This issue is being sent to this year’s WTC students. The Desert Peaks Section warmly extends a hand to those WTC students and hopes that they will take an interest in the Desert Peaks. May I say, “WELCOME! We would love to have you hike with us!”

Years ago my husband was yearning for places to explore and hike. He joined the “then called” BMTC to get a flavor of what hiking in the back country would be like. He fell in love with it and ended up becoming an assistant instructor for seven years!

Like many hikers he was looking for a “home” and asked some of the most noted hikers at that time, Ron Jones, Randy Bernard, Doug Mantle, “What is your all time favorite peak?” They replied, “North Guardian Angel, South Guardian Angel, Big Picacho, Little Picacho, Baboquivari.” He asked, “Where are those in Tibet?” They replied, “No they are on the desert peaks list.” “Huh? Who wants to go out into the dusty, hot, dirty, scratchy, snake and lizard infested, pokey, . . . did I say cactus infested? . . . desert.” But then he decided if these guys were that impressed with those peaks he’d better go see what they were talking about.

Well, he tried it and he never looked back. He has finished the list two times he loves it so much. (Well, his wife twisted his arm a bit . . . she wanted to finish the list too!) It gets into your blood. It’s different. EVERY peak is different. That’s what makes this list so exciting and fun. PLUS, they are for the most part day hikes, so you don’t have to carry your house on your back. WHEW. Car camping, potlucks, campfires and tall tales. Plus, there is a nice cold one waiting in your truck for you when you hike out.

For those of you who do need a backpack trip for your WTC credentials, please check out Rabbit. It is being led the weekend of March 11th and 12th by Gary Craig. You’ll have views of the Salton Sea area the entire trip.

Check out our website for a list of the peaks or contact our Treasurer, Pat Acheson for a copy of our Road and Peak Guide. You won’t be disappointed. You will be amazed how exotic, colorful, and yes comfortable because it is warm at night and you are sleeping in a bed in your truck or a nice camp spot. Please come join us.

Kindest Regards,

Ellen Grau
TRIPS / EVENTS
JANUARY THROUGH JULY 2006

JAN 28-29  SAT-SUN  DPS  Rainbow Basin Geology Site, Borate & Daggett Railroad Hike
FEB 4-5  SAT-SUN  DPS  Stepladder Mtn, Chemehuevi Peak
FEB 21  TUE  DPS, SPS, HPS, SMS  Annual Joint Meeting
MAR 4  SAT  DPS  DPS Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party
MAR 4-5  SAT-SUN  DPS  Martinez Mtn
MAR 11-12  SAT-SUN  DPS, HPS  Rabbit Peak, Villager Peak
MAR 18  SAT  LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC  Stony Point Rock Workshop/Checkoff
MAR 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS  Black Butte, Chuckwalla
MAR 25-26  SAT-SUN  DPS  New York Mtn, Clark Mtn
MAR 25-26  SAT-SUN  DPS  Granite Mtn #1, Old Dad Mtn
APR 1  SAT  DPS  DPS Monthly Meeting and Potluck/APRIL FOOLS PARTY
APR 8-9  SAT-SUN  DPS  4th Annual DPS Chili Cook-off Challenge, Eagle Mtn #2
APR 8-9  SAT-SUN  LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC  Indian Cove Rock Checkoff
APR 14-16  FRI-SUN  C/NCC Desrt Com, DPS  Surprise Cyn Tamarisk Removal Service Trip, Panamint Mtns
APR 22-23  SAT-SUN  LTC, SPS, DPS, SMS  Sierra Snow Checkoff
APR 29-30  SAT-SUN  DPS  Kingston Peak, New York Mtn
MAY 3  WED  DPS  Desert Peaks Section Annual Banquet
MAY 13  SAT  LTC, WTC  Mt Lowe Beginning Navigation Clinic
MAY 13-14  SAT-SUN  LTC, WTC, DPS  Places We’ve Saved Nav Noodle in the Mojave Nat Preserve
MAY 20-21  SAT-SUN  LTC, SPS, DPS, SMS  Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice
JUL 22  SAT  DPS, WTC  Charleston Peak, Mummy Mtn

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver.
If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate, please go to:
http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/
or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

♦ JAN 28-29  SAT-SUN  DPS
I:  Old Timer’s Hike: Rainbow Basin Geology Site, Borate and Daggett Railroad Hike: Join us for the Annual Old Timer’s Hike, held this year near Calico, CA. Ron Grau and Larry Tidball, both railroad enthusiasts, will take you back in time for a trip to the Borate and Daggett Railroad, an interesting little line that was started in 1898 by Francis Marion Smith of Death Valley fame. This will be an easy hike with a moderate gain suitable for all hikers, young and old. We will have plenty of descriptive handouts to share with old photos dating back to 1903 and before. For the peak bagger aficionado, Calico Peak is nearby for Sunday. Viewing petroglyphs or other activities will be available Sunday as well. Be sure to bring a dish to pass for a pot luck and campfire. SASE or email, Leader: Larry Tidball. Co-Leader: Barbee Tidball.

♦ FEB 4-5  SAT-SUN  DPS
I:  Stepladder Mtn. (2927’), Chemehuevi Peak (3694’): Join us for a winter climb of two low altitude peaks near the Calif./Ariz. Border. Saturday climb Stepladder, 1450’ gain, 13 miles (4wd probably required, we can carpool as necessary). Saturday night camp and traditional DPS potluck. Sunday climb Chemehuevi, 2000’ gain and 7.5 miles, all 2wd road. Send email (preferred) or SASE to Leader: Dave Perkins. Co-Leader: Ann Perkins.

♦ FEB 21  TUE  DPS, SPS, HPS, SMS
O:  Annual Joint Meeting: The Desert Peaks Section will host this year’s Annual Joint Meeting Section get-together. Long time friend and recently retired BLM Ranger Steve Smith will present a fascinating program on the Adopt-A-Cabin program focusing on the many historic cabins located in the mountains and canyons where we hike. Meet at the Griffith Park Ranger Station at 7:30 PM.

♦ MAR 4  SAT  DPS
O:  Desert Peaks Section Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party: The Desert Peaks Section will host their monthly meeting. The Management Committee will meet at 4:30 for business, and then Dave and Ann Perkins will host a Potluck/Party for old and new members at 6:00 PM. Dave & Ann Perkins, 19050 Kilfinan Place, Northridge, CA 91326 (phone 818-366-7578). All members welcome.
♦ MAR 4-5 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Martinez Mtn (6,560'): Strenuous dayhike: 3700’ of gain and 18 miles round trip. Send SASE with experience, conditioning to Leaders: Larry & Barbee Tidball.

♦ MAR 11-12 SAT-SUN DPS, HPS
I: Rabbit Peak (6,640’) and Villager Peak (5,756’): Hike to these two desert peaks in the Santa Rosa Mountains. The trip will be a backpack with 7,900’ gain, 21 mi rt. The route will be via the south side over Villager up to Rabbit. There should be great views of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to the south and the Salton Sea to the east. Send SASE/email with conditioning info to leader. Leader: Alex Amies (alexamies@yahoo.com). Assistant: Gary Craig.

♦ MAR 18 SAT LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC
M/E: Stony Point Rock Workshop/Checkoff: This intermediate and advanced practice and workshop (in Chatsworth) is based on the rock requirements for M and E leadership. Checkoffs for M and E rock must be pre-arranged. It is a restricted trip; to participate you must be a member of the Sierra Club and have some prior basic training/experience on rock. Send sase, email, SC#, H&W phones, climbing resume to Leader: Ron Hudson. Co-Leaders: Dan Richter, Patty Rambert.

