTC**  
**C: Wilderness First Aid Course:** The course runs from 7:30 a.m. Friday to 5:00 p.m. Sunday. Fee includes instruction, lodging, and meals. Proof of CPR within the previous 4 years required to enroll. The fee is \$250.00 (full refund until 9/23/16). For sign-up, see instructions and application at [www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org](http://www.wildernessfirstaidcourse.org) : Application and enrollment menu item.

◆ **OCTOBER 29-30**                      **SAT-SUN**                                      **LTC**  
**M/E-R: Rock: Indian Cove/Sheep Pass Checkout at Joshua National Park:** M and E level rock practice and checkout for LTC leadership candidates. Practice Saturday, checkout Sunday. Restricted to Sierra Club members with technical rock climbing experience. Climbing helmets and harness required. Email climbing resume to Leader: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, [pamckusky@att.net](mailto:pamckusky@att.net)). Assistant Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, [dan@danrichter.com](mailto:dan@danrichter.com)).

◆ **NOVEMBER 19**                      **SAT**    **LTC, WTC**

**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 limited. Send email/sase, Sierra Club number, class 3 experience, conditioning, and contact info to leader: Robert Meyers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)). Co-leader: Jack Kieffer.

◆ **NOVEMBER 19-20**                      **SAT-SUN**    **LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Indian Cove Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle in Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, and campfire. Sunday, checkout. To participate, send email, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto: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 3**                                      **SAT**    **DPS, WTC**

**I: Nelson Range High Point (7,696') List Finish:** After \*6\* years and one knee surgery, Matthew Hengst is (finally) finishing the Desert Peak Section List, and we're going to do it in suitable style. We'll meet Saturday at sunset at the trailhead for Nelson Range High Point, strap on our headlamps, and deck ourselves out in as much glow in the dark or light emitting gear as we can carry. We'll summit in the dark and proceed to have a celebration bright enough to be visible for miles before returning to camp and continuing the party fireside with glow in the dark libations. Total stats are 2 miles and 1,200' gain so appropriate for all levels of fashion challenged bipeds. Garishly colored jeeps optional though high clearance vehicles will be needed to reach the trailhead. Leader Matthew Hengst ([matthew.hengst@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.hengst@gmail.com)). Co-leader: John Kieffer ([jockorock@yahoo.com](mailto:jockorock@yahoo.com)).

◆ **DECEMBER 11**                                      **SUN**    **LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Warren Point Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle in 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, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto: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.

◆ **JANUARY 14**                                      **SAT**    **HPS**

**O: 2017 HPS Awards Banquet:** Join the HPS for its annual awards banquet at the Monrovia Restaurant in Monrovia, California, as we celebrate our accomplishments and visit with friends new and old. Mark your calendar; please check the HPS website for additional details. Leader: Mat Kelliher ([mkelliher746@gmail.com](mailto:mkelliher746@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. 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.

# Conservation Chair

by Dave Perkins



## BOOK REVIEW

*You Can Prevent Global Warming (and save money!): 51 Easy Ways* by Jeffrey Langholz and Kelly Turner. Andrews McMeel Books, Kansas City, Missouri. 2008.

This is a good example of a book that is full of interesting facts and suggestions regarding global warming and our possible responses to it. Gallup polls indicate that 70 percent of Americans are concerned about global warming. This title and those like it convert this public concern into action, providing simple, everyday things that can be done to minimize global warming-and save money at the same time.

The book contains 51 topics, but there are actually hundreds of tips and suggestions within the book that can help address this global problem. Whether you are one of the nearly three-quarters of Americans who consider themselves environmentalists or you're interested in practical ways you can save money each year, these straightforward tips will make this one of the most important and useful books on your bookshelf. The authors suggest that if you follow just the no-cost and low-cost tips in this book, you can save over \$2,000 and prevent the emission of 25,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year!

Many of the ideas in this book are well known and may even seem commonsensical, but there are so many suggestions in so many categories that there are bound to be new nuggets of information for all readers. The major divisions of the book are: Home electricity and hot water; Home heating and cooling; Your backyard; Getting around; Shop right; Reduce, reuse, recycle and more; and Expand your impact.

# DPS Membership Report

by Ron Bartell

## Membership Summary

<u>Type</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Sustaining</u>
Member	121	24
Household	29	
Subscriber	26	2
Totals:	176	26

## Activity Report

### Sustaining Renewals

Steve Corona 2 years

### Renewals

Rudy Fleck 1 year  
Karen Leonard 1 year  
Anne K. Rolls 2 years  
Tanya Roton & Mat Kelliher 1 year

## Gordon Macleod

Long time DPS member Gordon MacLeod broke his hip and leg in July and is recovering at a convalescent home in Newberry Park. Get well wishes may be sent to his home address at P.O. Box 1079, Simi Valley, CA 93062. They'll be delivered to him.

Please send him a card to cheer him as he recovers!



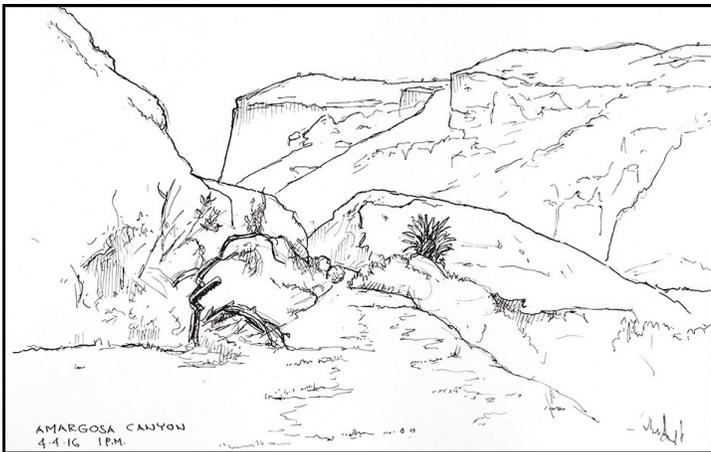


## Trip Reports

A Black-tailed Gnatcatcher seen on a climb of Umpah Point (photo taken by Richard Stover).

