It was 50 years ago in February that the music died when Ritchie Vallens, the Big Bopper, and Buddy Holly crashed a few miles from where I went to junior high and high school (Clear Lake, Iowa.) However, in the new year of 2009, we are hearing the Desert Song, as March and April loom, with many offerings in our DPS Schedule. If your forte is an amble in the desert or hanging from the great and grand rock walls of Arizona, come with us. And only in California can you put your downhill and cross country skis on top of the car, head off for some desert peaks, and end up in Mammoth with swoosh swoosh down the heavily laden snowy slopes of Mammoth Mountain.

I appreciate the loyalty and dedication of our leaders who are the life blood of the section. March is full of many trips, in fact three different peak climbs on the weekend of March 14 and 15 plus the pre-St. Patrick’s Day potluck at Tom Sumner’s in Sylmar. If you like more of an intro trip to desert peaking, go with the Perkins to Joshua Tree or accompany Tina and Mary Mac to Corkscrew. Thanks to George Wysup for a desert flora trip including Chucwalla. For technical climbs, I’m grateful to the Tidballs for ascents of Weaver’s Needle and Superstition, and to Doug Mantle and Tina Bowman for a new route on Baboquivari. Leaving 4th and 5th class climbs, you can go for third class peaks with Dan Richter and Asher Waxman on Clark and New York.

Gordon MacLeod recalled an early 1950s trip to Babo where they first viewed this incredible knob. Facing the wall, he said they had no ropes, but there was an old wire hanging down...and casually Gordon noted, "Well, the wire was hanging down, so I wrapped it around my arm and up I went." Jeez! The much sought after Big Picacho is being re-scheduled as we are losing one of our favorite fellows and wonderful, charming DPS and DPS leader, Alex Amies. Alex is moving to China (not China Lake--but the real China!), much to our chagrin. Alex, you will be sorely missed as you touched all of our lives with your mountain expertise and always a great smile. Hopefully, you and Virgil P. will still lead Pahrump and Smith in March. Ed Herrman is lighting votive candles in hopes of getting the Big P. so he can have a List Finish on Pleasant. I saw some serious Picacho politicking going on at the Gosnell potluck.

Speaking of List Finishers, we’ll look forward to Asher’s DPS Grand Finish on Spirit, Sept 27th (plus an exploratory of nearby McFarland.) Jim Pritchard writes he needs the two Mexican peaks, Pico Risco and Pescadores in order to join the club of DPS List Finishers. I’m watching some of Terry Flood’s trip write-ups, as he is always scouting the unnamed peaks for DPS and his own enjoyment.

If you want to get to know DPSers and work the potluck room for future peak climbs, come and see us at our monthly meetings. You will be warmly greeted and become an immediate friend. I hope we see 100 people at Taix’s for our May 16th banquet, and what a bargain ($35) for food, complementary wine, and a Dave Sholle program which you’d pay double to see anywhere else. The DPS banquet was held there, and comments flowed afterwards about the excellence of the food. The next Angeles Schedule covers July 5 through Oct. 31 which is the primo season for the big peaks, so let’s do some delectable combos with DPS and HPS.

Happy climbing, and thanks for your emails and suggestions for a better and bolder DPS. I’ll leave you with a quote said by Scott Fisher in 1994. "You know, Bruce, the real adventure doesn’t begin until you lose the map." Keep your maps, GPS’s, and wits about you for safe and satisfying climbing. As always, Mary Mac
### TRIPS / EVENTS

**MARCH Through SEPTEMBER 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
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<td>SAT</td>
<td>DPS</td>
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<td>MAR 14-15</td>
<td>SAT-SUN</td>
<td>DPS, HPS</td>
<td>Martinez Mtn and more</td>
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<td>Pinto Mtn, Queen Mtn</td>
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<td>Mitchell Point, Edgar Peak</td>
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<td>Baboquivari Peak</td>
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<td>Chuckwalla Mtns, Chuckwalla Bench</td>
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<td>Carey's Castle</td>
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<td>Indian Cove Navigation</td>
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<td>SAT</td>
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<td>Nav Noodle, Mojave National Preserve</td>
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In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see http://sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or call 415-977-5528.

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

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**MAR 14**

- **DPS Potluck and Management Meeting**: Come and celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with DPS List Finisher, Tommy O’ Sumner, and his dog, Danny Boy in Sylmar. Management meeting begins at 4:30 p.m. and potluck begins at 6 p.m. Bring your preferred beverage and your favorite food dish to be shared. Please RSVP at locornrn@aol.com or marymuir@earthlink.net.

**MAR 14-15**

- **Martinez Mtn (6560’) and more**: Join us on this nearby (in desert terms!) hike/camp/party. Saturday's hike of DPS/HPS co-listed Martinez will be a full day, 3700' gain, 18 miles, 12 hours, mostly just trail-walking. Camp that evening at Pinyon Flats campground (small camping fee), with traditional and famous DPS potluck happy hour and dinner. Sunday will be flexible and feature HPS peaks in the area, depending on the group’s energy and desire. Rain or snow cancels. Send email (preferred) or SASE with conditioning/experience/email/phone to Leader: Gary Craig (gary@usc.edu). Co-Leader: Sue Holloway.

**MAR 14-15**

- **Pinto Mtn (3983’), Queen Mtn (4500’)**: Join us for two easy climbs in Joshua Tree National Park, and maybe some wildflower and cactus bloom displays. On Saturday we’ll climb Pinto (2400’ gain, 9 miles rt), and proceed to a campground near Queen for an excellent DPS potluck. Sunday climb Queen (1100’ gain, 4 miles rt). All vehicles ok. Send SASE or email to Leader: David Perkins or Assistant Leader: Ann Perkins (ann.perkins@csun.edu).

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**MAR 14-15**

- **Pahrump Point (5,740’) and Smith Mountain (5,913’)**: Climb these peaks situated in eastern part of the Death Valley area. Saturday climb Pahrump (3,400’ gain, 8 miles). Sunday climb Smith (2,300’ gain, 4 miles). Happy hour on Saturday night. Send email with conditioning and experience. Medical form required. Leader: Alex Ames
MAR 21-22  SAT-SUN  DPS
I:  Mitchell Pt (7048'), Edgar Pk (7162'): Trip to these Mojave National Preserve peaks to be led by Barbee and Larry Tidball (lbtidball@earthlink.net).

MAR 28  SAT  DPS
E:  Baboquivari Peak (7734'): Dodge javelina hunters as we track down this beast from the EAST (not the usual route), including spots of 5th class. Helmet, basic climbing gear and completed medical form required. Send SASE w/climbing and catering experience to Leaders: Doug Mantle, Tina Bowman (tina@bownmandesigngroup.com).

O:  DPS Potluck and Management Meeting:  Come to the home of Larry and Barbee Tidball in Long Beach. Meeting starts at 4:30 pm, and the potluck starts at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to be shared. Please RSVP. (lbtidball@earthlink.net)

APR 4  SAT  DPS, Natural Science
O, I:  Chuckwalla Mtns (3446'), Chuckwalla Bench: In search of the Munz Cholla and other desert flora. Dirt road drive along bench between I-10 and Salton Sea. Optional climb of DPS listed Chuckwalla Mtn (class 2), 3 mi r/t, 1600' elev gain, observing flora along the route. High clearance vehicles required. Consider staying for Sunday hike to Carey's Castle. Email or phone George with contact and rideshare info and indicate which option. Leaders: George Wysup, Ginny Heringer, Jennifer Washington.

