FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Sawtooth & Red Top
Death Valley Christmas
Book Reviews
CHAIR’S CORNER
by David Baldwin

In the DPS we have our seasons. Summer is for White, Ruby, and our other lofty, northern peaks. Fall is for high desert peaks like Mitchell and Moapa. Winter is for the likes of Little Picaicho and Pescadores in the low desert and Mexico. And in the Spring we have elections.

I want to express my sincere thanks to Gary Craig and Greg Roach for their assistance since the beginning of the year. Together the three of us have served as your Nominating Committee asking members to volunteer as candidates for the DPS Management Committee election coming up in March. I wanted to share with you the nominating process and outcome; a bore perhaps, but if you know my engineer side, you know I just can’t help myself. Several pleas in the Sage to the entire membership had yielded one volunteer candidate when we started with the current member roster from the Membership Chair. Since only regular members may hold office, we first separated members from people who subscribe to the Sage but are not members. As an entity of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, most of our members reside in the greater-LA area, but the complete membership includes people in a dozen states as far away as Maine. Since I feel that the Section can be best managed by people living in the same area, we focused our candidate search on 141 LA-area members, sending a blanket email query to other California members only late in the process. By dividing the list, we were able to send 134 direct queries. Most of the remaining 7 do not have current email or phone on file; I encourage you to update your contact information with the Membership Chair. Nearly half (66) of our queries received no response. In my wildest dreams I hope that these members are giving candidacy some serious thought and might yet respond this year or sometime in the future. Our most popular response (57) was, as expected, “No”. I want to thank the several who declined citing present or past service to the DPS or other volunteer organizations; I appreciate the fun I’ve had because of your leadership. Several declined graciously, thanking us for the consideration; the thanks are mutual, hope you won’t mind if we call again another year. Some indicated they were just too busy to serve; I think you’ll find your elected officers are busy too and hope you may find some time in a future year to help out your Section. Fortunately we got serious consideration from 9 members and from 7 actual volunteers have selected 5 as candidates. For you and the 2 returning members of the Management Committee I reserve my highest praise, for you have guaranteed that the DPS will be around for some time to come. If you don’t make the Management committee this year, I hope you’ll consider running again in a future year.

Happy Hiking!
David Baldwin
DPS Chair

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Book Reviews

NEXT SUBMISSION DEADLINE APRIL 14, 2007

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.
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.

TRIPS / EVENTS
MARCH THROUGH MAY 2007

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 m),

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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 McDonnell.

♦ 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 KEARNEY, 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

CONSERVATION

What kind of light bulbs are in your house?

We’ve gradually changed incandescents to fluorescents; the older one in my closet still takes a few seconds to get up to full brightness, but with the new ones, it’s hard to tell the difference, except in the electric bill.

It’s not a fair comparison, because we’ve also changed (1) washing machine, (2) refrigerator (in both cases, I have to admit that we had to); and most expensively, windows – to (all but two) double paned ones. We have had a noticeable decrease in both gas and electric bills as a result.

We just watched “An Inconvenient Truth”. Expected a lesson, got – instead – a riveting experience. Al Gore knows how to tell a story, and he does it well; and it’s a true story (see the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report). Carbon dioxide for most of human history (as measured by ice cores) was 300 parts per million (ppm) in our atmosphere; it is now around 600 ppm, and headed for double that in the next fifty years if we keep ignoring the problem. Icecaps and glaciers are receding and melting around the world, in every big mountain range and at both poles.

But more than pointing out the problem, “An Inconvenient Truth” provides approaches to resolving, or at least ameliorating, it; so that we don’t, in Mr. Gore’s words, just go straight from disbelief to despair. Let’s take the steps that we can take. And watch “An Inconvenient Truth”; it will give you courage, motivation, and even a few laughs.

There is a recommendation at the end for a website to go to: www.climatecrisis.net. - Paul Cooley

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 18.
HELP WANTED

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

Conservation Chair

If you enjoy writing and are passionate about conservation, especially of our Southwest desert areas, please consider the position of DPS Conservation Chair. Based on the position description in the DPS bylaws ("The Conservation Chair shall direct the conservation activities of the Section"), the duties are minimal; they include writing a short column every other month for the Sage on a desert-related conservation topic of your choice, and maintaining contact with the Angeles Chapter Conservation Committee and other regional groups. It's a good way to get involved!

DPS ELECTION

Since the start of the year the DPS Nominating Committee has been hard at work contacting Section members and is pleased to present the following candidates for election to the 2007-08 Management Committee. If you are a regular member of the DPS, please get acquainted with your candidates then look for your ballot in the mail in March. Ballots must be returned to Chair David Baldwin by the opening of the April 7 meeting and we need 25% participation for a valid election, so please VOTE!

Robert H. (Bob) Hethmon
I am 82 years old. I was a teacher for 40 years and a veteran of many years of committee service -- most recently at UCLA. Married and a grandfather, I have been a member of DPS, HPS, and SPS since 1976, and I am still hiking and climbing, though not so often as a few years ago. I would be pleased to be able to work for DPS in any way I can.