**Death Valley**  
**By Gregory W. Frux**  
**April 2016**

During April of 2016 Janet Morgan (wife and partner) and I put together a marvelous two week adventure in Death Valley and the land directly to the east. Week one was devoted to exploring the drainage of the Amargosa River. This small river is extremely significant as it supports both wildlife and several human communities in an otherwise super arid landscape. The human communities include the towns of Beatty, Amargosa Valley, Death Valley Junction, Shoshone and Tecopa. The river is mysterious, flowing on the surface in some sections and vanishing underground for much of its route. Janet and I are



both artists and are hoping to do a creative project telling the story of the Amargosa River. To this end, we arranged to talk with representatives of the Nature Conservancy, the Amargosa Conservancy and people in the towns along the Amargosa River during our visit.

Our first couple of nights were spent at Bailey's Hot Springs just north of Beatty. The area is known as Oasis Valley and has some dramatic springs and bright patches of greenery. We met with Len Warren, birder and restoration expert based in Shoshone. He

took us to one of the Nature Conservancy's projects at the Corinth Ranch. The project involves habitat enhancement such as the removal of invasive salt cedar trees, planting of willows, explanatory signage and construction of a walkway into the wetlands. The place is a refuge for birds, frogs, fish and other wildlife. In Beatty itself, behind the casinos, the river was filled with tadpoles -- evidence of the return of a threatened species -- the Amargosa toad.

After a few days, we travelled down to Shoshone, following the dry washes that characterize the river between Beatty and Shoshone. There is a lot of evidence of occasional floods, but no water and very sparse plant life. At Shoshone the river emerges again to the surface, supplemented by springs emerging from the hill west of town. This tiny hamlet (population 31) fully appreciates their oasis status. There are bird watching trails, a pond created for migratory birds and enhanced natural pools, which are home to a unique species of pupfish. We also took the opportunity to hike into Amargosa Canyon, south of Tecopa, where the river flow is more ample (this section is designated a Federal Wild and Scenic River). Water here is a miracle and the foliage reflects this with trees and even wild grapes at several springs.

We had a meeting with the hydrogeologist working on understanding the river system for the Nature Conservancy. He explained that his survey was the first systematic study of the region and its springs. There are still many unknowns about how it all fits together. We travelled with him to view Slough Spring, a flow near Eagle Mountain. The name of the geologist might be of interest to readers -- Andy Zdon, the same man who authored *Desert Summits*. I took the opportunity to thank him for all the adventures he'd inspired and solicited his advice on our climbing plans.

*(Continued on page 9)*

# Trip Reports ... continued.

*(Continued from page 8)*

Week two of our adventure began with a meet up with Ron Beimel and Alice Panek at the Shoshone RV Park and Campground (highly recommended). Ron and I were continuing our project to climb the highpoint of each range in Death Valley National Park. This time we had three peaks in mind: Brown, Saline and Galena.

Our program began April 8th. Ron and I approached Brown Peak (4,949') from the east side along Highway 127. We chose this longer route because we were concerned about taking my shiny rental SUV up the Greenwater Road and on to Dead Man's Pass. We were most fortunate in having cloud cover and cool, unsettled weather, which greatly eased our climb. We were on the route at 7 AM, with the summit visible in the distance. Gradual slopes gave way to a series of washes. Above the 3,000 foot level there was fine spring growth -- flowers, grass and blooming cactus. We got on the wrong (south) side of a gully and had to cross some loose scree with a little exposure. The course correction put us on route towards the obvious notch in the ridge. At this point, we had a rare experience -- a light rainstorm. From the notch it was a steep 600' ascent to the summit register, arriving there at 11:30 AM. By now our "rare experience" had turned into a heavy rain and cold, high winds. Even with light fleece and Gortex, it was too cold to stay at the top. The rain let up on the descent. We had two excellent sightings on the way down -- a broken flint arrowhead spotted near the notch -- photographed and left. And a desert tortoise, about five inches long -- also duly photographed and left undisturbed. We were back to the car at 4 PM.

On April 9th we woke to more rain on our tents in Shoshone. The unsettled weather continued as we transited to Furnace Creek where we picked up a jeep rental from Farabee's. Coming from the east coast, the opportunity for renting a tough vehicle is critical to success in reaching the most remote peaks. Farabee Jeep Rental at Furnace Creek has been very helpful and even supplies a satellite beacon with their rentals. Thus reinforced, we drove under grey and threatening

skies to the Saline Valley Road. Weather had impacted the area around South Pass, with mud and fresh rock fall. However, the road was passable and beyond, in Saline Valley itself, conditions were fine. The only other sign of weather was trickling streams in the low points of the valley near the hot springs, and crossing the water threw up fine rooster tails of mud, which hardened and decorated our jeep's doors for the balance of the trip.

Saline Peak had been a long sought after objective for me. Information on this peak is scarce and transit issues challenging. Many thanks to the Desert Peaks Section for trip reports and encouragement. This year we finally felt ready to make an attempt and keep it safe. Andy Zdon's parting advice had been, "Be careful, Saline is a long way out there." On April 10 Ron and I started from Saline Valley Hot Springs before dawn, with Janet and Alice remaining at basecamp, in comfort. The road was rugged and hard to follow in the dark, but improved somewhat as we continued up into the bleak, raw valley between Dry and Saline Mountains. We parked at 3,600', leaving a note on the dashboard about our plan. The two of us packed 4 quarts of water, rain gear, fleece, emergency kit and food, setting out at 7:30 AM. We hiked out across a sloping plain (alluvium?) populated with black boulders, then skirted a gully and headed for the peak. At one point we came across a small rattlesnake in the process of trying to swallow a large mouse. We took some photos, but tried not to disturb her. Our group of two continued up past 5,000' and then 5,500' in elevations, moving at a steady 800 feet / hour. Up high, we traversed south, avoiding climbing over a false summit. We crossed some 30 degree slopes along the way that were unsteady going. Above this we made a bee line for a second saddle, which is 6,200' high and took us 4 hours from the bottom, avoiding a second false summit along the way. Ahead lay only another 800' of climbing, short and steep, then 2/10 mile across a plateau to the top.