♦ MAR 18-19 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Black Butte (4504’), Chuckwalla (3446’): Enjoy two easy desert peaks and possibly some early spring flowers. Saturday climb Black Butte (1830’ gain, 6.6 miles). Saturday night we will find a camping place for an excellent happy hour and potluck, Sunday climb Chuckwalla (1600’, 3 miles). Small amount of possible 4wd road on both peaks. Send email (preferred) or SASE to Leader: Dave Perkins. Co-Leader: Ann Perkins.

♦ MAR 25-26 SAT-SUN DPS
M: New York Mountain (7,532) and Clark Mountain (7,907’): Climb these two desert peaks in the unique Mojave National Preserve. The trip will be two day hikes with a car camp and happy hour on Saturday night. Climb New York Mountain on Saturday via the Keystone Canyon / northern approach class 3 route with 2,100’ gain over 5 miles round trip. Climb Clark Mountain on Sunday via the class 3 from the southwest with 1,900’ gain over 2 miles round trip. There should be great views of the surrounding areas. Participants should have experience on class 3 rock. Restricted to Sierra Club members. Send SASE / email with experience and SC# to leader. Leader: Alex Amies (alexamies@yahoo.com). Assistant: John Cheslick.

♦ MAR 25-26 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Granite Mtn #1 (6762’), Old Dad (4252’): We’ll climb these two moderate DPS peaks in the Mojave National Preserve. Saturday we’ll summit Granite (6 miles, 2900’ gain) and Old Dad (3 miles, 1800’ gain) will be climbed on Sunday. Saturday night we’re planning a wine tasting prior to indulging in our traditional DPS potluck. Join our group by sending email/sase to Leader: Gary Craig. Co-Leader: Sue Holloway.

♦ APR 1 SAT DPS
O: Desert Peaks Section Monthly Meeting and Potluck/APRIL FOOLS PARTY: The Desert Peaks Section will host their monthly meeting. The Management Committee will meet at 4:30 for business, and then Mary McMannes will host a Potluck/Party for old and new members at 6:00 PM. Mary McMannes, 19545 Sherman Way, #98, Reseda, CA, 91335-3450 (phone 818-701-6513). All members welcome.

♦ APR 8-9 SAT-SUN DPS
I: 14th Annual DPS Chili Cook-off Challenge, Eagle Mtn #2 (3806’): Join us for a weekend in Death Valley of climbing, cooking and/or tasting and judging various recipes from magnificent cooks and their culinary chili delights! Whether your chili specialty is Spicy, Texas Style, Vegetarian, Traditional, or your own unique concoction, please share with us at this fun event. Prizes are awarded based upon several categories, including, taste, heat, presentation and more! Cooks are free, tasters are $5.00 each. Bring umbrellas and tarps for shelters in case of rain. Saturday climb class 3 Eagle Mtn (1800’ of gain, 3 miles), then enjoy a happy hour and the cook-off at an easily accessible 2wd site. Sunday is open for possibly another peak, a soak in Tecopa Hot Springs, wildflowering, exploring or just a meander home thru the desert in springtime. Send sase with $ for tasters, H&W ph #s, carpool info and indicate whether you will be a cook or a taster to Reserv: Yvonne Jamison. Leaders: Scot Jamison, Barbee & Larry Tidball.

♦ APR 8-9 SAT-SUN LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC
M/E: Indian Cove Rock Checkoff: For M & E candidates wanting to check off leadership ratings. At Joshua Tree National Park. Practice and instruction available for those wanting to brush up on new techniques. Restricted to SC members with some prior basic training on rock. Send 2 sase, SC#, climbing resume, email, H&W phones to Leader: Dan Richter. Co-Leader: Pat McKusky.

(Continued on next page)
Continued from previous page

♦ APR 14-16  FRI-SUN  C/NCC Desert Comm, DPS
O: Surprise Cyn Tamarisk Removal Service Trip, Carcamp & Hike, Panamint Mtns: 2nd trip to remove tamarisk, scourge of desert water sources, in Surprise Canyon. Formerly open to extreme 4WD, flash floods completed the closure. Join BLM Ridgecrest staff in eradication. Training provided; tasks for all levels, families welcome. This beautiful, recovering desert riparian canyon may have spring wildflower displays. Tom Budlong, wilderness steward, and BLM staff will share history of the area including 1870's Panamint City, '49ers, and the new Briggs gold mine. Sunday moderate hike on the original foot trail to Panamint City or the miner's trail in Goler Cyn. (approx. 5 mi RT, rugged trail). Primitive camping under the stars with potlucks, campfire & camaraderie. Easter egg hunt for the young. 2WD vehicles OK. Send large SASE, rideshare info, vehicle type, H&W phones, E-mail to Reservationist/Co-Leader: Sue Palmer. Leader: Jim Kilberg.

♦ APR 22-23  SAT-SUN  LTC, SPS, DPS, SMS
M/E: Sierra Snow Checkoff: Demonstrate your skills to receive an M or E snow checkoff or sharpen snow climbing skills. Restricted to Sierra Club members with prior ice axe, crampon, rope training/experience. Eastern Sierra site depending on snow conditions. Email or send 2 sase, SC#, resume of snow climbing/training, H&W phones to Leader: Tom McDonnell. Co-Leader: Randall Danta.

♦ APR 29-30  SAT-SUN  DPS

♦ MAY 3  WED  DPS
O: Annual Banquet: The Desert Peaks Section will host their annual banquet featuring Utah’s canyons with Speaker Tom Jones, Canyoneer and Photographer: "Beyond the Angels: Secret Canyons of Zion and Beyond." The Reef, 880 S Harbor Scenic Dr, Long Beach, CA. No host bar at 5:30 pm, and Dinner at 7 pm. For Information contact: Ann Perkins, 19050 Kilfinan Place, Northridge, CA 91326 (phone 818-366-7578).

♦ MAY 13  SAT  LTC, WTC
I: Mt Lowe (5603') Beginning Navigation Clinic: 4 mi, 500’ gain. Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass. Beginners to rusty old timers welcome. Not a check-off. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. Send sase, $25 deposit, (Sierra Club--refunded at trailhead), H&W phones to Leader: Diane Dunbar. Co-Leader: Richard Boardman.

♦ MAY 13-14  SAT-SUN  LTC, WTC, DPS
I: Places We’ve Saved Navigation Noodle in the Mojave National Preserve: Join us for our annual journey through this jewel of the Mojave, now preserved under the California Desert Protection Act as a result of the efforts of Sierra Club activists and others. An intermediate x-c navigation dayhike workshop will be conducted out of a carcamp in the pinyon and juniper forests of the Mid Hills. Potluck and social on Sat, also for those arriving early on Fri. Send sase/email to Leader: Virgil Shields. Assistant: Harry Freimanis.

♦ MAY 20-21  SAT-SUN  LTC, SPS, DPS, SMS
M/E: Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice: For M&E candidates wanting to check off leadership ratings or others who wish to practice new techniques. Restricted to SC members with some prior basic training with the ice axe. Send SC#, climbing resume, 2 sase or email, H&W phones to Leader: Nile Sorensen. Co-Leader: Doug Mantle.