Michael Gosnell
I started to seriously hike DPS peaks in the summer '03. I earned my emblem on Signal and I'm currently at 50 peaks. I love to climb mountains--during the summer I try to get in a trip a week in the Sierras and during the cooler months I hike/climb in the desert. I'm a high school English teacher, so the job affords me some time. I'm also an amateur botanist, and that keeps me busy and having fun wherever I am.

Gloria Miladin
I was first introduced to the DPS by my friend from HPS, Patricia Arredondo, 3 years ago. We went with my 2wd Toyota Rav 4 to climb Granite #2 and Palen Mountain. Unfortunately, I had 2 flat tires, but that did not stop me. I keep coming back and climbing those rugged peaks with views that stretch forever. And yes, those chili cookoffs are also so much fun. I'd like to see the DPS to continue with these meaningful traditions. So far, I've climbed 22 DPS peaks and 105 HPS peaks, among those 3 emblem peaks: Rabbit, Telescope, and Picacho del Diablo. After these peaks, the remaining ones should be easy. With enthusiasm and the best of my ability I'm willing to serve on the Management Committee.

Audrey Goodman
I am running (well OK - walking slowly) for the DPS Board simply because DPS members are some of the best folk around and I am grateful for their friendship and help in learning how to navigate the hills, valleys, boulders ... yea-endless boulders ... boulders for DAYS .... Oops - I mean hills, valleys, and beautiful wild terrain of our local desert lands. I have gained so much more from my DPS experiences than I can ever give back in the course of normal member participation. So, I feel compelled to contribute some time to help out with management duties in order to repay those who have risen above and beyond the call of duty in helping me get those 10 peaks I've completed in three years. Besides, my being on the Board may just encourage you all to stay patient with me, and help me get a few more summits. This way, I can withhold your mail if you don't let me go with you and try. : - ) (just kidding folks).

Edna Erspamer
Although I am no longer climbing, I have a love of the desert and enjoy going on DPS trips to share in the camaraderie and appreciate the beauty and solitude. After all, it's the section with the best parties! If elected I hope to coordinate list seekers' lists with leaders to help them attain their goals. We need more trips in the schedule. I will also encourage HPSers to tackle the challenge of the DPS list. In the past I have been chair of both the DPS and HPS.

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Have fun hiking out there!  -Ellen Grau

If you get the chance pick up a copy of this book.  You may recognize some of the places.  Shut your eyes and you may know exactly where Johannes is standing . . . it could be on top of Chemehuevi or perhaps Eagle Mountain.

Have fun hiking out there!  -Ellen Grau
Desert Tower Climbs to be 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. -Dean Acheson

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Photos courtesy of Alan Kearney.
MULE PACK SECTION TRIPS

If you love being in the Sierra, you'll love mule pack trips! All the joys of backpacking and more without carrying a pack!

The Mule Pack section conducts camping trips in the Sierra, generally between Lone Pine and Yosemite on the east side of the Range, lasting between four and seven days. Because mules carry up to 55 pounds of each participant's gear, food and supplies, you can enjoy the beauties and activities of the Sierra without the burden of a heavy backpack and with a greater variety of food, a larger tent, and other amenities not possible on a typical backpack trip.

On the first day, mules carry our gear in while we hike to a campsite at an elevation of 9,000 to 12,000 feet in the scenic back country. We set up camp and, for the "layover" days, enjoy hiking, fishing, reading, relaxing, swimming, naturalizing, or whatever other activity the participant chooses. All activities are informal and unscheduled, although leaders typically plan some hike for those who wish to participate. In the evenings, we enjoy the traditional Mule Pack "Happy Hour" -- a potluck that often serves as dinner -- that includes goodies contributed by participants and wine provided by the Section. If regulations allow, a campfire is part of this event. On the last day, the mules return to pick up our gear and we hike out, looking forward to next year's adventure.

Each participant must bring his/her own gear and food, tent, stove, water filter, and other equipment necessary on a camping trip -- and a chair for luxurious comfort.

Mule packs are great opportunities not just for people who love to backpack and appreciate the opportunity to be free of weight, but for:

- Couples who enjoy the outdoors but one of whom does not backpack.
- Peak baggers (especially those who want to pick up some Sierra Peaks) – or lake, pass baggers.
- Photographers
- Fishers
- Folks who love to hike and camp and but don’t like carrying a backpack
- People who love to enjoy the outdoors in relative comfort

Five trips are planned for 2007. For those who prefer long weekend trips, the season opens July 12 with a trip to Rush Creek in the beautiful Thousand Lakes area, near the John Muir Trail with lots of opportunities for lake and pass hikes. This trip is lead by John Kaiser (who is knowledgeable about flowers) with Laura Joseph and Winnette Butler. (Email Laura ljoseph2@earthlink.net for trip info).

Three trips last a full-week. Sandy Burnside, Yvonne Tsai and Laura Joseph will lead a trip to Purple Lake. The John Muir Trail, Virginia Lake, Ram Lakes, and Franklin Lakes provide many day hike possibilities. For those who love to explore, Laura and Sandy are known for their creative cross-country adventures. (Email Yvonne yctsai@usc.edu for trip info).