APR 4  SAT  DPS, Natural Science
O, I:  Carey's Castle: Visit this wonder of SE Joshua Tree NP (8 mi r/t 1300' elev gain x), observing flora along the route, or just check out the desert flora in the vicinity of the trailhead or along the Cottonwood road near Joshua Tree National Park south entrance. Email or phone George with contact and rideshare info and indicate which option. Leaders: George Wysup, Ginny Heringer, Jennifer Washington.

APR 5  SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS
O:  GPS Class: Intro to Global Positioning System at Eaton Cyn Nature Center, Pasadena. Apply early, no registration at door, start 9 am indoors. Focus on Garmin models includes features, selection, operation, use with maps (provided), hands-on field practice in afternoon. We have loaner GPS. Send email/sase, phones, GPS experience & model, $20 (LTC-no refund later than 5 days prior) to Leader: Harry Freimanis (hfreimanis@cc.rr.com). Assistant: Robert Myers.

APR 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC
MR:  Clark Mtn (7907'), New York Mtns (7532'): Climb two classic 3rd class desert peaks in beautiful settings in the Eastern Mojave with a camp in the local desert. Happy hour Sat night. Both climbs are moderate 3rd class. Sat we will climb Clark (2 mi r, 1900' gain), Sun New York (4 mi r, 1900' gain). Class 3 rock experience required. Restricted to Sierra Club members (medical forms required). Send email/sase, detailed resume including class 3 rock experience to Leader: Dan Richter. Assistant Leader: Asher Waxman.

APR 18-19  SAT-SUN  LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I:  Indian Cove Navigation: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Sat for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sun checkout. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leadsr: Robert Myers (rmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Harry Freimanis.

MAY 2  SAT  WTC, LTC
I:  Nav 'till it Hertz: Intermediate level Navigation Clinic, Malibu Creek State Park: 5 mi, 300' gain. Spend most of day with Navigation Instructors sharpening your skills with map & compass. Not a checkout - but you'll be prepared. Send email (or sase) for required materials to Leader: Marc "Roadkill" Hertz (marc.hertz@sierracclub.org). Co-Leaders: Robert Myers, Adrienne Benedict, Jane Simpson.

(Continued on next page)
MAY 9-10
SAT-SUN
LTC, WTC, DPS, Desert Committee

I: Places We’ve Saved Navigation Noodle in Mojave National Preserve: Join us for our seventh annual journey through this jewel of the Mojave; preserved under the California Desert Protection Act, as a result of the efforts of Sierra Club activists and others. A basic to intermediate xc navigation day-hike workshop will be conducted out of the Mid Hills campground in the pinyon and juniper forests at 5500 elevation. Potluck and social on Sat, and for those arriving early on Friday. Limited to 14 participants. Send email/sase to Leader: Harry Freimanis (hfreimanis@cc.rr.com). Assistant. Virgil Shields.

MAY 16
SAT
DPS

O: DPS Annual Banquet: The Desert Peaks Section will host their Annual Banquet the evening of Saturday May 16 at TAIX French Restaurant, located 1911 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. The featured Speaker will be Dave Sholle presenting his video “Crossing Baffin” detailing a twelve-day backpack crossing the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island through spectacular Auyuituaq National Park. Price: $35. Dinner choices: Roast Top Sirloin, Fish or Vegetarian and includes complementary wine provided at each table. Any questions contact Elaine Baldwin at dwbaldwin@aol.com.

MAY 23
SAT
LTC, WTC, HPS

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

MAY 23-25
SAT-MON
DPS, WTC

I: Inyo Crest Traverse (Mt Inyo, KeynotPk, New York Butte, Pleasant Mtn): On Saturday, set up car shuttle then backpack from Cerro Gordo to the Inyo crest and out to Pleasant Mtn (9,690); explore Salt Tram on the way. Sat eve camp near New York Butte (10,668’), climb peak Sun am, then continue 4 mi along crest to Keynot Pk (11,101’). Spend Sun eve at Bedsprings Camp, Mon climb Mt Inyo (10,975’) and head down to cars. Total stats ~15mi, 2000’, mostly xc, carry own water. Send email detailing experience, conditioning and rideshare info to: Leader: Kathy Rich (KathrynARich@gmail.com). Co-Leaders: Barbee and Larry Tidball.

JUNE 7
SUN
LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS

I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Harry Freimanis.

SEPT 26
SAT
DPS, WTC

MR: McFarland Peak (10,742’): An “exploratory” climb of McFarland Peak - a beautiful, rugged and imposing limestone peak hidden deep within the northern portion of the Spring Mountains of southern Nevada. We will climb the peak via the Bristlecone and Bonanza Trails (13.5 mi rt, 4,500’ gain). Class 3 rock experience required. Restricted to Sierra Club members (medical forms required). Join us for Asher Waxman’s list finish on Spirit Mtn the next day. Send email/sase, detailed resume including class 3 rock experience to Leader: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Asher Waxman.

SEPT 27
SUN
DPS, WTC

I: Spirit Mtn (5,639’): Join us for Asher Waxman’s list finish on this sacred and magical peak above Christmas Tree Pass. The peak overlooks Lake Havasu and Laughlin. We will climb the mountain from the pass by a beautiful cross-country route. (3 mi rt, 2,000’ gain). Join us for our “exploratory” climb of McFarland Peak the day before. Send email and sase to Leader: Asher Waxman (amuirman@yahoo.com). Assistant: Dan Richter.

COVER PHOTO: Keynot Peak and Keynot Canyon from Point 6751’. Photo by Bob Sumner.
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR / ACTIVITY REPORT, February 13, 2009

Membership Summary

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Activity Report

New Member
Keith Christensen - Rosa Pt

Renewed Lapsed Member
Jim Fleming

New Subscriber
James Austin

Sustaining Renewal

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

OUTINGS CHAIR

We're in the middle of an excellent outings year for the DPS. Thanks again to Mary Mac for all her work. It's never too late to submit an outing, even if it does not make the big schedule. It can still be published in the Sage and our website. Our banquet is shaping up to be a great night, so make your plans to come on out. The price will be about the same except we're providing complementary wine for each table.

It's a great time to be thinking about a possible outing for the summer. We have some great peaks for summer hiking including Humphreys Peak which could sure use leading. Some other possibilities are White Mtn, Wheeler, Ruby Dome and Telescope. With our varied list of peaks, we should have outings year around.

Private outings are a big part of our section too. I know Ed Herrman is looking for a group to head down to do Big Picacho; this might even be his list finish. If you're interested, send me or Ed an email. If there are other private trips that you'd like to see led, let me know and I can give a shout-out in my column. See you out there, Michael

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 Bartell, 1556 21st Street, Manhattan Beach, CA, 90266

Include accurate address information. For your convenience, you may use the order form at the bottom of page 22.
It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of my good friend and mountain mentor, Cuno H. Ranschau, known to all as an incredibly strong and bold climber plus an amazing punster and joke-teller. When Cuno laughed in the mountains, his booming laugh bounced from peak to peak ringing throughout the wilderness. When Cuno laughed in restaurants, people ran out! One of his favorite corny jokes was: What is the favorite salad of newlyweds? Answer: Lettuce alone without dressing. Once he said he almost ran over a rabbit, but he missed it by a hare. My favorite line which we girls borrowed from him and Zsa Zsa; "I never hated a man enough to give back his jewelry (or diamonds)."