♦ JUL 22  SAT  DPS, WTC
I: Charleston Pk (11,915’), Mummy Mtn (11,528’): ...our second annual. A mere 45 minutes from the Las Vegas Strip awaits an alpine forest offering a wealth of Aspens, gnarled Bristlecone pines and enormous ridge top views. This truly is one of the most beautiful hikes you’ll ever do. We’ll head up the South Loop Trail and down via the North Loop, picking up Mummy Mtn. off trail on the way down encompassing 19 miles and 4600’ gain. This will be a long, strenuous day. Camp Fri. and/or Sat. nights and Sunday’s all yours to explore, gamble or beat the crowd back to L.A. Send 2 sase or email (preferred), conditioning, experience, H&W phones and rideshare info to Leader: Wayne Vollaire (avollaire@adelphia.net). Assistant: Edd Ruskowitz.

COVER PHOTO: Telescope Peak and the Panamint Range from Red Cathedral. Photo by Bob Sumner.
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR / ACTIVITY REPORT, December 3, 2005

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY

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Activity Report

Address Changes

Mike Daugherty
LA Quinta, CA 92253-9334
NEFace@aol.com

Barbara Eyerly
5465 La Forest Dr 6
La Canada, CA 91011-1341
home: 818-248-2707
heyerly@pacbell.net

Howard Eyerly
62016 Fall Creek Loop
Bend, OR 97702-1156
home: 541-617-0556
heyerly@pacbell.net

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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<td>David Baldwin</td>
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<td>Bob Hoeven</td>
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<td>Christopher Libby</td>
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<td>Susan L. McCreary</td>
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<td>Linda M. McDermott</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

New Subscription

George Barnes
960 Ilima Way
Palo Alto, CA 94306
Home 650-494-8895
ggared@att.net

Sustaining Renewal

Henry A. Arnebold
2459 Escalante
La Verne, CA 91750-1136
Home: 909-596-6232
hamebold@adelphia.net

OUTINGS CHAIR

To all WTC students: Welcome to the Desert Peaks Section! I owe my own participation in the DPS to the Sierra Club Basic Mountaineering Training Course, a precursor to WTC. My first BMTC experience trip was to DPS Eagle Mountain near Death Valley, a challenging 3rd class peak with an exhilarating step- across at the summit. From that first trip I was hooked. In the years since, adventures on DPS outings have taken me to far corners of Nevada, Utah, Arizona, California, and Mexico. My 4-wheel driving skills were tested in Goler Wash on a trip to Needle and Manley in the Panamint Range where I was introduced to the infamous tradition of the DPS potluck happy hour. My lungs got a workout on 14,246’ White Mountain. I’ve climbed DPS peaks on trails and cross country, on rock and on snow, on 5-day backpacks and 3 hour dayhikes, in foul weather where I couldn’t see 100 feet and on clear days where I could see 100 miles. I’ve seen incredible beauty in desert rainbows, hiked through fields of desert wildflowers, and stared at comets in a night sky filled with stars. If variety and outdoor adventure are your game, DPS is for you. So come join us for one of the fine outings listed in this issue of The Desert Sage or consider becoming a Sierra Club leader and leading some trips of your own for the DPS.

Happy Hiking! -Dave Baldwin, DPS Outings Chair

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

If you haven’t already done so, please consider renewing your Sage subscription. Dues are $10 per year and multiple year subscriptions are encouraged. If you feel even more compelled, the DPS offers a “sustaining” dues option ($20) which delivers your Sage via first class mail. Send your check made payable to “DPS” to:

Ron Grau, 3700 Blue Gum Drive, Yorba Linda, CA, 92886

Include accurate address information. For your convenience, you may choose to use the order form on page 22.

THE DESERT SAGE 7 January/February 2006
Planning is well underway for the Desert Peak Section’s Annual Banquet, and reservations are now being accepted.

The date is Wednesday, May 3, 2006, and the location, The Reef, 880 Harbor Scenic Dr., Long Beach. A no-host bar is scheduled from 6:00 p.m. with meal service to begin at 7:00 p.m. and to be followed by presentations.

To reserve your place, send a $30 check per person (payable to the Desert Peaks Section) to Ann Perkins, 19050 Kilfinan Place, Northridge, CA 91326 (phone 818-366-7578) along with a SASE for your tickets. Indicate an entrée choice (i.e., chicken, steak or vegetarian). Also, if reserving for more than one person, please indicate the full name of each person.

Tom Jones, avid hiker and canyoneer, will present "Beyond the Angels: Secret Canyons of Zion and Beyond."

Canyoneer and photographer Tom Jones began his outdoor life swatting black flies in the White Mountains of New Hampshire in the 1970’s. "Graduating" to technical rock climbing in the 80’s, he has climbed Yosemite's El Capitan and 90% of Alaska's Mt. McKinley. After moving to Utah in 1991, he discovered the desert (WE IN THE DPS CAN UNDERSTAND HOW AN EXPERIENCE LIKE THAT CAN TAKE OVER YOUR LIFE – RIGHT?) and the amazing canyons carved into the rock, and decided going down made much more sense than fighting gravity. He has popularized technical canyoneering with the on-line guide "Tom's Utah Canyoneering Guide" and a soon-to-be-released technical canyon guidebook to Zion National Park. He makes his home in Salt Lake City, Utah, and runs a gear company, Imlay Canyon Gear, when not down in the canyons of southern Utah.

Please join us at the Desert Peaks Banquet and experience a little piece of the desert with its awe and mystery!

Canyoneering

Water cutting through stone creates remarkable, intricate landscapes. In Utah, it creates canyons of a scale friendly to human visitors. Canyons in Mexico and Europe feature caves, jumps and waterfalls. Exploring these places is called canyoneering, and involves hiking, swimming, rappelling, and climbing; but also bushwhacking, thrashing through narrow slots, plus hypothermia, heat stroke and dehydration. We worship these beautiful canyons, large and small, technical and non-technical; we revere their pristine beauty, the adventure of finding out what is around the next corner, the fun of solving problems without altering the landscape. Join us in visiting, and loving, these canyons.

Canyoneering - kind of like fun, only different.

“Canyoneering” and photos courtesy of Tom Jones. Web sites at:http://utahphotowild.com and http://canyoneeringusa.com
DPS Annual Banquet
Wednesday, May 3, 2006
Presents
"Beyond the Angels: Secret Canyons of Zion and Beyond"
A Hike Into The Unknown
by Tom Jones

Ticket Order Form
Mail checks payable to DPS and this form to:
Ann Perkins, 19050 Kilfinan Place, Northridge, CA 91326
(phone 818-366-7578) along with a SASE for your tickets

Name(s)___________________________________

Number of tickets ____ @ $30.00
Number of raffle tickets ____

Dinner Selections:
Chicken with Garlic and Thyme__ Sirloin Steak__ Pasta Primavera__

Location:
The Reef restaurant in Long Beach, 880 Harbor Scenic Drive

Time:
5:30 PM No Host Bar, 7:00 PM Dinner

Raffle Items: 5 tickets for $3 ($1 each at the door)
Serigraph by Edna Erspamer
Watercolor painting by Elaine Baldwin
CONSERVATION

If you missed it, look for “This Land May Not Be Your Land”, on the front page of the Los Angeles Times “California” section for Sunday, December 4, 2005.

According to the article, mining law changes passed by the U. S. House of Representatives as part of a spending bill would allow mining claim holders to purchase the land underlying the claim. This could adversely affect many desert mountain areas, as most of the active mining claims in California are in the Mojave Desert and near the Sierra Nevada. A real concern is that land so purchased could then be sold for destructive development.