Next on the calendar is a trip to Virginia Canyon, a spectacular area in the northeast corner of Yosemite. The trip is led by George Wysup — a legend in the Hundred Peaks section for being the 10th person ever to lead the list and the first to hike 200 peaks by three different routes each. This is the trip for serious hikers to choose. Laura Joseph, also a peak-bagger and mule pack regular, is co-leader. (Email George georwv@charter.net for trip info).

“The Sandies” (Burnside and Sperling) will lead the trip to Crown Lake in the Hoover Wilderness. The Sandies trips are always popular for fun hikes and great Happy Hours. (Email Sandy S sspelrimg@verizon.net for trip info).

The second short trip, led by Dave Cross and Christine Gutierrez, closes the season over Labor Day Weekend. This year they will head for a campsite below Vogelsang Peak in Yosemite Park. (Email Christine christine-gutierrez@juno.com for trip info).

The cost of the trips ranges from $175 to $250. Weight limit per person is 45 pounds on the short trips and 50 on the longer ones (plus whatever you want to carry yourself). – Laura Joseph
Trip reports from scheduled DPS outings and private trips to any peaks or areas of interest to Sage recipients are welcomed and encouraged. Please refer to the back cover for CORRESPONDENCE submission details. Next submission deadline is APRIL 14, 2007.

Last spring my good friend Ken Linville, a fellow-member of the Sun City Palm Desert Hiking Club, mentioned that he had climbed the infamous Skyline Trail—which leads from Palm Springs to the top of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway—several times in his pre-retirement days, and he asked if I had any interest in joining him on an ascent of the trail in the near future.

I, a seventy year-old male, teetering on the brink of geezerhood, removed my hearing aids in order to check their batteries. Surely no one would be asking an old guy like me to climb the Skyline. I wheezed, “What did you say?” Ken repeated the offer.

I gasped, a tremor ran through my body, a tear formed in my eye. I had wanted to do the trail for years but could never find anyone even remotely interested in joining me. Was this to be my long-awaited chance? If so, did the offer come too late in the day to accomplish the feat?

The long, hot summer was rapidly approaching, however, and because both of us needed to get in better shape, Ken and I decided to postpone any such venture until mid-October, when the temperatures were cooler and the days would still be long enough.

The Skyline Trail leads from the base of the mountain behind Palm Springs, elevation 400’ above sea level, to the top of the tram, 8,400’ above sea level. Including a few ups and downs, the total elevation gain is 8,400’, stretched over, depending on where you start, 10 or 12 miles. The climb is considered one of the most difficult in the area (with the Snow Creek climb, up the very steep north side of Mt. San Jacinto, being the toughest).

Indeed, you won’t find the Skyline Trail shown on most maps of the area, including the U.S. Geological Survey’s Palm Springs and Mt. San Jacinto 7-1/2 minute topographic maps, or the map provided by Mt. San Jacinto State Park. The trail is mentioned in Philip Ferranti’s classic “120 Hikes in and Near Palm Springs,” but Ferranti includes several admonitions, including, “(the upper portion) of the trail to the top of Long Valley is faint and poorly marked and should be done only with someone who has previously hiked this section.”

Hiking the Skyline is discouraged by State and Federal officials as several climbers have become lost, exhausted, injured or even killed on the ascent, and because rescue efforts are hampered by the very difficult terrain involved. The search and rescue teams who have to respond to hikers in trouble would just as soon the trail become overgrown and never used again, I’m sure.

Ken and I, however, were brimming with optimism as we set out on the trail at 7 a.m. on the sunny morning of Sunday, October 15. We had both trained hard for the effort, Ken completing a North Rim to South Rim traverse of the Grand Canyon the previous week, while I had hauled myself up the local Bump & Grind trail, extending from near Highway 111 to the mid point of Shadow Mountain, on several occasions, often in 100+ weather, proving that older is not always wiser.

Rather than starting our hike from the true trailhead behind the Palm Springs Art Museum, we parked our car at the west end of Ramon Road, and headed north on the North Lykken Trail, paralleling the base of the mountain, until, after about a mile and a half, we intersected the Skyline Trail. Ken prefers this route because one can ease into the long climb rather than becoming immediately overtaxed on the steep incline just above the Museum. At the intersection of the two trails, approximately 1,200’ above the valley floor, a cautionary sign has been painted on a large rock listing the dangers of continuing upward, including the mileage, 8, and the fact that no water is available until one reaches the very top.

We were not to be discouraged, however, and so, turning up the steep, barren, sun-toasted slopes, we continued on, me at a slightly slower pace than Ken—which forced him to stop and wait for me on occasion, always with good-natured aplomb. In my defense, I strongly believe that finding your personal sustainable pace is essential on a long climb like the Skyline, again to prevent straining your stamina early on.

We gradually wound our way up the series of switchbacks that lead up the steep slopes of the fore range, between Tahquitz Canyon to the south and Tachevah Canyon to the north. When we reached

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**THE SKYLINE TRAIL**
(PALMS TO PINES THE HARD WAY)
October 15, 2006
By Burton Falk
approximately 3,800’ in elevation, the incline began to lessen somewhat and suddenly we could see our goal, the pine-studded ridge on which the top of the tram is located, perhaps three miles away as the crow flies. Gazing back at Palm Springs, it appeared that we were heading straight west on a line described by an extension of Ramon Road. A half an hour later, at noon, we arrived on the nose of a ridge between Tahquitz and Tachevah Canyons, where someone had fashioned a sign of white rocks, set on the ground next to the trail, indicating the elevation was just over 4,200’ above sea level, the mid-point of our ascent.

