CHAIR’S CORNER
by Christine Mitchell

So long and thanks for all the fish. I’ve enjoyed serving on the DPS management committee the last 3 years as secretary and then chair. My fellow committee members have been without exception a fantastic, hardworking group. And it will continue with another excellent team next year. Bob Wyka and Jim Fleming will continue to serve and be joined by the very capable Ann Perkins, Ron Eckelmann, and Pat Arredondo.

I have some final thoughts to share for my last time standing on this virtual podium and they’re about registers. Something I’ve noticed in recent years that I find amusing (occasionally) and annoying (too frequently) is the appearance of ballpoint pens in register containers. Didn’t they all used to be pencils or is this just another instance of old age doing the revisionist thing so I can have fond memories of the Good Old Days? It may be counter-intuitive, but pencils are far superior to pens for registers. If you’ve ever found a register that was (accidentally, we hope) exposed to the elements, then you’ve seen what happens with ink in water. Not pretty. Or readable. Graphite is far more durable. Just ask an artist who wants their signature to last forever on their masterpieces. Not only is graphite harder than ink, the humble pencil can way outlast a ballpoint pen. It’s discouraging to summit a personal challenge peak to find only a dry or malfunctioning pen in the register box. When the husband re-finished the SPS list on Cal Tech, he had to “sign” the register by using a safety pin (and about 20 minutes) to pinprick his name on the register page since only non-functional pens were in the box. Maybe I’m missing something about why pens are appearing in registers. If so, you can set me straight on the next hike. Being the frugal mountaineer that you are, you probably have a supply of pencil stubs around the house. Too much left to throw away but annoying to use. (You work hard for the money. Is it too much to ask to have a decent pencil to use?) So, you can either get a pencil stub printers or gather up those runts and keep them in your pack to leave in our register boxes.

Speaking of sticking things in your pack to haul up peaks for the fun of it, how about carrying a spare register book or some of our new DPS cards. Our enthusiastic new register king, Daryn Doce, has ordered DPS register books with our logo printed on the cover. He’d be happy to provide you with a space to keep handy in your pack. Or, better yet, check with him before you go on a DPS climb and see if he already has reports of a new register being needed. Also, the management committee has made up some business-type cards to leave in DPS registers inviting people to join us. Daryn is also the keeper of the cards and can provide you with some to distribute in registers or just hand out to potential desert rats you meet.

Thanks again for allowing me to serve and see you on the summit!

WILDERNESS RECLAMATION FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY

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NEXT SUBMISSION DEADLINE JUNE 11, 2011

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.sierrclu.org/dps/

The Desert Peaks Section 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.

THE DESERT SAGE 2

May/June 2011
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<td>NOV 19-20</td>
<td>SAT-SUN</td>
<td>DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS</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.

**M/E: Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice:** For M & E candidates wanting to check off leadership ratings or others who wish to practice new techniques. Restricted to SC members with some prior basic training with the ice axe. Send SC#, climbing resume, email, H&W phones to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Co-Leader: Tom McDonnell.

**M/E R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP3) – 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. 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.

**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 1-rated leaders started here in the past.
mi, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, $25 deposit (Sierra Club, refunded at trailhead) to Leader: Diane Dunbar (dianedunbar@charter.net). Co-Leader: Richard Boardman.

♦ MAY 15       SUN       DPS
O: DPS Annual Banquet: Save the date for the banquet! We'll return to the Proud Bird - see details elsewhere in this issue or contact DPS Banquet Chair: Jim Fleming (jimd33@att.net).

♦ MAY 28       SAT       DPS, Forest Comm, Camera Comm
O: Centennial Trails Restoration in Angeles National Forest: (Location dependent on hillside conditions) Commemorate Angeles Chapter Centennial by joining the Forest Committee's San Gabriels Trail Crew to help restore and maintain parts of the 500+ mile trail system in the Angeles National Forest. Tools and instructions provided. Boots, gloves, long-sleeved shirts and pants mandatory. Hiking distances vary. Events typically run 9 am to 3 pm. Bring lots of water, lunch, safety glasses if you have them, and enthusiasm to work as little or as much as you want. Contact leader (email preferred) week before for destination, meeting time and location. Leader: Steve Anderson (steveanderson1138@msn.com). Assistant Leader: Mary McMannes.