We reached the summit and summit register of Saline Peak (7,040') at 12:30 PM. This is one of the most remote mountains that I have ever climbed. The

*(Continued on page 10)*

# Trip Reports ... continued.

*(Continued from page 9)*

register showed that we were the first party to summit in a year. We had spectacular views in all directions -- Eureka Dunes, Last Chance Mountain, and the fierce wall of Dry Mountain to our east, the Nelson Range to our south, the Inyo Range covered with clouds and streaked with rain to our west, and the White Mountains with glimpses of the snow to our northwest. Amid all this majesty the only signs of human beings were two dirt roads: one at Eureka Dunes and the other in Saline Valley. It is a rare and deeply satisfying thing to be in a place this wild.



Our descent was an adventure. I had a map posted to me by mountaineer Mark Robinson, with an alternative route. (His name was also in the register for 2015, one of only two parties listed for the year). Mark's route followed a canyon that began at 6,000' in elevation and continued almost all the way down to Steel Pass Road. The canyon was wide at some points and narrow at others. The route cut through deep bands of dark rock (basalt?) and a light rock with caves (tuff?). While on the descent we got doused by rain, then hail, before the weather cleared. The alternating black and white bands and steep slopes with boulder fields were incredibly scenic. If this canyon was more accessible, it would be a very popular hike. There were several dry falls enroute, mostly class 3, but one that gave us pause -- a fifteen foot vertical descent. Fortunately it had solid hand holds. We arrived at the car without incident at 5 PM and were celebrating in the hot spring later that evening.

We spent the next two days exploring near Saline Valley Hot Springs. In the area near the Upper Hot Springs we located a couple of washes with actual flowing water, lush with life. We also visited Beveridge Canyon at the base of the Inyo Mountains. A spur road off the Saline Valley road leads to a cabin, and an abandoned mine with wrecked equipment. A short way up the canyon were waterfalls and abundant plant life. After the canyon, we exited Saline Valley at South Pass, turning west up into the Nelson Mountains. We camped near a cabin at 6,200' in elevation, but kept our distance due to National Park Service signage warning of hantavirus risk.

On April 13, Ron, Alice and I turned our attention to our last peak, the High Point of the Nelson Range. The route went straight uphill behind the cabin. The terrain was rocky, but had many flowers at this high elevation. The climb seemed slow, but we maintained our 800 feet / hour speed -- fast enough to get the job done. After 90 minutes of hiking we reached the forested ridgeline. From here the views of Saline Valley to the north were expansive. A bit of ridge scrambling brought us to the summit of Galena, High Point of the Nelson Range (7,701'). We celebrated Alice's first climb ever! Afterwards, we duly signed the summit register, then descended to Janet and the jeep. Later, we returned our mud coated rental and celebrated a great climbing adventure.

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## **Dry Mountain (8,674') and Tin Mountain (8,953')** **By Penelope and Alois Smrz** **March 29-31, 2016**

My husband Alois hates the heat, so I suggested a trip out to climb Tin and Dry Mountains and see the wildflowers in Death Valley when I noticed that the temperatures were due for a significant dip down to the pleasant 70s. The reason for the dip was a late winter storm hitting the Sierra Nevada Mountains, which also cooled the surrounding deserts. Perfect! Only when we arrived at our camping destination, with howling and frigid winds did I realize that we were at 4,500' in elevation and, ah, of course,

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Trip Reports ... continued.

(Continued from page 10)



**We camped along the Race Track Valley road at a roomy turn-out about 9.2 miles from where the pavement ends.**

forecasts were for the valley floor. We camped along the Race Track Valley road at a roomy turn-out about 9.2 miles from where the pavement ends, GPS waypoint 36.89185/117.50205, which was convenient for both peaks. Well, admittedly, there had been a wind advisory, but it was supposed to end promptly at 3 a.m. so all we had to do was get through the evening. We more or less enjoyed our dinner, finally succumbing to sitting in the car wearing everything that we owned, then moving over to our cots and slipping into our sleeping bags.

At 5:30 a.m. we awoke and discussed our options, at a high volume over the gale. Although it was still cold and very windy we did not want to lose a day, and after all the wind was overdue to stop, so up we rose and had breakfast without a hot drink, afraid that the kitchen equipment and stove would blow away. Intriguingly, the ridges above us were dusted with snow, which was strange since there had been no precipitation in the weather forecast. We proceeded toward the "Standard A Route" from the DPS guide that I had in hand (1990s edition) toward Dry Mountain. After some hours, several miles and about 3,000 feet of elevation gain of beating our way up the designated canyon, over a rough, rocky, rubbly

course, we arrived at a steep headwall looking for a clever way to pass through. We spent a good hour slithering around in the steep scree, or climbing muddy rock that broke away in our hand or black rocks which only broke 1/2 the time, all in vain. A side benefit was a view of Tin Mountain, across the way, as we struggled with the loose slope. Finally, at noon and totally frustrated, we dejectedly turned around and returned to our camp. Alois had originally suggested that we climb the ridge to the left, but DPS guides had never let me down before. It turns out that he was right. Only later did we read other trip reports, such as Eric Beck's in 1999, that highly recommended avoiding the headwall approach; maybe the DPS Guide has been updated? We consoled ourselves with hot ravioli with chicken sausage and vegetables and a bottle of Merlot, which was thoughtfully provided by friend Linda Christian; it was definitely warranted (and appreciated) at this point in our dejected state.