But Cuno was known in the Golden Age of Climbing as being the fastest and strongest climber in the Sierras for nearly two decades, the 1970s and 1980s. He never met a peak he didn't like, and many he climbed over and over again. His true claim to fame was when he orchestrated finishing all three Lists, HPS, DPS, and SPS, on the same day by saving three last peaks which were relatively close to one another. Doug Mantle, Don Sparks, and Cuno camped below Corcoran (a Sierra peak near Mt. Whitney) right before midnight. At exactly midnight, Cuno bagged the peak, and the three hiked out (with the light of the full moon) over massive boulder fields to the roadhead, and drove like crazy over to the Inyos to climb New York Butte (DPS peak). After conquering the Butte for a double List Finisher, it was the mad dash and drive down Highway 395 to climb the last peak, Red Mountain, finishing around 9:30 p.m.; and Cuno had done what seemed to be the impossible. He was a triple List Finisher before the dawn of a new day. Only one other person has accomplished this feat, and that's Tina Bowman. Not only did Cuno climb extensively here in the U.S., but he did ascents in Mexico, South America, and Europe. He was an E-rated leader, leading peak climbs in all sections and taught in B.M.T.C. (the earlier parent of WTC) for several years, plus being editor of the Sierra Peaks Section newsletter, the Echo. He liked that venue, because he could publish more corny jokes.

There are several Cuno stories which we all have, but one took place at the base of Mt. Williamson (up George Creek) where Maris Valkass and I had spent a death-defying day trying to bag Williamson in the snow, the ice, the wind storms. We barely made it back to camp where Cuno was eating his top ramen and tuna. When we bragged that we had made it, he looked up and said, "You only got one peak?" I think my water bottle flew through the air at that point. Of course, this was the fellow who had Sierra days of bagging four and five peaks!

If we were lucky, he'd recite his famous Rindercella which was the story of Cinderella where every two words had the
letters transposed. The handsome prince would be the pransome hince and the final admonition to not drop your slipper when running down the stairs was: "when running down the rails, don't slop your dripper." Cuno recited this lengthy story without a hitch hundreds of times and some of us are happy we have tapes of his performance.

When Cuno's knees gave out (probably from running the Griffith Park trails with his ten pound boots) or pacing back and forth like a panther before each climb, he simply changed gears and joined Senior Softball where he was the power hitter for the next decade. The L.A. Times described him at 71 years old, "as running the bases like a wolf pursuing a lamb chop." Various surgeries, cancers, and a pacemaker didn't stop this powerhouse named Cuno.

Our dear dear friend Cuno was the wildest, the boldest, the tenderest, the funniest mountain man we ever knew and such a loyal friend. He didn't simply pass through, but roared through life with all engines at full throttle. Even before people used the word AWESOME, it was Cuno's favorite expression as all of life was simply and utterly awesome! His was a passionate love affair with Nature and especially the high Sierra. He liked nothing better than on his birthday to linger with fellow climbers over dinner and recount every detail of those perfect Sierra days.

A favorite poem was found in his jewelry box written by a 19 year old fatality of World War I (John G. Magee). These could have been Cuno's words.

"Oh, I have danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings
Sunward, I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of
sun-slit clouds and done a hundred things you have not dreamed of.
I've chased the shouting wind and climbed through footless halls of air--
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace where never lark nor eagle flew.
And while with silent, lifting mind, I've trod...
High enough, high enough--I've put out my hand and
...touched the face of God."

The world was a merrier and more ecstatic place when Cuno was present. Quid Clarius Astris..." What is brighter than the stars?" Definitely, Cuno, it was you during your sojourn here on earth. He is survived by his wife, Carol Ranschau, and several relatives. Cuno will be especially missed by his crew, Dougie, Sparkie, Gregie, Mary, and Bartelli plus all the fortunate people who climbed and partied at the campfires and potlucks with him. Please send stories and condolences to Mary at marymuir@earth link.net or write Mary for Carol's snail mail address. All messages will be shared with Carol and family. One can visit his slide show at the website: cuno.prayers4.com.

Photos previous page provided by Ronald Nepsund.

BOB MARTIN

Bob Martin passed away in December 2008 at the age of 88 following a third stroke. For those not familiar with the name, Bob was one of the greatest peak baggers of all time (even though he climbed his first peak at age 44!). In Colorado, he climbed over 2700 peaks, which included all the legally accessible peaks over 11,000 feet. In Arizona (where he lived 6 months of the year), he climbed over 3000 peaks (of all elevations). In addition, he climbed several hundred peaks in New Mexico, Nevada, Idaho, Utah and California-mostly county high points (including San Jacinto, San Gorgonio and Mt. Whitney) but others as well. He used a number of lists, some of which he compiled himself or with others. He thought nothing of hiking from dawn to dark to get another peak. He was always most helpful in providing information to others on the peaks he had climbed.

He was also a runner, winning many medals for his age group and completing a marathon in 3.09 hours at age 60. He was the author or co-author of 5 guide books on Colorado and Arizona. These include "Arizona's Mountains", reviewed by Burt Falk in the May-June 2001 Sage. For anyone interested in exploring all areas of Arizona (which, like California, offers great year-round hiking), this book is definitely worthwhile purchasing.

Gordon MacLeod and I have had the pleasure of knowing Bob for nearly 20 years, climbing peaks with him in Colorado, Arizona and California. He will be missed. - Barbara Lilley

THE DESERT SAGE
BANQUET UPDATE

Banquet Program features “Crossing Baffin” by Dave Sholle

The Desert Peaks Section is pleased to have Dave Sholle present “Crossing Baffin,” his video of a twelve-day backpack crossing the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island through Auyuittuq National Park. Baffin Island, located in the Nunavut Territory of Northeastern Canada, is the fifth largest island in the world. Auyuittuq National Park is a nearly untapped wilderness offering deep valleys, spectacular fjords, dramatic peaks and magnificent landscape. The trip took place north of the Arctic Circle, with the group crossing the circle from north to south on the final day of hiking. Brian Elliot organized and led this CEC trip and Ron Bartell was the sweep. Several other DPS members participated. The group was taken by Inuit through ice floes on the ocean to the end of a fjord at the start of the hike, and was unsupported until being picked up at another fjord at the conclusion of the hike.

The main difficulties were carrying enough food for twelve days and sufficient gear to deal with uncertain Arctic weather and hiking on muskeg. The main dangers were numerous fast, cold, opaque stream crossings and the potential for Polar Bears. The payoff was hiking with friends through an awesome arctic landscape passing some of the most unique mountains on earth.

Dave Sholle has been a Sierra Club member for over thirty years and is a Professor of Physics at Long Beach City College, where he was instrumental in planning and building the LBCC planetarium and teaches introductory astronomy to hundreds of LBCC students. His interests include digital photography, videography and multimedia. With his wife Barbara he enjoys traveling, hiking, bicycling and telemark skiing.

If you would like to view Dave’s presentation, meet other lovers of the desert plus enjoy an elegant meal, the Desert Peaks Section invites you to attend our banquet.

When: Saturday, May 16, 2009

Where: The TAIX French Restaurant, 1911 W. Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles

Banquet tickets: $35. Please Reserve by May 11

Time: 5:30 pm - Social Hour/No Host Bar

7:00 pm – Dinner (Includes complementary wine at each table)

Dinner Choices: Roast Top Sirloin  Fish  Vegetarian

Program: Dave Sholle presents his video “Crossing Baffin” describing a twelve-day backpack crossing the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island through Auyuittuq National Park.

Raffle: We continue our tradition of providing you a chance to win fabulous prizes. This year’s offerings include: A beautiful serigraph by Edna Ersramer, Framed watercolor print by Elaine Baldwin, REI gift Certificates, A copy of “Desert Summits” by Andy Zdon and other wonderful items. Tickets are available 5 for $3 if purchased in advance before May 11 or $1 each on the day of the event. Tickets will be held at the door.