We stopped for drinks and snacks—by the way, I downed a gallon and a half of Gatorade during the climb, and didn’t pee once—then we were off again, observing that the incline had become more gradual, and that the brush on the slopes had become thicker.

At 2 p.m. we reached the top of a large dry waterfall, just beyond which it was apparent that the incline increased sharply and the brush became denser. It was here that we met our first company on the trail, a young mountain biker who was waiting for his partner to return from an attempt to ride all the way to the ridge top. Personally, I fail to understand the allure of mountain biking, especially on a trail such as the Skyline, where, because of the brush and rocks, a biker would have to dismount all too frequently. A half an hour later, we met the second biker, on his descent, a fellow who looked out of gas and was definitely out of water. Ken, one of the world’s good guys, shared his limited supply with the young fellow, who proceeded to quaff an entire quart in record time.

Continuing upward, we soon entered the remnants of a pine forest which has been decimated by both fire and the pine beetle infestation that is killing so many trees throughout the San Jacinto/San Bernardino Mountains. Indeed, the deadfall lying across the trail presented a real problem, as we either had to climb over or crawl under the downed trunks and limbs. How (or if) the biker got through this section remains a mystery. Because of the inaccessibility of the area, and the fact that the deadfall might discourage hikers from using the trail, I’m guessing that the State Park will make little effort to clear these obstacles.

At 4 p.m., nearing the final ridge, the trail made a sharp turn to the right, and continued laterally across the face of a steep, rock-filled gorge, or arroyo (if you’re Spanish), or couloir (if you’re French) or cwm (if you’re Welsh).

Crossing this section while icy would be extremely dangerous—any slip might well be your last. For this reason it’s probably advisable to wait until the ice and snow melt in the late spring or early summer to do the climb. In mid-October, when we crossed this poorly maintained area, the only hazard was that of stumbling over a jumble of rocks. Beyond this section the trail became indistinct, diverging into a network of smaller use trails. It was here we got off-route a couple of times, even though the top of the ridge, our destination, was in plain view.

At 5 p.m. sharp—10 hours exactly after we started—we crested the ridge. Suddenly, we were on a broad, well-used trail in Long Valley, and only 400 yards later we were strolling up the concrete ramp to the top of the tram.

Because Ken had used his cell phone to call his wife, Dotty, 10 or 15 minutes prior to arriving at the tram station, by the time we got on the tram, rode it down, and walked out of the lower station in Chino Canyon, we had only moments to wait for a ride back to pick up our car on Ramon Road.

Later that evening, after showering at the Fitness Center in Sun City (okay, I was dirty, dusty, and laden with all sorts of debris, and I didn’t want to clog the drains of our shower at home), and enjoying a home-cooked meal with my wife, Jo, I managed to sit through a Netflix DVD—although I did dislocate my jaw once during a giant yawn. When finally I crashed into bed about midnight, I sunk into a deep slumber briefly enjoying that inner-glow that comes from accomplishing a long sought-after goal.

I saw Ken again a week later on yet another hike. He said he’d been thinking that, because we had both done so well on our climb, we should consider attempting it again next fall, only we should continue on, climbing all the way to the 10,800’ summit of Mt. San Jacinto.

Heh, heh! Good old Ken Linville. What a keen sense of humor that man has.

**FUNERAL PEAK**
November 1, 2006
By Barbara Lilley

This aesthetic-looking mountain on the west side of the Greenwater Valley road in Death Valley National Park was climbed on November 1 by Gordon MacLeod, Barbara Lilley, and Dolores Holladay. This peak was led (in conjunction with Smith Mtn) in 1973 but rejected for list consideration due to a road that reached within a mile of the saddle north of the peak. However, this road has not been driveable for years and would make a good hiking trail. Its somewhat obscure start is about 11 miles south of the Greenwater-Dante's View road junction. If not used for the ascent, it is THE way to return. Explore and enjoy!
I did my homework assignment!

Barbara Lilly sent me an irresistible trip suggestion (challenge) some time ago when I finished The Peak Lists. Thanks for a satisfying ordeal, Barbara.

The Sawtooth Mountains form a 34,000-acre BLM wilderness on the western edge of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. It is rugged land with harsh flora and little water. “Sawtooth Peak” is the unnamed highpoint. Nearby, yet so far away, is Red Top. These twin peaks crown the isolated range. The summits have been climbed individually, but apparently not together before in a day trip. An overnight backpack may be more pleasant and reasonable. Writeups by Wes Shelberg (DPS Sage, Nov 1995) and Richard Carey (Peaks Gazetteer) provided me with background on the area.

The strenuous, non-technical climb entails lots of cross-country scrambling. Flat terrain here is precious. It often seemed like an endless jumble of boulders. Visitors are rare; the most recent summit logs were 1997 (Sawtooth Peak- Ron Hudson) and 2004 (Red Top- Gail Hanna). There were only a few cairns (and less now) on the untracked approach.