The next day was our planned day off for gazing at wildflowers and sitting in the sun, gaining a tan and relaxing in tropical conditions. However, it was still very cold and windy, and flowers were not abundant in this rocky, remote area. We sat around and read books, and were thankful for our wind blocking garments and down jackets. That evening, we watched with wonder as rain seemed to be coming down on the mountains around us. Later, when we felt a splash of rain, Alois and I remembered the tent that we (OK, Alois) had thrown into the car. As a prudent measure, we decided to put it up and put away the cots. Before bed-time, it began to rain and we snuck into our shelter, quite pleased with ourselves.

The next morning we were up early to discover that it had stopped raining, the wind was reduced to a mere breeze, and there was snow all over the peaks around us, which were ideal conditions for heading up to Tin Mountain. We used the GPS waypoints provided by Greg Gerlach in an earlier *Sage* and they were accurate and very helpful; thank you! The hike, which was along a ridge-line just about the whole way, was

(Continued on page 12)

# Trip Reports ... continued.

*(Continued from page 11)*

much more pleasant than the previous day's peak attempt. It was a bit of a slippery slog once we encounter the snow since we were wearing our almost worn out, smooth soles, rock-scrambling, approach boots. In addition, we carefully avoided prickly and other potentially devastating hazards as we made our way to the top. In spite of the conditions, however, we reached our objective in just less than 5 hours. Alois and I briefly enjoyed the summit before retiring to a



**Alois and Penelope Smrz enjoying the summit of Tin Mountain.**

sheltered location for lunch in order to avoid the swirling, cold wind, which I suppose peaks are justified in having despite the weather forecast. The view to the south towards the Race Track Playa was desolate, dramatic and huge. Further, the view to the west of the snow-capped Sierras was majestic. We found the names of three friends in the register, which always provides a good excuse for further conversations and commiserations with them back at home. Three hours later we were back at camp with at least one successful climb under our belts. Later, dinner was a bit less uncomfortable than previous evenings as the wind eventually died down.

The next morning dawned clear and still. Of course, it was time to go home. It was interesting, at home, to discover that we returned with our own unmelted ice still intact in the cooler.



## Treasurer's Report

*by Laura Newman*

*DPS Account Summary from  
January 1, 2016 to  
July 31, 2016*

### INCOME

Banquet Silent Auction	\$72.00
Banquet Ticket Sales	\$2,590.00
Donations	\$55.00
Merchandise	\$157.00
Subscriptions	<u>\$1,340.00</u>

**TOTAL INCOME** **\$4,214.00**

### EXPENSES

Banquet Expenses	\$3,305.81
Postage	\$42.19
Sage Printing	\$1,003.99
Sales Tax	\$19.26
Supplies	\$389.82
Web Page Expenses	<u>\$151.75</u>

**TOTAL EXPENSES** **\$4,912.82**

**CHECKING ACCOUNT BALANCE** **\$2,969.62**

### UPDATES ARE NEEDED TO THE CURRENT DPS ROAD AND PEAK GUIDE!

Please send road and climbing route updates to the DPS Road and Peak Guide Editor, Jim Morehouse, at [desertpeakssection@gmail.com](mailto:desertpeakssection@gmail.com). Jim is working on a new Version 6 of the guide, so be sure and send him a quick email after climbing a peak with suggested updates to the Guide while the information is still fresh in your mind. The DPS and Jim also welcome volunteers to join the DPS Road and Peak Guide Committee to assist with updating the current Guide. Please contact Jim via email for further information.

# 2016 Desert Peaks Section Chili Cook-off March 12-13, 2016

**Co-Hosts: Gloria Miladin, Linda McDermott, and Julie Rush**  
**Photos credits: Julie Rush, David Reneric, Gloria Miladin,  
Jack Wickel, and Dave Baldwin**

**The 22<sup>nd</sup> DPS Chili Cook-Off**  
**March 12-13, 2016**  
**Co-Hosts: Gloria Miladin, Linda McDermott, and Julie Rush**  
**By: Julie Rush**

Our event this season was in the Mojave Desert near Red Mountain. High winds and rain battered the hosts and early arriving cooks on Friday night. But thankfully, Linda's 'Suzy Q' RV provided us a shelter for our strategic, though muddy, planning and set up. Saturday morning the rain ceased, the sun came out, but wind gusts continued throughout the day. We woke to hills covered in the brilliant yellow goldfields of the Mojave. Purple phacelia, tidy tips, coreopsis, bottlebrush primroses, glorious magenta beaver-tail opuntia and more dappled the desert floor.

Our BLM campsite was a fairly secluded area open enough for the 38 participants and 6 canine pals who joined this year's event with plenty of room for the evening group campfire. Eight cooks participated this year: Elaine Baldwin, Jan Brahms, Janet Damen, Doug Farr, Ron Hudson, Linda McDermott and Tracey Thomerson. Cooks began firing up their stoves before noon and were hard pressed to keep the wind gusts at bay. We are really pleased that The HPS joined us for the weekend. While the cooks cooked, intrepid leader Mat Kelliher and Mike Dillenback led peak baggers to Black Mountain #6 and Red Mountain, two peaks on the HPS list.

The swell happy hour ranks as one of the best with so many fresh salads, homemade deserts, snackies and obligatory margarita stand. By 5pm all were gathered for the traditional "Cooks' Presentation" (aka "You better vote for me!" spiels). We were glad to see some new faces and new recipes: Tracey Thomerson, an avid HPSer, won recognition in two categories.

But, of course we must proclaim the Best Overall Chili Cook **Winner** of the Best Overall Chili - Little Jan Brahms! (who, incidentally, received the most cumulative votes). We will never know if that "Mohave Red" Indian Wells beer she passed out to tasters influenced the ballot box.....Thanks Gloria, Jack Wickel, and Ann Perkins for the tally counting!

I led small groups to one of the petroglyph sites in the area, Steam Wells. Entopic patterns, figurative depictions of rattlesnakes, bighorn sheep and anthropomorphic figures, some more than 2000 years old, were fascinating to see as we wander around the rocks and wildflowers. Because of the water and panoramic views, it was a perfect location for Kawaiisu shamans' recording of their vision quest. As one of the pictures included in this write-up shows, it is disheartening to see that vandals had actually chiseled off some of the art symbols!

