Our desert hiking season is in high gear! I hope you are getting out there to some of our DPS peaks. We had a great DPS party on December 2nd, it was fun to visit with everyone. Many thanks to Mary McMannes for hosting our annual holiday event.

In the months since I assumed the role of DPS Chair, I have placed in the Sage several appeals to you for help running the DPS. You will find the latest in this issue. While there has been some response to these appeals, I have received more refusals, and nobody has come forward to volunteer to run for a position on the Management Committee in the 2007 election. This is not wholly unexpected, but a little disconcerting nonetheless. In January we will form a Nominating Committee to find candidates for election to the DPS Management Committee. The charter of the committee will be to find at least 3 candidates, one for each expiring term on the board.

While we call it “nomination”, it is, as I see it, a de facto election. This is because more and more frequently we are lucky to find enough willing souls to fill the vacant positions, rendering the March election a mere formality. This nomination/election is a curious process, more like a proposition for which You have 3 choices:

Option 1: I will serve
Option 2: I can’t serve; let somebody else do it so the DPS survives
Option 3: I can’t serve even if it means the end of the DPS

Stranger still is the tallying of votes for these options. The good news is that Option 1 can win with only 3 votes. The bad news is that Option 3 can win with zero votes if Option 1 loses. The ugly news is that Option 2 cannot win, particularly if it receives 100% of the vote; a vote for Option 2 is really a vote for Option 3. Unfortunately Option 2 usually gets a majority in this process, and it is often only with some severe arm twisting that Option 1 has been able to eke out victory in recent years. That may seem a bit severe, but our Section cannot survive without leadership.

So I ask you to please consider a couple of questions when the Nominating Committee calls. Do you want the DPS to survive? Are you willing to serve so the DPS can survive? The jobs are really not as daunting as they may seem. The time commitment is only a few hours a month. I see it as salvation from as many hours of mindless TV. We have tried to ease the burden of attending meetings by holding them on weekends and less frequently than in the past. Best of all as a member of the Committee, if you don’t like things as they are, you can change them! So what do you say? After all the good times and great adventures the DPS has given you, can you give a little back? Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Happy Hiking!
David Baldwin
DPS Chair

Inside this issue:

Sid “San Jac” Davis
Smith Mth List Finish
Weavers Needle
Whipple & Big Maria
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Stepladder Mtns Route
Book Reviews

The Desert Sage is published six times a year by the Desert Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. Subscription to The Desert Sage is ten (10) dollars a year. See back cover for ordering details. The Desert Peaks Section’s Sage is the property of the Desert Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. All rights reserved.

The Desert Peaks Section maintains a website at: http://angeleschapter.org/dps/

The Desert Sage 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
JANUARY THROUGH MAY 2007

JAN 6  SAT   DPS   Pinto Mtn
FEB 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS Brown Peak, Eagle Mtn #2
MAR 3  SAT   DPS   DPS Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party
MAR 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS Mopah Pt, Chemehuevi Pk
MAR 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS Nopah, Pahrump
MAR 24 SAT   DPS   Pinto Mtn
MAR 31-APR 1 SAT DPS, WTC Pinto Mtn
APR 7  SAT   DPS   DPS Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party
APR 14-15 SAT-SUN DPS Baboquivari Pk, Signal Pk
APR 14-15 SAT-SUN DPS Potosi Mtn, Mt Stirling
APR 28-29 SAT-SUN DPS, SPS, LTC Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice
MAY 6  SUN   DPS   Desert Peaks Section Annual Banquet

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 6  SAT   DPS
I: Pinto Mtn (3,983’): Climb this desert peak located in Joshua Tree National Park. The trip will be a day hike. The class 2 route is from the southwest with 2400’ gain and 9 mile rt. Participants should be in good condition. Send SASE / email with experience and conditioning to leader. Leader: Alex Amies. Assistant: Jennie Thomas.

♦ FEB 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS
M: Brown Peak (4,947’), Eagle Mountain #2 (3,806’): Climb these two desert peaks in and near the unique Death Valley National Park. The trip will be two day hikes with a car camp and happy hour on Saturday night. Climb Brown on Saturday (class 2 route, 2000’ gain, 6.5 mi rt). Climb Eagle #2 on Sunday (class 3 route, 1800’ gain, 5 mi rt). We will have time to go to nearby Tecopa Hot Springs to soak after the Saturday hike. Participants should have experience on class 3 rock. Send email with experience and SC# to leader. Leader: Alex Amies. Assistant: Asher Waxman.

♦ MAR 3  SAT   DPS
O: Desert Peaks Section Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party: The Desert Peaks Section will host a monthly meeting and potluck at the home of Barbee and Larry Tidball. Old and new members are encouraged to come. 6:00 PM. Management Committee meeting at 4:30 (all members welcome). Barbee and Larry Tidball, 3826 N. Weston Pl, Long Beach, CA 90807-1556 (Ph. 562-424-1556). Bring your favorite dish to share.

♦ MAR 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS
MR: Mopah Pt (3,530’), Chemehuevi Pk (3,694): Join us for two climbs in eastern San Bernardino Co. Sat. Mopah, class 3, 8 mi, 2000+ gain. Sun climb of Chemehuevi, class 2, 7.5 mi, 2000’ gain. Must be Sierra Club member to climb Mopah and submit medical form. E-sase or sase with recent experience on rock and conditioning to: Leader: Tina Bowman. Co-leader: Tom Bowman.

♦ MAR 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Nopah (6,394’), Pahrump (5,740’): Join us as we climb Nopah from the ‘east ridge’, a route not described in the Peaks Guide. We’ll climb Pahrump via the traditional route on Sunday. There will be time on Saturday for soaking at the Tecopa Hot Springs before we set up camp nearby and enjoy a potluck. Good conditioning and the ability to keep up with a moderate pace are required. Send e-SASE (preferred)/SASE to Sue. Leaders: Sue Holloway and Richard Carey.

♦ MAR 24 SAT   DPS
I: Pinto Mountain (3,983’): We'll cross the Pinto Basin (perhaps if we're lucky, covered with spring bloom) from near Fried Liver Wash, then hike up one ridge to the summit and down another. Beautiful cactus blossoms and possible reptile sightings along the ridges of this lovely desert peak. 2400’ gain, 9.5 miles rt. Then join the spring-fling potluck SAT night. Leader: Wynne Benti. Co-Leader: Julie Rush
MAR 31-APR 1 SAT-SUN DPS, WTC

I: Pinto Mtn (3,983′): Enjoy a DPS peak in the central area of Joshua Tree. Sat backpack to base of mtn and setup camp. Sunday summit and pack out. 12 mi rt through sandy washes and class 2 rock and 2400’ gain. Send sase/esase: Leader: Eric Scheidemantle. Co-Leader: Bob Meyers.

♦ APR 7 SAT DPS

O: Desert Peaks Section Monthly Meeting and Potluck/Party: The Desert Peaks Section will host a monthly meeting and potluck at the home of Ellen and Ron Grau. Old and new members are encouraged to come. 6:00 PM. Management Committee meeting at 4:30 (all members welcome). Ellen and Ron Grau, 3700 Blue Gum Dr., Yorba Linda, CA 92885 (Ph. 714-777-4644). Bring your favorite dish to share.