I set out early from Agua Caliente County Park, on the west end of the signed Moonlight Canyon Trail (1360’). I left the trail midway, heading south up a lovely wash with dry waterfalls, to reach Moonlight Pass (2250’) at sunrise. The Inner Pasture lies below, with the Sawtooth Mountains beyond. This “desert meadow” was used in the distant past by wintering Indians, and more recently for cattle grazing. Now, eager new immigrants occasionally cross on foot headed north.

I dropped to the plateau on a faint path. Any footprints disappeared here. What appeared pretty from afar is a wide expanse filled with cholla, ocotillo, and cholla. Did I mention the cholla? I crossed the flat a mile towards a discernible ridge to intersect an abandoned jeep road indicated on the topo. The track fades as it curves around the ridge into the mouth of a broad canyon. At road’s end is a seasonal spring (2600’). The spring was dry today.

The general route continues south from the spring up a narrow and brushy wash. Both summits are roughly equidistant from the saddle at its head (3800’): Red Top to the east, Sawtooth Peak to the west.

I pressed up the wash, at times staying high on the west side to skirt foliage. At 3000’ elevation I impatiently contoured for the ridge northeast of Red Top. This went well to the ridgeline (3900’), but my hopes for an easy walkup were dashed. It was necessary to work for some time over and around massive boulders to attain the highpoint. The summit canister lies between two im-

Red Top from Sawtooth Peak.

Sawtooth Peak summit block.
mense boulders.

Crux of the day was now picking a clean line through yet steeper large boulders to reach the aforementioned saddle between the peaks. From here a subsidiary rock pinnacle precludes direct access to Sawtooth Peak. I traversed around its south side to a pleasant highpoint plateau. A climbers’ register rests below the class 3 summit block.

My final descent was a difficult northeast contour into the canyon wash at 3600’, then following it back to the jeep track. The flat desert walk thereafter was bliss after the rock hopping. I returned over Moonlight Pass. Ann Kramer met me there having come up at midday. On our hike out, for grins we completed the east end of the Moonlight Trail loop as a full moon aptly rose at dusk. The highlight of Agua Caliente County Park is the restorative powers of its hot spring pool. It was greatly appreciated that evening.

Roundtrip stats were 14 miles and 5000’ gain. Amplified by the difficult terrain. Live the adventure.

Photos this story by Erik Siering.

DEATH VALLEY CHRISTMAS
BLACK MOUNTAIN (5244’),
UBEHEBE PEAK, (5678’),
PYRAMID PEAK, (6703’),
DESERT BUTTE (3145’)
December 23, 2006 - January 1, 2007
By Debbie Bulger

Since it's a very long drive from Santa Cruz to Death Valley, Richard Stover and I camped for the night in the El Paso Mountains, south of Ridgecrest. Black Mountain, the highest peak in this range, was the perfect warm up for our anticipated week of hiking and climbing in Death Valley. We were joined for the easy climb of lava-studded Black Mountain by a hiker from Bakersfield. After reaching the summit with its views of Owens and Olancha Peaks to the north, we proceeded to the western summit in search of Indian house rings. We did see rings of lava rock, however, we cannot say for sure if they were the archeological structures we had read about.

The next day we drove to the Mesquite Springs Campground in Death Valley after a Christmas Day tour of Scotty's Castle. Contrary to the bad review in the DPS Guide, this campground is pleasant enough, although the coyotes are a bit too tame. One brazen trickster trotted down the middle of the road to Scotty's Castle stopping traffic in search of handouts.

Our climb of snow-splotched Ubehebe Peak on December 26 was joyful. There is a trail part of the way as well as fun scrambling and historic mining artifacts. After the climb we investigated and photographed the famous racing rocks on the playa below.

Alternating geology with peak bagging, we spent half the next day circumnavigating the Ubehebe Crater and hiking nearby, ably guided by the fabulous book, "Geology Underfoot in Death Valley and Owens Valley," by Sharp and Glazner.

December 28 brought 50 mph wind gusts blowing borax and sand, completely obscuring views. We headed for Slit Canyon and Hole in the Wall as described in "Hiking Death Valley," by Digonnet where, at least in the narrows, the wind couldn't reach us. We also saw a Loggerhead Shrike.

The weather was starting to calm when we started our climb of Pyramid Peak at first light on December 29. Although the DPS Guide estimates 8 hours, we knew the climb would take us much longer at 10.5 miles and 3500' elevation gain. We left our truck at the abandoned trailer park about a half mile past the traditional starting point at milepost 129.

Neither the DPS Guide nor Andy Zdon's "Desert Summits" discloses that Pyramid is the Queen of Scree. As I
trudged up the seemingly endless ridge, at times quite steep. I kept thinking of the hot fudge sundae I would enjoy if I ever made it back to Santa Cruz. Worried about hiking too slowly, I ate very little. About 600' below the summit, I got real grumpy, grabbed the cheddar bunnies out of Richard's pack, and tore open the package. I scarfed half the lot. They were the best bunnies ever.