♦ JUNE 4       SAT       DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS, HPS
I: Heart Bar Peak (8332'): Practice navigation for Sunday's checkout on this 7 mile r/t, 1400' gain hike. We will take a cross-country route to Heart Bar Peak and practice micro-navigation skills along the way. Send email (preferred) or sase, with contact info & recent conditioning to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Co-Leaders: Jane Simpson, Adrienne Benedict, Ann Pedreschi Shields.

♦ JUNE 4-5     SAT-SUN   DPS
I: Hayford Peak (9912'), Mount Stirling (8218'): Join us for these two Nevada peaks north of Las Vegas with chance to see great wildlife! Sat Hayford, class 1, 4100' gain in 15 mi r/t. Camp in area Sat night. Sun we'll caravan north and climb Stirling, class 1, 2200' gain, 4 mi r/t. Send contact, rideshare info to Leader: Jim Fleming (jimd33@att.net). Co-Leader: Tina Bowman.

♦ JUNE 5       SUN       DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS, HPS
I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

♦ JULY 23      SAT       DPS, Forest Committee
O: Centennial Trails Restoration in Angeles National Forest: (Location dependent on hillside conditions) Commemorate Angeles Chapter Centennial by joining the Forest Committee's San Gabriels Trail Crew to help restore and maintain parts of the 500+ mile trail system in the Angeles National Forest. Tools and instructions provided. Boots, gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and pants mandatory. Hiking distances vary. Events typically run 9 am to 3 pm. Bring lots of water, lunch, safety glasses if you have them, and enthusiasm to work as little or as much as you want. Contact leader (email preferred) week before for destination, meeting time and location. Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Assistant: Tom Bowman.

♦ JULY 30      SAT       DPS
I: Boundary Pk (13,140'), Montgomery Pk (13,441'): Climb Boundary, high point of Nevada, and Montgomery, then re-climb Boundary on our way back mostly on trail and use trail (12.5 mi, 5000' gain r/t, less if we have enough 4WDs). Send email or sase conditioning, rideshare info to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Co-Leaders: Tom Bowman, Kathy Rich, Gary Schenk.

♦ AUG 7        SUN       DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS
I: Mt. Pinos Navigation: Navigation noodle in Los Padres 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). Asst: Kim Homan.

♦ SEP 17       SAT       LTC
Deadline for Leadership Training Seminar: Last day for receipt of application and payment by LTC. Register for Oct 1 seminar. Next Seminar: Spring 2012. Contact: Steve Botan (ltc registrar@hundredpeaks.org).

THE DESERT SAGE

May/June 2011
SEP 25  
**SUN**  
**DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS**  
**I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation:** Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

**SEP 28**  
**WED**  
**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**  
**M/ER: Workshop: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP4) – 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. 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**  
**SAT**  
**LTC**  
**O: Leadership Training Seminar:** Become a qualified Sierra Club leader. Deadline for receipt of application and payment is Sep 17. No registration after this date or at door. Next seminar: Spring 2012. Contact: Steve Botan (ltcregistrar@hundredpeaks.org).

**OCT 1**  
**SAT**  
**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**  
**M/ER: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP4) – 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. 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**  
**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 1-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 8**  
**SAT**  
**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**  
**M/ER: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP4) – 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. 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 8-9**  
**SAT-SUN**  
**DPS**  
**I: Sandy Point (7062') and List Finish on Last Chance Mountain (8456’):** Postponed from March. Ascend Sandy Point (2000' gain, 11 miles) on Saturday. Car camp and Happy Hour at nearby Crater Mine area Saturday evening. On Sunday, list finish with Daryn Dodge on Last Chance Mtn (2400' gain, 7 miles via Crater Mine route) with a short celebration on the summit so climbers can begin the drive home at a reasonable hour. Join us for one or both peaks. Send e-mail or SASE with conditioning and experience to Leader: Daryn Dodge (DDODGE@oehha.ca.gov), Co-Leaders: John Cheslick, Kathy Rich, and Gary Schenk.