Thanks to Linda, Gloria, Judy Hummerich, Mirna Roach, Laura Webb, and so many others who helped with the set up and spiffy clean-up of the campsite. A special thanks to Jan Brahms, who, once again, produced the graphics for the winners' certificates, voting ballots and the fabulous commemorative picture mugs, true collectors' items, that feature various mountains on our DPS list, that were included in the eclectic and envious Award Bags for the winners.

By popular vote the winning chilies and cooks for the **22<sup>nd</sup> DPS Chili Cook-Off of 2016** are:

Best Overall Chili	Jan Brahms	Hedgehog's South of the Border Chili
Best Traditional	Laura Webb	Farmhouse Chili
Best Texan	Tracey Thomerson	Bandana Bandit Chili
Best Vegetarian	Linda McDermott	Daffodil Delight

*(Continued on page 14)*

# The DPS Chili Cook-off ... continued.

(Continued from page 13)

Most Original

Best Presentation

Spiciest

Runner-Ups:

Elaine Baldwin

Janet Damen

Tracey Thomerson

Doug Farr

Ron Hudson

Holey Mole` Turkey

Squealer's Last Stand

Bandana Bandit

Kaitlyn's 20 Mule Kickin' Chili

Mojave Mountain Chili

The Cook-Off Committee decided to round up the small profit we made to donate \$100.00 to Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. Check out their website: [www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org). They offer volunteer trips and you might want to donate your time or give a few \$\$.

Alas, there was much discussion for scheduling the next Cook-off. Some want it to be a two-year event; others are split for autumn and spring scheduling. I am hoping someone or two will step up to host the next one. **Are you out there?** We will be glad to assist in any way. It is really a fun experience. Enjoy the pictures. Julie.



Our DPS Chili Cook-off greeter.



The 2016 DPS Chili Cook-off site in the Mojave desert.



Julie Rush, far left, aka comedian extraordinaire, and the Chili Cook-off cooks.



Laura Webb's Farmhouse Chili is set to impress!

# The DPS Chili Cook-off ... continued.



Janet Damen presents...



Bandana Bandit, aka Tracy Thomerson, giving her spiel.



Waiting for that chili!!



Linda McDermott's Daffodil Delights for a win!



Elaine Baldwin putting savory touches into her chili!



Left to right, Doug Farr and Peter Kudlinski watching Doug's veggie chili cook.



Vandalized Indian Petroglyphs.

# The DPS Chili Cook-off ... continued.



Little Jan Brahms really cookin'!!



Dave and Ann Perkins giving little Jan Brahms (center) a tip or two!



These gals (left to right, Suzi Martin and Linda McDermott) don't mind the wind!

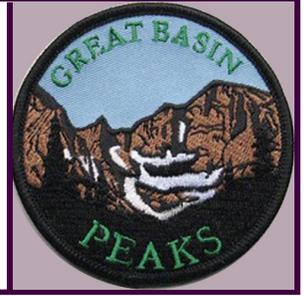


Left to right, Linda McDermott, Judy Hummerich and Gary Craig with pups at rock art site.



Karen Andersen and Ron Hudson speed cooking Mojave Mountain Chili.

# Great Basin Peaks Section News



## Exploring the Nightingale Mountain Range in Pershing County, Nevada By Sharon Marie Wilcox March and April 2016

The Nightingale Range parallels the east side of dry Winnemucca Lake and has beckoned me to explore it with its interesting geology for many years. As we returned from a hike up Pah-Rum Peak in March and drove by this range, I decided it was time to add Nightingale to the agenda.

The next week we headed out to hike both the Nightingale Range High Point (6,942') and Nache Peak (6,552'). After the long drive on a rocky dirt road to access the east side of the range, both peaks were easy hikes and rewarded us with 360-degree views including the Virginia Mountains, Pyramid Lake, Lake Range, Pah Rah Range, Selenite Range, and Winnemucca Dry Lake.



**On the Nightingale Range High Point, left to right, Deborah Stevenson, Sue Wyman, Vic Henney, Al Sandorff, and Sharon Marie Wilcox (photo by Sharon Marie Wilcox).**

The Nightingale Range is one of 314 Nevada mountain ranges identified by Alvin McLane in his 1978 book, *Silent Cordilleras: The Mountain Ranges of*

*Nevada*. This designates Nevada as the most mountainous state besides Alaska.

Alvin McLane was an archaeologist at Desert Research Institute, author, field guide, spelunker, climb-

er, ski mountaineer, historian, and conservationist. He spent countless hours exploring and completing various research projects throughout Nevada, often accompanied by his dog, Petroglyph. Alvin's book is a valuable resource for those exploring and hiking Nevada mountains.

A few days after our first exploration into the Nightingale Range, I learned that a peak in this range had



**On the summit of McLane Peak, left to right, Ron Moe, Deborah Stevenson, Vic Henney, Sue Wyman, and Sharon Marie Wilcox (photo by Ron Moe).**

officially been named McLane Peak to honor Alvin. So in April we headed back to climb his namesake Peak 6,474'. Though not the range high point, this peak provided a more interesting and challenging hike with excellent surrounding views. A worthy peak dedicated to Alvin's memory and one I encourage you to explore.

But why stop here? Continue your exploration to Nevada's other 313 ranges! The solitude and views will never disappoint.



# DESERT BOOKS

*By Burton Falk*

## DESERT BOOKS

### REVISING MOUNTAIN HISTORY; A CLIMB GONE WRONG--BIG PICACHO, 1967

#### A WAY ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN: JOSEPH WALKER'S 1833 TRANS-SIERRAN PASSAGE AND THE MYTH OF YOSEMITE'S DISCOVERY (2015), Scott Stine

One of the better but questionable stories entrenched in the history of U.S. West concerns the trans-Sierra Nevada journey of Joseph Walker and his band of trappers who, during the fall of 1833, made their way from the Rocky Mountains to the hopefully bountiful streams and rivers of California.