The changes have been opposed by the governors of Arizona, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming; that, and reasoned public opposition, might help sway the opinions of individual House or Senate members. According to the Times article, “a House-Senate conference committee is expected in the near future to begin work to resolve the differences between the House bill and one passed by the Senate. The Senate bill does not contain the mining provisions, but it does include an equally contentious measure, rejected by the House, that would open Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.”

The House bill is supported by Representative Richard Pombo (R – Tracy, CA), whose anti-conservation stance has become apparent this year.

It also could be important to make your views known to Governor Schwarzenegger, who had not yet taken a position as of this writing.

If there is a desert conservation topic that particularly interests you, please let me know – my email address is: paul.r.cooley@aero.org. -Paul Cooley

JOINT MEETING NEWS

STEVE SMITH TO PRESENT ADOPT-A-CABIN PROGRAM AT JOINT MEETING TUE FEB 21

Each year, the DPS shares a meeting with the Sierra Peaks Section, the Hundred Peaks Section and the Ski Mountaineering Section. It is the Desert Peaks Section’s turn this year to host this annual joint meeting. The meeting will be at the Griffith Park Ranger station.

Steve Smith, a long time friend, member, and supporter of our Desert Peaks Section, will be the presenter at this meeting. Steve was a BLM ranger for many years in the Ridgecrest region.

Steve recently retired from his post as Staff Chief of the Ridgecrest BLM office, but is still active with the Desert Peaks Section and with the Adopt-a-Cabin program, which he helped launch. He will present information on the purpose, scope, and status of the Adopt-a-Cabin Program. This program was started in 1989 with the purpose of preserving historical cabins in the Ridgecrest desert region. These cabins were built years ago to support the activities of miners, hunters, and cattlemen.

The Adopt-a-Cabin program includes the repair, maintenance, and preservation of these cabins. The locations of these cabins make them of particular interest to our activities sections as they are located near the areas we frequent.

-Dean Acheson
Eight climbers (Bob Hoeven, Anne Rolls, John Thau, Virgil Popescu, Ron Eckelmann, Ann Perkins, Patty Rambert: asst. leader, and Dave Perkins: leader) met near Ballarat at 8 AM on Saturday and drove to the end of the road at Novak’s camp. The road is rough and rocky has a couple of spots where 4wd or high clearance 2wd is necessary. We left at 9 and proceeded up Surprise Canyon, and were duly surprised by the large amount of water that was coming down the canyon. We got to climb up small waterfalls, wade through the stream, and push our way through many types of brush and vine obstacles. In fact, we had such a good time that we didn’t get to Panamint City till 2 PM.

Finally, after some exploring, we located water above the water tank that shows on the sketch in the DPS write up, and also at the Castle, a very well cared for cabin in Sourdough Canyon just downstream from PC. A notebook left at the Castle indicated that climbers a few weeks earlier had not been able to get water, so maybe water there is not always reliable, and it is also a good idea to take a filter system of some kind.

We initiated happy hour at about five, and enjoyed the wine and the snacks so much that we didn’t bother with our backpacking dinners! The cabin was in such good order, with no evidence of rodents, that four of the group slept inside. (Although as we were having happy hour, someone opened the door and a bat flew out, and later Dave observed a miniscule mouse running out a tiny hole near the door lock.) Bedtime was early in preparation for our 6 AM start on Saturday.

The temperature was perfect for our climb the next day. Virgil had left early for Sentinel because he had to be back to town by Sunday night, so we signed him out and the rest of us got started about 6:15 and followed the directions in the DPS Guide to the Wyoming mine and thence up the ridge to Sentinel, arriving there at 10 AM. As we neared the top, we were glad to see Virgil, who was just on his way down, and wished him luck with the descent through the canyon. Ann P, decided to stay and wait for us to return from Porter, and the remaining six intrepid climbers dropped the thousand feet from Sentinel to the four mile ridge to Porter, arriving there about 1 PM and back to Sentinel about 5 PM. We then raced sunset down the ridge to the Wyoming mine, but it beat us. We groped about for a time locating the mine with a GPS waypoint that I had put in on the way up, and then walked down the road to PC, arriving at about 8 PM.

We had a leisurely start on Monday morning but were away by about 8:30 AM. We had more fun getting down the canyon (this time we discovered a lovely secluded fern grotto) and were back to the cars by noon. I would
like to thank all of the participants for their help, cooperation and sense of humor, especially during the vine detours that I treated them to both up and back down Surprise Canyon! That, and the climbing, is what makes desert peaking so much fun.

Saturday morning promised us delightful weather. Steve Smith, Jon Inskeep, Campy Camphausen, Russ Anderson, Dean, Pat and Cinnamon Acheson, George Duffy and Jeff Madsen met at the intersection of the Minnietta Cabin Road and the Panamint Valley Road for an exploration of a few of the cabins that are part of the Adopt-A-Cabin Program. Steve, recently retired from the BLM, a long time DPS leader, and a supporter of the Adopt-A-Cabin program, was the leader of this backcountry trek into the Argus Wilderness.

Just driving into these areas once sparsely populated by an occasional miner seeking the elusive fortunes hidden in these desert hills, is an adventure. Our vehicles scrambled over the boulder strewn mining road heading up Stone Canyon, and parked at a wide spot a couple miles short of the Stone Canyon cabin. One could make it another mile or so to the wilderness barriers, but a particularly challenging spot for the vehicles was avoided by parking where we did.

The hike up to Stone Canyon Cabin was awesome. One ¼ mile side-hill section of roadbed was held up on the downhill side by a wall hand built with tons of rock meticulously placed, no doubt, by these early explorers.

We passed a pipe that continuously provides a generous supply of water to passersby. At the cabin, Steve and I meditated while the others explored the old mine shafts and mining equipment.

We drove on to the Minnetta Cabin arriving before dark. We were the only ones there, so commandeered the cabin and made preparations for camp – some sleeping inside the cabin and some outside in their campers. Volunteers have outfitted this cabin with furniture that I’m sure those old miners would have loved. The campfire was complete with a mix of historically significant tales and up-to-date technological advice on various aspects of 4-wheel traveling devices.

Next morning we made way up upper Shepard Canyon to the Kopper King Mine cabin. This cabin is also furnished with circa 1950s accoutrements, and would have made a comfortable overnight site had we not had to reenter civilization that day.
Steve will be putting together another cabin exploratory for the spring of ’06. If you have an interest, watch for it in an upcoming Sage. Steve also will be the featured speaker at the joint meeting of the Sections at the ranger station in Griffith Park next February 21. His topic will be the Adopt-A-Cabin program, so if you are interested in these old mini museums of the desert, please attend – arrive about 7:00 pm.

A group of 14 (David and Wendy Doucette, Spencer Berman, Winnette Butler, Sara Danta, Bob Hoeven, Anne Rolls, Stephanie Gylden, Ron Goldfarb, Mia Wang, Gerry Pardoen, Dave Perkins, George Wysup: asst. leader, and me) turned out for my provisional backpack lead into the Santa Rosa Wilderness.

It was a beautiful fall weekend, and after a little over an hour on the trail we arrived at Horsethief Creek and stopped to fill canteens and admire the yellow and orange foliage on the cottonwoods. Our packs had been somewhat lighter for the 2 ½ up and down miles to the creek, but after taking on all the water needed for the rest of the weekend, we toiled up a steep 300’ or so out of the canyon and two more miles of up and down to the camp at (so-called) Cactus Springs - don’t count on water here!