**OCT 15-16**  
**SAT-SUN**  
**DPS, LTC, WTC, SPS**  
**M/ER: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP4) – 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. 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 16**  
**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,
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR / ACTIVITY REPORT, April 7, 2010

Membership Summary

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<td>Household</td>
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<td>Subscriber</td>
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<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Activity Report

Achievements

List Finish

#159 Jim Prichard 3/15/11 Pico Risco
#160 Jim Long 3/25/11 Mitchell Pt
#161 Susan Cooper 3/25/11 Mitchell Pt

Renewed Lapsed Member

Gary Schenk

New Subscriber

John Levy

Sustaining Renewals

Mary Jo Dungfelder 1 year
Burton A. Falk 1 year
Thomas R. Hill 2 years
Karen Isaacson & Brian (Wolf) Leverich 1 year
Doug Mantle & Marcelo Altamirano 3 years

Membership Renewals

Misha Asken 1 year
Doug Bear 1 year
John Bregar 1 year
Harry Brumer 1 year
Dennis Burge 2 years
Ron Campbell 2 years
John Cheslick 2 years
David Comerzan 1 year
Peter Dascalos 1 year
Michael Dillenback 2 years
Steven Eckart 1 year
Audrey Goodman 1 year
Sherry V. Harsh 1 year

Donations

$10 from Thomas R. Hill

rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

OCT 28-30  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 $210 (full refund through Sept 23). For application contact Leader: Steve Schuster (steve.n.wfac2@sbcglobal.net).

NOV 12-13  SAT-SUN  DPS

I: Edgar Peak (7162’), Granite Mountains # 1 (6762’): Join us in this beautiful area of the Mojave Desert for a Saturday climb of Edgar, 2900’ gain, 5 miles, trail begins in paved parking lot. Potluck Saturday night, Sunday climb Granite, 2900’ gain, 6.5 miles, 2 miles dirt road driving. 2WD vehicles can easily do this trip. If time permits either Saturday or Sunday, participants may want to visit Mitchell Caverns nearby. Leader: Dave Perkins. Contact Assistant Leader Ann Perkins with recent climbing experience and for more details.

NOV 12-13  SAT-SUN  DPS

I: Smith Mountain (5913’), Brown Peak (4947’): Join us for two peaks in southeastern Death Valley. Sat climb Smith (5.5 mi, 2300’ gain) and enjoy great views of the valley, Telescope Peak, and more. After car camping, then Sun it’s Brown (6.5 mi, 2000’ gain). Sign up with Leader: Tina Bowman. Co-Leader: Mary McMannes.

NOV 19-20  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 (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

COVER PHOTO: Approaching Pyramid Peak. Photo by Tina Bowman.

THE DESERT SAGE  7  May/June 2011
OUTINGS CHAIR

Because this is my last column as outings chair, I’d like to say that it’s been a pleasure to serve the DPS in this position. I know the DPS outings program will be in excellent hands as Ann Perkins takes over as the outings chair (again).

In regards to the matchmaking service for those wanting to climb our peaks in Mexico, I’ve heard from Ken Jones, who has Cerro Pinacate and Pico Risco on his wish list for the 2011-12 DPS climbing season. Since he lives in Newcastle, Washington, his preference is to climb the two peaks in a single trip with a fair amount of advance planning. His e-mail is hiptken@hotmail.com. So far this matchmaking has been a worthwhile endeavor since Jim Prichard linked up with Susan Cooper and Jim Long for a successful trip south of the border.

Reminders: June 11th is the next Sage deadline, and the deadline for the Schedule for November through February is July 10th. I’m sure Ann would appreciate having your outings submissions in hand a few days before these deadlines.