For reservations: Please indicate number of banquet tickets at $35 a piece, specify your dinner selection/s: Prime Rib, Fish or Vegetarian, and specify number of raffle tickets. Tickets will be held at the door. Mail check payable to DPS to Treasurer: Gloria Miladin, 11946 Downey Ave., Downey, CA 90242. For questions e-mail: Elaine Baldwin: dwbaldwin@aol.com or Gloria: gm500@yahoo.com

The Highway Glacier.
**Driving Instructions to the TAIX:** At the junction of the 110 and 101 freeways in downtown Los Angeles head north on the 101 toward Hollywood, exit at Alvarado St. (Hwy 2) head north on Alvarado, Turn right at Sunset, the TAIX Restaurant will be on the left at the intersection with Park Ave. Valet parking provided.

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**HELP WANTED - CONSERVATION**

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 conservation groups. It’s a good way to get involved! If you are interested, please email the DPS Chair, Mary McMannes (marymuir@earthlink.net).

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**CELL PHONE (AB)USE**

That Bob Hartunian wrote an account of his climb of Clark Mountain was somewhat surprising, as most experienced hikers who used a cell phone to call for a rescue in a non-emergency situation (good weather, no injury, fire made) would or should be too embarrassed to report it, since this not only uses funds and resources that might be needed elsewhere in a REAL emergency, but could put a helicopter pilot unnecessarily at risk. To reduce temptation, **CARRY A SPACE BLANKET!** - Barbara Lilley
DID YOU KNOW

The DPS family extends our deepest condolences to Jim Hinkley who lost his mother in January, Greg Vernon's mother Dottie passing away in November, and Dave and Elaine Baldwin journeying back to Missouri for Dave's father's farewell in December. Ron Jones emailed me about good friend Blair Kurokatkin, past BMTC leader and peak bagger (SPS), whose untimely death was reported by her husband, Barry. And you read about my best friend and mountain mentor, Cuno Ranschau, who will be deeply missed by all of us.

On a happier note, Henry Heuskinveld celebrated his 90th birthday in January back in Missouri, and noted rock climber and author Greg (Greggie-Boy) Vernon announced his pending retirement. Lance Dixon, the boy juggler on the peaks circa 1980s, reappeared at the SPS banquet much to our surprise and delight. We remember him as a callow youth of 17 years old joining us on some very difficult peaks (and juggling balls on the tippy ends). Jeff Koepke was also at the SPS banquet, and he's the Miracle Man having survived a broken back and many surgeries. Wedding bells rang for Mars Bonfire (song writer of Born to Be Wild heard emitting from various stuffed animals during Valentine's Day) and Kathy Cheever as they tied the knot in Vegas in a ceremony performed by an Elvis impersonator.

DYK about the Potluck After the Potluck--there's nothing better for climbers than to bask in the sunshine of great stories told by the legendary climbers from yesteryear. Leaving the Gosnell DPS potluck, I dropped by Erick Schumacher's home where Barbara Lilley and Gordon MacLeod were finishing desserts. Then the real desserts came as they shared stories of DPS and SPS beginnings in the 1950s. Barbara, world renowned climber, has ascended more than 4,400 different summits including two dozen first ascents in Alaska and Canada plus the first ascent of DPS Kino Peak (1952). She also was the first woman to stand atop the spire on Yosemite's Lost Arrow (with Royal Robbins). Gordon has equal stas of first ascents with Barbara and good friend Andy Smato; and now retired, these two are out of town often as they climb even more peaks and explore new horizons. Gordon (sponsored by Ansel Adams in joining the Sierra Club) spoke about his mother and brother chauffeuring him to the base of many desert peaks while he scurried up for many solo adventures. He was there in the formation of the Desert Peaks List where outings leaders were explorers and promoters of the new peaks. See Chairman's Corner where Gordon climbs Babo with a dangling wire twisted around his arm! Arkel Erb (Arky) SPS List Finisher #6 (after Barbara who was #3 and Gordon, #5) is a legendary climber mentioned often by the old timers. He met his demise on a peak in Pakistan when two roped teams fell, and wife Ruth looked on. Coming out here from Wisconsin, Arky couldn't wait to join the SPS, but he needed the required 6 peaks. Racing up to the Whitney area, he was able to bag them all within two days (Guyot, Hitchcock, Chamberlain, Newcomb, etc.) Later, Arky set records of most Sierra peaks gained in one day, later challenged by the likes of Cuno R. and Doug Mantle. It's worth noting that Arkel was a bibliophile, and Ruth donated over 10,000 of his books to the Malibu Library. If you're looking for some obscure mountaineering book, it'd behoove you to drive out to Malibu and see the Erb collection. And Did You Know, Multi-List finisher, Rich Gnagy, says he was the first person to bring champagne to a summit during a List Finisher (on Marion Peak honoring Barbara Lilley's accomplishment.) He says he brought two real glass champagne goblets, too. Rich, we've done our best to carry on your tradition with champagne popping and bubbling over on List Finisher peaks.

Local Color: DYK about Bagdad Cafe located near Newbury Springs on old Route #66 as a place not to be missed. Gene, Ednita, and I breakfasted there after feasting the night before with the Perkins, Bob Hoeven, Anne Rolls (DPS List Finisher). Gilberto, the cook and waiter, prepared us one of the best omelets we've ever eaten. Still caught up in the
festive spirit of the night before, Edna and I swilled a couple beers (10 a.m.) much to Gene's amazement. The Cafe was featured in the artsy-fartsy movie by the same name and featured a popular German star whose name escapes me. Jack Palance was in the movie, too. Now, this place is the favorite haunt of Europeans, because the movie has quite a cult following. Gilberto keeps a register of all who visit, and it's great fun to read and see entries from all over the world (even in Chinese and Japanese). Years ago, I recommended the movie to DPS leader and great friend, Gene Olson. He saw it with Edna, later exclaiming, "I'll never ever go to any movies that Mary Mac recommends! That was the worst!" We all disagree—and if you like dessert peaking, you must see Bagdad Cafe, and you must have a Gilberto omelet. Jerry Keating sent further info that the area holds the record for the longest dry streak ever—no rain from Oct. 3, 1912 through Nov. 8, 1914 (767 days.) Later, Gene, Edna, and I fiddled around on the railroad tracks probably seeing trains every two minutes.

DYK about Mt. Morrison Cemetery? If you climb Mt. Morrison or unlisted McGee Peak, you drive past that sweet little cemetery south of Bishop (off 395). It's a sad and poignant place where many children are buried accompanied with toys surrounding their tiny graves. Bob Sumner and I mused over one inscription about, "missing your sonrisas." We interpreted it as "sunrisas", but later our friend Marcelo (from Chile) said, "sonrisas" are smiles. The cemetery is wild in its beauty with stones, boulders, and blooming mountain lilies. My favorite marker was for Ollie Honea, "who truly lived in a house by the side of the road." (See photo.) The marker line is from a famous poem written by Sam Walter Foss, which most people over 75 and 80 years old memorized in grammar school. The poem begins, "Let me live in a house by the side of the road and be a friend to man." I liked visiting a cemetery where there are views both of the high Sierras and the beautiful White Mountains. What better resting place could there be for those who love the out of the way and wild places along Highway 395?

Roving Reporter, Mary McMannes (contributions are always welcomed.) Photos by Mary McMannes.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Interested in becoming an outings leader for the Club?

Angeles Chapter is home to one of the largest outings programs on the planet – thousands of trips ranging from beach barbecues to mountaineering expeditions.