Arriving about 11:30, we had plenty of time to set up camp and enjoy lunch before starting off for Sheep. We proceeded over a series of bumps and rock piles and through cactus, and George declared that he had never been on this route before (in spite of this being his seventh time!) We did reach the summit, however, and on the way back the leader pulled herself together and found a more direct route. We were a little dismayed by the heat and the amount of water we had consumed, but after pooling resources, especially thanks to the generous supply Bob Hoeven had packed in, decided we would survive. Even on a backpack, we managed to have a great happy hour, but with no campfire to gather around, retired early for a long (and somewhat cold) night.

There was plenty of light for a 6 a.m. start the next morning, and no one complained – better starting early than hiking out in the dark. Eleven of us set out and followed the good Cactus Springs trail to a saddle, and then a fairly well-ducked route up the ridge to the summit.

After a lunch break, we descended via the gully, steep but also well-ducked, and then down a series of washes to rejoin the trail. Back in camp, we found that Wendy Doucette and Sara Danta had hiked back to Horsethief Creek in our absence and filled many of the canteens – the extra water was certainly welcome!

On the way back, we realized we had forgotten about (or repressed) the elevation loss on the way in – I kept saying “Only one more uphill stretch,” and then another one came along. But we made it back to the cars at 4:30 with plenty of daylight. Thanks to a congenial and patient group for a fun and successful trip.

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**SHEEP MTN and MARTINEZ MTN**

November 19-20, 2005

By Ann Perkins

A group of 14 (David and Wendy Doucette, Spencer Berman, Winnette Butler, Sara Danta, Bob Hoeven, Anne Rolls, Stephanie Gylden, Ron Goldfarb, Mia Wang, Gerry Pardoen, Dave Perkins, George Wysup: asst. leader, and me) turned out for my provisional backpack lead into the Santa Rosa Wilderness.

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**MT JEFFERSON (11,941’)**

**ARC DOME (11,773’)**

October 2005

By Debbie Bulger

My sister Barbara pointed out to me that sleeping in the back of a pick up and waking up to frost-encrusted camper shell windows is not everyone's idea of a fun vacation. For me, it was the perfect way to spend my birthday.

In threatening weather, we drove over Tioga Pass passing the undraped skeleton of the Tuolumne Meadows store where camping supplies and ice creams are dispensed in the summer. It was sprinkling by the time we reached Tonopah, NV, so we decided to get a motel.

The next day we hightailed it to the ghost town of Belmont, albeit without National Forest maps since it was Sunday, and the ranger station in Tonopah was closed. We spent several delightful hours in Belmont, made particularly interesting since I had an old book on ghost towns with photographs from the late 60s and early 70s. It was fun to compare what time or restoration had done to the Belmont ruins in the intervening 30 to 40 years.
years. We peeked in the windows of the County Courthouse, visited the ore smelter, and tramped around what was left of the stamp mill outside of town.

Evening found us camped in a grove of mahogany trees at the Jefferson Summit saddle contemplating the route up Mt. Jefferson that we would take the next morning. We saw no point in driving all the way to the 4WD trailhead and just hiked up the dirt road in the morning. There were mountain bluebirds in abundance watching our progress and refusing to sit still long enough for a good photo.

There is a trail all the way, although in places it is faint. Mt. Jefferson's windy, cold summit hosts a scattering of antennae, but an astute photographer can crop out the intrusions. The leisurely climb took us about 8 hours including time on the summit.

Sleeping in the back of the truck, I thought I heard rain in the middle of the night. We awoke to no visibility. We could see no valley, no trees, no mountain. Only white clouds all around our truck at about 8800 feet.

"We'd better get out of here," I suggested to Richard. Last winter we had been caught in a flash flood, and I didn't want to repeat the experience. So we jumped into the cab and started driving. A couple of thousand feet down, the visibility improved. We could now see the snow on the mountain tops all around us. Luckily the snow line was above 8800 feet.

I had planned a layover day for exploring between climbs, so the weather was no problem. We started east toward Arc Dome and stopped by the partial ghost town of Manhattan to see among other buildings, St. Patrick's Church which had been moved long ago from Belmont.

Manhattan was friendly and interesting. A work crew was finishing off a new foundation for the old schoolhouse. As he left the site on an ATV, a young man advised us, "Go in the old school and look around. The church is unlocked and you can go in it too. Just don't take nothing." We took photos. Of special interest were the tin ceiling panels and flattened cans that had been used as siding on some of the houses in town. The Manhattan mine is still in operation.

On the road again, we decided to have lunch among the cottonwoods in the Peavine Campground. The striking yellow of the cottonwood leaves contrasted with the black tree trunks. Suddenly, as we drove toward the campground, a merlin glided ahead of us, barely a foot off the ground, with almost no flap of its wings. Surely aeronautical engineers must envy its superb design.

After lunch we continued on increasingly rougher dirt roads until we came to a steep downhill with about a 30% cross slope ready to pitch us over the edge. We probably could have made it in our 4WD truck, but I wasn't going to find out. We backtracked from this remote area and went back to Tonopah. It was Tuesday, and the ranger station was open.

After stocking up on National Forest maps, we drove north to Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park. On the way we encountered some interesting road signs. For some reason, whoever made the signs (the state? the County?) didn't believe in arrows. Picture this: We are at the junction of two dirt roads. The printed metal sign reads, "Gabbs 20, Cloverdale Ranch 12, Ione 30. That's it. No arrows. We had only a general idea where any of these places were. We weren't completely sure which road we were on. I had to dig out my compass. It was almost as if we had entered the Twilight Zone.

The next day we toured Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park although the fossil exhibit was not open and all we could do was peer in the windows. The mining town (Berlin) exhibits were also closed for the season, but the well-signed buildings were interesting, however not as
authentic as Manhattan and Belmont. Then it was on to Columbine campground, our trailhead for Arc Dome.

That afternoon we scouted the beginning of the climb since we planned to start before dawn so as to return in daylight. The aspen were past their prime, but we discovered abandoned paper wasp nests, woodrat nests and high up in a stout aspen tree crotch, a very large raptor nest.

We rose at 4:30 a.m. and were on the trail by 5:00 a.m. reaching the Arc Dome plateau by sunrise. Roundtrip, the hike (on a sometimes-disappearing trail) was 14 miles and about 4600 feet elevation gain. From the plateau, we could see the summit of Arc Dome peaking over the rim, but just over the hill, so to speak, we had to drop down a heartbreaking 600 feet before we could climb up again to the summit. We made our way up the steep slope on snow-dusted switchbacks.

Arc Dome was used as one of the survey stations for the 39th Parallel triangulation. John Muir climbed the peak, then known as Toiyabe Dome, in August 1878, as part of this project. The ruins of the building which was the survey station can still be seen on the summit as can graffiti from 1902 and other early years of the 20th century.

Richard uncovered the remains of old handmade boots put together with nails. For more info on the history of the 39th Parallel triangulation see www.history.noaa.gov/stories_tales/geodetic4.html

On the way down, we tried to find an old pack trail which was designated on the map. The exploration cost us another couple of miles of walking all over the plateau with no trail found. Giving up our search, we returned to camp, flushing a few elk as we neared the campground.

That night around a warming campfire we enjoyed the starry night and the campground all to ourselves.