Daryn Dodge’s list finish planned for Last Chance on March 27th was postponed because of snow! The new date is October 8-9. In the meantime, Susan Cooper and Jim Long finished the list on Mitchell (with an extra four miles because the Providence Mountains State Park is closed till the fall—but it’s ok to hike there), and Jim Prichard finished on Pico Risco. Virgil Popescu’s list finish is slated for May 7th on Pleasant Point. Congratulations to all. Happy trails! - Tina Bowman

CONSERVATION

Uncertain Future for Joshua Trees

According to a new study by the U.S. Geological Survey, temperature increases resulting from climate change in the Southwest will likely eliminate Joshua trees from 90 percent of their current range in 60 to 90 years. "This is one of the most interesting research projects of my career," said Ken Cole, a USGS ecologist and the study’s lead author. "It incorporated not only state-of-the-art climate models and modern ecology, but also documentary information found in fossils that are more than 20,000 years old." By using fossil sloth dung found in desert caves and packrat middens... scientists were able to reconstruct how Joshua trees responded to a sudden climate warming around 12,000 years ago that was similar to warming projections for this century. The study concluded that the ability of Joshua trees to spread into suitable habitat following this warming was limited by the extinction of large animals, particularly the Shasta ground sloth, which had previously dispersed its seeds over large geographic areas. Today seeds are dispersed by seed-eating rodents, such as squirrels and packrats, which would be adversely affected by temperature increases.

- Ann Perkins

ROAD & PEAK GUIDE UPDATES

Only two Road and Peak Guide reports have come in this last quarter. The report on Navajo Mountain was of interest to me. I know the Navaho Nation consider this mountain sacred and do not want visitors to ascend the mountain. I wonder why they have allowed so much trash to accumulate up there and who put it there.

Edgar Peak, Mitchell Point

Susan Cooper and Jim Long reported that Providence Mountain State Recreation Area has been closed. A check of the Providence Mountain State Recreation Area web site and a telephone call to the park office at (760) 928-2586 confirms that the Park is closed to entry until October 2011 for repairs. Further information can be obtained at (760) 389-2281.

Navajo Mountain

Rick Hartman reports that Navajo Mountain is open and permits are available to climb it. The Navajo Nation web site reads that “The Navajo Mountain is sacred and cannot be ascended”. Rick found that this rule no longer applies. The maintenance road to the cell phone towers and summit is in good condition. High clearance vehicles are recom-
mended. The fee for a permit is $5.00 a day for each person. There is a $5.00 a night camping fee for any person that might want to stay overnight.

A permit can be obtained through the mail at:
Park Office Visitor Center, PO Box 459, Cameron, AZ, 86020, Telephone (928) 679-2303
Web: www.navajonation.org/permits.htm or www.navajonationparks.org  - Edward Herrman

GREAT BASIN PEAKS SECTION NEWS

We Made a List and Some are Checking it Twice

Why is THAT peak on the Great Basin Peak list? Why isn’t THIS peak on the list? Compiling a peak list might be more challenging than climbing the peaks themselves!

The GBPS list was selected with uniqueness and variety in mind. The goal was a peak section that had something for everyone. To avoid too much overlap with other peak lists, the expanded definition of the Great Basin was used with some over-step of those boundaries creating abundant peak choices.

Dilemma number one of how to select 100 peaks transitioned to dilemma number two, now we have too many. The possibilities lead to difficult decisions and the realization that you can’t please everyone. Each person has a different idea of what defines a “worthy” peak.

I challenge you to answer my initial questions by taking this multiple choice quiz as you summit each listed Great Basin Peak: (Hint: all peaks have more than one answer.)

a.) it is a Nevada county high point
b.) it is in a wilderness area
c.) it has interesting geology, archeology, wildlife, or history
d.) it is easy enough to take the kids or grandparents
e.) it is a challenge to summit
f.) it is on a prominence list
g.) it has superior views
h.) it is located in a Great Basin state outside of Nevada
i.) it has other worthy points not on this quiz

Please have fun with this quiz and the adventures you experience as you complete the Great Basin Peaks List.

Join us! For details on membership, recognition categories, peak list, our new emblem patch, and trip reports check out the Great Basin Peak Section at: toiyabe.sierraclub.org/GBPeaksSection.html - Sharon Marie Wilcox

LOU BRECHEEN

Hi DPS friends - Leora and I were in Phoenix last week taking in some spring training baseball games when we got a phone call from Terry, Lou Brecheen’s daughter.

She told us that recently Lou has been diagnosed with liver cancer. He is very weak and spends most of his time in bed and is being taken care of by his daughter, Terry. He has lost about 50 pounds and is quite weak. The prognosis is that he possibly has only a few months to live. He did move into his daughter’s home, I believe in Lakewood, WA for his last days.