Based on an obituary of Joseph Walker written by a newspaper man who interviewed the aged explorer in the summer prior to his death in Concord, CA on October 27, 1876, it has become widely believed that Walker and his men, while on their harrowing, twenty-nine day traverse of the Sierra Nevada, became the first non-natives to view the wonders of Yosemite Valley.

In an essay published in a recent issue of *The Desert Sage*, this reviewer, too, bought into the Yosemite sighting story: "On October 20, based on a journal kept by Zenas Leonard, one of Walker's men, the group came to the brink of the Yosemite Valley, thus becoming the first non-natives to view the natural wonder. Unable to descend the steep valley walls, they eventually found a route into the San Joaquin Valley via the ridge somewhere between Yosemite Valley and the equally impressive Tuolumne Canyon."

Two weeks after that review was published, I received a copy of a brand-spanking new volume, *A Way Across the Mountain: Joseph Walker's 1833 Trans-Sierran Passage and the Myth of Yosemite's Discovery* (2015), by Scott Stine. The friend who sent me the volume, Bryan Wilson, a Palo Alto attorney, became acquainted with Stine while both were active in the successful "Save Mono Lake" Campaign--Wilson providing pro-bono legal work; Stine, a Professor in the Department of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies at California State University, East Bay, providing valuable background

information. Knowing I was interested in desert history, Bryan thoughtfully sent me a copy. After binge reading the 317-page volume, I came away with clashing reactions --appreciation for the time and effort Stine spent researching and publishing this masterpiece; chagrin in realizing that only two weeks after my review was published it was out-of-date.

In his introduction, Stine explains that as "an avid hiker with a love of maps and several trans-Sierran treks behind me," he had formed doubts about Walker's route as proposed by Francis Farquhar in his 1965 volume, *History of the Sierra Nevada*. Indeed, Farquhar, a former president of the Sierra Club, contended that, based on Walker's obituary and a description of the area by Leonard, the trappers had "a glimpse of one of the wonders of the world." "Search the whole Sierra," he continued, "and you can find but one spot that would inspire this description--the northern brink of Yosemite Valley."

Stine was puzzled why Walker, a veteran mountain man, would forego "the relatively low front of the northern Sierra (where he first encountered the range), proceed south along the base of the progressively higher and more rugged mountain block, then scale the imposing range face east of Yosemite?"

Deciding to investigate further, during the summer of 1999 Stine laid out plans to accurately determine Walker's route, including a close examination of the timelines as noted in Leonard's 1839 journal's-based book, *Narrative*; a determination of the upper limits of the trappers average daily mileage; and a careful examination of topographic maps and aerial photos of the area.

By the autumn of 2000, in confirmation of his suspicions, Stine had come to the conclusion that Walker and his brigade could not have come anywhere close to Yosemite.

So what route did Walker and his men take? Well, during the following decade--always in his spare time--Stine not only scoured documentary sources, but also hiked more than three hundred miles studying the topography, vistas and vegetation, until, at last, in

*(Continued on page 19)*

# Desert Books - continued...

(Continued from page 18)

concurrence with Leonard's descriptions, he settled on a route which he considered the "sole solution."

To be brief, Stine determined that Walker and his men ascended the West Carson River, turned south into Charity Valley, and then followed the present day route of State Highway 5 (Blue Lakes Road) to where it now crosses the Pacific Crest Trail. From there, their route zigzagged down the western slope of the Sierra, descending the north side of the Stanislaus River Canyon, passing through the North Calaveras Grove of Sequoia trees--where they became the first Euro-Americans to record *Sequoiadendrom*--and finally exiting the Sierra in the foothills near present-day Angels Camp.

*Voila*, the men were in California, where, after checking in with the Mexican authorities in Monterey, they spent the winter of 1833-34 in a camp most likely located on the eastern edge of the Diablo Mountains near present day Los Banos.

But Stine doesn't stop there. Noting that the Walker brigade's return route from California to the Rockies in the spring of 1834 "has long flummoxed geographers and historians," in his Appendix B, again using Leonard's *Narrative* as a guide, the author attempts to follow the group as they plied their equally hazardous return journey.

There is no argument that, on their way back to the Rocky Mountains in early April, 1834, Walker and his men were the first non-natives to cross the Sierra Nevada via present-day Walker Pass. The brigade then continued north up the Owens Valley, passed through present-day Indian Wells and Lone Pine, and arrived at Keough Hot Springs on or about April 25. Continuing north, the group passed through present-day Bishop, Round Valley, Chalfant Valley, and Benton Valley, and then turned east to enter present day Nevada by way of Montgomery Pass.

Once over the Pass and in the Columbus Salt Marsh area, Walker decided, according to Leonard, that the group should strike out "in a north-eastern direction, which

would shorten our route considerably, if we could only be so successful as to surmount the difficulties of travelling through loose sand, without water, (as the streams descending from the mountain into the plain all sink.)".

Well, Walker's plan was an almost fatal failure. After two days without water (May 16 and 17), and being subjected to sand stinging their eyes and scouring their animals, crippling many, Walker's men demanded they backtrack to the mountains. Reluctant at first, Walker finally relented, and on their May 18 and 19 return, "dehydration killed sixty-four horses, ten cattle, and fifteen dogs." Leonard reported that blood was sucked from their fallen horses to stay slaked.

To compound their problems, while traveling at night, the brigade became lost, and if it weren't for their remaining horses pulling them in the direction of "a beautiful stream of fresh water," the party may not have survived.