♦ APR 14-15 SAT-SUN DPS

ER: Baboquivari Peak (7,734′), Signal Peak (4,877′): Climb these two desert peaks in Arizona. The trip will be two day hikes with a car camp and happy hour on Saturday night. Climb Baboquivari on Saturday (4200′ gain, 9 mi), which will involve class 4/5 rock. Climb Signal (Kofa), a DPS emblem peak, from the west on Sunday (2800′ elevation gain, 4 miles), which will also involve class 4/5 rock. Restricted to Sierra Club members with class 4/5 climbing experience. Helmets and completed medical forms are required. Send email/sase with experience and SC# to leader: Leader: Alex Amies. Co-Leader: Tom McDonell.

♦ APR 14-15 SAT-Sun DPS

I: Potosi Mtn (8,514′), Mount Stirling (8,218′): Join us for a spring climb of these two high desert peaks near Las Vegas. We’ll climb Potosi (2900′ gain, 6 mi.) by the A route on Saturday, then drive to an area near Stirling for a Saturday night potluck. Sunday climb Stirling (2200′ gain, 4 mi.) and view Indian petroglyphs en route. 2WD good for both peaks. Send SASE or email (preferred) to Leader: Dave Perkins. Co-Leader: Ann Perkins.

♦ APR 28-29 SAT-SUN DPS, SPS, LTC

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 mbrs with prior basic training with the ice axe. Completed medical forms will be reqd. Send SC#, climbing resume, SASE or email to: Leader: Nile Sorenson. Co-Leader: Doug Mantle.

♦ MAY 6 SUN DPS

O: Desert Peaks Section Annual Banquet: The Desert Peaks Section will host their BANQUET May 6th. THE REEF, 880 S Harbor Scenic Dr, Long Beach, CA. No Host Bar 5:30 pm, Dinner, Awards and Program at 7:00 pm. Program by ALAN KARNEY, climber, world traveler, author. Alan will present his climbs of some of the Desert Towers: Washer Woman, Monster Tower, Sister Superior, The Priest, Ship Rock. Many trips to Patagonia: New route up South Face Central Tower Of Paine, Fitzroy's North Pillar, 8th ascent of Cerro Torre, new route on North Face Saint Exupery, and solo of Shark's Fin. Mark your calendar not to miss this great event and you will have a chance to meet your fellow climbers. For Banquet tickets and information, please contact: Pat and Dean Acheson, P. O. Box 90043, Pasadena, CA 91109-0043, (phone 323-256-4069). Include SASE. deanacheson@earthlink.net

JOINT MEETING NEWS

Notice about postponement of the Joint Annual Meeting. The February Membership meeting is replaced by the annual joint meeting of the Angeles Chapter's three Climbing Sections, Desert Peaks Section, Hundred Peaks Section, and Sierra Peaks Section. The meeting location and date rotates yearly among the three sections. This meeting has been postponed until the Fall of 2007. Please watch this space for additional announcements on this matter or contact Gary Schenk if you desire additional information.

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 “Desert Peaks Section” 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.
Our own Gary Craig, former DPS chairperson and DPS List finisher (2002) has set some Marathon records, too. He started running in 1987 and completes a couple marathons a year (plus continuing to climb all those peaks).

His best time in Boston was 3:08:18 this past year - and in St. George, this October, he ran it in 2:58:56. I asked him if marathoning helped him in peak bagging or did peak bagging help in him marathoning.

Gary says the aerobic conditioning really is an asset in those long climbs like Rabbit Peak or Dry Mountain.

Gary and Rich Gnagy and Mary Mac share the same birthdays -- but Gary is the marathoner! Good luck, Gary - and no wonder we can't catch you on those peaks.  -Mary McMannes

OUTINGS CHAIR

The Next Best Thing

When I came up with the idea of having a Meeting / Potluck for the DPS Management Committee last year, I was more focused on saving money for the section, than anything else. If you recall we used to rent a room in the DWP building in downtown LA and the zoo was another location, but money and traffic have both become a problem. So I came up with the idea of having the meeting as a potluck in some one’s home and moving it around. Well, I am happy to say, this seems to be working!

Those whom do not have a scheduled trip or outing on the weekends, can now have some fun and get together with their hiking friends at the potluck. This also has generated some trips, which is a huge plus too! The fact that we move it around gives everyone the chance to attend. Another plus is the ambiance our hosts and hostesses bring into the mix.

This past meeting was held at Mary McMannes’s house and we had about 20 attendees: Brian Smith and Audrey Goodman, Tom Sumner, Mary McMannes, Asher Waxman, Jerry and Pat Holleman, Sherry Harsh, Janet Damen, Charlotte Feitchmans, Barbara Lilley and Gordon McLeod, Edna Erspamer, Karen Leonard, Eric Shoemaker, Dave and Elaine Baldwin, Paul Cooley, Frank Dobos and his friend Leigh, Dean and Pat Acheson, Rebecca Owen, Ellen and Bogie Grau.

For those of you who have not attended one of these outings, please try to do so. They are a lot of fun and the food is terrific! Whatever outing you choose, the DPS welcomes your participation.

Have fun out there! -Ellen Grau

Photos provided by Dean Acheson.
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR / ACTIVITY REPORT, December 6, 2006

Membership Summary

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Activity Report

**Emblem**

#566 Kathy Wing

**List Finish #1**

#148 Brian Smith 10/21/2006 Smith Mtn

**List Finish #2**

#17 Tina Bowman 10/7/2006 Waucoba Mtn

**Membership Renewals**

- Henry A. Arnebold 1 year
- Diane Baker 2 years
- George Barnes 1 year
- Daniel Baxter 1 year
- Robert A. Beach 2 years
- Tina & Tom Bowman 2 years
- Harry Brumer 1 year
- Debbie Bulger 2 years
- Cindy Coutu 1 year
- Marcia Faulkner 1 year
- Terry Flood 1 year
- Peter Fracev 2 years
- Steven Gabel 1 year
- Bruno Geiger 1 year
- Geoff Godfrey 2 years
- Audrey Goodman 1 year
- Gail W. Hanna 2 years
- Sherry V. Harsh 2 years
- Edward Herrman 1 year
- Robert Hethmon 1 year
- Jim Hinkley 2 years
- Sue Holloway 2 years
- Carl Johnson 3 years
- Cliff Jones 1 year
- Robert Kanne 1 year
- Karen Leonard 1 year
- Christopher Libby 1 year
- Doug Mantle 3 years
- Penelope May 1 year
- Carlton McKinney 1 year
- Mary McMannes 1 year
- Frank Meyers 1 year
- Robert Michael 1 year
- Robert Morris 1 year
- Mary & Rayene Matheral 1 year
- Pat & Paul Nelson 1 year
- Ken D. Olson 2 years
- Chuck Poopshish 1 year
- Jim Prichard 2 years
- George Quinn 1 year
- Kathryn Rich 2 years
- Gerry & Jennifer Roach 1 year
- Thomas Rountree 5 years
- Carleton Shay 1 year
- Barbara & Dave Shollie 1 year
- R. Steve Smith 1 year
- Nile Sorenson 1 year
- Ed & Joan Steiner 3 years
- Pamela Jones 1 year
- Bob Sumner 1 year
- Barbee & Larry Tidball 2 years
- Robert Tomlinson 2 years
- Devra Wasserman 1 year
- Asher Waxman 2 years
- Roger Weingaertner 1 year
- Kathy Wing 1 year
- Charles Winger 2 years
- Robert Young 1 year

HELP WANTED

The DPS needs your help. We are seeking volunteers for the following positions. Please contact David Baldwin, DPS Chair if you are interested in helping out. Your efforts will be appreciated.