THE BONANZA TRAVERSE
(McFarland Pk, Bonanza Pk, Willow Pk)
By Erik Siering
September 17, 2005

Please bring back DPS burro bakes! The Burro, Bob Sumner, Bruno (Ann Kramer’s truck) and I nearly ascended to heaven together. This sleepy beast lumbered out of the predawn darkness as we approached at a high speed on Lee Canyon Road. It would have been an inglorious, albeit fitting, end for desert list finishers. But I laid down rubber and just squeezed by without blood or fur…

The Bonanza Trail is a strenuous path along the crest of the Spring Mountains. It runs roughly sixteen-miles north to south between Cold Creek and Lee Canyon. Drive west from Highway 95 to access both trailheads. The scenery and a spring midway make this an appealing weekend backpack. Bob and I dayhiked it. We also climbed McFarland, Bonanza, and Willow Peaks: very fun, fun, and annoying, respectively.

From Lee Canyon the trail runs to the crest, passes west of McFarland Peak, and then regains the crest at Bonanza Peak before dropping northeast to Cold Creek. It is forested with ponderosa pine, white fir, and aspen at lower elevations, and bristlecone pine up high. There are spectacular views east and west to the distant deserts and mountain ranges. Water is available at Wood Spring, on Bonanza Peak’s southeast slope. Reportedly seasonal, it was flowing well this time of the year.

The Lee Canyon trailhead (8,668’) is slightly higher than Cold Creek (7,550’). We began here at daybreak after parking Bob’s truck at the north trailhead. The Bristlecone Trail starts at the end of the paved road
above the ski area. Two miles on the Bristlecone Trail leads to the signed junction where the Bonanza Trail proper forks off to the west. After a mile of uphill on the forested slope, the trail crosses a saddle on the crest near South Sister. Another undulating 2.5 miles leads to the base of McFarland Peak.

At the top of the six descending switchbacks is a faint spur trail, adjacent to an oddly shaped rock outcrop. Briefly described by Bob Michael in a 1998 Sage report, the north canyon ascent is quite straightforward. The use path leads up and north into the main gully. Occasional cairns mark the uncomplicated route. Continue up the drainage along the south side of a massive rock formation. There is one obstacle, a class 4-5 dry waterfall midway. Stay close to the rock wall on the left to climb class 3 steps. The slope beyond is steep but easy to a small saddle. Then walk southeast across the wooded plateau for a quarter mile to McFarland Peak’s highpoint (10,742’). The top offers a panorama of Mummy and Charleston. We retraced our route on descent. It was very enjoyable.

The Bonanza Trail then drops to cross the gully and continue to the west ridge of McFarland. Reality differs from the topographic map, which indicates a much bigger loop around the north side of the peak; the trail has been rerouted and shortened.

The trail then turns northeast and descends the steep north side of the ridge to rejoin the old trail near the bottom of the canyon. Again, the map here doesn’t reflect a reroute. It heads west onto a ridge below Wood Spring, which is on the uphill side of a bend in the trail. Water flows from a pipe out of a metal box that captures the runoff. Beyond the spring is a turnoff leading to an attractive small campsite on the ridge.

The main trail switchbacks up the forested hillside at a gentle grade. Eventually, the trail passes the northwest side of Bonanza Peak at 10,200’. We left the trail just beforehand to beeline to the highpoint (10,397’), which is a nice rock outcrop with a vista of imposing McFarland Peak.

After lunch and Bob’s summit catnap, we followed Bonanza’s north ridge to intersect the trail. It drops in a mile to Bonanza Saddle, the crossover point above Cold Creek. The trail turns to the east side of the crest, descending eighty switchbacks to the trailhead. So I am told. Bob and I opted to climb Willow Peak (9,964’). It was 1:30 PM.

Willow’s north ridge from Wheeler Pass must be the best approach. Or as one register entry noted, a snow climb is excellent. The south ridge is tedious. Our beta came from “Hiking Las Vegas” by Branch Whitney. Branch has a unique perspective... for example, elevation gain is simply the difference of the summit and trailhead elevations (?!), and various dead trees and logs are route markers. The description for Willow Peak is dope-smoking nonsense. The bare limestone ridge is a constant climb over and around large rock outcrops in a burn area, interspersed by side-hilling on shattered limestone. A use path is largely indiscernible. It would be expedient and less tiring to drop lower on the western slope and contour to the summit... which the author incorrectly places on the far side of the peak. The highpoint is clearly a quarter mile to the south. The register was placed by Gordon and Barbara in 2002; there is none on the lower flat. It took nearly two hours to cover the two miles from Bonanza Saddle to the summit. Rather than descend the ridge on our return, carefully picking our way through cliff bands, we soon headed off the crest straight for the trailhead parking below. The cacophony of a Boy Scout camp there greeted us as we trudged through the forest before sundown.

We determined the traverse and peaks to be 20 miles, 6400 feet elevation gain total. Done in 11.5 hours total, too much of which involved Willow Peak.
In September 1849, several hundred anxious Argonauts could be found camped along Hobble Creek, south of Provo, Utah. It was too late in the year to attempt a crossing of the Sierra Nevada—they were all well aware of the fate of the Donner Party, which had tried a late-in-the-season attempt three years earlier—and yet they were unwilling to overwinter in Utah. The smell of gold was in the air, and their overwhelming desire was to push forward to the California mother lode area as soon as possible.

After discussing the situation with local Mormons, most of the gold-seekers decided to strike out south for the snow-free but lengthier Old Spanish Trail, a route that would lead them across southern Utah and Nevada, through the Mojave Desert, and finally to the settlements in Southern California.

In early October 1849, guided by Captain Jefferson Hunt, a caravan of approximately 100 wagons and several pack animals, consisting of Americans, Dutch, Germans, French, Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, families and single men, set out for points south. In early November, near the site of present day Cedar City, Utah, a map of unknown origin came to light indicating that a shortcut, heading west across unexplored desert territory, and then via Owens Lake and Walker Pass, could lead the group directly to California’s Central Valley, thus eliminating 300 to 500 miles from their already lengthy trek. The decision seemed obvious, and all but seven of the wagons opted to take the new route. A few days later, however, when the going became extremely difficult at Mt. Misery on the Utah/Nevada border, some three-quarters of the wagons turned back, leaving approximately 27 to travel on across the trackless wastes, thereby beginning one of the most desperate episodes in western American history.

From Mt. Misery on, the story gets complicated. As the remaining group moved ever westward, they became something akin to runoff on an alluvial fan, i.e., they divided into ever smaller streams, recombining on occasion, e.g., Death Valley, but eventually flowing into coastal California at several widely separated locations and at various times. Also, because they were traveling through unknown territory, there were no place names on which to anchor their routes. All that we know of their varied journeys is based on the memories of those who made the arduous trek, and, unfortunately, those recollections don’t always agree.

Over the past seventy-five years, a handful of researchers have gone to great lengths in attempting to establish the exact itineraries of those who had the misfortune to wander into Death Valley in December 1849. Although routes of other parties are also considered in some of the books and articles reviewed herein, this essay concentrates on the course by which the Bennett and Arcan parties exited Death Valley.

