CHAIR’S CORNER
by Christine Mitchell

Low desert season is right around the corner and Tina has a great lineup of trips in the schedule. There are opportunities to bag at least six different DPS peaks on led trips in September alone! So come out to the desert for some of the sun those of us in southern California have been missing all summer. And make sure your calendar is marked on October 23-24 for the annual Chili Cookoff/Pumpkin Carving Contest/Peak Bagging/General fun weekend.

Leaders: Don’t forget the grace period deadline for the initial honorees of the new DPS Leader Award is September 30, 2010. Leaders who have led or co-led 50 DPS peaks are eligible for this honor. Since this is a new award as of the last election in May and we have several leaders who already qualify, we would like to make the initial award list reflect the sequence of when the leader qualified. So we will collect these “grandfather” leader list submittals until the end of September. Then the lists will be sequenced by the date that the leader qualified for this emblem (i.e. the date they led/co-led their 50th DPS peak).

Speaking of awards, don’t forget about the Desert Explorer Emblem. All you have to do is climb 40 DPS peaks by 2 ‘significantly’ different routes. Then send in your list to the DPS secretary and you will be immortalized on the DPS website. You don’t have to be a DPS List Finisher to earn this award. The definition of ‘significantly’ is an exercise left to the climber. This is another peak puzzle that can generate discussion around a campfire like how far do you have to unwind a peak ascent before you can re-climb the same one for the second time. Does tagging your car and trudging back uphill count? Do you have to drive home and sleep in your own bed before ascent #2? DPSers can be so shy with their opinions sometimes!

Hey, you leaders who are approaching 50 leads, how about leading a trip up an old favorite by a different route? You get credit for another lead, participants get credit for another route, and we all have a good time exploring new territory!

Congratulations to the most recent list finisher John Hooper from Mammoth Lakes. John is one of those stealth climbers who sneaked out and bagged all the DPS summits and emerged on the scene as a finisher! He joined Ron and me on our 2x and 3x finish on Patterson making it a memorable 1-2-3 finish. Not the first time it’s been done but still a great event. Some of you may remember when Bob Hicks, Duane McRuer, and Doug Mantle had a 1-2-3 list finish on Pleasant in October 1992. So it was definitely time for a revisit of that stunt. We had a great time swapping stories with John and hope to see him on other trips. Gary Craig and Mary Mac led us on a perfectly planned and executed hike. We had a great time with lots of celebrating on top and continuing right back to the potluck camp.

Thanks to all of you who joined us and made it a memorable event.

See you on the peaks or at the first management meeting/potluck of the season on Sunday, October 3rd, at Tina and Tom’s house.

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Annual Banquet & Speech
2 Wilderness Area High Points
Boundary & Dubois
Orocopia List Finish
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Patterson List Finish
Book Reviews

NEXT SUBMISSION DEADLINE OCTOBER 9, 2010

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://angeles.sierraclub.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.
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<td>MAY 15</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.

I: White Mountain Peak (14,256'): Join us on this hike to the third highest peak in California and highest desert peak in the United States. We will start at the locked gate to the Barcroft Station and our hike will entail 15 mi rt, 2,600' elevation gain. Reaching the trailhead requires a long dirt road drive through the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. If time permits, we may climb Mount Barcroft (13,040') on the way back to the trailhead. Send email (preferred) or sase, with contact info & recent conditioning to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Co-Leader: Regge Bulman.
SEP 18 SAT LTC
Deadline for Leadership Training Seminar: Last day for receipt of application and payment by LTC. Register for Oct 2 seminar. Next seminar: Spring 2011.

SEP 18-19 SAT-SUN DPS
1: Mt Jefferson (11,941'), Arc Dome (11,773'): Join us for two day hikes of these Nevada peaks and lots of dirt road driving (2WD probably ok). Saturday Jefferson 8 mi, 3200' gain from 2WD parking spot. We may stop at the Berlin Ichthyosaur State Park on our way in to Columbine campground for Sat night. Sun Arc Dome 12 mi, 4600' gain. Send e-mail or sase with conditioning to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Co-Leader: Mary McMannes.

SEP 18-19 SAT-SUN DPS, WTC
1: Glass Mountain Ridge (11,140'): This outstanding DPS peak dominates the Upper Owens River Basin. This highpoint of the Benton Range is considered a volcanic peak and has outstanding views of the Sierras, Mono Lake, and the White Mountains. This is an easy paced WTC experience trip with plenty of time to explore and practice navigation. 6 mi. rt, 1900' of gain (less than 200' gain to camp). Send email (preferred) or sase, with contact info & recent conditioning to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Co-Leader: Regge Bulman.

SEP 24-25 FRI-SAT DPS
ER: North Guardian Angel (7395'), South Guardian Angel (7140'): Two challenging dayhikes in Zion Nat Park. Fri climb North G. Angel 6 mi rt, 800' gain. Sat climb South G. Angel via cross canyon route 9-10 mi rt just under 4000' total gain. Participants must be experienced on 4th class rock climbing and comfortable rappelling; harnesses and helmets needed. Send SASE or e-mail with climbing experience and SC# to Leader: Larry Tidball (lbtidball@verizon.net). Co-Leader: Barbee Tidball.

SEP 26 SUN DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS
1: 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 (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

SEP 29 WED DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS
M/E: Workshop: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP2) – Basic Safety System: First of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today’s indoor evening workshop of 4 hours reviewing ropes, knots, harnesses, helmets, and basic climbing gear will take place in Pasadena. Based on Chapter 9 of Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills, 7th edition. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send sase or e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Leader: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Pat McKusky.

OCT 1-3 FRI-SUN DPS, HPS, SPS
1: Fall Festival in the Southern Sierra: Lots of hiking and climbing, lots of evening partying. Bag scenic peaks from all three climbing section Lists. Hikes range from moderate on-trail hikes to xc climbs. Saturday night happy hour, potluck and campfire at Powers Well. Camp in Walker Pass, or primitive camping in Powers Wells or stay at motels in Ridgecrest or Lake Isabella. More activities, hikes, and climbs will be added closer to the event. Contact HPS Program Chair: Dave Comerzan.

OCT 2 SAT LTC
Leadership Training Seminar: Become a qualified Sierra Club leader. For info, LTC website (angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc). Deadline for receipt of application and payment is Sept 18. No registration after this date or at door. Next seminar: Spring 2011.

OCT 2 SAT DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS
M/E: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP2) – Belaying: 2nd of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on belaying and principles of anchor building. Based on Ch. 10 of Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills, 7th ed. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send sase or e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Leader: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Pat McKusky.
**OCT 3**

**SUN**

**DPS**

**O:** DPS Potluck and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Tina and Tom Bowman. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com).

**OCT 9**

**SAT**

**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**

**M/E: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP2) – Rappelling:** 3rd of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on rappelling. Based on Chapter 11 of Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills, 7th edition. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send sase or e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Leader: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Pat McKusky.

**OCT 9**

**SAT**

**LTC, WTC, HPS**

**I: Beginning Navigation Clinic:** Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome, and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 mi, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, $25 deposit (Sierra Club, refunded at trailhead) to Leader: Diane Dunbar (dianedunbar@charter.net). Co-Leader: Richard Boardman.

**OCT 10**

**SUN**

**DPS, WTC**

**I: Porter Peak (9,101’), Sentinel Peak (9,634’):** Meet Saturday late afternoon in Ballarat to consolidate in 4WD vehicles for drive up Pleasant Valley Canyon to camp near base of Porter. Early Sunday climb Porter, continue following ridge to Sentinel, and then retrace route back to camp for drive home, 11 miles, 5500’ gain round trip. Be prepared for a rather long day and lots of gain. Send e-mail (preferred) or sase with contact information and recent conditioning to Leader: Daryn Dodge (ddodge@oehha.ca.gov). Co-Leader: Kathy Rich.

**OCT 16-17**

**SAT-SUN**

**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**

**M/E: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP2) – Rock Climbing Techniques and Anchors:** 4th of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on climbing and anchors. Based on Chapters 12 & 13 of Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills, 7th edition. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send sase or e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Leader: Dan Richter (dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Pat McKusky.

**OCT 17**

**SUN**

**DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS**

**I: Indian Cove Navigation:** Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

**OCT 23-24**

**SAT-SUN**

**DPS**

**O:** 18th Annual DPS Chili Cook-Off and Pumpkin Carving Challenge (**DATE CHANGE**): Join us for a day of fun in the Eastern Mojave National Preserve at the foot of the Granite Mountains near Kelso Dunes. Whether you like your chili traditional, Texas-style (no beans), or vegetarian, bring your favorite recipe or just stalwart taste buds to this DPS classic. Cooks prepare chili from scratch at the site then all enjoy happy hour followed by chili tasting and judging. Prizes will be awarded by category, with special recognition for spiciest chili, best presentation, and the coveted Best Overall Chili. Cook for free or taste for $10. Pumpkin artisans bring your gourd and carve your best design at the site to be judged for a prize alongside the chili. Saturday: optional short Saturday pre-cooking hike/activity in the area. Sunday: hike Kelso Peak or alternate activity. Send ESASE with choice of Cook or Taster to Hosts: Dave & Elaine Baldwin (dwbaldwin@aol.com) and Leaders: Larry & Barbee Tidball (lbtidball@earthlink.net).

**OCT 23-24**

**SAT-SUN**

**DPS**

**MR: Granite Mtn #1 (6762’), Kelso Peak (4746’):** Climb Granite Sat (6.5 mi, 2900’ gain) in San Bernardino Co. Fine car camp. Sun explore unlisted Kelso Peak (6 mi, 1100’ gain) and Kelso sand dunes, among the highest in the country. Send SC#, climbing resume by email or sase to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Assistants: Mary McMannes, Asher Waxman.
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR / ACTIVITY REPORT, August 13, 2010

Membership Summary

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Activity Report

Achievements

- **OCT 29-31**  
  FRI-SUN  
  LTC, WTC, Harwood Lodge

  C: Wilderness First Aid Course: Runs from 8 am Fri to 5:30 pm Sun. Fee includes lodging, meals and practice first aid kit. Proof of CPR within previous 4 years required to enroll. Fee $205 with SC#/S215 non-member (full refund through Sept 24). For application contact Leader: Steve Schuster (steve.n.wfac2@sbcglobal.net).

- **NOV 6**  
  SAT  
  DPS

  O: DPS Potluck and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Elaine and Dave Baldwin for Oktoberfest. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Elaine Baldwin (DWBaldwin@aol.com).