Leora and I called and talked with him and he would love to hear from his old friends. He can be reached by email at his old address (lovebostonterriers@comcast.net) or he can be reached by phone at 1-253-584-1302. His daughter Terry probably would pick up the phone. Leora and I thought Lou sounded pretty weak.

He is not having any chemo or radiation. Lou especially hopes that he could hear Terry sing “Summertime” over the phone, one more time.

HAPPY DESERT TRAILS - - Ron & Leora Jones

THE DESERT SAGE - - May/June 2011
BANQUET NEWS

DESSERT PEAKS SECTION 2011 ANNUAL BANQUET NEWS

When: Sunday, May 15, 2011

Where: The Proud Bird, 11022 Aviation Blvd., Los Angeles (near junction of 405 & 105)

Banquet tickets: $35 - Please reserve by May 5. $40 reserved after May 5.

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

7:00 pm - Dinner (Includes complimentary wine at each table)

Dinner Choices: Marinated Sirloin Steak  Baked Fresh Salmon  Vegetarian Wellington

Program:
John W. Robinson presents Desert Rats and Mega-Crowds on Mexico’s Big Picacho: DPS, the Early Years.

John is a native Californian born in Long Beach in 1929. He graduated from the University of Southern California in 1951 with a B.A. degree and CSULB in 1966 with an M.A. degree. He taught school for 35 years in Orange County. A physically active man, he climbed & explored throughout the West, Canada, Alaska, and Mexico. His personal experiences exploring mountains have given him a particularly insightful understanding of the trails and mountain passes used by early travelers. He is a noted author, having written extensively on the history of Southern California and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. His articles have appeared in many publications, including Westways, the Overland Journal, and others. John began hiking with us in 1953, and joined the DPS in 1955. He was Chair of the Section in 1962-63. He climbed the original 7 qualifying peaks on the list, and later the 36 total peaks.

The program will take us back to the early beginnings of the Section, with pioneers Chester Versteeg, Niles and Louise Werner, and others. We will then travel via muscle car (in an era that preceded four wheel drive vehicles) to Mexico, for early climbs of El Picacho Del Diablo, affectionately and respectfully known as Big Picacho, an emblem peak considered the most beautiful climb by many.

Raffle: Our tradition of providing fabulous prizes for you to win continues. Tickets are available at five for $3 if purchased in advance before May 5 or $1 each on the day of the event. Tickets will be held at the door. Raffle prizes include: REI Certificates, copy of “Desert Summits” by Andy Zdon, framed watercolor print by Elaine Baldwin and much more.

Book Sale: Mary McManns will offer a Classic Mountaineering and Climbers “Cheap” Book Sale.

For reservations: Please indicate number of banquet tickets: $35 before May 5th, $40 after May 5th. Include your dinner selection/s: Marinated Sirloin Steak, Baked Fresh Salmon or Vegetarian Wellington. Also, please specify number of raffle tickets: 5 for $3 if purchased in advance before May 5. Tickets will be held at the door. Mail check payable to DPS to Treasurer: Gloria Miladin, 11946 Downey Ave, Downey, CA, 90242. For questions e-mail: Jim Fleming at jimF333@att.net or Gloria Miladin at miladingloria@yahoo.com.

Driving Instructions to the Proud Bird:

Northern Approach: 405-South and take Century LAX exit. Stay in right lane and exit (Century West exit 46). Turn left at the bottom of the ramp onto La Cienega Blvd South. From La Cienega take the 1st right onto Century Blvd heading west. Turn left on 2nd signal onto Aviation Blvd South. The Proud Bird is 0.7 miles on left.

Southern Approach: 405-North, exit Imperial Hwy, left onto Imperial Hwy, right on Aviation. Restaurant is 1 block on right.

Eastern Approach: 105-West to La Cienega/Aviation exit. Left at bottom of ramp onto Imperial Hwy. Right on Aviation. Restaurant is 1 block on right.