You can take the first step toward becoming a leader by attending a class offered by the chapter Leadership Training Committee on Saturday, April 4. The class, usually taught in Los Angeles, will take place this time in Orange County.

The class covers all the basics of leadership. Experienced leaders will tell you how to plan a trip, prevent problems on the trail and make sure that everyone – including you – has a great time. They'll also explain good conservation and safety practices. And they'll give you tips for getting your "O" rating quickly and then, if you choose, pursuing more advanced ratings.

The all-day class at the Costa Mesa Community Center costs $25. The application is online at angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc.

Mail the application and check, payable to Sierra Club, to Steve Botan, LTC Registrar, 18816 Thornwood Circle, Huntington Beach 92646. You also can reach Botan by phone (714-963-0151) or e-mail (sbotan@pacbell.net).

Applications and checks are due March 21.

Scholarships are available for those in financial need. Apply to LTC Chair Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com).
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 11, 2009.

MOAPA PEAK, VIRGIN PEAK
November 1-2, 2008
By Kathy Rich

The group met on Saturday morning, Nov 1st near the corral, a nice flat area convenient for 'no-frills' overnight car camping about a mile from the I-15. The group comprised myself, co-leader Alex Amies, Mary Jo Dungfelder, Lumme Erilt, Ron Hudson, Paul Garry, Ed Herrman and Ron Eckelmann.

After consolidating into fewer cars, we headed along the dirt road to the 2WD trailhead for Moapa Pk. It was a beautiful, sunny fall day. We initially hiked further along the road, seeing not one, but two tarantulas on the way! We then headed xc across the desert and up a large wash (an area known as “Jack’s Pockets”), then west up a slope to a saddle. The route went smoothly up the ridge to the headwall and then across the ramp to the base of the cliffs on the SW face of Moapa.

The mountain was an impressive sight across the desert as we began our hike earlier in the morning, and we were now eager to tackle the ‘crux’ of the climb: the knife-edged ridge to the summit. It was an interesting 200yd traverse, with several hundred feet of exposure on both sides, but we took it nice and slow. The views from the summit were magnificent.

Once back at the cars, we drove further east along I-15 to the Riverside exit for Virgin. Darkness was falling as we headed along the New Gold Butte Road for some 21 miles to the end of the pavement where we car camped overnight. It was a nice open flat area surrounded by unusual rock formations. We had quite a feast and even built a fire. During the night however, a storm came through, with thunder and rain disturbing our restful sleep.

One of several tarantulas that were spotted. Photo by Alex Amies.

Traversing the knife-edge ride of Moapa. Photo by Alex Amies.
Next morning everything was fresh, although air temps a little cooler than the day before. Dan Richter and Asher Waxman drove into camp around 7 am as they planned to join us for the climb of Virgin Pk. They had climbed Spirit Mtn the day before. Asher apparently only has a few peaks left to finish the list!

We drove the couple of miles to the 2WD parking spot and then packed ourselves into Dan’s and Ed’s 4WD vehicles, hoping to get 3 miles further up the 4WD road towards the peak. Alas, this turned out to be wasted effort because less than a mile or so down the road, we discovered the road to be impassable due to a severe washout. With some difficulty, we parked the two 4WD vehicles, and then set off on foot.

We left the road and headed west through some brush to a minor ridge and thence to the main NW-SE ridge and on up to the summit, where we had lunch. It was somewhat windy and a bit chilly, so we didn’t linger too long. For our ascent, we had essentially followed the route described in the DPS guide. However, during lunch Ron Hudson remarked to Dan Richter that the ridgeline stretching SE from the summit seemed to continue enticingly far into the distance, and appeared to be brush-free no less at its lower reaches.

Dan enthusiastically endorsed the idea of taking the ridgeline essentially all the way back to the cars. What was the point of walking 3 miles along a 4WD road anyway? This new direct ridge route turned out to be very pleasant indeed: scattered brush, trees and grassy-to-bare areas. We made fairly rapid progress, hiking about 2½ miles in an hour or so, until we began to recognize features indicating we were nearing the start (or so we thought). We headed off the ridge down to the road, where we built a large cairn (UTM 11S 760230/ E4050299-thanks, Ed) so that others might try this approach in the future. The cars were another mile or so down the road.

Special thanks to Ed and Dan for providing their vehicles for transporting the group, and thanks to all participants for a most enjoyable weekend!

RABBIT PEAK, VILLAGER PEAK
November 22-23, 2008
By George Wysup

For some reason I thought it was time to hike Rabbit and Villager again. Much of the reasoning had to do with forgetting what the hike is like. So I scheduled it and sought a co-leader. Amazingly, I got acceptances from Jennifer Washington, Don Croley, and Wayne Vollaire. Don needed both peaks to finish the HPS List, that's his excuse.

5 participants signed up. Gary Schenk, Mary Jo Dungfelder, Gary Bowen, and Chris Spisak "needed" them. A fellow from El Cerrito, Kevin Kingma, somehow heard about the trip and had wanted to visit Rabbit for years, so signed up. I had insisted that we start hiking from Thimble trailhead at 7:30 am. This might seem earlier than necessary, and it was because we got to Villager and the campsite for the night shortly after 2 pm. But I have had bad experiences with hikers running out of steam or getting sore feet or whatever, and it's often just a bit cooler with an earlier start. Anyhow, a 4:50 departure from my house got me and my car pools to the trailhead well in time. All the prospective hikers were there, plus we had an unexpected bonus. Leo Rosario was there. He needed the peaks and knew where to lurk. I had no problem taking on the strong and amiable hiker that Leo is.

The weather was nice enough and there was no prospect for rain. We were all 'lugging' rather heavy packs, what with the prescribed 8 liters of water in addition to the bedrolls and other weighty stuff. Wayne and I alternated leading, keeping the group fairly close together. We took a couple of lengthy breaks since it was apparent that a few of us were starting to flag.

Hiking over pre-Villager (the lump before Villager that everyone hopes is the real summit) we met 2 other hikers. We passed them and saw them again on Villager summit and they camped with them. They were Ed Herman and Tom Ersramer. Tom is Edna's son. Ed (now age 80) is near finishing the DPS list. After Rabbit he still needs Big Picacho (piece of cake!) and said he plans to finish on Pleasant Point.

We set up camp and killed time eating, resting, shooting breeze, and whatever. Soon enough, at a little after 5 pm, the only light was from stars and from the lights of Indio, with some glow from San Diego and Mexicali reflecting
off the high clouds. The temperature was about 50 degrees F. Everyone gave up trying to stay up by 6 pm and it was time for a long and very intermittent slumber. My light bag sans tent was plenty cozy as the temp never got below 40 and there was very little breeze.

Promptly at 5 am I sang loudly, trying to serve as an alarm clock to get everyone up and about for the edited 6 am start. Amazingly, we started for Rabbit on time. Ed and Tom left a few minutes before our group. It was light enough, official sunrise being at 6:22, that we needed no headlamps. The hike to Rabbit with light day packs went very smoothly and we summited before 9 am. Tom and Ed signed in before us. My GPS indicated that the distance is just shy of 4 miles one way.

One reason it went smoothly was because of the incredible number of ducks along the route. This trip could have been O-rated. There was no chance of getting lost, even if half the ducks were gone. People can be incredible litterbugs, and some might consider removing their junk on the way back. Magically, it seemed, at least half the ducks that we encountered had disappeared on the return trip. I can't understand how that might have happened.

We arrived back at Villager just after noon. I didn't set any time limit on packing up, but we were on the way before 1 pm. Of course we were all burdened by much less water and it was mostly downhill, so the packs didn't feel so heavy. The hike down went nicely, except for a need for ibuprofen for some achy knees. There was enough water for all, even though I hiker forgot where he stashed his water. All those rock piles look pretty much the same. We reached the vehicles at around 5 pm, with no need for headlamps.