- **NOV 12-13**  
  FRI-SAT  
  DPS

  I: Mt Ajo (4808'), Superstition Mtn (5057'): Join us for one or both class 2 peaks. Fri hike up Ajo in Organ Pipe Natl Mon (7.5 mi, 2600' gain); Sat climb Superstition and see petroglyphs, maybe bighorn sheep (6.5 mi, 3000' gain). Send e-sase or sase with conditioning to Leader: Tina Bowman. Co-Leader: Mary McMannes.

- **NOV 13-14**  
  SAT-SUN  
  DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, 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 Leader: Robert Myers (rmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

- **NOV 20-21**  
  SAT-SUN  
  DPS, HPS

  I: Needles Peak (5803'), Manly Peak (7196'): We'll try again for these two peaks – rain in February closed access roads to the eastern approach which we had planned, so we had to cancel the previously scheduled trip. Needle is 2900 feet of gain and 7 miles; Manly is 2800' of gain and 6 miles. We still plan to take the eastern approach rather than going in over Goler Wash, but 4WD will still be necessary in some spots. Saturday night enjoy a DPS potluck. Leader: Dave Perkins. Send email or SASE to Assistant, Ann Perkins (aperkins@csun.edu).

- **NOV 20-21**  
  SAT-SUN  
  DPS, HPS

  I: Villager Peak (5756'), Rabbit Peak #2 (6640'): 21 miles, gain 7900'. Strenuous backpack in the Anza-Borrego desert. Climb from desert floor to Villager first day. 2nd day hike to Rabbit & camp; then out. Be advised of ever-present cholla cactus. Take away the prize of bagging the Big Bunny. Strenuous hiking in the desert requires good conditioning. Please contact leader with recent conditioning history. Leader: Mark S. Allen (markallen4341@socal.rr.com). Assistant: Bob Myers.

- **DEC 4-5**  
  SAT-SUN  
  DPS

  I: Pahrump Point (5740'), Stewart Point (5265'): Join us for one or both of these fine DPS-listed limestone peaks just east of Death Valley NP. Saturday climb Pahrump Point (3400' gain, 8 mi.). Happy hour Saturday night. Sunday climb Stewart Point (2600' gain, 6.5 mi.). Send e-mail with conditioning and experience to Leader: Daryn Dodge (ddodge@oehha.ca.gov) or Co-Leader: Kathy Rich (kathyrich@gmail.com).
DEC 11-12 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Oroopia Mtn. (3815') (List Finish #2): Join the leaders for a leisurely climb of Oroopia on Saturday. The climb should be 1100' gain, 4.5 mi rt, 4 hours or so plus time for a celebration on the summit for Sue Holloway's second finish of the DPS List. Saturday afternoon/evening activities in camp will include another (in)famous "beers of the world" tasting as well as a traditional DPS potluck and more celebrating. Leaders: Gary Craig and Sue Holloway (sueholloway@cox.net).

DEC 12 SUN DPS
O: DPS Potluck, Holiday Party, and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Ann and Dave Perkins for the holiday potluck and management committee meeting. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Ann Perkins.

JAN 9 SUN DPS
O: DPS Potluck and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Gloria Miladin for a DPS potluck and management committee meeting. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Gloria Miladin (miladingloria@yahoo.com).

JAN 22 SAT DPS, LTC, SPS, HPS
M/E: Local Baldy Snow Practice: Come review snow climbing, rope travel, ice axe, and snow anchors. Practice your skills or brush up on new techniques. Especially for aspiring M & E leader candidates. Restricted to SC members with prior experience with the ice axe. Lack of snow may cancel. Email SC#, climbing resume, email address, phone # to Leader: Nile Sorenson (nsorenso@pacbell.net). Co-Leader: Tom McDonnell.

FEB 5-6 SAT-SUN DPS
I: Black Butte (4504"), Chuckwalla Mtn (3446") Join us for two class 2 hikes near the historic Bradshaw Trail. Sat Black Butte, 1600' gain, 3 mi if we have enough 4WDs or 1830' gain, 6.6 miles from the 2WD parking spot. Sun Chuckwalla, 1600' gain, 3 mi. Be prepared for catclaw. Send contact, rideshare info to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Co-Leader: Tom Bowman.

FEB 12 SAT DPS, LTC, SPS, HPS
M/E: Local Baldy Snow Practice: Come review snow climbing, rope travel, ice axe, and snow anchors. Practice your skills or brush up on new techniques. Especially for aspiring M & E leader candidates. Restricted to SC members with prior experience with the ice axe. Lack of snow may cancel. Email SC#, climbing resume, email address, phone # to Leader: Nile Sorenson (nsorenso@pacbell.net). Co-Leader: Doug Mantle.

FEB 13 SUN DPS
O: DPS Potluck and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Christine Mitchell and Ron Bartell for a DPS potluck and management committee meeting. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Christine Mitchell (christinebartell@yahoo.com).

APR 10 SUN DPS
O: DPS Potluck and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Barbee and Larry Tidball for a DPS potluck and management committee meeting. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Barbee Tidball (lbtidball@verizon.net).

MAY 15 SUN DPS
O: Annual Banquet: Save the date!

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Outdoor leadership training will be offered Saturday, Oct. 2, at the Costa Mesa Neighborhood Community Center. The all-day seminar costs $25. The application is online at angeles.sierrclub.org/ltc. Mail the application and check, payable to Sierra Club, to Steve Botan, LTC Registrar, 18816 Thornwood Circle, Huntington Beach 92646. Applications and checks are due Sept. 18. The class will cover all the basics of leading, from planning a trip to proper safety and conservation practices. The class is required for everyone seeking a leadership rating from the chapter.
The Great Basin Peak Section is gradually spreading the word about our new group, hiking peaks, and building membership. Our webmaster has created a membership page & is working on a format to post trip reports & pictures.

During July, GBPS members joined the Desert Peak Section for their summer list completion celebration trip on Mt Patterson, the high point of the Sweetwater Mountains. Three members completed the DPS list including a first, second and third list completion. The list finishers were acknowledged in style on the summit with champagne and snacks. Then the weekend continued with a campout and potluck near Mono Mills. The next morning concluded with a hike to the Mono Craters high point, Crater Mountain.

In August, the GBPS did a Pah Rah Peak Ramble summiting Virginia & Pah Rah Peaks while enjoying a herd of antelope, colorful wildflower displays, and a birds eye view of Pyramid Lake.

Other listed peaks that GBPS members have summited this summer include: Mt. Davidson, Snow Valley Peak, Stateline Peak, Mt Siegel, Galena, Oreana, Mt Rose, Jobs Peak, and East Peak.

For details on membership, recognition categories, and peak list, check out the Great Basin Peak Section at http://toiyabe.sierraclub.org/GBPeaksSection.html - Sharon Marie Wilcox

OUTINGS CHAIR

Howdy, DPSers, Chili Cooks, and Chili Lovers! Please note the change of date for the annual chili cook-off. It has been moved up one week to the weekend of October 23-24.

Leaders, we could use more trips, especially for January and February. Climbers, please bug your favorite leaders to lead peaks you need! If there's not enough time to get an outing in the Sage, we can publish it on the DPS website. Another Schedule deadline is coming November 10th for the March-July 4th issue, so please be thinking about leading a trip we can advertise there and catch some folks new to the DPS.

Last but certainly not least, we have another list finish coming. Plan on joining Sue Holloway for her 2x DPS list finish on Orocopia on Saturday, December 11th, stay for the celebration, and come back Sunday in time for the DPS holiday party on Sunday the 12th at the home of Ann and Dave Perkins. What a fine weekend that will be! - Tina

CONSERVATION

In the past few years, questions have arisen regarding current wilderness boundaries, and some members have inadvertently driven or parked past these boundaries. Wilderness.net, a useful web site put up by the University of Montana, provides current information about wilderness areas throughout the U.S. For all wilderness areas, you can click on the name of the wilderness and get general information about date established, size, etc. By clicking on “map” for that wilderness area, you can view a road map, a satellite image, a terrain map, or a topo. The maps are small, but I found that by zooming in I could match the information to roads on a map such as San Bernardino County. The site gives the usual disclaimers, but it should be useful not only for information on specific wilderness areas, but also for its sections on wilderness laws and policies and wilderness management. Check it out! - Ann

Also, DPS member Tom Bowman has written a paper about the Gulf spill: “Climate Change and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.” Check it out at http://www.bowmanglobalchange.com/writing.php

COVER PHOTO: Approaching the summit of Mount Patterson. Photo by Ron Bartell.
**ROAD & PEAK GUIDE UPDATES**

**Mount Dubois**

There is a signed route to the cattle guard at the entrance to Middle Canyon: Starting at the post office in Dyer NV, drive 11.3 miles north on NV State Route 264 to Chiatovich Road. Turn left here and drive 4.5 miles to a road bifurcation with a road sign to Middle Canyon. Take the right fork on a good dirt road and drive 1.8 miles to a gravel road. Turn right and drive 1 mile to the cattle guard in Middle Canyon, passing a large green building on the right. Follow the Middle Canyon road to the trailhead.

**Mount Tipton**

Recently, Richard Carey found a better route to the Tipton trailhead that avoids the rough road on 5th Street: On Arizona Highway 93 turn northeast onto Pierce Ferry Road that goes to Dolan Springs. Drive 2.9 mi, turn right on 7th street; drive east for 2.4 miles to Inglewood Drive. Turn right on Inglewood Drive, drive 1 mile to 5th Street, turn left on 5th Street; drive 0.8 miles. Turn northeast on a dirt road and drive 1.1 miles to a water tank. The road is gated here; 2WD vehicles should park here. 4WD vehicles can go past the gate for another 1.1 mi to a locked gate and park. Hike on the road to where our Road and Peak Guide recommends starting the climb. -Ed

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**LLOYD BALSAM (1925-2010)**

Lloyd Balsam, a valued, long-term member of the Sierra Club, passed away on May 6 of this year at the age of 85.

He led his first Sierra Club outing, a climb of Telescope Peak, sponsored by the Desert Peaks Section, in May of 1948. Over the years that followed, besides the Desert Peaks Section, he went on to lead outings for the Local Hikes Committee, the Camping Committee, and the Ski Mountaineers Section.

Lloyd also served the Angeles Chapter in many administrative functions: his name appeared on no less than eleven chapter entities. These included the Schedule Committee, Southern Sierran Committee, San Antonio Hut, Membership Committee, Conservation Committee, Education Committee, the West Los Angeles Group, Chapter Nominating Committee, and of course his favorites, the Desert Peaks Section (which he chaired in 1953) and the Ski Mountaineers Section (which he chaired in 1953-54).