Before proceeding, however, consider the following facts:

1. During December 1849, on various dates and by various routes, approximately one hundred ‘49ers entered the as yet unnamed Death Valley. Among the arrivals were the Bennett/Arcan party (consisting of two wagons belonging to Asabel Bennett—about 42 years old—and his wife, Sarah, formerly of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, along with their three children: George, 8; Melissa, 7; and Martha, 4, two wagon drivers, and William Manly, 30, and James Rogers, about 30; and two wagons belonging to Jean Baptiste Arcan, 36, and his wife Abigail—pregnant at the time—of Chicago, Illinois, along with their 2-year-old son, Charlie, and their two drivers), who on December 26 descended into the valley via Furnace Creek Wash. They, along with three or four other wagons, camped at Travertine Spring, not far from the present day Furnace Creek Inn. Continuing on January 4, 1850, they crossed the valley in the vicinity of Devil’s Golf Course, and turned south. Other Argonauts, who had arrived in the valley prior to the Bennett/Arcan party, including the Jayhawkers, the Georgians and the Mississippi Boys, exited the valley first heading north.

2. A few days later, after proceeding down the west side of Death Valley, the Bennett/Arcan party attempted to climb out of the depression via a canyon on the east side
of the Panamints, somewhere south of Telescope Peak. Failing in that effort, and with supplies running low, oxen weakened and resolve at a low ebb, it was decided to make camp at a spring on the valley floor, and to send William L. Manly and James Rogers, “the boys”, off on foot for help.

3. William L. Manly kept a diary on his 1849-50 journeys, and, based upon those notes, he later wrote a 300 page account of his travels for his parents in the Midwest. Both of these efforts, unfortunately, were lost when his parent’s home burned. In June 1887, thirty-seven years after the trek, while Manly was living in San Jose, a local monthly horticultural journal began publication of a serialized version of his early life—“From Vermont to California”—continuing until July 1890. This material, re-edited, was republished in 1894 as the now classic Death Valley in ’49. These two accounts by Manly (and a brief remembrance by Rogers) are virtually the only first-hand information we have as accounts by Manly (and a brief remembrance by Rogers) follow:

Returning with supplies about three weeks later, Manly and Rogers retraced their route through the Slate Range, ascended the west side of the Panamints via Redlands Canyon—which opens into Butte Valley—and returned to Bennett’s Well via Warm Springs Canyon, where they found the Bennett and Arcan families malnourished and ready to set off without them. Others, including the Wade family, who had been at the long camp with the Bennett/Arcans, had departed earlier.

Abandoning their wagons on the valley floor, the little group, consisting of four men, two women, four children, one dog and eleven oxen, then exited Death Valley again by way of Warm Springs Canyon. Upon reaching the crest of the Panamints, the party glanced back, at which time someone uttered the now famous remark, “Goodbye, Death Valley.” Descending the west side of the Panamints, via Redlands Canyon, the group was brought to a halt by a dry waterfall. Not about to be stopped at that point, they mound up a pile of sand below the fall, and pushed their oxen—which somehow managed to survive the fall—over the drop off.

As a result of his explorations, Wolff successfully petitioned the U.S. Geographic Board to name a fall, a pass and a mountain after William L. Manly, which explains how the DPS summit Manly Peak came to be named. Unfortunately, the 180’ Manly Fall in Redlands Canyon shown on U.S.G.S. Topo maps is not the fall over which the Bennett/Arcans pushed their oxen. In fact, the actual fall is either, depending on which researcher you believe, further up the same canyon, or in a different canyon altogether. Furthermore, because an open pit mine is now operating in that location, the Manly Fall shown on the topo map has been obliterated forever.

I received two unexpected bonuses by “investing” (as I patiently explained to my wife) in a copy of Wolff’s work. The first is that mine is inscribed “compliments of the author,” and the few errata are corrected in ink, presumably by Wolff himself. Even more interesting, pasted inside the front cover is a yellowing article from an unknown newspaper, dated August 13, 1940, probably placed there by person to whom Wolff presented the copy.

The headline reads “Sands claim life of geologist, 84,” and goes on to explain that Wolff, a native of Montreal, Canada, who graduated from Harvard in 1879, and studied at Heidelberg from 1881 to 1885, was found “dead at the wheel of his automobile, hub deep in sand… Strewn about the stalled car, as if in an effort to lighten it, were geological tools—his empty canteen.”

But perhaps it’s not as tragic as it sounds. I’d like to think that Wolff died doing exactly what he wanted to be
doing—exploring the wild, magnificent desert. And, hey, making to eighty-four isn’t to be sneezed at either.


The second attempt to identify the Argonaut routes, “Trailing the Forty-Niners Through Death Valley,” was undertaken by historical cartographer Carl I. Wheat, author of Mapping the Transmississippi West, 1540-1861; Mapping the American West, 1540-1857 and The Maps of the California Gold Rush, 1848-1857, and published as a 34 page article in the June 1939 Sierra Club Bulletin.

Wheat acknowledges the cooperation of several others in his project, including Ernest Dawson, former President of the Sierra Club, and T.R. Goodwin, Superintendent of Death Valley National Monument, and claims further that he “has given continued and detailed attention to the problem on the ground, following obscure portions of the various routes afoot, camping on the spots were the pioneers rested, and drinking of the springs that succored them.”

Well, guess what? His conclusions differ substantially from Wolff’s.

To begin with, Wheat believes that the Bennett/Acan’s “Long Camp” was not at Bennett’s Well, noting that the water source there is, in fact, a man-made well, not a spring, and that it was named for “Bellerin’ Tex Bennett of Death Valley’s Borax days, rather than for the ‘49er Bennetts. Instead, he thinks that the Bennett/Arcans probably camped at some point further north, perhaps Shorty’s Well, near the old Eagle Borax site, a true spring.

Furthermore, Wheat contends that Manly and Rogers climbed out of Death Valley via Six Springs Canyon, noting that Wolff’s Warm Springs Canyon route “can hardly have been the one in question,” as it was too far south of the Bennett/Arcane long camp (Manly noted that the canyon was eight miles from the camp, while Warm Springs Canyon is much farther), and, “(m)ore important, (Warm Springs) is a broad wide canyon, of easy gradient, up which the ox-teams could readily passed with the wagons” (implying they could have made it out of the valley via that route).

Wheat, like Wolff, isn’t sure how the men descended into the Panamint Valley (Wheat says “via an unknown rocky ridge”), but it is his opinion that they climbed out of that depression over the Slate Range, “probably dipping into Water Canyon, the mouth of which lies due west of the spot where the present (Trona-Death Valley) highway descends to the north from the pass.” From there they turned south toward Searles Lake unsuccessfully seeking drinking water, and then continued west over the Argus Range, north of Argus Peak.

On their return to Death Valley, Wheat believes that Manly and Rogers ascended the Panamints via South Park Canyon, rather than Redlands Canyon, as claimed by Wolff. The difference in opinion lies in Manly’s remark that he and Rogers headed east across Panamint Valley toward “a rough looking canyon” (M1894) directly opposite. The basis for the disparity is that Wolff contends that Manly and Rogers descended into the Panamint Valley by the route which they had previously used to exit, i.e., Manly’s Pass in the Slate Range, whereas Wheat’s theory is they descended into the valley at the north end of the Slate Range.

After reaching Butte Valley, into which South Park Canyon leads, Manly and Rogers continued on down Six Springs Canyon to the “long camp,” where, gathering up the Bennetts and Acans, they exited Death Valley, again via Six Springs Canyon and South Park Canyon.

Beyond This Place There Be Dragons (1984), by George Koenig.