**DPS Guide Editor**

The DPS Guide Editor maintains the DPS Road and Peaks Guide, currently in its 4th edition, capturing updates to existing route descriptions as they are reported or gathered through personal experience, publishing these updates in the Sage for the benefit of the membership, and adding route descriptions for new peaks added to the DPS list. A significant current need is to ensure that all route descriptions in the guide conform to the legal descriptions of desert wilderness areas as published by government agencies, particularly the BLM. Larger projects to be undertaken by the Editor with the advice and consent of the Committee may in the future include a new edition of the Guide, an update to the CD version, or web publication of route descriptions.

**Candidates for Election to the DPS Management Committee**

Each year 2 or 3 of the five members of the Section Management Committee are elected by the membership to 2-year terms. Committee members are elected at-large and decide after the spring election who will hold the positions of Chair, Outings, Treasurer, Secretary, and Programs for the upcoming year. Terms for 3 of the current Committee members will expire at the end of the season and candidates for these positions are needed for the spring 2007 election. Committee members perform the duties of their position as outlined in the Section Bylaws, attend meetings throughout the year, and generally attend to the business of running the Section.

COVER PHOTO: Weavers Needle. Photo by Tina Bowman.
Desert Tower Climbs is Focus at DPS Annual Banquet

The Desert Peaks Section is very fortunate to engage Alan Kearney, climber, world traveler and author, to speak at their annual banquet next May.

If you do any traveling in the desert, whether to climb a desert peak or to get to a vacation spot or to simply get away and enjoy the scenery, you no doubt have noticed the occasional tower protruding upwards from the desert floor. To many of us, these balanced spires serve as awesome beauty ornaments in the desert landscape.

To some, they present unique climbing challenges. If it is tall and steep and hard to climb and if the top is higher than anything close around, it has to be topped.

Alan Kearney is such a person. His banquet presentation will focus on climbs he has made of desert towers that are somewhat familiar to many of us, including Washer Woman, Monster Tower, Sister Superior, The Priest and Ship Rock.

Alan grew up in the Northwest and began hiking, skiing and climbing mountains at the age of seven. During college he gained further skill on big mountains and walls in Alaska and Yosemite. In 1981, he and Bobby Knight made the fourth ascent of the Central Tower Of Paine, in Chilean Patagonia via a new route. Three years later, he and Knight made the first alpine-style ascent of Fitzroy's 5,500 foot North Pillar in Argentine Patagonia. Expeditions throughout the 80's and 90's took him to Pakistan, Nepal, Alaska, Patagonia and Canada. In 2000, Kearney and Brendan Cusick climbed the last major buttress on Mount Combatant in the British Columbia Coast Range. The lightweight ascent required five days, four bivouacs and 29 pitches of climbing.

He has been publishing photographs and writing about the outdoors since 1975. His work has appeared in Alpinist, Climbing, Rock and Ice, Men's Health, Newsweek and Outside. He has written three books: Mountaineering In Patagonia, Color Hiking Guide to Mount Rainier and Classic Climbs Of The Northwest.

In 1998 the Breast Cancer Fund in San Francisco hired him to photograph Breast Cancer Survivors climbing Mount McKinley. Many of the images appeared in their book Climb Against The Odds and in various periodicals.

He continues to climb, ski, run trails and backpack in his nearby North Cascades and photograph threatened wild areas in North America. He often donates images of these pristine lands to non-profit environmental organizations.

If you would like to see Alan’s presentation, the Desert Peaks Section welcomes you to attend at the Reef Restaurant in Long Beach on May 6, 2007. $30 gets you, in addition to the presentation, an elegant banquet meal and the opportunity to meet other lovers of our beautiful desert environment. The DPS treasurer loves receiving checks at PO Box 90043, Pasadena, CA, 91109. Please specify choice of Chicken, Steak, or Vegetarian. More information can be seen at http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps/banquet.htm.

Photos courtesy of Alan Kearney.
I met Sid Davis back in 1980 when I led Spanish Needle—there were twelve of us, and we had had a long day due to climbing the wannabe summit and finally the real summit. Back at Indian Wells, we had a great dinner, and Sid generously ordered fine bottles of wine for all us SPSers, and a good time was had by all. My last encounter with Sid was in planning the SPS 50th Anniversary banquet where he and his friend Shirley looked forward to attending. Sadly, at the last minute, he was unable to come, but he insisted on buying the SPS Anniversary CD for all leaders and climbers featured on the CD. He was not only generous but one of our favorite companions and friends. Anyone climbing his peak, San Jacinto, will surely feel his spirit along the way.

Not only being a great climber in all three sections (SPS, DPS, HPS), he had a colorful Hollywood life. As a child, he was in Our Gang movies, and later in life became best friends with and a stand-in for John Wayne. John Wayne became Sid's silent financial partner in Sid Davis Productions, a company that made "cautionary" films about social issues. Any of us who attended school in the fifties and sixties remember well these thirty minute b/w movies. His first movie, "The Dangerous Stranger," was seen by a child who later saved herself from a predator, because she remembered the movie. Meeting this child was one of Sid's proudest moments.

But back to the peaks—and THE PEAK. On July 11, 1964, Sid climbed San Jacinto (10,834') at the age of 47. From that time on, he ascended this fine desert peak 643 times—twelve times in his eighties. He went up every route that could possibly be done—Devil's Slide, Suicide Rock Trail, Fuller Trail, Marion Mountain, and the arduous route from the desert floor. While still living in the S.F. Valley, he'd get the urge to climb his peak—rising at 4 a.m., riding his motorcycle to the tram, climbing San Jac, and returning home. After moving to Palm Desert, the peak was more accessible, and in 1978, he climbed it every day. His neighbors asked him, "When are you going to quit that hiking and take up golf?" His answer was, "I will when I get older." He never got older, and he never took up golf!

Sid's last ascent was September 1, 1998, and when asked why he did that peak so many times, he answered, "You gotta be a nut to hike the peak as many times as I did, but what can you do? I love it!" We pause to wonder and ask ourselves, Why would someone want to climb the peak as many times as he? He didn't need the peak but as with any passionate love affair, he needed the daily encounter. Or perhaps Sid understood what John Muir meant in letting the ice, trees, flowers, soil, storms, and seasons teach him who to be and how to live.