Free Parking in Proud Bird parking lot.
The DPS has long been active in maintaining registers on desert peaks, and anyone can help keep the summit registers in good shape. We have new register books to pass out to members that plan to visit desert peaks on the DPS list. I always carry one or two books with me when I go climbing just in case the peak ends up needing a new book. If you are willing to carry one or two with you when you go desert peak climbing, I would be happy to send you a few books. Just contact me at: ddodge@oehha.ca.gov

The DPS management committee has also made up business-type cards to leave in DPS registers inviting people to join us. I'll be passing these cards out to club members with the register books so you can distribute in registers or just hand out to other desert climbers you meet in the mountains.

I would like to get reports on the condition of summit containers and the register books, especially an estimate of pages left to fill is helpful. Based on how many pages are filled per year, if you think the current book in the container has only 1 or 2 years left before being filled, go ahead and leave a new book if you brought one with you. Also, let me know if pencils/pens are needed, or if you left one on the summit.

However, not all desert peaks require DPS books. For example, peaks such as Charleston Peak have many visitors and their registers seem to be taken care of by other climbing groups. Humphreys Peak in Arizona and Wheeler Peak in Nevada also fall into this group. Other peaks can be driven to and appear to have any registers that are placed on them eventually go missing. Mount Patterson and Navajo Mountain are examples. These peaks are probably not worth leaving registers on their summits.

In some cases the new DPS register books will be too small. Famous summits such as Telescope Peak need a large hard-bound book due to many visitors. I'll have one or two large hard-bound books on hand in case the book on Telescope Peak or other high visitation peaks fills up.

Here is a list of DPS peaks in need of books or containers that I know about:

Dry Mountain Needs book
Porter Peak Large-bound book falling apart, needs new book
Pyramid Peak Needs book (recent book left there went missing)
Checmehuevi Peak Needs new can or ammo box to replace plastic water bottle can
Bridge Mountain Needs book
Signal Peak Needs book
Castle Dome Peak Needs book

In addition to these peaks, I found that some registers of unlisted peaks in Death Valley were in need (e.g. Funeral Peak book/pencils disappeared, I left a book; glass jar on White Top Mtn broke and book probably ruined). Death Valley and other desert areas of Southern California have many unlisted peaks that had registers placed on them by club members. Some were placed as far back as the 1960s and 70s. The new DPS books can serve these summits as well. - Daryn Dodge

Did you enjoy this hike?
Join us on climbs of peaks in the deserts of the Southwest.

Non-members welcome!

SIERRA CLUB
Desert Peaks Section

To see our trip schedule or subscribe to our newsletter:
http://angeles.sierracub.org/dps/
DID YOU KNOW?

It looks like the past month of March and the 100 Years rainstorm didn’t dampen the spirits of DPSers who continue to bag peaks, finish the list, and make us all exceptionally proud of being fellow section members with such a bunch. Heartly congrats go out to our newest List Finishers, Jim Prichard (Packwood, WA) and Sue Cooper and Jim Long of Boulder, Colorado. These three managed to hook up after we ran some ads in the *Sage*. Jim landed the coveted List Finish pin on Pico Risco (March 15) and Jim and Susan were lauded on Mitchell Point, March 25. Jim emails that he climbed his first desert peaks with Barbara Lilley and possibly her dog in 1954. We still are verifying the dog story, and alas, Barbara is out of town. Sue and the other Jim (Long) emailed, “What a chore that was complete with trudging in the show. The Providence Mountains are closed until the fall, so we had to add four miles round trip and 800’ gain to the climb of Edgar.” These two have a noteworthy reputation of having climbed all of California’s 14ers except for Starlight, Thunderbolt, and Polomomium. Sue adds how much they enjoy the DPS, the outstanding *Sage*, and Burt Falk’s wonderful book reviews. And I agree!

AND DYK, on the horizon, our dear and favorite Virgil Popescu will finish on Pleasant Point in May, one of the more pleasant peaks for a List Finish. Sounds like Virgil has had some late nights in gaining his final desert peaks as participants hummed Kate Smith’s famous song, “When the moon comes over the mountain.” Virgil boasts of 50 years of mountaineering, and did you know his father was an Orthodox priest and his mother a school teacher, and all from Romania? Virgil is absolutely one of the nicest guys you’ll ever meet.