“I wasn’t sure why I wanted to undertake such a task,” admits George Koenig, who became the third person to make a major effort to retrace the ’49 routes. “After all, the route had already been plotted, mapped and written about by acknowledged authorities.” Following his first exploratory trip, however, he noted: “Nothing seemed to fit.”

Koenig, author of Valley of Salt, Memories of Wine: A Journal of Death Valley; Lost Death Valley ’49er Journal of Louis Nusbaumer, various guides to the Mother Lode area, and who served as editor of Westerners Brand Book No. 12, became determined to find, based on Manly’s writings—which he describes as remarkably accurate, although not unflawed—exactly which routes were correct.

His resulting 263 page book, published in 1984, Beyond This Place There Be Dragons—the title taken from an “imaginative” substitute for the Terra Incognita normally used by cartographers of yore to indicate unknown areas—examines not only the routes of the ’49er as they exited Death Valley, but it also attempts to follow their progress from all the way back at Mt. Misery, on the Utah/Nevada border.

Regarding the Bennett/Arcans specifically, Koenig devotes a seven-page Appendix C to a discussion of the possible location of their “Long Camp,” citing several sources, including Col. Henry Washington’s 1855-56 survey maps, the maps of Lt. George Wheeler’s 1871-75 explorations, California State Mineralogist, Henry G. Hanks’ report of 1883, plus the conflicting views of latter-day historians, including W.A. Chalfant, C.B. Glasscock and Carl Wheat. In the end, Koenig declares, “this writer is convinced that the Long Camp was at

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He further contends that Manly and Rogers left Death Valley by yet a third route, i.e., Galena Canyon, located between Six Springs Canyon (Wheat’s choice) and Warm Springs Canyon (Wolff’s selection). He differs with Wheat because: 1) Six Springs Canyon does not have a “large, bowl-like head” (Koenig doesn’t attribute this quote, and I can’t find it in either Manly 1887 or 1894), 2) Six Springs Canyon has several visible springs—not “small water holes,” (M1894), (but then again the water holes that Manly described were not in the canyon, but instead higher up on the north slopes of Butte Valley), and, 3) From Six Springs Canyon one can’t see what Manly described as the “snowy peak to the north.” (M1894) (however Manly was viewing the scene from Butte Valley, and Porter Peak, which would have been snow-covered in January, is said to be visible from there). Koenig discounts Wolff’s Warm Springs Canyon route supposition in a footnote, observing that the canyon is too verdant to fit Manly’s 1894 description.

Koenig believes that the boys, because of the unimpeded view of the Panamint Valley which the route offers, descended the west side of the Panamints via South Park Canyon, noting that Manly mentioned they could see “100 miles…part way down” (M1894) “a prospect,” Koenig continues, “that no other route save one can duplicate.”

His “admittedly…conjectural” theory is that Manly and Rogers ascended the Argus Range via Shepard Canyon, well to the north of the routes favored by Wolff and Wheat, and he backs his conclusion by referring to a map Manly later drew, indicating he and Rogers took a decided northerly swing after they crossed a saline stream on the floor of the Panamint Valley.

Koenig takes several pages to justify, mostly by the process of elimination, his contention that Manly and Rogers returned to Death Valley by way of Shepard Canyon, Redlands Canyon (the latter, as you recall, Wolff’s choice) and Galena Canyon, arriving at the Long Camp with supplies 25 days after they left. After collecting the Bennetts and Arcans, the entire group then exited Death Valley via the same route by which Manly and Rogers had returned, i.e., Galena and Redlands Canyons.

On a positive note, I think it admirable of Koenig to have undertaken the enormous task of accounting for each of the splinter ‘49er groups as they struggled across the desert, all the way from Mt. Misery on the UT/NV border. The fact that many of those routes now lie within the Nevada Test Site (Yucca Flat) no doubt made the job especially difficult.

On the negative side, Koenig doesn’t always attribute his quotes, and furthermore, his writing at times is a bit murky. I found myself studying several passages at length attempting to determine exactly what he was trying to say.

Regarding the “Long Camp” site, and the canyon in which the initial unsuccessful attempt to cross the Panamints with wagons was made.

“When we got to the west side of the valley, we found a good spring of fresh water that came down from the snow mountain above, also quite good grass. The next day we got nearly as far down as the snow mountain and camped at a small sulphury water hole…”

“We were now at the mouth of a wash coming down from the west and it was decided that they (the Bennetts and Arcans) would go up it and take their chances. I took my gun and went on ahead. I got within a short distance of the top of the canyon, which all along had been very narrow; it suddenly spread out and seemed walled in on all sides by steep cliffs and there seemed no possible way out with wagon.” (1887)

“Leaving this camp where the water was appreciated, we went over a road for perhaps 8 miles and came to the mouth of a rocky canyon leading up west to the summit of the range. Out in the valley near its mouth was a little well that held about a pailful of water that was quite strong with sulphur…The men with wagons decided they would take this canyon and follow it up to try to get over the range.” Manly walked up the canyon in advance of the party, and found that it “spread out into a kind of basin enclosed on all sides but the entrance, with a wall of high steep rock, possible to ascend on foot but which would apparently bar the further progress of the wagons…” (1894)

On Manly and Rogers climbing into the Panamint Range the following day, via the same canyon:

“When we got near the summit (of the Panamint Range), night came on…When it got dark we traveled on some ways further and found a small washed ravine.” (1887)

“By night we were far up the mountain, near the perpendicular rough peak, and far above us on a slope we could see some bunches of grass and sage brush. We went to this and found some small water holes…Here we staid (sic) all night. It did not seem very far to the snowy peak to the north of us. Just where we were seemed the lowest pass, for to the south were higher peaks and the rocks looked as if they were too steep to be got over.” (1894)
At the crest of the Panamint Range the following morning:

“We soon reached the summit and saw what was west of the mountains we had seen so long and had been wondering how the country looked beyond. We were in a rather low pass but at a great elevation and could see a great distance east and west.” (M1887)

“...we started for the summit near by. From this was the grandest sight we ever beheld. Looking east we could see the country we had been crawling over since November 4th...To the north was the biggest mountain we ever saw, peaks on peaks, and towering far above our heads, and covered with snow which was apparently everlasting.” (M1894)

On descent of the west side of the Panamints:

“...we...pushed our way on down the mountain. Some places we found it so steep that we had to help each other over the steep places...When we got near the foot of the mountain, we could see a large lake to the north, but the valley where we were to cross it was very narrow and had a small clear stream of slowly moving water going towards the lake. (M1887)

“...so down the rocky steep we clambered and hurried on our way. In places the way was so steep that we had to help each other down...When part way down the mountain a valley or depression opened up in that direction up which it seemed as if we could look a hundred miles. Near by and a short distance north was a lake of water and when we reached the valley we crossed a clear stream of water flowing slowly toward the lake. (M1894)

On ascending the west side of the Panamints, with two horses and a mule, on their return:

“...we had to try a new pass in the last range, for the way we came over could not be crossed by a dog, let alone our horses. We tried a canyon further south.

“The canyon that we entered did not look favorable, but there did not seem to be any other pass for a long ways, so we took it...(F)urther up the canyon we came to an almost perpendicular fall of about ten feet. The wall on the north side was thousands of feet high and leaned over the canyon; the south side was sloped. (M1887)

“We now went directly to the mouth of the canyon we had decided to take, and traveled up its gravelly bed.” Later, after leaving their horses behind due to the precipitous canyon, Manly and Rogers found their mule “stopped by a still higher precipice or perpendicular rise of fully ten feet.”
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