As an active member of the Desert Peaks Section, Sid climbed on many scheduled trips plus many private trips with notable climbers as Andy Smatko, Jerry Keating, Eric Schumacher, & Doug Mantle. He emblemed on Navajo Mountain in 1964. In 1967, Sid and companions (Bob Mason, Marlin Clark) climbed the Mexican volcanoes. Later, he invited the Mexican Search and Rescue team, La Brigada de Rescate del Socorro Alpino to journey to L.A., where Sid housed them and accompanied them on a climb up Mt. Whitney. From 1968-1975, he was a vital member of his local Mountain Rescue Committee. His daughter Jill recalls he almost missed her wedding, because he was

In Memorial of Sid “San Jac” Davis
April 1, 1916 - October 16, 2006

Sid enjoying the summit. Photo courtesy of siddavis.net.

Mary McMannes and Sid Davis atop San Jacinto, 1986. Photo provided by Mary McMannes.
out rescuing a lost hiker. They found the missing fellow, Sid invited him to Jill's wedding, and they all remained friends from that point on.

The last six years of his life in Palm Desert, Sid watched the rising and the setting of the sun on his favorite peak along with his lovely new friend, Shirley Friesen. She said he regaled her with stories of the legend and lore of his climbing, and one particular trip up 395 seemed to take forever, because he had so many peak stories. He told Shirley she was the love of his later life, but Shirley says, "His real love was with San Jac." The rangers of San Jacinto are naming a trail, the Sid Davis Trail, in 2011 (the required time after his passing.) He was told this shortly before his death, and he was greatly pleased.

Sid was preceded in death by wife Norma and is survived by daughter Jill and grandson Steven (the youngest climber of San Jac when he was barely three years old.)

Sid once wrote in a poem, 'My ashes will be cast atop San Jac, In the holes and in the crack. The pine tree will say, 'Sid, you are mine.' As I climb through the roots into the limber pine."

"Climbing, climbing ever higher. Reaching, reaching to my heart's desire. And the thrill that I seek, Is to stand atop my mountain peak. And if you ask me how or why All of this happens beneath the sky, I don't know the reason why But as a mountaineer, I'll never die."

Sid was a bold and courageous climber with a generous and kind heart.

We can only admire one who became legendary in climbing a peak he loved so ardently. John Muir often said, "Going to the mountains is going home." Sid "San Jac" has gone home and is resting in the mountain heart. Thanks for being our great friend and climbing companion. Rest in peace and walk with us when we climb your peak. - Mary McMannes

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Now on sale:

**CHESSIE BLIGH AND THE SCROLL OF ANDELTHOR** by Ellen Grau (pen name Thora Gabriel --- the first names of my grandchildren).

If you want to read a great adventure story or give a great Christmas gift --- go online and order it from [WWW.CHESSIEBLIGH.COM](http://WWW.CHESSIEBLIGH.COM).

The peak in the book is Pico Risco!

This is a little girl adventure story with lots of magic. It takes place at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.
Brian Smith climbed his 99th DPS peak, Smith Mountain, on October 21st, thus completing the DPS Peaks List. Congratulations Brian! Scot Jamison and I had the pleasure of serving as the leaders on this outing. In addition to Brian and the leaders, other participants included Audrey Goodman and her son James, Yvonne Jamison, Jan Brahms and David Reneric, Barbee and Larry Tidball, John Strauch, Dave and Elaine Baldwin, Terry Flood, Greg and Mirna Roach, Jack Wickel, Gloria Miladin, Bill Gaskill, Rich Gnagy, Lova Hyatt and Stu, Karen Leonard, Alka Patel, and Didier Tais. My apologies if I missed anyone. Skies were clear and temperatures comfortable all weekend.

We followed the DPS Peaks Guide directions to the standard 4wd trailhead, and the directions were accurate and easy to follow. The road seems in no worse shape than it was 3-1/2 years ago for the Roach/Baldwin multiple list finish. Parking is quite limited at the nominal starting point for the hike, so large groups will want to consolidate into as few vehicles as possible for the drive in. The hike itself is straightforward, and we followed the Peaks Guide directions across the flats and into the correct gully with no difficulties. After winding through the gully to a point near its top, we rested and regrouped at a spot at the base of the only steep section. The gully divides here and we took the right-hand route (though I think either choice works) up a disagreeably loose slope for fifty vertical feet or so to easier terrain above. The route bends southward a bit here, after another fifteen minutes or so the peak itself comes into view. Well, almost, as one is looking at the rounded false summit with the true high point hidden behind, just a bit higher.

The group crossed the rolling terrain (complete with animal burrows reminiscent of the start of the Pinto Mountain hike) and hiked to, and over, the false summit, then down into the shallow saddle to once again regroup so that we could all climb the true high point together. We got Brian and Audrey up in front and they took off running at first towards the top, but cooler heads prevailed and the whole group caught up to witness and enjoy Brian’s triumphant steps up to Smith Mountain’s summit.

This is a fine peak for a list finish, with grand views of nearly all of Death Valley National Park and also the lands to the east (as far as Charleston) and south. The group celebrated on the summit with plenty of champagne, lunch, photographs, and even some folk dancing courtesy of Brian and his Dancing Troupe.

The return to the trailhead went fine, retracing our steps. Our overall time was a bit slow due to the large group
Before the trip, we investigated options for camping nearer to the trailhead, but those were all a no-go. All lands crossed after turning from the pavement onto the Greenwater Valley road are inside DVNP and thus subject to stringent rules regarding campsite location, group size, and so on. Anyway, a wide variety of snacks, entrees, desserts, drinks, and so on appeared at our camp, which the tail end of the group (including myself) pulled into just a few minutes before the sun disappeared behind the Ibex Hills to the west. As is customary for list finish trips, the cooks outdid themselves! A fine campfire accompanied the meal, which turned into a sing-along ably led by Audrey and James on the guitar (we were going to bring a piano for Audrey, but the moving van never showed up). There were also many tales told (some tall, some not so tall) of past trips with Brian in the desert and in the Sierra. A fair number included the words “flat tire” (or is it “tyre”?)

The next morning a good-sized fraction of the group descended on the Crow Bar in Shoshone for breakfast. This completely overwhelmed the poor souls running the place, and although the service was always cordial and the food was tasty as usual, it took a long time for everyone to get in and out of there. Quite understandable. Most of the group said their good-bye’s outside after breakfast, with various plans in place for Sunday’s activities. In particular, Brian, Audrey, and James planned to take the main road through Death Valley and visit some of the tourist sites on the valley floor. I joined Dave and Elaine Baldwin and Larry and Barbee Tidball for a climb of Ibex Peak.

The trailhead for Ibex is on a dirt road reached by leaving the pavement of SR 127 about 1.25 miles west of Salsberry Pass, at UTM 503743. The dirt road parallels the highway to a turn south at UTM 497739. Go south about 2/3 mile to a junction at UTM 501729. The road on the left is staked “closed” immediately; park here and walk up the road behind the stakes (Andy Zdon’s Desert Summits book needs to be updated in this regard, as it refers to driving up said road). Despite the extra distance we climbed Ibex in about 4 hours round trip, going up via the NW ridge (passing the “prospect” at 1165m) and down via the “WSW ridge”, for lack of a better description. We noted the signatures of John Strauch and Terry Flood in the summit register from just two days before, but the prior ascent was about two years ago… this peak is not frequently climbed!