Relying on sources, but including Leonard's sparse description of those grim days, Stein proposes the

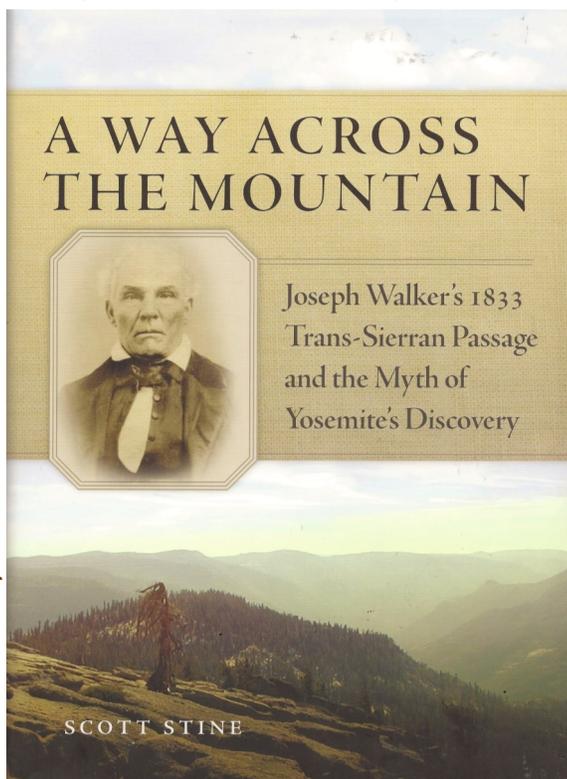
"beautiful stream" that saved the brigade was a watercourse running into the Columbia Salt Marsh from the slopes of 8,729' Miller Mountain.

Due to a dearth of information from Leonard, however, the brigade's route, "conjectural at best," probably headed northwesterly through Rhodes Salt Marsh, Soda Springs Valley, along the east side of Walker Lake, passed Soda Lake, until finally reached the Humboldt Sink, the sight of their previous autumn's trail.

From there, on June 8, 1834, Walker and his men began retracing their path back to the Rocky Mountains.

*A Way Across the Mountain* is a gem. If you have an appreciation for western history and for a mountaineer who, with an inquiring mind and elegance, turned his obsession into a significant historic correction, this is the book for you.

(Continued on page 20)



# Desert Books – continued...

*(Continued from page 19)*

## **A CLIMB GONE WRONG: BIG PICACHO, 1967 Coming Home From Devil Mountain (1989), Eleanor Dart O'Bryon**

There are no photographs in Eleanor O'Bryon's excellent memoir, but I envision both the author and her boyfriend, Ogden Kellogg, as exemplars of the Flower Child, Anti-War era of the late 1960s. As the story begins in early 1967, Eleanor is in her second year at Pitzer College, in Claremont, CA. Describing her mindset at the time, she explains that, although she had the means to buy a bus ticket home to Oregon for the 1966 Christmas break, she decided to hitch-hike: "The trip was a revelation. My restlessness, the longing I seemed to have all my life to break out, just to GO...all found a focus on the road. No car, no money, no permission...you just stroll down to the nearest highway, stick out your thumb and you're gone. I was dizzy with freedom."

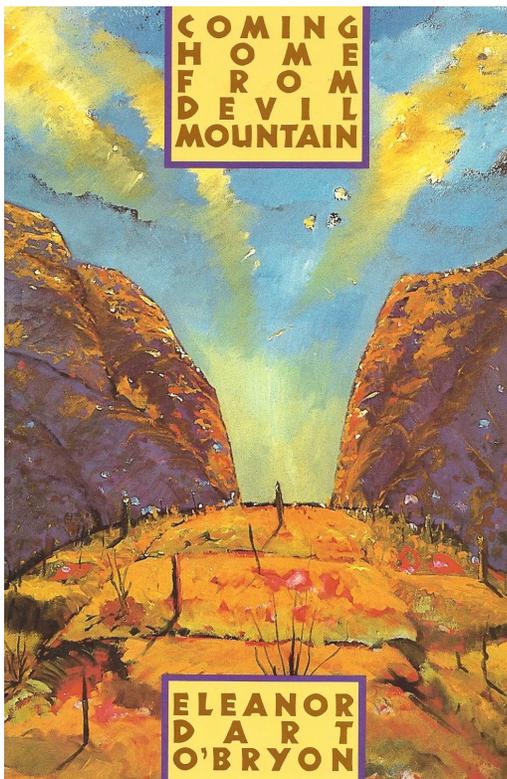
Describing Ogden, a fellow student at Claremont, Eleanor wrote: "tall and long-limbed, with a tumble of dark hair, liquid brown eyes and a shy, embarrassed smile. He is a pacifist, a romantic dreamer studying Chinese language and pottery."

It was Ogden's idea to climb El Picacho del Diablo. He explained his goal to Eleanor as "a sort of a quest, a personal pilgrimage he must take." Eleanor thought, "An adventure...an escape to the simplicity of rocks and sweat...of course I will go."

And so at 5 a.m. on Friday, February 3, 1967, hitch-hiking from Claremont, Eleanor and Ogden set out toward Big Picacho. Eleanor's pack contained "a harmonica, a paperback edition of the works of Walt Whitman, Ogden's pocket-sized game of go, four days worth of brown rice, oatmeal and raisins for the climb, and a small black book with 'Record' embossed on the cover in gold--my journal."

Three days later, on the morning of Monday, Feb. 6, Ogden and Eleanor were alone on the desert floor, 18 miles from the mouth of Cañon del Diablo--the most common route to the summit at the time, forty miles by road from San Felipe, a fishing town on the Gulf of

California. The next day, Feb. 7, they hiked to the edge of the steep eastern escarpment of Picacho, and the day after that, Feb. 8, they made a serious navigational error, somehow missing Cañon del Diablo, and continuing on a mile or so further south to the mouth of Cañon Diablito, the starting point for a steeper, more difficult route.



It took Ogden and Eleanor six difficult days of climbing, until Monday, Feb. 13, to reach the north, highest summit of Picacho del Diablo. Exhausted, almost out of food, and facing a long hike out, they began their slow descent, even as a strong wind began to rise, the precursor of a vicious two-day storm.