The Desert Peaks Section (DPS) was launched as a concept by Chester Versteeg in 1941, but languished in the hiatus of World War II until formalized as a Section in 1946. Only a year later we find Lloyd obtaining Emblem Status by virtue of climbing all seven of the new Section’s Emblem Peaks.

In addition to chairing the DPS, Lloyd served the Section in other important capacities: Treasurer, Secretary, Vice Chair, and in arranging banquets, revising by-laws, and of course as a leader extraordinare.

In 1952 he led one of the initial DPS forays into the Sierra Nevada, a climb of The Thumb, thus participating as a ‘midwife’ in the delivery of a newborn climbing entity, the Sierra Peaks Section just three years later in 1955.

Lloyd also ‘discovered’ 11,160-foot Glass Mountain in northern Inyo County, being the first Desert Peaker to schedule a climb of this beautiful mountain of volcanic obsidian glass. So popular had Lloyd’s outings become that he attracted 55 participants on his exploratory climb of that peak over Labor Day Weekend of 1954.

Another life-long passion of Lloyd’s was skiing, as evidenced by his participation in the Angeles Chapter’s Ski Mountaineers Section (SMS), an organization he chaired in 1953-54. He further assisted the SMS by serving on the San Antonio Ski Hut Committee from 1948 through 1954, acting as Ski Hut Manager for five of those seven years.

Lloyd’s Sierra Club career, at least on paper, became subsumed in the mid-

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*THE DESERT SAGE* 10 *September/October 2010*
1950s by the responsibilities of raising a family and by his demanding vocation as a systems engineer for Northrop, however he never lost interest in his Sierra Club roots. According to Mark Goebel, “During 1979 and 1980, a period of difficult transition and change for the SMS, Lloyd stepped briefly back into active service for the Section. He stood up for proposed changes to the way Section elections were held, and outings planned. He served on an elections committee, and greatly assisted in re-writing of the Section’s bylaws and obtaining approval from the Chapter. For that period of time he was a guiding light that enabled the SMS to continue forward with new energy.”

In his later years Lloyd reflected back on his glory days as a pioneering Desert Peaker, recalling that, “We developed and honored our desert competence and, better yet, formed lasting friendships which are active and rewarding to this day.” —Bob Cates, Chair, Angeles Chapter History Committee

DID YOU KNOW?

Did You Know, it’s the August deadline of the Sage, and I’m gallivanting around Colorado in search of climbing a few more “14ers,” but for now, I’ll stop and roost in order to write a Sage column about our famous, infamous, and always-on-the-move DPS family members. Two days ago, I phoned Vic and Sue Henney from the top of Quandary Peak (14,265’) where they celebrated their Colorado 14ers List Finish a couple years ago and had called me. Terry Flood and Brian Smith are roaming around this area collecting some peaks, too. Pat and Gerry Holleman were here and climbed Mount Democrat with great agility and called to check in. After climbing Democrat myself, I met a fellow named Carl Norman in the parking lot, and after a brief chat about high peaks, he related his lightning hit on White Mountain, July 28, 1997, where he was blown off the ground by 10 feet, burned, and ended up with a paralyzed leg. He regretted that friends in California said never worry about lightning or thunder storms on our peaks. Nay, nay, not true. Ask Chris Libby whose email moniker is: lightningsurvivor. Carl said it was the worst electrical storms ever seen on White Mountain. And DYK, there was a Boston terrier on top of Mount Democrat chasing a white mountain goat, and this Zooey dog had climbed 45 of the Colorado 14ers. However, a note to Bob Michael that Zooey refuses to go near our most unfavorable “death peak”, Little Bear.

In sadness and sympathy, our DPS family has bid farewell to a legendary climber and former DPS chairperson, Lloyd Balsam. (See Bob Cate’s fine eulogy on the previous page.) Tom Toby called me with sad news that his dad George Toby had passed away, Monday, August 2, 2010, after five days in a local Northridge hospital, complications of a faulty heart valve. George had a good run of nearly 89 years, and his last three years were greatly enriched by an attractive and kind caretaker, Deli. More will be said about George at a later time, but he was in that era of SPS and DPS E-rated leaders (Duane McRuer, Cuno Ranschau, Joe McCosker) who led many deserving peak-baggers up our great peaks, safely and successfully. We could tell stories by the dozens about this DPS and SPS List Finisher George as many of us rode to countless miles and endless nights of roadheads with George sharing every detail of his most colorful and interesting life. I will never forget tenting with George, and his signature, “Yip Yip Yip,” wake-up yelp like an excited pup (much to the dismay of deep sleepers.) George was a deeply spiritual man and a loyal devoted friend who will be sadly missed. And lastly, in speaking of our favorite DPS four legged friends, all of us were chagrinned to receive Ron and Ellen Grau’s email that Bogie had passed on and now is chasing clouds in the sky. What a great little fluffy dog was that Bogie who had climbed many a desert peak himself.

DYK, by the time you get this Sage, Gregie Boy Vernon will have been honored in San Francisco by the national Sierra Club with the Francis Farquhar Award for excellence in mountaineering (and for Gregie, his rock climbing guides.) We hope he has recuperated from his helicopter evacuation off of Ritter, late July. It seems the old boy’s knee cap disintegrated during his ascent up the snow chute of Ritter. Helpless and knee-less was Gregie until his rescue. Surgery followed in Mammoth, and Gregie was in pretty good spirits.
especially thinking of the cute ranger hugging him closely as he was reeled up into the helicopter (see photos.) Speaking of great and past leaders, Happy 85th Birthday to Bob Hicks who is doing well down in Long Beach.

At the DPS banquet, it was heard that Japhy Dhungana had been off climbing in Vegas' Red Rocks, and lo and behold, there was Fred Beckey gliding across the rocks like a youngster or in Japhy’s words, “This dude moves flawlessly over rock like no one I’ve ever seen.” Fred is a young 88 years old and credited with more first ascents than any man alive. Doug Mantle continues to pursue Beckey’s Classic Climbs of North America, and now has added Hallett Peak in Colorado, the Liberty Creek route on Liberty Bell in Washington, and finally the Northwest Classic, Burgundy Spire. In between climbs and continuing to read books in Spanish, Doug has finished a hot topic book about Clarence King who led a double life in being married to Ada, a black woman and the love of his life; but society preventing him from coming clean and acknowledging his wife and five children. James Gardener was King’s best friend and confidante, and of course, it’s no coincidence that Gardener and Clarence King are Sierra peaks looking at one another for geological eternity.

Congrats to Steve Eckert for his List Finish on Orocopia, May 30th, and finally Ron Bartell’s three-timer, Christine Mitchell’s two-timer, and John Hooper’s one-timer DPS List Finishes on Mt. Patterson, led happily by Gary Craig and the loyal sweep, yours truly. I finally got to meet Daryn Dodge who gracefully offered to help me sweep. Steve Eckert’s campfire banter is of the best, and I liked it when he gave advice on opening champagne. “Grasp the bottle firmly, and gently open champagne as a woman sighing not screaming.” Rich Gnagy informs us that he is the creator of Champagne on Peak List Finishes, as he popped a bottle of bubbly on Barbara Lilley’s DPS List Finish circa 1950s. Ron and Christine (Bartellis) now have time to work on other lists such as climbing Baldy every day of the year, all DPS peaks by a different route, and the Great Basin List of 114 peaks. Sharon Marie Wilcox, chair of the Great Basin Peaks Section in Nevada plus friend Larry joined us for the Patterson List Finish. We hope to have more duo trips between their section and ours. Thanks to Ron Eckelman for the big pot of weenies and franks which were appreciated by all at the DPS lavish salad and dessert tables.

DYK, our good friend and infectious disease doc, Anne Anglim, was a contestant on “Jeopardy?” She had a great time despite the fact that the winner, Saad Hasac, was a fast draw on hitting the buzzer. In Anne’s words, “He was adorable, and I
didn’t mind losing to him. It wasn’t too embarrassing getting my butt handed to me.” DYK, Sue Wyman placed 4th in the Women’s Division of the Santa Monica Two Mile Ocean Swim (1400 swimmers.) Husband Vic was seen on the beach holding a great banner. And DYK, Elaine Baldwin won an electric guitar at a concert and a raffle to clean up the birds in the Gulf Oil Spill? We wonder if Elaine will hang up the paint brushes and start organizing an all girl band?

China Lake’s NAWS Peggy Shoaf wrote to congratulate DPS for finally putting Argus and Maturango on suspension. She says, “While NAWS China Lake is 1.1 million acres, only 5 percent of the land is disturbed by explosive ordinances. The safety buffer is our main concern, and we want no one venturing into those areas for his own personal safety and our chance of liability.” She adds that she will make every effort for any of our members wanting access to Little Petroglyph Canyon as an official trip if so desired. Thanks, Peggy, and DPS will continue to promote a policy of No Trespassing in these banned areas. And thanks to DPS members who voted wisely on these peaks and Kino.

Thanks to Bob Cates who represented DPS at Dawson’s Book Store in celebration of Lloyd Balsam’s life. The rest of us were celebrating George Wysup’s worthy and wonderful life on Wysup Peak in Big Bear led and organized by Gary Schenk. (See HPS Lookout for trip reports.) Although we all have love and admiration for Bob and Maureen, our hearts have been stolen by Teddy Cates, the remarkable “person in a dog suit,” who accompanies these two on all their adventures.

There’s a lot more to be said in DYK, but the day is young, the peaks are calling, and I must go. Thanks to Barbara Lilley and Gordon MacLeod who donated large jugs of good red and white wines for future DPS potlucks and List Finishes. I’ll be seeing you on the Old Timers trip in September. I never thought I’d have a chance to co-lead a trip with legends like Barbara and Gordon, but my dream has come true. Thanks, Jerry Keating, for organizing this trip where I’ll be meeting the stars of yesteryear in DPS and SPS history. And DYK in October, Gene Mauk and the Motherals will cross the PCT trail into Oregon? Only two more states to go, Gene, and you’ll reach Canada.

Since thunder and lightning seem to be a daily occurrence on Colorado peaks, I was amused at a teeshirt that read, “It’s always darkest just before lightning scares the crap out of you.” And—“you know men and women are a lot alike in certain situations like when they’re both on fire they’re exactly the same.” Happy and safe climbing to all. I’ll see you in the fall, peak-climbing and pot-lucking.