This was an excellent weekend spent with good friends. I think everyone had a blast. Congratulations once again to Brian on his climbing success and to everyone else for helping to make this trip the special occasion that it was.

All photos this article by John Strauch.
Saturday morning, November 4, we had a group of ten eager to climb Weaver’s Needle, signed-in, ready to go about 6:00 a.m. California time since I never can quite remember what’s up with Arizona and the clock. The leaders were Doug Mantle, Tom Bowman, and me; participants were Alex Amies, Ed Herrmann, Bob Hoeven, Sue Holloway, Ann and Dave Perkins, and John Strauch.

We were soon on our way on the trail, taking only one very brief break at the saddle, as we tagged along behind Doug in his relentless pursuit of getting to the base of the climb. Some members of the group had climbed Superstition the day before and Babo before that, and probably other peaks I’m forgetting. Those climbs and the warmth of the day (high 80s predicted) led Ann to wait for us beside some boulders not far from the base of the climb where she could see much of the climb but also be in the shade when she desired.

At the base we donned helmets and harnesses. In the midst of all that, Alex spotted an amazingly huge centipede and took a number of photos of it as it scurried about, trying to hide from us. Doug had climbed the peak the day before—yes, indeed!—and left a rope tied in place for the first pitch. He attached a prusik as a self-belay as he went up. Tom followed next and then Alex (provisional E leader) and Dave (former Rock Climbing Section member). They all worked to get ropes in place and belayed us at the awkward and exposed spots. My job was to check harnesses and tie-ins. Everyone climbed well with no problems at all. With all the rope work it took a little under three hours to get everyone on the summit at noon where we enjoyed the view, had a bit of lunch, and took pictures. I called out to Ann so that she knew we were on top—she hallooed back.

On the way down Doug belayed us on an exposed spot not far below the summit that was a little bit awkward to descend for one move and then in another spot he had belayed us up. We had a short rappel into the notch to avoid an outward leaning move and then two more rappels to reach the bottom. Just as on the way up, it took us a little under three hours to come down.

We picked up Ann where we had left her and hiked back the faint and sometimes ducked use trail to the Terrapin Trail and then the Bluff Springs Trail to the cars. As the sun set the full moon rose, bright enough that we didn’t need headlamps.

Doug said goodbye, and the rest of us went back down the road to the camping area just outside the Tonto National Forest, where we had a fine potluck and campfire. It was a very comfortable evening, and I think we all enjoyed relaxing with a good group. Edna Erspamer, who had traveled with Ed, made her Uzbek stew. Bob’s friend Annie added to the good company.

Sunday morning we were up early, most of us on our way home. Alex hiked up Superstition and was rewarded with seeing four bighorn. What a great outing!

November 12-13, 2006

By Ann Perkins

Nine climbers (Ldr. Dave Perkins, Asst Ldr. Ann Perkins, Bob Hoeven, Anne Rolls, Gene Mauk, Virgil Popescu, John Thau, Ed Herrman, and Michael Gosnell) gathered on Saturday morning just off the Lake Havasu Road to caravan in to the roadhead for the Whipple B route. This road to the War Eagle mine is passable to high-clearance 2WD’s.

Leaving Edna Erspamer to hold down the fort, the mine, and the cars, we hiked across the desert and south up a series of washes and canyons generally following the directions in the peaks guide. A steep slope led to the ridge. We then contoured around a rock outcropping up the ridge to the summit, which was quite windy.

We had been surprised the night before to see all the lights of Havasu City across the river, and while eating lunch we had an even better view of the urban sprawl – amazing growth in just a few years. In search of a less
steep route down from the ridge, we followed an initially pleasant slope that ended up at a steep dry waterfall, and had to do a brief exploration and detour before working our way back into the canyon. (Ah, the wisdom of going down the same way you come up!)

Arriving at the cars at about 4:00 (7 hrs. rt), we said goodbye to Michael and Gene who were not climbing on Sunday and headed toward Blythe and the Big Maria roadhead. There are several good camping spots along the first mile or so of the powerline road, and we located one in the dark, built a fire and heated up Edna’s black bean and sausage stew and Bob’s split pea soup which we enjoyed along with appetizers and salad.

The next morning we drove to the roadhead for Big Maria – in the opinion of us all, this is a definite 4WD road. We headed into the canyon and followed the directions which led up to the ridge, and over a couple of bumps to the peak. Again, the summit was very windy so we huddled under some rocks a bit lower down for lunch. The main surprise on the way down was how much longer the canyon seemed than on the way up!

We returned to the cars at about 3:00 – a 6 hour round trip – and caravaned back out the powerline road to make sure the rocks didn’t claim anyone’s tires. An enjoyable weekend trip with a number of seasoned veterans, most of them close to finishing the list.

Edgar Peak, Mitchell Point
November 18-19, 2006
By Gary Craig

I had forgotten how tough these two peaks are. The subconscious mind shuts out the difficult memories, I guess. Sue and I put this trip in the schedule last summer, and it seemed for a while that we two would be the only participants. The peaks’ reputation for rough, prickly travel preceded them, it seemed. But in the last few weeks before the trip I got a few RSVP’s, from Dave Perkins, Ron Eckelmann, and Gene Mauk. Just a few days prior Ed Herrman joined the group, with Edna Erspamer coming along for the camp. I was also chatting with Garnet Roehm about the trip; he had a group of friends coincidentally in the area and perhaps would join us for one day or the other.

We climbed Edgar on Saturday and Mitchell on Sunday. We met at the Mitchell Caverns parking area at 7 AM on Saturday, signed in, and hit the trail about 7:20. To my surprise, Garnet was there with his group also. His last message said that they were going to try to access the Winding Stair cave route, but they didn’t make arrangements for the key to the locked gate (unclear if this is even available; the rules change from time to time), and they were unable to find alternate access to the trailhead. Garnet and the others started ahead of us, and we did not see them again until we reached Edgar’s summit. There were just four in the official DPS group: myself, Sue, Ron, and Gene. We had quite an adventure, due mostly to some inept routefinding on my part. My first mistake was to believe the written directions in the Peaks Guide rather than following the line drawn on the map. The words say to follow the Mary Beal Nature Trail “NW about 0.5 miles to its end”. This is completely wrong. One should indeed find the start of the Mary Beal Trail, at the north end of the upper parking lot (the lot adjacent to the visitor center, not the lower, campground parking lot). Then, follow the trail along a few constructed switchbacks downhill (just a minute or two) to a trail junction with a signpost with an arrow pointing left. You should be a rebel and turn right here instead. This seems wrong as you’ll continue downhill and away from the peak. Trust me. The trail soon bends left and traverses north across rolling terrain. When you get to an interpretive display describing “Birds of Prey”, it is time to leave the trail and head NW across gradually uphill terrain toward the mouth of the canyon marked on the map in the Peaks Guide. This display is only a few minutes from the aforementioned trail junction. The line drawn on The Peaks Guide map is accurate; it is only the words that are misleading.