Don's GPS claims that the total stats for the trip are 21.2 miles with 8250' gain and involved just over 17 hours of moving time. I agree with the gain, but his miles may be a few tenths short. I am thinking that, with 4 leads of Rabbit, I may be tied with Frank Goodykoontz for the number of Rabbit leads. Frank may actually have more than 4, but I don't know how I'd ever find out. Anyway, there won't be a 5th for me.

RABBIT PEAK
(HOW I CAUGHT THE RABBIT)
November 22-23, 2008
By Ed Herrman

After two tries I finally reached the summit of Rabbit Peak. For several reasons, I failed in two previous attempts to gain the summit during the past year. On this attempt, Tom Erspamer and I went up the Rattlesnake Ridge route on an over night backpack. We departed the trailhead early Saturday morning. This is also the parking area and trailhead for the Rosa Point climb. Our schedule was to hike for fifty minutes and rest for ten minutes. We felt this was a good schedule because of our backpacks made heavy by eight or nine quarts of water, food and gear. We stashed one quart of water at about 3800 feet for the return trip. While we were having lunch, George Wysup and his HPS Sierra Club Group passed us on their way to Rabbit Peak. We reached the summit of Villager Peak in the afternoon just as the last of George's group was signing the register for that peak. George invited us to camp with them for the night. We accepted his offer and camped in the trees on Villager Peak with his group.

The late afternoon winds were blowing until after dark when they settled down. The wind started blowing again after everybody had retired for the night. Around 1 AM, I found it necessary to move my camp to a more sheltered area. Wake up time was at five AM. I was awake when I heard George shout a wake up call.

Tom and I started for Rabbit at 5:50 AM with light packs. It was just daylight enough that headlamps were not necessary. Tom and I reached the summit of Rabbit in two hours and thirty minutes. We signed the register, took some photographs and refreshed ourselves before starting down. As we descended, George and his group passed us on their way to the peak. We picked up our now light backpacks that we had left on Villager and started our descent. From Villager, it took us four hours and thirty minutes to reach our cars, around 4:20 PM.

Both Tom and I enjoyed this climb and would do it again. Tom thought this route was easier than the route up to Rabbit from the Salton Sea side. He had successfully climbed the DPS "A" route, on the Salton Sea side, to the summit of Rabbit early this year. For me the Rattlesnake Ridge was the golden route to catch the Rabbit.

MOUNT PERRY (5,716')
December 27-28, 2008
By Terry Flood

Always looking for new desert peaks to go after during the off-season, Death Valley has lots to offer in the way of new areas to climb and explore. As I was spending Christmas in Las Vegas anyways, I decided to set this climb up for the weekend afterwards to see if any of my friends would be interested. I wasn't disappointed as Tim and Suzanne Fletcher, Carol Jean, Carol Snyder, and Brian Smith all showed up at Dante's View at 8 AM on Saturday with 23 degree temperatures to do the ridge route over to Mt. Perry with over 3,000 feet of
undulating gain. It was about eight miles roundtrip with
a lot of use trail, some of it contouring the ridgeline, so
navigation was never an issue.

A spectacular view of the valley below, and incredible
panoramas of Telescope Peak in the Panamints, and Mt.
Charleston over in Nevada lent a surreal air to the super
cold temperatures and the scattered snow that had been
left over from the last two storms. Even though the days
are pretty short right now, we got back with enough time
to find a nice campsite just outside the park but close by,
as we found an abandoned trailer site with concrete pads
and a makeshift fireplace to warm things up a little bit.

As we had all hiked together previously the festivities
that night were very nostalgic and we relived many of
our adventures from the past and made plans for more!!
I see more of these desert trips in the future as this is
usually the only time of the year when many parts of this
desert are habitable and they encompass such a large
area, there is just so much to choose from!

Mt Perry in the distance. Photos by Terry Flood.

A top Mt Perry. Brian Smith standing, and left to right, Tim Fletcher, Suzanne
Plechter, Terry Flood, Carol Jean, and Carol Snyder.

ANZA-BORREGO NEW YEAR
Humbug Mountain (2260')
Inspiration Peak (5,575')
San Ysidro Mountain (6,147')
The Thimble
Granite Mountain (5,633')
December 25, 2008 – January 2, 2009
By Debbie Bulger

It was snowing and very cold as Richard Stover and I
drove over the Tehachapi on Christmas Day. When we
pulled into Barstow at sunset, delayed by the weather, I
was in no mood to spend a freezing night sleeping in the
back of our truck. We got a motel. Dining options were
few and dismal.

Early the next morning we left for Yucca Valley to climb
Chaparrrosa, but found the area closed for restoration due
to the recent fires. Instead we climbed Humbug Mountain near Twentynine Palms. The drive to the
trailhead was more complicated than the climb, but it
was a pleasant hike. Unable to find a campsite that
evening, we worked out a deal with a couple of rock
climbers to share theirs at Hidden Valley and also shared
interesting conversation around the campfire. My
homemade cookies helped the transaction.

The next day we took in the spectacular overlook at
Keys View and braved the cold to ascend Inspiration
Peak. Definitely worth it. We then headed south to
warmer climes and Cottonwood Campground for the
night. We leisurely drove to Culp Primitive Camp in
Anza-Borrego State Park stopping on the way at the
Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association Store
and the Park Visitor Center. That night we were joined
by Tobi Tyler and Howard Steidtmann who missed the
campfire, arriving after we had gone to bed.

Debbie Bulger examines Indian morteros in Anza-Borrego State Park.
Photo by Richard Stover.
At 8:30 a.m. the next morning, we headed for San Ysidro Mountain. Howard remarked, the first mile was actually two miles because we had to wend our way among the cacti. Howard was way ahead, but Tobi, Richard and I stuck together climbing through snow in places. When I reached the top, Howard was perched on the summit block reading the register. It was only when we snacked after descending the block that Howard admitted he had temporarily transported the register from the easier summit block bearing the benchmark. Sneaky Howard!

Of course, on the way back, he insisted we climb The Thimble. It was a fun scramble, but dark descended before we got back to our vehicles. The next hour was spent thrashing around in Mountain mahogany thickets, dealing with failing headlamps, and admiring the spectacular sight of a very bright Venus, a sliver of a moon, Jupiter, and Mercury in a line over Chimney Rock. We emerged on the road about 100 yards downhill from our cars. I can’t imagine what the drivers thought when they saw headlamps bobbing on the roadside in the middle of nowhere.

Richard and I took the next day off to bird watch and soak in the Agua Caliente hot springs—a bargain for a $5 day pass. Howard and Tobi climbed Whale Peak which we had already climbed. We rendezvoused the next evening for a lovely campfire at the junction of Oriflamme and Rodriguez Canyons.

At first light, Richard and I got a head start for our climb of Granite Mountain since we were slower than Howard and Tobi who hit the trail two hours later. We wanted to be sure we finished before dark. It was a lovely hike up an old mining road and then onto the ridge. The summit provided a fun scramble and we spent an hour on top. As we left the summit, we met Howard and Tobi. On the way down we stopped to explore the mine workings, especially interesting in the company of Howard, a mining engineer. We got back at dusk and Tobi and Howard left for dinner in town. Richard and I celebrated New Year’s Eve (Greenland time) and went to bed. We played tourist the next day and visited the Marshall South house ruins in Blair Valley, the morteros, and the pictographs before spending the night at the Blair Valley Primitive Camp.