At this point in the book we are introduced to Frances Dart, Eleanor's father, a physics instructor, a Quaker, and a journal keeper. The events for the next few days, February 14-March 2, are described in alternating excerpts from Frances' and Eleanor's journals, Frances' detailing his anxiety after learning that his daughter hadn't returned to Pitzer; Eleanor's describing Ogden's post-storm decision to leave her near the top of the peak, descend into Cañon del Diablo, climb the ridge of the San

Pedro Martir plateau, and then continue on to find help at the nearest ranch.

Ten days later, on Thursday, Feb. 23, Eleanor, seeing no signs of a rescue effort and having little or nothing to eat since Ogden's departure, decided Ogden must have become stranded or died on his steep descent into Cañon Diablo, and that, no matter how weak she was, she would have to save herself.

On February 23, also, Frances arrived at a camp site on the desert floor below Picacho de Diablo, where he watched rescue efforts being organized. His last journal entry for February 24 read, "I am tired and very much depressed. As the night grows colder I can feel her calling. I am so afraid we are too late." On February 25, after new, one-way tracks and a campsite had been found in Diablito Cañon, Frances wrote, "...Diablito is a 'mistake route' taken sometimes by people who mistake it for Diablo Canyon. It leads to a nearly impossible face." That

*(Continued on page 21)*

# Desert Books – continued...

(Continued from page 20)

same evening, however, Frances assured members of the Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue Group that Eleanor "had taken at least two climbing schools, has climbed most of the Cascade peaks, is experienced, careful, more likely to be slow than impetuous. She is physically strong with lots of stamina. She is level-headed in a crisis" Suddenly, the rescue effort had become, "mountaineers searching for fellow mountaineers.."

On Wednesday, March 1, Bud Bernhard of the San Diego Sierra Club found Eleanor at a point some seven miles up Cañon del Diablo. Bernhard couldn't make radio contact with search planes overhead, so after Eleanor ate some cookies--her first food in eighteen days, they began a five-mile hike down toward the mouth of the canyon. In her journal, Eleanor noted, "after a while Bud gave me a can of Segoe and it really hit the spot--cool and sweet like a vanilla milkshake. He was so glad I liked it...After I drank that I began to move pretty fast. He kept saying, 'Do you realize how bitchin' you're going?'"

Eleanor's swift recovery can only be termed remarkable, her physical and mental strengths were almost beyond belief.

After making radio contact the next morning, Eleanor and Bernhard were airlifted by helicopter to the desert floor rescue camp site, where, after brief consultation, Bernhard was flown by chopper to a point above Slot Wash, "a sheer 2,000' drop," below Picacho's summit, where Eleanor thought Ogden might be stranded.

Eleanor's suggestion was correct. Bernhard found Ogden on a ledge some 150' below the entrance to Slot Wash where, with severely frozen feet, he had been lying for two weeks.

Setting up ropes to raise Ogden 350' over an overhang, he too was soon on his way off Devil Mountain, heading for an emotional reunion with Eleanor, Frances, and his own father. The 22-day ordeal was over.

Eleanor's story was not over, however. Twenty years later, while finishing this book, she wrote, "The last years have been hard ones--a long painful battle with cancer, bankruptcy and divorce." Furthermore, she became estranged from and then reconnected with her father to whom this book is dedicated. In the mid-1980s she moved to Arizona where, somewhere outside of Tucson, the once restless college student who just wanted to GO stopped. "Years of hiking in the wilderness have taught me to

follow the faintest of trails. Tracking over desert ground... has led me back into myself. When I lose faith I go out to these desert canyons. I hold rocks in my hand and feel their strength."

Postscript #1 While searching for further biographical material on O'Bryan, I came across a blog site, "Desert Mountaineer," in which an anonymous climber/author commented that he had found that Eleanor Dart O'Bryan, along with ten other climbers, had signed the Picacho del Diablo register on April 11, 1990. Okay, maybe Eleanor didn't stop after all.

Postscript #2 Although long out-of-print, used copies of *Coming Home From Devil Mountain* can be purchased on Amazon.com for as little as \$2.66, plus shipping.

## Outings Chair by Leo Logacho



Greetings Everyone,

"Beyond the wall of the unreal city, beyond the security fences topped with barbed wire and razor wire, beyond the asphalt beltways of the superhighways, beyond the cement-ed banksides of our temporarily stopped and mutilated rivers, beyond the lies that poison the air, there is another world waiting for

you. It is the old true world of the deserts, the mountains, the forests, the islands, the shores, the open plains. Go there. Be there. Walk gently and quietly deep within it.. And then—may your trails be dim, lonesome, stony, narrow, winding and only slightly uphill. May the wind bring rain for the slickrock potholes fourteen miles on the other side of yonder blue ridge. May God's dog serenade your campfire, may the rattlesnake and the screech owl amuse your reverie, may the Great Sun dazzle your eyes by day and the Great Bear watch over you by night." — Edward Abbey, *Beyond the Wall: Essays from the Outside*.

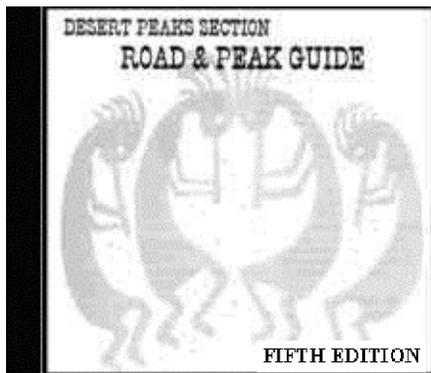
It is that time to start planning winter season DPS hikes. The weather will start cooling down and all those great Desert Peaks need visitors. Lets' get inspired by Edward Abbey's *Beyond the Wall: Essays from Outside* and start planning new hikes. It is also time to start planning the DPS Annual Chili Cook-off. Please contact me if you would like to participate or share new ideas for the location.

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