Unfortunately for us, I followed the signed trail and distances mentioned in the guide to the upper end and continued up the canyon. This didn’t look too different from my previous ascent (10 years ago in a large group), and the terrain in the bottom of the canyon was reasonable. Before too long we found a decent trail heading up; this wasn’t familiar to me but was welcome, easy, walking. Unfortunately, this is the trail to Crystal Spring. Find it on your map; it is one drainage too far south! Aarrrrgh, what a mess. To further confound
matters, the trail continues uphill beyond Crystal Spring, further sucking you in to the error in your ways. Eventually the trail peters out on the ridge northwest of the peak. At this point it was obvious that we had been off-route almost since the very start. Following the ridge from here up in a broad arc leading across Fountain Peak to Edgar did not look promising due to numerous gendarmes. Another option was to punt and return to the start, but that was unpalatable to everyone. So we decided to “bite the bullet” and descend the northwest side of the ridge, across uncertain terrain, into the correct canyon. This went as well as could be expected, although we had to throw away about 500 feet of elevation en route.

Once in the correct canyon (UTM 347680) our progress went according to plan for quite a while. There’s quite a bit of bouldery terrain and cacti, necessitating numerous diversions from the bottom of the drainage. At the 1800m level (UTM 341684), I was still looking for the “bear right” point mentioned in the Peaks Guide and went too far right into the gully leading NW more or less directly toward the peak. This went OK for a while but got quite steep and narrow for a short bit through a wooded gully. After tackling this section we were able to proceed NW across easier terrain to the main south ridge leading to Edgar’s summit. I suppose one benefit of this misdirection was that we avoided some of the up-and-down-and-around along the S ridge. We popped up at the last saddle south of the summit.

We hiked up the final easy slopes for a few minutes to the top where we met Garnet’s group; they had reached the top about 45 minutes ahead of us. We exchanged greetings and took a few photos before they headed back to the start. What a beautiful day we had on the summit! Skies were quite clear and we could see quite a ways in all directions.

For our descent we dropped back down the S ridge to the point where we hit it coming up. I wanted to follow the Guide route down, and so tried to find the route from there along the ridge to the saddle where the A route turns east toward the trailhead. But, I couldn’t. We wasted 20 minutes or so on various dead-ends when I decided to punt and return to our ascent route. It wasn’t the official track, but I knew it would work on the way down. This was a bit slow through the steep section near the top with some minor routefinding problems and some rockfall. Once we made it into the main “A” route canyon leading home, we had only minimal difficulties and were back at the cars around sundown, 4:45 or so.

We spent a few minutes in the Caverns parking lot cleaning up and refreshing ourselves before heading down the road for the Mitchell Peak trailhead. We planned on hiking, on Sunday, via the “D” route, the driving route which leaves the paved road 10.6 miles N of I-40. At the paved road turnoff we met Dave Perkins, Edna Erspamer, and Ed Herrmann, all of whom were joining our camp and hiking with us on Sunday. From this point we drove 4.2 miles north along the dirt road to a nice campsite on the left side of the road. Note that this road is one lane with a high berm on each side so it is basically impossible to pass for long stretches if one meets a vehicle coming in the opposite direction, as happened to us on this occasion. For the record there is another fine campsite about 1/4 mile farther (past 4.2) along the “D” route road, on the left side. The spot we chose had been used by Sue on a prior excursion. It is flat, open, and there is an old fire ring here. The last shreds of twilight faded as we set up camp with wood for the fire and folding tables for our hors’ d’oeuvres, dinner, and dessert. A fine board of fare was served to willing takers, and was followed with a fine campfire under clear, calm skies. The Leonid meteor shower was peaking this weekend, and there was no moon to interfere. But, most everybody was more of a mind to
sleep this evening rather than to stay up late to more fully appreciate the show. There were a few comments the next morning of seeing some meteors during waking moments overnight.

We drove to the Stone Cabins early Sunday morning for the “D” route on Mitchell. Beyond the turn at 4.9 miles from the pavement, at the “8 foot metal pole”, the road is NOT good. It is very rough from here to the Stone Cabins, and I would not take a standard car beyond this point. High clearance 2WD is probably sufficient. We started hiking a bit after 7.

The executive summary version of Sunday’s hike is that it was longer, with more difficult rocky terrain, but with fewer cacti. Sue wasn’t feeling up to snuff so Dave Perkins agreed to serve as co-leader for the Mitchell hike. We (myself, Dave, Gene, Ron, and Ed) drove to the Stone Cabins and starting hiking shortly after 7 AM. We first traversed southwest across rolling terrain to a broad ridge and then up to the main west ridge towards the summit, basically following the line drawn on the map in the *Peaks Guide*. It was warmer than the day before, and I felt a bit worried about our chances for success given the mileage, temperature, and other challenges. But everybody did really well up the first haul to the point where we met the main ridge (roughly UTM 354715). Good! From here the route is obvious for a while ascending the E ridge. From point 2024m, we tackled the first bump or two directly along the crest of the ridge. Shortly thereafter we met a large distinctive slab of smooth gray limestone. We proceeded across and down and found a use trail at its lower W side. It is pretty easy to cross the slab via friction. From the far side of the slab we followed the indistinct route along the left (S) side of the main ridge towards the peak. There are occasional ducks along this “path” but it is not easy to follow. It gradually ascends towards the peak, but does not closely approach the E ridge before the final summit mass. Finally when you feel like you are getting close, there is a sharply uphill section, straight up toward the ridge at first then generally trending back away from the peak as you finally gain the east ridge. Once on top of the east ridge walking and routefinding are easy leading to a short steep (class 2.9) pitch just below the top.

Our group made the summit not long before our turn-around time, and enjoyed panoramic views from the top despite the early afternoon hour. But, we didn’t have long to enjoy the summit before we had to head down. We followed the ascent route without major issues to the top of the final wide slope (roughly 1650m, 5500’). At this point darkness got the better of us, and we had to use headlamps for the final 1500’ descent to the cars. Thanks to Dave for ably “taking the point” for most of this last section. We suffered through a bit of a “final insult” with some difficulty finding the cars in the dark at the end of the hike along the road, but we eventually made our way successfully across a few broad drainages northward to the Stone Cabins where our vehicles waited.

We wasted no time driving back to our campsite from the night before, where Edna awaited our return. Everybody had a nice break cleaning up and relaxing a bit before hitting the road back to L.A. Edna had a nice campfire set up as she and Ed were spending Sunday night here before heading home the next day. We had actually been able to see Edna’s fire during the last portion of our descent: a comforting beacon in the wild. Thanks to everyone who participated for making this a successful trip.

*All photos this article by Gary Craig.*

### WHERE IS THE WILDERNESS? (Stepladder Mountains Route)

*By David Baldwin*

On October 31, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 which designates as wilderness 71 areas of the California desert comprising over 3.75 million acres. This Act is the culmination of an 8 year campaign by the Sierra Club to protect the land that we of the DPS in particular value so much. To preserve the character of these designated areas, it is essential that we all comply with the law and respect and protect the wilderness by keeping vehicles out and pets under control. But where is the wilderness?

Before we venture forth into the desert, it is important to know the location of wilderness boundaries. This is especially important to the DPS as several DPS-listed peaks lie within designated wilderness areas. Section 103(b) of the Act specifies that maps and legal descriptions of the designated wilderness areas should be prepared and made available for public inspection. Thanks to the World Wide Web much of this material available to us with a few mouse clicks starting from [http://www.blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/wa_lister.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/wa_lister.html). What follows is an example of using this material to find an acceptable route through the wilderness to a DPS peak impacted by the Act.