Your roving girl reporter,
Mary Mac
The day before, Joe Speigl and Kathy Rich led an excellent DPS dayhike to Spectre Peak. Expecting a long day, plans had been made to camp at the Spectre trailhead after the climb, then caravan over the next morning for Granite Mtn #2. The Granite group included Kathy Rich (leader), Daryn Dodge (co-lead), Chi Truong, Tracey Thomerson and Paul Kudlinksi.

We had little recent information about the drive approach for Granite from the west side, as most climbers tend to drive in by the easier east-side approach. Apparently, there is some notoriously deep sand to drive through coming in from the west. It is for me, so long as I don’t get stuck. At the well-marked junction of Highway 177 and unpaved Palen Pass road, Chi left her AWD vehicle and caught a ride in Paul’s Ford 4WD pick-up. I had a 4WD Jeep Cherokee. Just before we started up the road, a Honda Element passed us heading up towards Palen Pass.

The Palen Pass road was indeed sandy, but the deep sand did not start until after crossing an intersection 1.8 miles into the drive. Our 4WD vehicles handled it well, but we soon came upon the Honda Element mired in the sand. Even though the Element has 4WD, it is a low-clearance vehicle with small tires. They could not move forward up the slight grade anymore, but could spin their tires in reverse and slowly back their way out of the deepest sand. Clearly, this part of the road requires true high-clearance, 4WD vehicles (with big tires). This deepest sand section goes on for a little over a mile.

After several more miles the sand gives way to crossing washes. Small at first, but they become more significant the farther east we drove. In two spots the road had been washed out, and is diverted slightly south to an easier crossing of the washes. Roughly 2 miles from Palen Pass we came to a wash that tested the Jeep and my driving skills. Dropping into the wash was the easy part, but I needed two runs at the steep, rough road out of the wash before I made it. The strain on the Jeep made it discharge a burning oil smell. But to me, it smelled like...victory! Paul gunned his truck out of the wash on the first try, and we both raised our fists in triumph.

Pushing on over Palen Pass, we soon made the left turn leading to Packard Well and the start of Route A. These last few miles to the trailhead are common to both approaches from the east and the west. Only 0.4 miles after the turn we came to a narrow, deep road cut caused by water erosion. We got across it after a short inspection, but if this road cut gets any worse, the road could well be impassable to vehicles at this point. A short distance from this cut we drove up the first of two major washes that one must drive upstream for a short distance before finding the road out. We drove up this first one less than 100 feet before driving out the other side. However, dropping into the second wash we found few markings of the road in the bed of the wash. Staying generally on the west side, we drove at least 200 feet before we spotted where the road climbs steeply out. There is no other choice for driving out of the wash as the DPS instructions seem to imply. We eventually parked 2.2 miles from the Palen Pass road intersection, just past a little hill where we had our first wide-open view of our route to Granite Mtn. It took us 2 hours to cover the 15.4 miles of dirt road.

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 OCTOBER 9, 2010.
The DPS instructions indicating a bearing of 3 degrees to Granite Mtn were very helpful. A closer false summit on the ridgeline actually looked higher from our vantage point, but is a mile from the true high point. Following the Route A instructions, we walked 1.5 miles to a major wash, then another mile mostly in the wash before we left it and started up the ridgeline that is the second half of the Route B approach.

We stayed on top of the ridgeline for a few hundred feet of gain, then mostly diverted to a series of ledges just below and on the west side of the ridgeline when it got too rocky and narrow. Soon after hitting the main crest of the Granite Mtns, we came across a wet spot in the sand where an animal had apparently recently urinated. Looking down slope, we were treated to a view of a large male bighorn galloping across the mountainside.

We reached the summit less than 10 minutes after seeing the bighorn. Nice views of the Palen and Coxcomb ranges greeted us on top. The day was proving to be rather warm, but a nice breeze on the summit felt good. After a 30-minute lunch break, we started down, this time deciding to give the entire Route A wash route a try. The descent from the crest of the Granite Mtns starts out steeply, before leveling a little and converging into a major wash. We dropped over several small waterfall pitches, none of which were particularly difficult. However, we soon reached the crux of this descent, a 30-foot class 4 waterfall pitch. To overcome this obstacle, we ascended the east-side slope until we could drop into a small gully that descended to the bottom of the waterfall. The climb difficulty fell somewhere in the class 2-3 area.

Less than two miles from the cars, Kathy almost stepped over a large rattlesnake having a siesta in the shade of some rocks. It got upset over this interruption and rattled vigorously at us. As we crowded in for a closer look (but out of striking distance), it panicked and slithered under a rock to continue its rattling out of view. This was the only rattlesnake we saw today. However, those of us that went on the Spectre Peak climb the day before had the privilege of seeing no less than four rattlesnakes.

Back at the cars, the round trip hiking distance was 6.5 to 7 miles and took us about 6.5 hours. Total gain was 2800 feet. We were parked about a half-mile from Packard Well, but we never went over to see what that was all about. Knowing the road from the drive in, we covered the distance back to Highway 177 in only 1.5 hours. The DPS drive route description still fairly accurately describes the condition of the approach from the west, and should not be a problem for experienced 4WD drivers.

Our old friend Bill Krause arrived at our home in Idyllwild for dinner in clean clothes and with only a few scrapes and scratches visible. He is a veteran of many hard and long technical mountaineering routes all over the world. He jovially regaled us with the story of hiking up Manly Peak from Coyote Canyon the day before and excused his unplanned overnight bivouac on a late start. His wife called off the Rescue Team when he resurfaced. He implied that we might find it challenging...and we fell for it.

Only later did we calculate that it is 6,000 feet of gain, over mostly rough trail-less desert, and 15 + miles round trip. Watch out for those smiling guests in clean long-sleeved hiking clothes!

We drove to Death Valley and followed (dirt) Wingate Road south from Ballarat about 15 miles, before turning left (unmarked) to the mouth of Coyote Canyon, where we made camp, with the peak above us. Promptly at 6 am the next morning we left, enjoying the first two miles of easy hiking on an old dirt road, which led to an abandoned mine and aerial tramway.

After that the terrain became typical canyon, and we encountered a huge chockstone after about another mile. After about 4 miles, we took the right turn up Coyote Canyon and after another ¼ mile or so, identified the rectangular boulder on the skyline, marking the place to ascend the subsidiary ridge which then connects to the main ridge on its left. Thus began the rough haul up to
the summit, with only a few scratches. During the upward slog the flowers underfoot assuaged some of the pain. The route led up the long south-east ridge about another 2 miles. The last part was quite steep and rough.

Of course, the summit is not at the top of the ridge where it should be...it's about the 4th peaklet back from the summit ridge, about another ¾ mile. Once there, some 8 hours 10 minutes after leaving camp, we despaired, believing Bill had done it in 8 hours. Imagine our delight when we read in the Desert Peaks Section' register that he had taken 8 hrs 30 minutes, especially as we are more than 10 years older. Euphorically, we shimmied up the class 4 summit boulder, from the right off-width. The authorities in 1948 apparently did not know that Manly Peak was 7,196', as no elevation was inserted.

On the way down, we chose a different route and dropped into a long wash which ended in upper Coyote Canyon, before reconnecting with our earlier route: better for the knees and carpeted with flowers. The downside, so to speak, was that I aroused a rattlesnake which rattled aggressively as Alois leaped over it with some very loud words of “snake charm” expressed at altitude!!

We were back at camp, another 5 hours 45 minutes later, just at dark. Not that we were at all tired, or thirsty... after almost 15 hours of non-stop effort. But we had not bivouac-ed. We “toasted” our friend Bill for the inspiration...and the accomplishment of a Manly experience with very little loss of blood.

In reading many of your emails and hearing personal comments, I’d say the 2010 Desert Peaks Banquet at the Proud Bird was a smashing success. We nearly hit 100 in attendance, but we certainly missed Barbara Lilley and Gordon MacLeod who had to cancel due to Gordon bringing Barbara back from a Mammoth skiing trip with a broken arm. She’s mending now, and she admits that after sixty years of skiing with never a scrape, she’s been very lucky. There were some changes of plans with a few other members, but all in all, the entire DPS family was present. There was even a great Richard Carey-van up from San Diego bringing one of our favorites, Betty McCosker with them.

The DPS management and especially Elaine were preening ourselves like proud birds, delighted we had chosen a new venue to host the banquet. The accommodations were big and airy; no one had problems in being too crowded or being heard. Thanks to Mima Roach, Julia Gosnell, Barbee Tidball, and Gloria Miladin who manned the welcome table, handed out new laminated name tags, and sold raffle tickets. Chris Wu bought the most raffle tickets, and we were pleased he later won a REI gift certificate.

The Mountaineering Classic and Cheap Book Sale did well, and we are grateful to Tina Bowman for clerking the table. Bob Sumner was nearby and grinning broadly as he sold and signed his new Nevada guide book. Later, he was happily sitting between Tina and Mary Mac at the dinner table enjoying our company even though we weren’t the usual Playboy bunnies. Doug Mantle was there with his inimitable smile, and we couldn’t wait for his roasting and chiding fun and hilarious keynote speech of the evening. He and his big yellow tablets

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**DPS ANNUAL BANQUET**

May 16, 2010

by Mary McMannes

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The huge chockstone blocking Coyote Canyon

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Jeff Dhungana, Mary McMannes, Karla Dhungana, and Tom Bowman

Photos provided by Mary McMannes
never fail to charm us all. (See his speech printed on page 18.) Japhy Dhunga appeared looking dashing and handsome as ever. He brought his twin sister, Karla, and she is not only beautiful but as friendly and congenial as our Japhy.

Elaine was bustling around making sure last minute details were taken care of. Michael and Julia Gosnell had brought the red wines, and I brought chilled chardonnay, all bottles ready to be uncorked. Let the show begin!

Dinner was served and after extensive wining and dining, the Great Desert Peaks Program and time-honored traditions began to unroll. The Ceremony of Standing Achievements was first, and most of us sat down after List Finish #1. Tina Bowman, Barbara Reber, Greg and Mirna Roach, and Rich Gnagy remained standing for List Finish 2x, and Lara McRuer stood in place for her father, Duane McRuer. At three List Finishes, it was Vic Henney and Sue Wyman-Henney. Yes, Doug was still standing flashing that great white smile—and he continued standing for List Finish 4x, 5x, 6x, 7x, and he’s a few peaks away from 8x.

Further applause was given to past chairpersons and those who had hosted a DPS potluck in the past year. In 2011, we will honor the Desert Explorers plus a new emblem, for those leading 50 scheduled official desert peaks.

After congratulating each other and ourselves, it was time for the distinguished award plaques to be given to the Best and Deserving. Sue Holloway received the 2010 Service Award for being one of our most capable and generous leaders. She’s due for List Finish #2 plus has already qualified for the 50 peaks led for the Leader Emblem.