Our plans to climb Pinyon Mountains January 2 were foiled by a flat tire. Not ours. A pick up in front of us hit the sidewall of one of their tires on a difficult stretch of the 4WD Pinyon Mountain Road. As the couple in the vehicle worked on the tire, 27 jeeps in three convoys came up the narrow road. By that time we had given up thoughts of climbing, gotten out our lawn chairs and were eating lunch. It would be a while. We had front row seats for the entertaining parade. When we finally were able to get on the road again, we headed for the short Narrows Earth Trail to photograph an earthquake fault and other geologic wonders. The sand and dust in the air from the nearby Ocotillo Wells State Vehicle Recreation Area (read crazy people tearing up the desert) convinced us to head north instead of going to the Fish Creek Primitive Camp as originally planned. We started home spending the night in the Oak Grove Campground of the Cleveland National Forest.

(Continued from Page 22)

creosote whispers by my feet, and everything is awash with a rich, bright blue,” thus the work’s title.

**Marshall South and the Ghost Mountain Chronicles (2005); text by Marshall South, introduction and biography by Diana Lindsay**

The desert attracts a wide variety of devotees, including those who are spiritually and esthetically captivated by the area, those who relish the healthful living conditions thereon, and those who desire to get away from a money-driven society and to live an inexpensive existence. In 1932, for all of the above reasons, Marshall and Tanya South began building their home, Yaquitepec, on top of Ghost Mountain in what is now Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. There, until 1946—except for two years spent in other desert locations—the couple and their growing family eked out a simple—including lack of clothing—existence. From February 1940 through December 1946, Marshall supplied monthly essays recounting his family’s experiment in primitive living to Desert Magazine—a series which contributed to the early success of that publication, and through which South won both the affection of a great number of admirers and the scorn of a smaller group that disparaged his unconventional ideas.

So just who was Marshall South (1889-1948), this latter-day Thoreau, the man born Roy Bennett Richards in a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia?

Well, that’s a tricky question, because, as Diana Lindsay, who collected South’s works, researched the excellent biographical forward, and published this fascinating volume notes, “there has been a long-standing aura of mystery and secrecy” surrounding his past. “Marshall South, like a character out of one of his western novels, was part fiction.”

Randall Henderson, editor of Desert Magazine, may have described Marshall South best, when, upon the author’s death, he eulogized, “He was a dreamer—an impractical visionary according to the standards of our time, but what a drab world it would be without the dreamers. Marshall’s tragedy was that he tried too hard to fulfill his dream. He would not compromise. And that is fatal in a civilization where life is a never-ending compromise between the things we would like to do and the obligations imposed by the social and economic organization of which we are a part.”
In fact, there is strong evidence, based on shorter pieces and letters which Manly published about the same time, that he alone could not have produced such a work.

Despite these distractions, Powell also describes Death Valley in '49 as a “classic of the gold rush, a chronicle of death and disaster, survival and heroism, distinguished by narrative power, specific event and precise observation.”

The Desert (1901), John Van Dyke (1856-1932)

John C. Van Dyke's The Desert is considered by most cognoscenti to be the seminal literary work regarding the Colorado and Sonoran Deserts. In A Literary History of Southern California, Franklin Walker describes Van Dyke as the first to exalt the desert as a place of beauty, and cites the lineage of desert writers that Van Dyke sired, a list including Mary Austin, A. J. Burdick, George Wharton James, Idah Meacham Strobridge, J. Smeaton Chase, Stewart Edward White, and Zane Grey. Edwin Corle, author of Mojave: A Book of Stories and Desert Country, added, "We desert writers are forever in the debt of John Van Dyke. He saw it first and said it the best."

Similar to Death Valley in '49, however, The Desert has its flaws. Purportedly, it is based on Van Dyke's two year desert Odyssey, a trip that he, a professor of Art History at Rutgers College (now University), claimed began in Hemet, continued down the Coachella Valley and Salton Basin, through Yuma and Tucson, across the border, and finally ending in Hemosillo, Mexico. Unfortunately, because many of Van Dyke's tales—as related in The Desert and later enlarged upon in his autobiography—don't match 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.

Nevertheless, Van Dyke accurately captures the desert's "eternal strength, the poetry of its wide-spread chaos, the sublimity of its lonely desolation" and especially "the glory of its wondrous coloring." As Lawrence Clark Powell observed, "If a modern reader should find Van Dyke's book excessive in its chromatic exuberance, it would surely not be when reading it at sunrise or sunset on the desert."

The Land of Little Rain (1903), Mary Austin

Although Mary Austin (1868-1934) was to write thirty-five books during her lifetime, her first effort, The Land of Little Rain, a collection of essays regarding the Inyo/Kern County area, published when she was thirty-five, is still considered—as evidenced by the fact that the volume has remained in print for more than one hundred years—her finest work.

To quote desert bibliographer E.I. Edwards, "The lasting appeal of The Land of Little Rain abides not so much in what the author tells as in the eloquent beauty she employs in the telling of it...Other great desert books have
approached, but never quite captured, the peculiar charm of the Austin masterpiece.

Pulitzer Prize winning biographer Carl Van Dorn observed that, “Readers who... discover or rediscover (Mary Austin) will find in (The Land of Little Rain) the records of a woman who... went into the venerable desert, put her heart to the ground, heard men walking and gods breathing, mastered herself by generous surrender to the earth and sky, and came back to the world of muddy tumult with clear eyes. Because the world had no bread for a prophet, she wrote books to live by.”

The best tribute I know of, however, is inscribed on the bronze California Historical Monument plaque, located outside Mary Austin’s former dwelling in Independence—a quote from The Land of Little Rain:

“If you ever come beyond the borders as far as the town that lies in a hill dimple at the foot of Kearsarge, never leave it until you have knocked at the door of the brown house under the willow at the end of the village street, and there you shall have such news of the land of its trails and what is astir in them, as one lover of it can give to another.

The Wonders of the Colorado Desert (1906), G. Wharton James

Born in England, George Wharton James (1858-1923), as a young man, for reasons of health, emigrated to the American West. Employed early on as a circuit riding pastor in Nevada, then as the minister of the 1st Methodist Church in Long Beach (a position he was forced to relinquish after a scandalous divorce), he eventually remarried, became enamored with the Colorado Desert, and acquired a rudimentary cabin in Palm Springs’ Chino Canyon. After making several pack trips through the region, he wrote The Wonders of the Colorado Desert, a two-volume work which Lawrence Clark Powell ranks as a classic, “(B)ecause it embodies more information about the region, its natural and human history, than any other single book; and because it is written in masterful prose, an expression of its author’s virile character; and finally because it is embellished with hundreds of accurate drawings by Carl Eytel, making the book a pictorial as well as a prose encyclopedia.”

Lawrence Hogue, author of All the Wild and Lonely Places, adds, “If Van Dyke was an impressionist, then James was a social realist, showing farmers and engineers confidently taming the desert, with just a glimpse of pristine landscape visible in the background.” Modern day desert bibliographer, Peter Wild, in his Grumbling Gods: A Palm Springs Reader, avers that James gave readers “in snowy Ohio or slushy Connecticut” reason to believe that “they, as they read through the pages, were indeed entering a Wonderland —a word that after James was increasingly applied to a bright new region entering the nation’s consciousness.”

California Desert Trails (1918), J. Smeaton Chase

J. Smeaton Chase (1864-1923), similar to George Wharton James, was born in England, emigrated to the U.S. as a young man, and had a strong bent for improving the lot of his fellow man, spending most of his career as a welfare worker for a Los Angeles-based charitable organization. Coincidentally, both Chase and James died in 1923; Chase in Banning, James in St. Helena.