That energy boost got us on the summit for views of snow-capped Telescope to the east and snow-capped Charleston to the west. With plenty of moonlight on tap for the evening, I decided to relax and not worry about finishing in daylight. The descent on all that scree was rapid but hard on the knees. We saw fossils. After we reached the sandy wash, our knees thanked us. Only 2 and a half miles across the desert to our truck. As the sun set, we stowed our packs, 10 and a half hours since starting that morning.

For a relaxing next day we decided to explore Chloride City, an old mining site. Instead, we were treated to one of the most hair-raising, heart-stopping, roller coaster 4WD roads I have had the pleasure to traverse. More scary than Goler Wash. Neither Zdon nor Digonnet give any hint of the condition of this road. Digonnet says, "Lighter vehicles may also require 4-wheel drive for the last 1.1 mile stretch which goes over steep and lopsided bedrock." May? May? We were in low gear for much of the drive. Richard was driving, so I had to look over the steep drop offs on the passenger side. We came up over rises where all we could see was sky because the descent was so steep. At one point it seemed the roadbed was ready to collapse into the void. Luckily we didn't meet any vehicles going the other way at the really tight spots. Needless to say, we took the less dramatic way out.

I had had it for 4WD adventure. Since we were not sure what the exit entailed and didn't want to rush, we decided to camp below Chloride City after just scratching the surface of mine exploration. We had a cheerful campfire and dinner at the Chloride Cafe (aka tailgate). That night our water bottles froze.

On the drive home we stopped to run up Desert Butte just south of California City. On the summit we were treated to a thrilling display of aerial acrobatics as a gang of ravens harassed a red-tailed hawk. There was a brand new register placed by Barbara Lilley and Gordon MacLeod in October.

And yes, on New Year's Day I kept my promise to myself and stopped at the gelato shop for a hot fudge sundae before we pulled into our driveway. I have my priorities straight.
The long-lived radio personality, Paul Harvey, has made a specialty of ending his broadcasts with a feature, “The Rest of the Story,” in which he relates a tale, breaks for a commercial, and then returns to add an unexpected or ironic twist to his account. That is the premise of the following reviews. Indeed, we’ll be taking a look at three follow up volumes that add surprise, interest and/or clarification to works previously reviewed in Desert Books.

**The Secret Life of John Van Dyke** (Selected Letters), edited, with an introduction by David W. Teague and Peter Wild
University of Nevada Press, 1997

**Fig Tree John: An Indian in Fact and Fiction**
Peter G. Beidler
University of Arizona Press, 1977

**The Oatman Massacre**
Brian McGinty
University of Oklahoma Press, 2004

The long-lived radio personality, Paul Harvey, has made a specialty of ending his broadcasts with a feature, “The Rest of the Story,” in which he relates a tale, breaks for a commercial, and then returns to add an unexpected or ironic twist to his account. That is the premise of the following reviews. Indeed, we’ll be taking a look at three follow up volumes that add surprise, interest and/or clarification to works previously reviewed in Desert Books.

**The Secret Life of John Van Dyke** (Selected Letters), edited, with an introduction by David W. Teague and Peter Wild
University of Nevada Press, 1997

The first book reviewed in Desert Books, way back in the March/April 1999 edition of *The Desert Sage*, was *The Desert* by John Van Dyke, first published in 1901. It was a natural choice to begin the series because, as Lawrence Clark Powell stated in his *Southwest Classics*, “All Southwestern book trails lead to The Desert.” Franklin Walker, in his *A Literary History of Southern California*, described Van Dyke as “the first to exalt the desert as a place of beauty,” and Edwin Corle declared, “We desert writers are forever in the debt of John Van Dyke. He saw it first and said it the best.”

Keeping that in mind, here’s a partial reprise of my 1999 review, *The Desert—A Classic, a Period Piece, a Mystery*: “So, just who was (Van Dyke), and how did he come to write such an important book concerning an area considered, at the time, to be so desolate and of so little value?”

“Well, he was born to wealthy parents in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1856, attended Columbia Law School, and was admitted to the bar in 1877. Instead of pursuing a career in law, however, he became the head librarian at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, spent some time in Europe studying art, and in 1891, was appointed assistant professor of Art History at Rutgers University. In 1897, at the age of forty-one, seeking relief from an asthmatic condition, he journeyed to Southern California to visit an older brother, Theodore (who later was to become the Justice of Peace in Daggett, CA). And it was in California that the book and the mystery began.”

*The Desert* is based on Van Dyke’s purported two year desert Odyssey, a journey which the author claimed began in Hemet, continued down the Coachella Valley and Salton Basin, through Yuma and Tucson, across the border, and finally ended in Hermasillo, Mexico. Unfortunately, because many of Van Dyke’s tales—as related in *The Desert* and later enlarged upon in *The Autobiography of John C. Van Dyke*—don’t jibe what we now know about the area, serious scholars believe that the author’s desert observations probably took place from the comfort of a railroad car or the front porch of a hotel. And, of course, the question of how he actually spent those missing two years is still open to speculation.

The Secret Life of John C. Van Dyke, consisting of a sampling of letters written by and to Van Dyke over a period stretching from the middle 1890s to the early 1930s, mostly concerning other aspects of his life, doesn’t do much to clarify the mystery. What is interesting, however—although not enough so to recommend purchasing the book—is the introduction by the editors, David W. Teague and Peter Wild.