Dave and Ann Perkins: 2010 Service Awardees are real energizers for DPS. Both are List Finishers and favorite hosts for the popular December holiday party. Along with Sue, they always say “Yes” to leading more trips and helping others achieve a List Finish too.

Vic and Sue Wyman-Henney glowed with happiness in being awarded the Bill T. Russell Mountaineering Award. Their accomplishments could fill another page in the Sage: List Finishes in HPS, DPS, SPS, Lower Peaks, Colorado’s 54 “Fourteeners,” all 50 State High Points, and extensive climbing and trekking abroad. Bill T. would be tremendously pleased! Vic is a legendary navigator and finds the best route on any peak. What a duo these two are—bold and focused and forever planning the next adventure.

After a brief respite and break, Jeff (Japhy) began his spectacular slide show entertaining and astounding us with his bicycle ride from Los Angeles to Patagonia in 19 months on $10 a day. Leaving home with a budget of $5,000 and a small wagon behind his bike, when he ran out of money, Japhy resorted to creative methods as writing trip articles, playing the guitar, and depending on the kindness of strangers. He slept in ditches, the homes of local farmers, firemen, policemen, and even slept one night in a jail cell. Each beautiful slide featured a wonderful quote such as, “Tell me, what is your plan to do with your one wild and precious life.” Japhy, you have a head start on the most wonderful life that anyone can imagine. Thank you for sharing your pilgrimage with us and letting us see the goodness of people who took you in as one of their own. What a ride you had
and what a story! We loved every minute of it.

There were some happy raffle winners going home with unexpected prizes, and we are grateful to HPS/DPS leaders Chris Spisak and Lilly Fukui in assisting us with the Raffle. Winners were: Ron Eckelman, “Lost Hikers,” oil painting by Betty McCosker. Shelley Rogers, “Mt. Patterson,” framed print by Elaine Baldwin. Ed Herrman, ‘Desert Horizon,” serigraph by Edna Erspamer. REI $25 gift certificates were given to Chris Spisak and Chris Wu. Books donated by Wynne Benti were won by: Diana Estrada (Andy Zdon’s Desert Summits), Chris Spisak (Bob Sumner’s Hiking Nevada’s County High Points), Tina Bowman (Ruth Mendenhall’s Women on the Rocks), and Gloria Miladin, Corinna the Christmas Elf, written and donated by Bob Sumner’s sister, Suzanne.

Elaine and Dave Baldwin and the entire DPS management, thanks for orchestrating a perfect evening. Happy Belated Birthday to Greg Roach whose actual birthday was the same night. We missed Christine and Ron who dashed off to China. Same place, same time, next year! See you there.

DPS BANQUET SPEECH
May 16, 2010
By Doug Mantle

Roger Homrich trekked solo 225 days through Death Valley, finishing in chest-deep snow on Last Chance Mountain. He survived 30,000 feet of gain, 100 mph winds, sleet and snowstorms, and up to 120 degree temperatures. Average folks read about this and were astonished.

Our glorious leader, Mary McMannes, snorted that we DPSers could relate to that, but we had the good sense to come home the weekends.

Hey, Roger, just 225 days? We’ve been doing those trips for 70 years!

I joined the DPS 40 years ago. Barbara Lilley had already been a member for 20 years; Gordon Macleod for a dozen.

It was a Golden Age. Good mining roads abounded. An “access problem” meant we’d have to build our own road. You might hitch a ride on a big ore truck all the way down Surprise Canyon. I drove my company Cadillac to roadheads like Avawatz and, yes, Maturango. I was more afraid that my boss would find out than the Navy.

Some voted “thumbs down” on Stepladder because it was too easy—four miles round trip. The LTC and insurance came later; if Paul Lipsohn supposed he might lead a Mexican peak, “bingo” (that’s for you, Betty McRuer), 50 participants would show up, no doubt including Dick Akawie who would complain about all the Mexican peaks.

Gas was 26 cents in Phoenix. Talk about global warming: if it was cold, we made a tire fire. Nobody fretted about L.A. traffic on Friday afternoons, and Las Vegas had no traffic.

Barbara Reber reminds me that sixteen climbers were piled into the back of Ron Francisco’s truck on one trip like sandbags, no seatbelts, folks (gasp), and led Kofa, Castle Dome, and Little Picacho in one day.

Next came the SUV. Like giddy teenagers we rushed out to buy them, maybe beginning with DPS Chair Mary Sue Miller.

Now, we could practically drive up the peaks! Imagine our buddy, dignified Duane McRuer, clapping his hands in child-like glee as he drove Julie King, Carolyn West and me to within one mile of Mopah! I wouldn’t have put it past Dale Van Dalsem to keep driving to the top! But big changes were coming.

We thought the desert was unchanging and erosionless. Ret Moore, the world’s oldest geologist, could have set us straight...it is NOT. Now there isn’t a trace of a road up Surprise Canyon; the road to Virgin is a 30-foot-deep trench; and the road to Eagle in J-Treec is just gone.

Gas hit $4.00, and if we manage to battle through the crushing city traffic in our rusting SUVs, we have to stop short, at a bullet-riddled red stake in the salty flats, 10 miles from the peak. Or farther.

Hell’s bells, we’re right back where we started! Some of us are in denial.

Last Christmas, I climbed Whipple from the south. Past the red stake I followed a fresh motorcycle track, over the impressive barricade, past the leaching tanks, and well up the wash toward the peak. The motorcycle rider left an entry in the summit register. It reads, “Dennis Richards, bite me.”

So, we are back to square one. We even worried whether the DPS would survive. We were told we were too old. Our social scientist and dandy biography-author, Karen Leonard, has surveyed our members for decades.

One finding is that among the most active DPSers, the average age is 55. Not that bad.

Unfortunately, if you take out Michael Gosnell, it’s 75. Edna Erspamer compounds the problem. Edna is here with her date, Jeb Toubkal. Edna’s age is not the problem. She may have 60-year-old kids, but we all agree she isn’t quite 70.

The problem is, Edna could do better at promoting our
youthful image. She calls Mary McMannes the “it” girl of the Sierra Club. The “it” girl? Betty McCosker, did your mother tell you about the “it” girl? It was Clara Bow, so named in 1927. 1927?

Ron Ecklemann is one of our active members—is Ron here? Ron bowled us over at the February ice axe practice. He was the only student agile enough to jump downhill, backwards, head-first, to try one of the self-arrests. Ron just had a birthday. He is 133.

Then we were told we need to certify more leaders. Those of us around in the Golden Age were lucky; we didn’t have to pass any tests for certification. Maybe that’s NOT so lucky for our followers. Anyway, we were “grandfathered” to be leaders. Actually, in our cases, we were great-grandfathered.

With a refreshing ambition to revitalize the DPS, talented Audrey Goodman proposed sidestepping the Sierra Club regulations.

She suggested we simply have a bunch of DPSers hike up some prospective List peaks, then put the peaks on the List. The establishment howled! Illegal! You can’t do that! Well, that is the way we did it in the first place . . . Why not just PRETEND we followed the rules so we can get this done?

In the end, the DPS proved too timid to adopt this approach, but not the U. S. Congress, who used it to pass healthcare. There is a legal way to become a DPS leader, and not long ago, Ann Perkins did it! Ann’s husband, Dave, of course is a real DPS stalwart. Dave sprang from the legendary Cal State Northridge Library DPS cell, which also harbored Walt Kabler and Barbara Magnuson. But back to Ann. In addition to the customary 200 hours of lectures and six months’ residency in internal medicine, Ann was required to assist Roger Homrich on two of his adventures, which she did. Good show!

Lately, we have missed one of our very best leaders, Greg Roach. The upshot of Linda McDennott’s second list finish was that Greg was left holding the bag, in trouble with the BLM rangers. Greg cast about for advice on how to deal with the rangers.

He called ME! What was he thinking?

I told him to murder the ranger, of course...

Anyhoo—Greg, come back; we need you!

Now, Tina Bowman, I’ve been tough on the LTC tonight. There’s a tad more. To become a leader, the Angeles Chapter has decreed that we pass through the Leadership Training Committee, the “LTC,” Tina’s Little Club (well, that doesn’t quite work).

The Power Broker, Tina, delivers the lectures, writes the textbook, conducts the checkoffs, and hosts your list finishing party, the LFP, in her house in Independence. She works about 300 hours a week on all this.

Of course, the Sierra Club insists on monitoring. That is done through a committee, the Mountaineering Oversight Committee, the MOC. The chairman of that committee is . . . Tina Bowman. For the past couple of years, Tina has also led all of the DPS trips. Thanks to Tina, to be sure.

Nobody (well, except maybe for Tina) works harder for the DPS than Dave and Elaine Baldwin. Years ago, after the Hormel brothers left the DPS, to our shame it was John McCully who won the chili cookoff. John McCully, he of bacon-and-rancid-mayonnaise sandwich fame? Times have changed. The Golden Age of chili cookoffs is now. Dave Baldwin measures 35 ingredients into his award-winning chili.

As chairman, Dave’s priority was saving the DPS, to get members to help run the section. He hit on the idea of a survey, so craftily composed that either you would say “uncle” and agree to serve, or you would go crazy with guilt.

Dave, you should have been a lawyer! Listen to how he set the final trap: “Option 3 can win with zero votes. The ugly news is that option 2 cannot win, particularly if it receives 100% of the votes; a vote for option 2 is really a vote for option 3. “Gotcha!” (heh?)

Recently, Dave went too far. He tried to rig the election for chairman.

Simply put, Dave wanted our Mary Mac...to serve a third term as chair. Mary, however, stuck to tradition. Like Cincinnatus, like George Washington, she chose to give up her empire. The last thing Mary wants is more Cincinnatus...

Thanks to these and many more illuminati and bright new ideas like the potlucks; and to LFPs; to the amazing energizer bunny of book reviews, Burton Falk; and double ram’s funny pins thanks to Sage Editor-for-Life and after, Bob Sumner, the DPS is doing just fine, thank you. And thanks not least to Mary McMannes.

Like a frontier cowgirl in the Indian wars, she has helped bury our fallen with her kind words in the Sage. So what if she inherited a piano or two for her trouble? In seeking out and sharing our stories and folklore, sometimes accurately, she has ignited our collective memory and fostered a sense of community: the Red Baron, butt-naked on Rabbit; Ron Jones’s head spinning as he tracked those speeding boulders across the Racetrack; Mary Motherall’s record 50 tickets for speeding en route to the climbs. Pico Fiasco. For the past two years the DPS is undeniably resurgent. Mary has been DPS chair for the past two years.