The highpoint of the Stepladder Mountains Wilderness ([http://www.blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/stepladder_mountains.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/stepladder_mountains.html)) is number 3.12 on the DPS peaks list. From the “Final Legal Description, April 2, 2001, CACA No. 035122, Stepladder Mountains Wilderness, 83,392 Acres, Designated October 31, 1994
by the California Desert Protection Act, Public Law 103-433”:

“...the boundary for the Stepladder Mountains Wilderness Area located in San Bernardino County, California and managed by the Bureau of Land Management ... is more particularly described as follows: From the township corner of sections 31, and 36, T.6 N., Rgs. 19 and 20 E., SBM, this point being the point of beginning; ... to point 11, the corner of sections 31, 32, 5 and 6 on the township line between Ts. 6 and 7 N. R. 20E.; thence southerly between sections 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 17 and 18, to point 12, the corner of sections 17, 18, 19, and 20, T.6 N., R. 21E.; thence easterly between sections 17 and 20 to point 13, the corner of sections 16, 17, 20, 21; ... to point 32, the intersection of a line parallel with and 100 feet northerly of the centerline of Turtle Mountain Road; thence southwesterly parallel with and 100 feet northerly of said road to point 33 ...”

This description may be a bit hard to understand, but fortunately the BLM website also provides detailed maps depicting the wilderness boundary. The drive for Stepladder Mountain described in the 3rd edition of the DPS Road and Peaks Guide would cross the boundary between points 32 and 33 when turning north off Turtle Mountain Road. To park within 100 feet of Turtle Mountain Road, outside the wilderness boundary, and hike along the former driving route would make for a 20-mile, 1,420' gain round-trip hike. For those seeking a shorter hike, an approach to the peak from the north is also possible.

To reach the northern access, exit I-40 at Water Road (4.8 miles east of the Mountain Springs Rd. exit or 12.8 miles west of the US 95 north exit). On the south side of I-40, continue straight 0.1 mile from the end of the pavement, then bear right to drive southeast on a powerline access road (good dirt) 15.8 miles to a junction with a pipeline service road. Turn sharply right and drive west on the pipeline road 0.55 miles to a faint dirt road on the left. Drive south on the faint dirt road to the wilderness boundary marker (between points 12 and 13) and park. (The distance from the pipeline road to the wilderness boundary has been variously described as 1.4 and 4.7 miles, but the BLM description and map indicate 5.4 miles from the pipeline road to the boundary at NAD27 UTM 013309.) From this parking spot the peak is a 10-mile, 1,150' gain round-trip hike. This drive and hike are described in a Mar/Apr 2006 Desert Sage 266 article and the 4th edition of the DPS Road and Peaks Guide.

So check out the BLM website before you go. Know the location of wilderness boundaries in the area you will visit. Enjoy the wilderness, but also respect the wilderness to keep it wild.

Stepladder Mountains area map on page 18.
Stepladder Mountains area map.
I was born in what was then the quiet little town of Knoxville, Tennessee. I went to public schools, and afterward until I was twenty-one to the State University whose campus was ten minutes from our home. I then migrated to the graduate school at Columbia University, taught for a while in a small Brooklyn college, did a good deal of journalism, returned to teach at Columbia, and wrote a number of books, some of which enjoyed a modest success.

The above paragraph opens Joseph Wood Krutch’s 1962 autobiography, *More Lives Than One*, in which, in the very next paragraph, he muses on whether a non-heroic, non-controversial, non-profoundly influential life such as his would give one an excuse for writing a self-expository.

Well, the answer is a resounding, “Yes.” Krutch, in fact, was a fascinating fellow, a man who reinvented himself time and again, and a person who by the end of his multi-faceted life had become one of the most eloquent spokesmen for the preservation of the desert Southwest.

Born in 1893, Joseph Wood Krutch (pronounced krooch), earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics at the University of Tennessee, and planned to continue study in the same subject at the University of Chicago. After a chance reading of George Bernard Shaw, however, literature became his abiding passion. Instead of Chicago, he opted for New York City, where he earned his masters and PhD in literature at Columbia University.

After a short stint in the army during WWI, followed by a year of European travel with his Columbia classmate and life-long friend, poet Mark Van Doren, Krutch started teaching at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. In 1924, he was named the drama critic of *The Nation* (1924), a position he held until 1952, and in 1937 he began teaching at Columbia, where in 1943 he was appointed the Brander Matthews Professor of Dramatic Literature.

During the 1920s, Krutch met and married Marcelle Leguia, a native of the Basque region of France, whose merry, people-oriented personality was just the opposite of his, which tended to be melancholy and reserved. In the 1930s, convinced that her husband had become somewhat of a “city slicker,” Marcelle persuaded Joe to spend a part of each year in a village in the Berkshire foothills of Connecticut. And it was there, after reading a nature essay which pleased him greatly, that Krutch decided he would like to write something similar, an idea that eventually produced *The Twelve Seasons* (1949), describing a year of natural events in that New England countryside.

During his journalistic and academic career, Krutch authored twenty-nine books plus hundreds of essays, most on dramatic criticism and literary biography, including *Edgar Allan Poe* (1924), *The Modern Temper* (1929), *Samuel Johnson* (1944) and *Henry David Thoreau* (1948). Eventually, he came to be considered one of the most important literary authorities in the United States, and it seemed he was destined to remain forever rooted in the East Coast intellectual milieu.

In 1937, however, at the close of the summer session at Columbia, Joe Krutch departed New York City by train to meet Marcelle in Lamy, New Mexico.

The meeting between the eastern academic and the vast, empty Southwest was historic. As Krutch later explained: “No sooner were we speeding along the roller-coaster road that leads to Albuquerque than I felt a sudden lifting of the heart. It seemed almost as though I had lived there in some happier previous existence and was coming back home.”

Returning to the Southwest each summer until World War II interfered and for several summers thereafter, the Krutchs explored the area, awed by the extraordinary landscape and remarkable earth colors, the unusual plants and animals, and relishing in the clear desert air which greatly diminished Joseph’s propensity for
asthmatic colds.

In 1950-51, while on a sixteen-month sabbatical, the couple rented a house on Ina Road, north of Tucson, along southern base of the Santa Catalina Mountains. During this period Krutch wrote *The Desert Year*, an effort similar to *The Twelve Seasons*. Upon returning to New York City, he astonished his friends by announcing that after another year he and Marcelle were moving to Arizona for good. As Lawrence Clark Powell, the noted western bibliographer, notes, “His colleagues were incredulous in the way that New Yorkers are prone to regard their little island world as The World.”

Relocating permanently in Arizona in 1952, the Krutchs built a home on a five-acre parcel on East Grant Road, a location which was well beyond the outskirts of Tucson at the time. Three years later Krutch published *The Voice of the Desert*, a deeper, more studied effort to describe his surroundings.