Noting that the desert was no longer a “genuinely fearsome place” when Van Dyke made his alleged journey—indeed, tuberculars had discovered the benefits of the dry climate, profusions of successful crops were “spurtng from the sands,” “the Apaches and other tribes had been bludgeoned into submission, and railroads had made travel through the region relatively easy”—Teague and Wild observe that the author was able to make “the nation tremble with a pleasurable frisson” as he praised “the desert of chromatic colors and enchanting distances,” while hinting at his own “impressive frontier savvy and derring-do.”

But to portray himself as a heroic figure was only a ploy to sell books. Van Dyke was, in fact, a “refined and wealthy patrician from an old and politically powerful
family,” certainly not an outdoorsman. Puncturing this balloon does not, however, diminish the power of his descriptions of the desert. In describing sand dunes, for instance, he observes: “(They) are always rhythmical and flowing in their forms; and for color the desert has nothing that surpasses them. In the early morning, before the sun is up, they are air-blue, reflecting the sky overhead; at noon they are pale lines of dazzling orange-colored light, waving and undulating in the heated air; at sunset they are often flooded with a rose or mauve color; under a blue moonlight they shine white as icebergs in the northern seas.”

Teague and Wild state that in composing such passages, Van Dyke “offered Americans an aesthetic vocabulary to address the new region.”

The co-editors also observe that Van Dyke’s letters supply veiled evidence that he began his two-year desert sojourn because he was on the lam, not because of health reasons. Indeed, it seems that Van Dyke was the father of a love child, Clare, whose mother was the wife of one of Van Dyke’s fellow Rutgers faculty members. That he departed for California just about the time “a fuss flared up about Clare and her relationship to Van Dyke” was probably not coincidental.

Ah, yes! Perhaps those Victorians weren’t so repressed after all.

**Fig Tree John: An Indian in Fact and Fiction**, Peter G. Beidler, 1977.

In 1935, Edwin Corle published *Fig Tree John*, his first and arguably best novel. Because the story had well-developed characters, an exciting plot and a serious theme, it was well-received by both critics and readers (in fact, it has been reissued several times, with over 100,000 copies sold). However, as pointed out by Peter G. Beidler, in his book of the same name, Corle was guilty of placing “the requirements of good fiction—convincing character, engrossing plot, emphatic theme;” before accurate biography and ethnography.

Beidler divides his study, published in 1977, into two parts: "Fig Tree John in Fact," and "Fig Tree John in Fiction,” the first section offering a biographical account (drawn from interviews, newspapers, magazines, letters and Bureau of Indian Affairs records) of the man; the second a literary analysis of the manner in which Corle used historical and ethnological data to change Fig Tree John, the factual Cahuilla, into a fictional Apache.

Indeed, the real Fig Tree John was a Cahuilla Indian, Juanito Razon. Very old when he died in 1927—he was rumored to be 130, but was probably only in his 90s—Razon was known around the Coachella Valley as a colorful figure, who lived near the Salton Sea, removed from other Indians and surrounded by white neighbors. He was married to Matilda, also a Cahuilla, and sired a daughter and two sons, one of whom was named Johnny Mack. A bit of a fop, Fig Tree’s most notable characteristic was his unusual dress, i.e., a black silk top hat and an army coat with brass buttons. The outfit became so associated with his personality that, when he died, he was buried in it.
Beidler states that, “Many early travelers, ethnologists, prospectors, tourists, and settlers stopped at (Fig Tree’s) camp to chat with him or to get water from his spring. Several found the old man interesting enough to mention in magazine articles and books about their experiences…(and) because he ‘made trouble’ for some of his white neighbors about land ownership, the clerks at the Bureau of Indian Affairs found that they were keeping a growing file…about Fig Tree John.”

The fictional Fig Tree John, as described by Corle, however, was quite different. Here is a portion of my review of Corle’s work as published in the March/April 2003 issue of The Desert Sage: “(In 1906,) Fig Tree John, a White River Apache…along with his Apache wife, Kai-a, emigrated from his reservation in Central Arizona to the shores of the newly formed Salton Sea…”

“Settling in a clearing along the northwestern shores of the inland sea, Fig Tree, whose Apache name was Agocho, and Kai-a built a kowa, a shelter, out of mesquite and greasewood branches, and there they raised a boy, N’Chai Chidn—later known in English as Johnny Mack and in Spanish as Juanito—and planted a fig grove, the latter the source of Agocho’s English name. Tragically, when Johnny was only three, Kai-a was brutally raped and murdered by a pair of passing white thugs. After that dastardly deed, the novel focuses primarily on the relationship between Fig Tree, unwilling to change his traditional ways, and Johnny, who grows up illiterate but curious, a lad increasingly intrigued by the white man’s way of life.”

“As Fig Tree ages, he develops increasing resentment toward his white neighbors (mostly date and citrus ranchers), steals everything he can lay his hands on, and becomes more and more disgusted with his son for associating with the alien culture. The crux of the story occurs after Johnny, age seventeen, falls in love (or lust) with Maria, a neighboring Mexican girl, whom he marries and brings back to the shack he built in the squallid clearing, where his father still lives in his kowa. I won’t give away the end of the story; I’ll just tell you it’s powerful and definitely worth the read.”