Coincidence? We don’t think so!
The Black Mountain Wilderness, created in 1994, lies about 30 miles northwest of Barstow, California. Black Mountain comprises a large mesa of ancient lava flows and is unlike any of the other mountains in the area in this respect. We drove into the area from Hinkley, CA, off U.S. Highway 58 near Barstow and proceeded up the west side of the wilderness through Black Canyon. We had read that sand can often be a problem in the canyon, especially for 2 wheel drive vehicles, but we had no problem on this particular day reaching a good starting point with our Honda CR-V. We drove to 2900', others have started at 2800'. Either point allows one to access the gentle and shallow north-south valleys that contain enough vegetation and soil to make for easy going and allows one to avoid having to cross the basalt flows and ridges that also run in a generally north-south direction. The highpoint is not obvious as one approaches the summit area but the complex of antennas is. While these are not on the summit, it is but a short walk to the summit from the antennas.

We found the benchmark noted on the map. The register was placed by Gordon MacLeod and Barbara Lilly in 2005. Delores Holladay was also on the trip. We also found a few other familiar names signed in since 2005, but the peak is not climbed often.

The weather was incredibly pleasant for a Memorial Day weekend and the wildflowers were great. The climb took us about 4 hours round trip and the round-trip distance is somewhere between 5-6 miles, at least the way went. It's an easy climb in a beautiful area of the desert. We departed the area by driving north and in general found the roads to be in pretty good condition.

The Grass Valley Wilderness Area is a 30,000+ acre wilderness area located about 30 miles southeast of Red Mountain California. It is bounded on the east by the China Lake Naval Weapons Center and on the West by the Cuddeback Bombing Range. It is bisected by a north-south wilderness corridor road passable by high clearance vehicles. There are two groups of mountains/hills. The higher one to the Southeast includes the high point of the wilderness, Point 4681, which rises approximately a thousand feet above the desert floor. There are many possible routes up the peak but we started from a point southwest of the peak where the wilderness corridor road come closest to the peak. We chose to walk to a low saddle on the eastern side of the peak and ascend the ridge line. We found a small cairn on the summit, but no register. We placed a register. The hike took less than 2 hours and is probably no more than 2-3 miles in length. This peak has incredible views of many familiar peaks. We could see Mounts San Gorgonio and Baldy in the south, the Sierras to the north, as well as Telescope Peak and the Argus Range and many other familiar mountains in between.

One of the highlights of our hike was coming across a desert tortoise. He initially retreated into his shell but after a couple of minutes came out again and looked around. He seemed as interested in us as we were in him. We took a couple of pictures and he proceeded on...
his way. We estimated that he was somewhere between 12 and 14 inches in length. We did a little research when we got home and learned that the desert tortoise can go up to a year without water. Tortoises get moisture from eating vegetation and especially desert flowers. They also can live to be 80-100 years old if they live out a normal lifespan. They spend 95% of their time in their burrows, which makes them even more unusual to see.

This peak can be easily combined with Black Mountain to the south, the highpoint of the Black Mountain Wilderness or with Dome Mountain to the north, the highpoint of the Golden Valley Wilderness.

**MOUNT DUBOIS, BOUNDARY PEAK**
May 29-30, 2010
by Tina Bowman

When Kathy Rich and I planned this outing for Memorial Day weekend, we must have been temporarily insane. What’s worse, we persisted in this madness and led it—or most of it.

The original plan was to climb Dubois Saturday and Boundary and Montgomery Sunday. I was generally thinking about Middle Canyon for the start of Dubois and then the Kennedy saddle route for Boundary (DPS guide route C). I kept having this nagging memory of postholing and getting out about dark from Dubois when I was part of a group led by Patty Rambert and Ron Hudson a few years ago. The thought of arriving exhausted at the cars and then having to drive around for the start of Boundary and Montgomery was truly daunting; the thought of climbing the two from Trail Canyon was even worse. And then Barbee Tidball mentioned that she and Larry had climbed Dubois from the west some years ago. Aha! Larry gave me the link to the Sage article, and I started looking at maps. Then I drove the road to see whether it had changed much since Barbee and Larry were there in 1993. Because I drove without problem to where they had started their hike, I figured the driving part of the trip was looking much, much better. Then Steve Eckert did a very similar route from the west for his penultimate DPS peak, Dubois. After reading his excellent route description and looking at his maps, I decided to stick with the Tidball’s route because I hadn’t scouted Steve’s part of the road or the stream crossing (not something we do very often in the DPS).

Although the driving problem was fixed, the hiking part was still ridiculous. Larry reported 7054’ gain, and certainly the map shows that or maybe a hair more (where are my reading glasses?). So we planned to take a group up a trailless, steep ridge to nearly 13,600’ for a dayhike. Right. Soft-hearted, I told the folks on the wait list that they could join us; it was just too hard to say no. As a result, by the time we started hiking to Dubois, we had a group of thirteen. I figure I know at least a dozen other crazy people, though three were smart enough to have other things to do on Sunday than join us for day 2 of this adventure...

Larry described the route well, so I won’t repeat that information. At the meeting place just off highway 6, we consolidated into three vehicles and drove up to the saddle at the end of a spur road (not on the map but visible as we drove closer) close to the Queen Dicks site and on the end of the ridge north of Queen Dicks Canyon. The last part is rather steep and a bit rough; I thought 4WD was useful, but it might not have been necessary.

It was just shy of 7:00 am when we started hiking. Besides the leaders, we were Anne Anglim, Keith Christensen, John Cyran, Paul Garry, Bill Gaskill, Bruno Geiger, Ron Hudson, Gloria Miladin, Dave Perkins, Alexander Smirnoff, and Ted Tassop. Kathy was a bit short on sleep having just driven back from San Luis Obispo where her son had been in hospital for a week after a skateboard accident (when will wearing helmets become the right thing to do in this sport?).

I think we’d all agree that the first 2000’ of gain was the steepest part of the climb with the loosest footing. My motto for the day was “Slow and steady.” I wanted to minimize the rest stops—time was a wastin’—but with the group getting well strung out, the stops were longer and a bit more frequent than I would have liked. Sometimes much longer. We avoided the snow until we were well above tree line, now pushing for the summit. Snow conditions were good and the angles fairly gentle, so we never got out the ice axes and crampons. I led the group over a pre-summit bump (I hesitate to call it a false summit), warning those near me as we were about to crest it, “Prepare to be disappointed.” I had just seen the summit plateau ridgeline and wished to avoid being lynched.
Fortunately, we dropped only a few feet and strolled on to the summit. The first part of the group arrived before 3:15 p.m. And soon we were passing around the register and enjoying milder weather than we had expected. (The latest forecast I saw for the summit was 27 degrees with winds of 10-15 mph and gusts up to 25 mph; John’s thermometer in the shade read 32 and the wind wasn’t bad at all.)

At about 4:05 p.m. we started down, bypassing the bump, going down the start of the canyon a short ways on good snow, and then angling back onto the ridge. We moved along well, taking fewer and shorter breaks on the way down (we were far less strung out going down), Kathy leading us down well. Still and all, it was about 8:40 p.m. when we finally got down to the cars, still a bit light out.

We drove back to the meeting point and found Tracey Thomerson and Peter Kudlinski waiting to join us for Boundary and Montgomery. At Kathy’s suggestion, we decided to eat dinner and camp there rather than drive the last part of the road, so we walked, taking a steep short cut road that avoided the final long switchback. It was close to 7:30 a.m. when we started hiking. The trail from the saddle was generally easy to follow with a bit of snow at times. What a relief it was to have a use trail after Dubois!

The first part of the climb above Trail Canyon Saddle was free of snow to the small saddle before the final approach to Boundary. We put on helmets and got out ice axes for some snow from that saddle. We followed boot prints in the snow and the use trail on up to the summit, where we enjoyed splendid views again of the Sierra and all around. Montgomery, however, was looking ugly from a climbing point of view—lots of steep snow. We felt it wouldn’t be prudent to attempt it on this trip, better to wait till the snow is gone and it’s a much easier climb.

After relaxing on the summit for about an hour, we headed down with Kathy leading, having a pleasant hike back to the cars and arriving about 5:50. Happy hour commenced with a fine spread laid out on John’s tailgate and chairs circled for conversation. We had another fine and ambitious DPS outing.

My only hope is that the insanity will not reoccur!

There is a longer version of this report at Climber.Org/reports/2010/1753.html, with more words, color pictures, a map, and links to driving directions with waypoints all the way to the summit. The 4WD trailhead is 5.2 miles from the freeway, at 2500’ where wilderness stakes and a turnaround loop mark the current end of the road. Most of the group camped at that turnaround, which has plenty of room for parking but only a few tent sites.

Starting before 7 am, we walked up the now-closed road on the east bank of a wash. The road crosses over a shoulder and sidehills down a bit. We left the road where it crosses a small dip and heads southeast. Minor route-finding is required here to go southwest to the wash, working through some steep gullies to where we entered the wash just above a waterfall.

We followed the wash south and up, scrambling over two class 2-3 waterfalls. The footing isn’t bad and the Cats Claw is avoidable but there’s nothing memorable about this canyon. We went straight up onto a ridge from the end of the canyon, and the ridgeline took us over a false summit where we were finally sure we could see the peak.

We reached the 3815’ summit of Orocoopia around 10 am, a little over 3 hours from the car. A nice breeze dispelled
our fears of broiling on such a low elevation peak on the hot end of May, and we broke out the cookies and champagne to celebrate my list finish. There's a nice view of the Salton Sea from here, but in terms of peakbagging Orocopia was sort of anticlimactic compared to Dubois (13.6k) a few weeks earlier.

The point of saving this spectacular (read "easy") bump for last was to allow old and new friends and family to join me. The youngest climber was 4, the oldest climber stopped counting at 80. It's a pity Dale Van Dalsem couldn't be here, since he was the one who convinced me to go through the LTC/ALTC training with the Angeles Chapter in the 80s. Each generation follows in the footsteps of those who teach them.

The return to the trailhead was uneventful, except the large desert tortoise we saw, following which we had a happy-hour-style lunch. Unusual to see a bunch of climbers sitting in lawn chairs holding umbrellas in one hand and champagne in the other, but given the rising temperatures no one wanted to hang out all afternoon waiting for the cooler evening temperatures.

"Thank You" to everyone who came, and to everyone else who contributed to my peakbagging experiences. Especially to Dan and Asher, the leaders, who demonstrated their generosity (if not their wisdom) by agreeing to give up their holiday weekend and lead a trip that could have been really hot.