As a result of his desert writings, Krutch attracted the attention of the San Francisco industrialist-conservationist Kenneth Bechtel, and soon thereafter the two of them, often accompanied by William Woodin and Lewis Walker, directors of Tucson’s Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, of which Krutch was a founding trustee, were off, via Bechtel’s Lockheed Lodestar, on a series of Southwestern aerial surveys. One of their favorite destinations was the Baja California peninsula, where the geographical distribution of Boogum tree held their special interest. These flights, plus additional trips by yacht, jeep, truck and burro resulted in two additional books, *The Forgotten Peninsula* (1961) and *Baja California and the Geography of Hope* (1967), the latter of which, a Sierra Club publication with photographs by Eliot Porter, was Krutch’s last desert book.

Krutch died of cancer in Tucson in 1970, after granting one of his last interviews to his fellow conservationist and writer, Edward Abbey, an essay which appears in the latter’s *One Life at a Time, Please* (1988).

So here we have a man whose interests changed from mathematics to drama and literature, from drama and literature to the natural history of New England, then to the natural history of the deserts of the Southwest. Even more profound, however, was the change in his personal philosophy.

Consider this. In his 1929 book *The Modern Temper*, Krutch described how science had replaced religious certainties with rational skepticism, leaving man in a meaningless world exuding disillusionment and despair. Lawrence Clark Powell suggested that Krutch voiced Existentialism even before Sartre. In the 1940s, however, while researching his biography on Thoreau, Krutch was struck by a passage from the Concord naturalist’s book *Walden*, i.e., “There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still.” In an epiphany, Krutch took Thoreau’s message to heart, and he became a convert—perhaps the first contemporary conservationist to do so—to Pantheism, which is defined in my Random House Dictionary as “a doctrine that God is the transcendent reality of which the material universe and human beings are only manifestations: it involves a denial of God’s personality and expresses a tendency to identify God and nature.”

By the time he published in *The Twelve Seasons* in 1949, Krutch was cheerfully noting that the Spring Peeper, a tiny tree toad that announced the coming of spring with a riotous ribbiting, proclaiming that "life is resurgent...the earth is alive again,” was, as far as he was concerned, better served to mark the beginning of the season than the theologian’s Easter Day. Krutch whispered back to the Peepers, “Don’t forget... we are all in this together.” Later he recalled that these words "stated for the first time a conviction and an attitude which had come to mean more to me than I realized... (They) summed up a kind of pantheism which was gradually coming to be an essential part of the faith."

"Beauty and joy are natural things. They are older than man, and they have their source in the natural part of him. Art becomes sterile and the joy of life withers when they become unnatural. If modern urban life is becoming more comfortable, more orderly, more
sanitary, and more socially conscious than it ever was before—but if at the same time it is also becoming less beautiful (as it seems to me) and less joyous (as it seems to nearly everyone)—then the deepest reason for that may be its increasing forgetfulness of nature.”

Acting upon his new consciousness, Krutch became an advocate of conserving what was left of the desert west. “Faith in wildness, or in nature as a creative force, has the deeper, possibly the deepest, significance for our future...It puts our ultimate trust, not in human intelligence, but in whatever it is that created human intelligence, and is, in the long run, more likely than we to solve our problems...It is not a sentimental but a grimly literal fact that unless we share this terrestrial globe with creatures other than ourselves, we shall not be able to live on it for long.”

*The Desert Year* (1952). Described in its cover blurb as “a report on the pattern of the desert world and its seasons, (the reader will find) the wise and often quizzical play of a mind which has learned that there is more joy in the way things are than in the way they might be.”

In fact, most everything natural in the desert evokes Krutch’s interest and delight. He is fascinated by “the brilliant little flower springing improbably out of the bare, packed sand; the lizard scuttling with incredible speed from cactus clump to spiny bush; the unfamiliar vertical brilliance of the sunshine at the summer solstice; the “coquettish” plume of the Gambel’s quail; the “cocky stroll” of the road-runner.”

“Love me or hate me, the desert seems to say, this is what I am and this is what I shall remain. Go north for astonishment if you must have it. What I offer is different.”

Because this was Krutch’s seminal desert work, it is, in my opinion, the freshest and most delightful of all four of his desert efforts. Although *The Voice of the Desert*, published three years later, comes in a close second, I deem *The Desert Year* to be more worthy, and thus deserving of the coveted DPS Desert Classic award.

*The Voice of the Desert* (1955). Lawrence Clark Powell comments: “*The Voice of the Desert* represents a widening and deepening of the knowledge which marked *The Desert Year*. Although there is some repetition..., there is also new experience and material. If he had lived longer, Krutch might have combined them in a single book.”

Krutch, who had to adapt to life in the arid region, considers, among others, the Sonoran spadefoot toad, the kangaroo rat, the road-runner, the white winged dove, the scorpion, the saguaro, cholla and barrel cacti, and describes how each species also had to adjust to its sere surroundings.

In the last chapter, “Conservation is Not Enough,” Krutch proposes that in addition to conservation, man, in order to become truly happy, must also “learn to love and to delight in the variety of nature.”

*The Forgotten Peninsula* (1961). In this volume, Krutch considers not only the natural history of the Baja Peninsula, but he also includes the human history and lore of the area as well. And because of the sketches of those he encountered in the Baja villages and ranches, plus the missionary, mining, and whaling history of the peninsula, Lawrence Clark Powell deems *The Forgotten Peninsula* and his next book, *Baja California and the Geography of Hope*, to be the “crown of his work on the desert lands.” Powell further opines that Krutch was “in a revulsion from life in the eastern ant hill” while writing *The Desert Year* and *The Voice of the Desert*, and that “he needed a decade of desert living to restore his soul” before he could include people in his writings.

Of special interest is Krutch’s quest to determine the geographical boundaries of the Boogum tree. Often flying into tiny airstrips—this was prior to the completion of the Baja highway—then rattling off in broken down trucks, Krutch describes his, Bechtel’s, and their companions’ many excellent adventures.
**Baja California and the Geography of Hope** (1967). Mostly cobbled together from Krutch’s previous writings, and not really Baja specific, this book, however, because of Eliot Porter’s excellent color photographs of the peninsula, is a “must have” for any desert aficionado’s library.

Krutch does make at least one interesting point regarding Baja in his forward, i.e., “Bad roads act as filters. They separate those who are sufficiently appreciative of what lies beyond the blacktop to be willing to undergo mild inconvenience from that much larger number of travelers which is not willing. The rougher the road the finer the filter.”

I wonder what Krutch would think of Baja now, with a paved road running the full length of the peninsula, providing access to both a rapidly growing population, and to untold acres of greenhouses (both of which, of course, deplete the natural aquifer)?

Before leaving the remarkable Joseph Wood Krutch, consider the following passage from *The Desert Year* which comes to mind every time I climb a desert peak and survey the surrounding wilderness: “One can own, either rightfully or fruitfully, only those things—and only so much of a thing—as one can come into some intimate relationship with…One can own only what one loves, and love is always some sort of reciprocal relationship.”

And that describes why I consider myself to be a wealthy man, indeed, personally owning vast stretches of the desert West. It’s because I love the area, and because I use it. Three cheers for the DPS.
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THE DESERT SAGE 23 January/February 2007
DEsert PEAKS SECTION
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