And the parallels don’t stop there. Both James and Chase relished long pack trips in the desert, and they both wrote excellent accounts of their adventures.

However, whereas James was an idealist, a strident advocate for life in the open air, and, somewhat ambivalently, a “booster” for more agricultural and commercial development in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys, Chase was more self-effacing and not quite as ardent regarding “boosterism.” Also, unlike James, who usually traveled with one or two companions, Chase was perfectly content to travel with only his horse. One of the most endearing aspects of Trails, in fact, is Chase’s obvious affection and concern for his Indian pony, Kaweah.

California Desert Trails recounts 3 pack trips Chase made in the spring and summer of 1918, during which he visited 29 Palms, Mecca Hills, Borrego Springs and the lower Colorado River. Peter Wild observes that California Desert Trails, “in contrast to the sometimes cloyingly sweet syllabubs produced by the enthusiasts, is a work of unprecedented emotional range, accuracy and human depth... as Chase sometimes hallucinating from exertion and dehydration, tries to make sense of a phantasmarmonic land that, as reality wavers before him, sometimes seems bent on killing him.”

The Desert Year (1952), Joseph Wood Krutch

It wasn’t until 1952, thirty four years later, that the next of my top ten desert books, The Desert Year by Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970), appeared on the scene. By that time a sea change had occurred in Western literature, and we find Krutch and a new generation of writers examining the then-settled American Frontier in a new, more introspective manner.

Krutch, a long-time drama critic for The Nation, and a professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia by 1951, had become one of the most important literary authorities in the United States. It seemed he was destined to remain forever rooted in the East Coast intellectual milieu.

In 1952, however, he and his wife Marcelle surprised their friends and colleagues by moving to the northern outskirts of Tucson, where they were to live out the rest of their days.

Krutch’s first book on the area, The Desert Year, was described in its cover blurb as “a report on the pattern of the desert world and its seasons, (in which the reader will

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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.” The author was 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 “coquetish” 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.”

The Desert Year was Krutch’s first desert work, and as such it is, in my opinion, the freshest and most delightful of his four desert efforts, which include The Voice of the Desert (1955); The Forgotten Peninsula, a Naturalist in Baja California (1961), and Baja California and the Geography of Hope (1967)

Desert Solitaire (1968), Edward Abbey

In his prime, Edward Abbey (1927-1989) blazed a bright trail across the desert southwest. As the author of several landmark books on the region, and as a man possessed with strong, even anarchistic, notions as to how to preserve the natural wonders of his adopted homeland, he became a major force in many of the environmental battles waged in the area during the 1970s and 80s.

Desert Solitaire, published in 1968, is based on journals that Abbey kept while working for two summers as a seasonal ranger in Arches National Monument, Utah. Vividly describing the wild canyonlands and the delights of his isolation as a backcountry ranger, the volume is regarded as one of the finest nature narratives in American literature, and has been compared to Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac and Thoreau’s Walden. Desert Solitaire also first elucidated what Abbey termed “industrial tourism,” the unfortunate condition which he believed was turning national parks into “national parking lots.”

The problem is that Desert Solitaire does not directly concern the area in which the DPS climbs. Nevertheless, I believe it deserves top ten status because it does capture the essence of the DPS deserts, and because it was published at a time when the nascent environmental movement was eager for inspiration, in need of a point man to lead the struggle. Abbey—tall, rugged, bearded, cigar smoking and hard drinking, an incendiary voice crying in the wilderness—became that person.

Ten years later, Abbey published his best-selling novel, The Monkey Wrench Gang, another milestone in environmental literature. Appearing to advocate eco-terrorism, Abbey claimed he wrote the book “in an indulgence of spleen and anger from a position of safety behind my typewriter.” No matter what his intentions, TMWG inspired environmentalists—including the radical action group Earth First!—frustrated with the compromises which the mainstream environmentalist groups were making.

Ed Abbey authored several subsequent books more directly concerning the DPS area of interest, including Cactus County (1973), The Journey Home (1977) and Beyond the Wall (1984), the latter of which, to this reviewer, was his best desert effort.

Gathering the Desert (1985), Gary Nabhan

Gary Paul Nabhan (1952- ) is intrigued with desert flora and Southwestern cultures in spades. He is an ethnobotanist, a vocation involving the study of the uses of wild plants and/or cultivated crops by the people indigenous to an area. In Gathering the Desert, Nabhan and his collaborator artist/biologist Paul Mirocha have focused on the plant life and the people of the Sonoran Desert, and together they have assembled an outstanding 209-page volume regarding those closely related subjects. So well did they conspire, in fact, that their effort was awarded the prestigious John Burroughs Medal for outstanding nature writing.

Even if you have little or no interest in desert flora, I guarantee that Gathering the Desert’s perfect blend of folklore, history and scholarship will delight you. Although there are more than 425 wild edible and/or otherwise useful species and twenty-five crop species that have been cultivated on the Sonoran Desert since prehistoric times, Nabhan considers only twelve, i.e., the creosote bush, native palms, mesquite beans, chilies, devil’s claw, wild desert gourds, Sonoran panic, and sandfood, the latter two of which, once important in native diets, are now virtually extinct.. Among the tribes considered are the Cahuilla, the Mohave, the Pima, the Yuma, the Papago, the Cocopa, the Seri, the Opata, and the Yaqui.

A faculty member at the University of Arizona, a cofounder of Native Seeds/SEARCH, a MacArthur Fellowship recipieent, and the author of The Desert Smells Like Rain, Cultures of Habitat, Why Some Like It Hot: Food, Genes, and Cultural Diversity, and Enduring Seeds: Native American Agriculture and Wild Plants, Nabhan laments the fact that so many Native Americans and Mexican-Americans living in the desert Southwest now suffer from diabetes and other nutrition-related diseases due to the demise of native plants in their diets.

Blue Desert (1986), Charles Bowden

With style and passion, often opting for subjects considered unpleasant and/or unsavory, Charles Bowden (1945- ) calls attention to several unfortunate trends in today’s Sonoran Desert. His on-going works, for my money, constitute the best contemporary writing on the region.

Similar to his friend, Ed Abbey, Bowden passionately rails against the on-going degradation of the desert Southwest. In his introduction to Blue Deserts, Bowden
notes: “Thousands move here each year...to escape the unemployment, the smoggy skies, dirty cities, (and) crush of human numbers...of their pasts. This they cannot do. Instead, they reproduce the world they have fled.”

My favorite Bowden volume, Blue Deserts, dwells on subjects such as the demise of the Mexican free-tailed bat, the Sonoran pronghorn antelope, the desert tortoise, and the Yaqi topminnow. It also relates stories of a man and his family whose forebears came to the Tucson area in the mid-1800s, but who today are being literally squeezed out because of that city's continued sprawl; of a Papago Indian on a visit to Palm Springs to determine what lessons the Agua Caliente Indians learned while negotiating leases and sales of their tribal lands, and of an evening of bar hopping with a mining company official in the strike-bound town of Ajo, just prior to the closure of the big open pit mine there. In the final section, Bowden recalls two personal hiking experiences, the first a 130 mile trek along the ancient Hohokum shell trail, stretching from Puerto Penasco on the Gulf of California to Ajo, AZ; the second, a long overnighter along the “webback” trail, stretching from a truck stop on Mexico’s Highway 2 to Interstate 8 at Tacna, AZ. During this experience, about midnight, Bowden suddenly discovers that “...everything turns blue. The mountains rise azure, the ocotillo waves blue wands, the

(Continued on page 18)

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