Everyone who finishes one of these lists is expected to have something profound to say. I say "Open that other bottle of champagne!" The best reason to climb from a list is to explore (e.g. to make sure you don't get stuck doing the same thing over and over). The worst reason to climb from a list is to check off the peaks, rushing up and down without stopping to smell the Saguaro.

People always want to know what peaks I consider to be the best, the worst, the hardest, the prettiest... First? Turtle and Mopah, led by Owen Mallory, in 1982.

Hottest? Ajo was too low and too south for April, but Kino was a close second the following February.

Best overall sustained "ooh and aah"? The Guardian Angels in Zion.

Best sunset? When we got off-route driving to Grapevine and ended up on a shoulder at precisely the right moment.

Saddest? Waucoba, as Patty Rambert's memorial.

Most unexpected weather? Snow on Arc Dome in August.

Highest radiation exposure? Potosi microwaves.

Most gain in a day? Telescope from below sea level is more than 11k of gain! (Sometimes we TRY to make it hard.) Hardest? Rabbit is often mentioned, but by doing Eagle in the morning and the flat part of Rabbit the same day I got two peaks in two reasonable days.

Easiest peak on the list? Navajo. Peaks you can drive to the top of? Navajo. But oh my god, there are some sights to see around there if you just take a few extra days to explore Muley Point, Betatakin, Monument Valley, Goosenecks, Natural Bridges, Canyon de Chelly, etc.

Peaks NOT gotten on the first try? I was snowed off Avawatz with Van Dalsem and I stuck an agave in my knee on Villager. After I signed out of a DPS trip, a search party was mistakenly sent after me in 1982 - I finally returned to Edgar and Mitchell in 2009 to climb both peaks as a dayhike from a new trailhead.

Most dangerous? Kino was the most dangerous for me (the border patrol arrested 14 smugglers with drugs and guns just a few miles away).

I've collected waypoints from trailheads for most of the peaks on the list, and am building trailhead pages (see Climber.Org/driving) as I have time. Not to replace the DPS Guide, but to add a new resource that backs up the Guide. Please help me improve and keep these pages up to date by sending me additions and corrections.
Having wanted to do this little jewel just north of Charleston Peak out of Las Vegas, I noticed that the Las Vegas Mountaineers Club was doing this climb on a weekend when I would be there visiting family anyways. More information on them can be found on their website www.lvmc.org/webpages/lvmcwhoweare.html.

I contacted the leader Joel Brewster who said that I would be welcome to join them even though I am not a member of their club although I have been aware of them for some time. They were established back in July 1994 and have a fairly prolific schedule of climbing trips mostly in the Red Rock and Spring Mountains range close to Las Vegas. They also have a Classic 50 Peaks List centered around the Las Vegas area: www.lvmc.org/webpages/lvmcclassicpeaks.html.

We met at a Starbucks in the northwest Las Vegas area close to Hwy 95 and car-pooled up to State Route 156, turning left (west) to Mack’s Canyon Road, a decent dirt road that could probably be done with good clearance but 4WD not needed. That road dead-ends after 4.3 miles at a nice trailhead with plenty of parking at 8,500’. There were 9 of us with Doodly the dog and we began hiking on a good trail until reaching a saddle northeast of the highest peak, where the steep trail became class 2 and then class 3 up on the ridgeline where we scrambled up and around a fairly exposed ridge to the ammo box up on the highest point. Temperatures were in the 60’s but I put on a jacket up on the summit. From there it is a half mile of sustained class 2/3 to the slightly lower North Sister with a substantial drop but we eventually reached that summit and signed in also. From there we dropped down a steep and fairly loose cross-country route that completed the loop route and took us back down to our cars without too much trouble. Final stats were 7 miles round-trip with 2,000’+ total gain in maybe 7 hours total. It was a fun climb with great views of nearby Charleston Peak, Mummy Mountain, MacFarland Peak, and nearby Mack’s Peak.

Ron Bartell, Christine Mitchell, and John Hooper together finished the DPS Peaks List for the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st times respectively, on Saturday July 10th, at Mt. Patterson. That’s only the second time that’s happened in the DPS, in a single day. Ron and Christine had finished for the 1st and 2nd, and 1st, time on the same day back in 1990, so long ago it barely registers. And we didn’t even know John then. Yet here they all are, each pounding their way up Mt. Patterson one more time!

I was honored to be asked to lead this trip with Mary Mac alongside as co-leader. We had a group of about 30 ready to go on Saturday morning.

The drive in to the peak (after consolidating into high-clearance vehicles alongside 395) went as per the DPS Road & Peak Guide directions. We stopped just a few tenths before the official (wilderness boundary) end of the road, at a couple of spots which between them would accommodate all of our vehicles. The “4wd” portion of the drive in, the last mile or more, required care but wasn’t too bad. The Baldwins had trouble with their SUV, so we did a bit more passenger re-arranging at the start of the tough section. At our parking spot we dawdled while preparing but eventually embarked upon the standard “A” route up Patterson, which is mostly a walk up a steeply-inclined dirt road, with a short walk across a scree field at the very top.
We had a really good walk up to the summit, although the large group got quite spread out along the way. I overheard conversations on most any topic one could imagine (which is good; it means everyone is having fun), though the “which way to the summit” issue became predominant as we rounded our way over the ridge (at around 11,000’) and the summit area came into view. Fortunately when our honorees’ final few steps were taken, no ORVs were in the area, and Ron, Christine, and John planted their boots upon the summit to applause, photo-taking, and the breeze. And that’s all.


We had lunch on the summit, avoiding a stiff breeze from the south by dropping off the summit on the opposite side a few steps. Otherwise, the weather for the entire hike was great. This was followed by the obligatory “summit hero” photo-ops. The return hike to the cars, and the drive out, was a casual affair, and everyone re-grouped at the US 395 turn-out. I swear the road-gnomes were out again making the drive out longer and different than the drive in. Well, no matter... We made it!

Our Saturday night camp was to be near the Mono Mills site on SR 120. After much fussing around we picked a spot about 0.9 miles east of the “Mono Mills” signpost, on a side road leading south from the main SR 120, just a few tenths off the paved road. This was a nice spot accessible to all vehicles. The potluck feeding frenzy and campfire story-telling lived up to all expectations. Rich never made it to our camp, but we later found out that he had a room in Lee Vining and was OK. It’s good that we didn’t choose to run this trip a few weeks later, as the Mono Fire closed access in this area, for a few days S of 120 and to the N and W of the Mono Craters.

Our Saturday evening camp was most enjoyable in a nice open Jeffrey Pine forest. The potluck dinner filled our tummies, and our campfire filled our need for tales of adventure, in both the recent and distant past. Mary prepared and presented a “This is your life...” questionnaire to ferret out Ron and Christine’s hiking secrets.

Many people on Sunday morning had their own activity ideas. It seemed, the trip was winding to a close. Some residing in the Mammoth area returned home to more friendly environs. Kathy and Daryn headed to eastern Nevada for Ruby and Wheeler. Many returned to SoCal. Eight of the crew (myself, Ron, Dave Boyle, Steve, Sharon Marie, Larry, Dave Baldwin, and Elaine) headed...
off for a climb of the high point of the Mono Craters on Sunday morning. A few other members of the group had headed off for hikes in more distant regions earlier.

The Mono Craters loomed nearby and after much negotiating the aforementioned group departed to check out an east side drive and approach. After a few short miles west on 120, we consolidated vehicles, and headed south into the forest. The road is somewhat sandy but not too bad. We parked at 11S 03253 41941, for you GPS-inclined peeps, although the exact location is not crucial… just find a wide spot in the sparse forest where it looks like you’re about even with the peak. Walking through the trees is much more enjoyable than the adjacent open sandy slopes, at least on the way up. Although, it’s not easy… it is still a steeply uphill trudge. We veered gradually left to hit the ascending ridge, where we took a well-earned break after about an hour or so. Then our route took an interesting right-hand path through volcanic landscape, more gradually ascending and beautiful than the last hour, through nearly treeless open terrain. There was eventually a short loss of 100 feet or so, and then a steep ascent, which proved less formidable than observed, into an area of undulating pits and cones where the actual summit (at the NW edge of the crater) was not obvious. We wandered a bit but just followed the map and GPS across easy sandy terrain to what was really, finally, the summit cone. Okay, it really wasn’t all that hard to find. At any rate the group made the last ascent through a few class 2 moves and onto the high point (Crater Mtn). Photos and lunch followed; we lingered on the summit for at least 30 minutes.

After leaving the immediate summit area, we changed plans a bit and dropped out of the east side of the crater directly towards the cars. Once over “the edge” this is an outrageously fast sand/scree descent, the rival of any in DPS lore. Steve charged out ahead and got some nice photos I’m sure. Yeah, our total gain from the cars was only 1500' or so, but it was well earned on this nice early summer day. The eight of us reveled in our effort and in the warm afternoon at our cars upon return, enjoying snacks saved from the night before. The drive out, after a few puzzling turns, was uneventful.

Early that afternoon a few of us visited the South Tufa area of Mono Lake for the photos and a generally relaxing atmosphere. As we headed for home, I took a short side trip to my favorite Lee Vining gas station/restaurant, and savored the remains of the warm summer afternoon.
BOOK REVIEWS

THREE NEW INTERESTING DESERT VOLUMES

POINT OMEGA (2010), Don Delillo
ABOUT A MOUNTAIN (2010), John D’Agata
GOING THROUGH GHOSTS (2010), Mary Sojourner

POINT OMEGA (2010), Don Delillo (1936-)

Don Delillo is considered to be one of the most important American authors writing today. His eighth novel, White Noise—the plot of which involved an “airborne toxic event” and a subsequent riff on the fear of death—won the 1985 National Book Award. His eleventh and most popular novel, Underworld (1997)—set during the Cold War, with a plot including buried nuclear waste and the American effort to repress things they would rather forget—was nominated for yet another National Book Award, the New York Times Best Books of the Year award, a second Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and was runner-up in the New York Times’ survey of the best American fiction in the last 25 years (announced in May 2006).

Point Omega, Delillo’s fifteenth novel, opens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, where a new age filmmaker, Finley, is watching 24 Hour Psycho, a video presentation that slows down the Hitchcock film so that the movie fills the time period of the title, and “whatever was happening took forever to happen.”

The scene then switches to the Anza-Borrego State Park, where Finley has sought out an intellectual named Elster, a man who recently consulted with the Defense Department to help define the methods and goals of the U.S. Military, hoping to make a documentary film on Elster’s life.