Beidler excuses Corle for taking liberties with Fig Tree’s life, claiming that the author “wanted to show what happened when a man refused to accommodate himself to the modern world. Corle was sure of his theme, and he carefully created a character, a setting, a cultural backdrop, and a series of actions which would effectively convey that theme. It seems ironical that, for a novel which set out to demonstrate the disastrous effects of an Indian’s refusal to merge into the dominant white society, Corle used as his model and Indian whose real life demonstrated, on the contrary, that an Indian could successfully adjust to a new kind of life in a dominantly white society.”

Although many now take issue with Corle, noting that assimilation is an outdated concept, Beidler maintains that “Fig Tree John…is a good novel. Corle was very much in command of his materials, and it is fortunate, from a literary standpoint, that he always gave the artistic and thematic integrity of his work a higher priority than he gave its historical accuracy.”

The Oatman Massacre, Brian McGinty, 2004

The November/December 2005 The Desert Sage ran my review of R. B. Stratton’s 1857 best-selling book, Captivity of the Oatman Girls, the essay beginning: “In the early spring of 1851, while traveling west along the Gila River, mid-way between the Pima Villages (located near the confluence of the Gila and Santa Cruz Rivers) and Yuma Crossing, on the Colorado River, Royce and Mary Ann Oatman, along with their seven children, the oldest of whom was a girl, sixteen; the youngest, ‘a bright little boy of one year,’ found themselves in harm’s way.”

“Indeed, their lone wagon was approached by a group of nineteen Indians (originally thought to be Apaches, but later determined to be Yavapais), who first asked for a smoke and then for food. Royce Oatman, who believed he knew how to deal with Indians, puffed a pipe with the men and gave them some bread, but when they asked for more of the family’s scarce supplies, he turned them down. The Indians then drew aside, concocted a ‘hellish plot in their own tongue, with naught but an involuntary glance of their serpent eyes to flash or indicate the infernality of their treacherous hearts,’ kept looking up and down the road to see if anyone was approaching, and then, suddenly, ‘as a clap of thunder from a clear sky…(they jumped) into the air… uttering the most frightful shrieks,’ and attacked the family.

“When it was all over, six of the nine family members had been murdered. Lorenzo, the oldest son (14), although clubbed and left for dead, somehow managed to survive. Two of the daughters, Olive (13) and Mary Ann (7), were taken as hostages.”

Brian McGinty, an independent scholar and writer specializing in American history, has done an excellent job in researching and relating an updated and more authentic version of this Indian captivity narrative, a long series of which, he notes, “from the late seventeenth century on, enthralled readers with tales of white Americans (usually young, sexually vulnerable females) snatched from their homes and families to endure unimaginable horrors at the hands of the ‘savages.’”

In his introduction, McGinty takes issue with Stratton’s version of the Oatman story, noting that, “the book was never very good—that the author’s ponderous writing style made it difficult for most readers to get through the text without annoyance, that the book’s anti-Indian bias was almost suffocating, (and) that it strayed
a narrative history, McGingty’s *The Oatman Massacre*, includes the family’s origins in New England, the years they spent in New York and Illinois, their experiences with the wagon train of fellow Brewsterites (a splinter group of the Mormons, who believed that Brigham Young was wrong in choosing Utah as Zion; that the place of refuge was rather at the confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers), the family’s fateful encounter with the Indians, the lives of the Olive and Mary Ann as captives, and Olive’s eventual repatriation from the Mohaves (to whom she was traded by the Yavapais).

Whereas Stratton ended his book with Olive (Mary Ann, died while in captivity) living with a Brewsterite family in Southern California in February 1856, McGinty continues the story, including Olive’s days on the lecture circuit, her 1865 marriage to John Fairchild, her subsequent emotional and physical sufferings, and, finally, her death in Sherman, Texas in March 1903.

McGinty speculates also on what may have happened to Olive during her five-year captivity, noting that there were strong rumors that she was the mother of two half-Indian children, and that she was distraught at having been uprooted from the tribe.

In addition, McGinty follows the life of Royal Stratton, the author of *Captivity of the Oatman Girls*, who, at the time he helped Olive and Lorenzo write their story, was a Methodist minister living in Yreka, CA. After the publication of *Captivity*, Stratton moved east, first to become a minister in Albany, NY, then on to a similar position in Great Barrington, MA, where allegations of adultery and suspicions regarding his ordination eventually caused him to resign. Next he served a brief tenure at a church in Worcester, MA, where, acknowledging that he had serious personal problems, he once again resigned. Stratton died in January 1875, at the age of forty-eight, after spending two years in an insane asylum, proving once again that having a “ponderous writing style” is harmful to one’s health.

**BILL FELDMANN**

Bill Feldmann, active with the Angeles Chapter in the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties, passed away on January 1, 2007 from a massive heart attack while bicycling near his Palmdale home. He retired a few years ago and, with a second home at Mammoth, continued to be an avid skier, hiker, and fisherman. He was 69. - Barbara Lilley.

**COVER PHOTO: Manly Peak from Between Point. Photo by Bob Sumner.**
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