Elster doesn’t make the job easy, however. His view is that true life “is not reducible to words spoken or written, not by anyone, ever. The true life takes place when we’re alone, thinking, feeling, lost in memory, dreamingly self-aware…” (Elster’s) life happened…when he sat staring at a blank wall, thinking about dinner.”

It should be noted that the Point Omega of title is not a geological feature such as Rosa Point, Zabriskie Point or Sandy Point. Rather, the omega point is a term coined by a French Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to describe a maximum level of complexity and consciousness toward which the entire universe appears to be evolving. More recently, the mathematical physicist, Frank Tipler, has put a cosmologic spin on the term, suggesting that the omega point is the ultimate fate of the universe—the point at which the amount of information stored approaches infinity.

And this notion segues into Elster’s propensity to think rather than talk. Indeed, as might be expected, a major dialogue between the filmmaker and the intellectual never really takes hold.

As Finley considers his problem, Elster’s daughter, Jesse, arrives for a visit, then after a few days she disappears, setting off a large, unsuccessful search (reminiscent of Edward Abbey’s plot in his novel Black Sun).

Delillo provides a few good desert descriptions such as the following as we find Finlay walking back to his car after a solo search for Jesse: “I walked back into the wash under the shallow line of the sky and then stopped and put my hand to the cliff wall and felt the fiery rock, horizontal cracks or shifts that made me think of huge upheavals. I closed my eyes and listened. The silence was complete. I’d never felt a stillness such as this, never such enveloping nothing…After a time I began to think I should have reached the car by now. I was tired, hungry, water was gone. I wondered whether this gap, this pass had a north and south fork and was it possible I had strayed into the wrong fork?…I took the water bottle out of my pocket and tried to squeeze a drop or two into my mouth.”

But Point Omega could have been set in any number of locations—a cabin in the Rockies, a deserted island, a sail boat. The desert plays only a minor role in the story. If you’re just interested in the desert per se, Point Omega is a bit of a disappointment. If you’re in an existential mood, the 117 page novella will probably be worth your while.

Point Omega ends back in MOMA where the narrative began, and we know little more than we did at the opening. That, however, may be exactly the point that Delillo is trying to make.
ABOUT A MOUNTAIN (2010), John D’Agata

The first two authors considered here share a common concern, i.e., the exposure—accidental or by terrorist attack—of a large number of people to radioactive material. Indeed, both Don Delillo’s Underworld (see review above) and John D’Agata’s About a Mountain, reviewed below, consider this deadly possibility.

But whereas Delillo considers the risk from a fictional standpoint, D’Agata is a facts-driven essayist and a good one at that. In addition to teaching writing at the University of Iowa, he is also the editor of The Next American Essay and The Lost Origins of the Essay.

During the summer of 2002, while helping his mother move to Las Vegas, D’Agata became aware of the federal government’s plan to store high-level nuclear waste inside Yucca Mountain, some 90 miles north of the rapidly expanding city.

The concept of a single storage site for atomic waste by the federal government, however, goes back to 1980 when the American Nuclear Energy Council began to lobby Congress for such legislation.

In December, 1982, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act—a plan to dig ninety-seven miles of tunnels into Yucca (Mountain), spend forty years filling them with 77,000 tons of spent nuclear waste, and then seal the mountains shut until the waste has decomposed—was voted into law. As D’Agata explains, the site “would end up holding at capacity ... the radiological equivalent of 2 million individual nuclear detonations, about 7 trillion doses of lethal radiation, enough to kill every living resident of Las Vegas, Nevada, four and a half million times over.”

Twenty years later, on July 9, 2002, the Yucca Mountain Project, based on the findings of a 65,000 page environmental impact study—although bitterly opposed by Senator Harry Reid (D, Nev.) and many other Nevadan activists—was approved by U.S. Senate. D’Agata, who was watching the day’s proceedings on C-SPAN with a group of Las Vegas activists, became concerned and decided to get personally involved.

The anti-Yucca Mountain people believed that many of their concerns had been not been properly addressed. Among their questions:

1. Would the mountain really be a secure storage site for the proposed 10,000 year period?

The answer, D’Agata determined, was no. In fact, a 1998 study by the California Institute of Technology “revealed that Yucca Mountain was stretching, seismically, ten times faster than anyone had thought,” and that “based on satellite studies, the institute estimated that the entire mountain was likely to move almost fifty full feet over the next 1,000 years.” In addition, the project’s own chief geologist, Jerry Szymanski, “had discovered as early as 1988 that any kind of fault movement...could cause what he was calling ‘massive upwelling,’ a surge of steaming water from deep within the Earth that could flood the site’s repository and corrode the waste’s containers, sending their nuclear waste into the desert’s ecosystem.”

2. Was the 10,000-year storage period a scientifically reliable figure?

D’Agata’s attempt to track down how the 10,000-year figure was determined could be considered humorous were it not for the gravity of the situation. Beginning his inquiries at the regional office of the Department of Energy, he was told that the time period had been set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When he talked to the EPA, they told him that the 10,000-year period was established in the Yucca Mountain Development Act of 2002. That one-page document, D’Agata found, referred back to the Energy Policy Act of 1992, which read, “scientists of the National Academies are to consider whether it is possible to make scientifically supportable predictions of the probability that the repository’s engineered or geologic barriers will be breached as a result of human intrusion over a period of 10,000 years.”

Upon posing the 10,000-year question to the National Academies of Science, D’Agata was referred to the office of the National Research Council (NRC). At the NRC he was told to talk to the people at their Board on Radioactive Waste Management (BRWM). At the BRWM he was referred to the Committee on the Technical Bases for Yucca Mountain Standards (CTBYMS), and it was there at last that he found his answer. The original CTBYMS study read in part...“Taking into consideration that some potentially harmful exposures may still be possible several hundred thousand years following the mountain’s closure, we therefore recommend that a time frame be established that includes those periods of peak potential risks...which could be on the order of a million years or more.”

In other words, “the stability of Yucca Mountain couldn’t be guaranteed for as long as a million years, so somewhere within that long chain of federal policy-wranglers the time frame for securing the nuclear waste...was decreased by approximately 99 percent.”

3. The question of most immediate importance to the Anti-Yucca Mountain group was not in regard to the mountain per se, but rather in regard to the large number of shipments of radioactive waste that would be coming into the area. “Would those shipments be safe from accidental spills and/or terrorist attacks?”

D’Agata found a great difference of opinion in answer to that question. The estimate is that it would take...
108,000 shipments to truck the 77 thousand tons of spent nuclear waste from various sites around the country to Yucca Mountain. That means that approximately 3,000 truckloads per year would pass through Las Vegas, converging with traffic at the "spaghetti bowl," the intersections of Interstate 15 and 80. D'Agata breaks it down even further: "Two hundred fifty monthly (shipments), eight or nine daily ones. One load every two hours and forty-eight minutes..."

The Department of Energy, considering "reasonably foreseeable incidents," figures the odds of a spill in a serious accident—which could well lay waste to Las Vegas—during the four decades of anticipated shipments would be 1-in 10 million, an acceptable risk limit for large-scale federal projects.

However Lee Clarke, a Rutgers University sociologist who specializes in planning for improbable possibilities, sees it a different way: "Refusing to keep a proper balance between the probable and the possible can skew our ability to recognize legitimate dangers. Catastrophes are common, failures are a part of life." Consider the Titanic, Three Mile Island and the British Petroleum Gulf Coast disasters for example.

And, remember, the DOE doesn’t address the possibility of a terrorist attack.

D'Agata combines his disquieting essay with the story of a Las Vegas teenager who committed suicide by jumping off the Stratosphere Hotel’s 875 foot tower about the same time the Senate voted for the Yucca Mountain legislation. While this was undoubtedly important to the author who was volunteering on the suicide hot line at the time, this diversion dilutes the main thrust of the book, the title of which, as you may recall, is About a Mountain.

Update: On March 3, 2010, the Department of Energy filed a motion with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to withdraw the license application for the high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. And although the project, which was forecast to cost 96 billion dollars by completion, is dead in the water for now, there remain those 77,000 tons of nuclear waste which still need a place for safe storage.

GOING THROUGH GHOSTS (2010), Mary Sojourner

After reading the blurb on the back cover of Going Through Ghosts, I thought, “Okay, I’ll read it, but it’s really not my kind of story.” The blurb explained that the heroine, Maggie Foltz, a fifty-five-year-old cocktail waitress at a rundown casino in Creosote, Nevada, on the Colorado River, is enlisted by the spirit of Sarah, a young Native American woman who had been recently murdered, to help her depart from earth. And, the problem is, I’m really not into ghost stories.

But, guess what? Going Through Ghosts turned out to be an excellent read. In fact, by the time I finished the book the idea of giving aid to a spirit seemed almost as real to me as it did to the good-hearted Maggie.

Mary Sojourner, who is also the author of Bonelight: Ruin and Grace in the New Southwest, lives in Bend, OR, and is a self-confessed recovering gambling addict. Indeed, the lingo she uses to describe life in the Nevada casinos is almost worth the price of admission. What was really impressive, however, were her desert descriptions. As Maggie and Sarah’s spirit travel through the Nevada desert on a quest for redemption, and as Maggie and Jesse, an emotionally scarred Viet Nam veteran, begin a hit and miss love affair, Sojourner’s desert comes alive and beautiful:

“(The Colorado River) at noon was flat as a roadkill snake. (Maggie) crouched at shoreline. Pebbles shone under the water. (She) picked up a palmful, silver-rose blood-rock veined with turquoise; dull gray holding the whorl of an ancient shell.

“She raised her eyes to the blue blade of sky. Later swallows would hunt in and out of its fading light. They would dip and skitter, sunset glowing on their underbellies like pearl, twilight turning them to shadows.”

Or she confronts the desert’s squalor: “She already knew who lived here, drifting in, disappearing overnight. They were the lonely losers off the loneliest road in America. Desert-toast geezers on old bicycles, their rat-faced terrier riding in the milk crate duct-taped to the handlebars. Families, frantic kids, bruised skinny moms with melon bellies, dads who drank Bud around the first of the month, Old Mil in the middle, and generic at the end.”

“Going Through Ghosts,” as the back cover blurb continues, “is a moving novel about a search for healing after pain and loss. Sojourner’s characters are powerfully drawn, and the Mojave setting has rarely been described as sensitively or truthfully.”

This reviewer agrees completely. Buy it and read it. I think you, too, will fall under Sojourner’s spell.
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THE DESERT SAGE

September/October 2010
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