Daryn Dodge, SPS List Finisher, was scheduled to finish the DPS List on Sandy and Last Chance, late March. With the 100 Years’ rain came the 100 Years’ snows, so Daryn has rescheduled for early October. He emailed that he went to check out snow conditions and bag some unlisted peaks. “Had to postpone my DPS list finish on Last Chance, since the weather was not cooperating and the range was full of snow. I’ll try again for October 8 (Sandy) and October 9 (Last Chance) for finishing those remaining desert peaks. In my exploration, I was chased away by a stallion protecting his women (5 mares and their little ones) out in a remote area of the Bullfrog Hills. Nothing like a wild horse charging you to get your blood moving. I played the part of the cowardly human and ran away. This seemed to be enough for the stallion who returned to his harem and led the bunch away from me.” When Daryn came within 100 yards of the horse, he whistled, and that’s when the excitement began. Then if that wasn’t enough, a little later, Daryn started a stampede of 32 bighorns on Bare Mountain, when he popped over the ridge and surprised them. Despite not having the anticipated List Finish, it looks like Daryn had quite a day of adventure as DPS’s newest horse and bighorn whisperer.

Broken bones and other maladies department: Did you know, it was our joy to celebrate Vic and Sue Henney’s List Finish on Ghost Mtn (read about that elsewhere in this *Sage*.) Newly retired and ready to chomp at some other lists, Vic was coming down from Eagle BM (high point of Fish Creek Wilderness) and took a little tumble. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, so he and Sue continued two miles down the wash of loose boulders, dry waterfalls, and lots of miserable brush. Once home, Vic decided it might be wise to visit the doctor, and he was told he had a fractured fibula and cracked ankle. Now sporting a classy black cast and boot, Vic is healing nicely. Tom Sumner reminded us that Vic, a Viet Nam vet, was once able to sleep soundly on top of live ammo boxes and has hiked with blisters as big as JFK silver half dollars. He’s in good company with Jan Brahms-Reneric who also sports a classy black cast on her leg after stepping off a curb in Seattle. At the time of this writing, we assume Diana Estrada and Pat Arredondo have fully healed from their broken ankle and leg bones, too.

Flash back to the Ghost Mountain List Finish, where we were all mesmerized by the campfire stories which flowed liberally. Rich Gnagy was not telling his own stories but was on a hunt

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*THE DESERT SAGE*

May/June 2011
for his lost bottle of wine. We heard stories from Shane Smith and his mountain lion encounters, Dan Richter’s hilarious climb of Weaver’s Needle with the inimitable John McCully, Gene Mauk’s fall into the North Pal Bierschund, Tom Sumner’s total disappearance into a snow hole, and more hair-raising stories from Steve Smith, Terry Flood, Linda McDermott, and Ron Bartell. The wine flowed, the gosp-gosp stories ensued, and then people simmered down to the sweet sounds of Shane Smith and Sue Wyman singing late into the night with their duo guitars. It’d be a good thing if Shane and Sue provided some musical entertainment at the pending banquet. Sonny and Cher should have sounded so good!

Did You Know, some old time friends gathered to visit Bob Hicks, who is recuperating in Long Beach? Betty McRuer made an appearance and had cleaned out her liquor cabinet wanting to give bottles to any takers. Much to everyone’s surprise, when a dusty old frail-looking box was opened, there was a 1969 Robert Mondavi wine, one of the prized wines in California history. Mike Manchester had purchased such a bottle for his List Finish in the early 1970s (then priced at $100), and his eyes sparkled. We planned a subsequent visit to Bob’s, so we could sample the fine wine and have another reason to visit Bob. As fate would have it, we bragged far too much about the rare find (valued now at $460 to $500), and Betty McRuer returned the next day, and away she ran with her wine leaving the rest of us chiddened and regretful.

Muscle Cars of the DPS, did you know Mike Manchester reminded us about the time he took his Monte Carlo fancy company car into the Glass Mountain trailhead, so Mike, Doug Mantle, and George Hubbard could get their peak? After descending Glass, with snow flurries swirling, Mike’s muscle car would not start. The story is told that the three had to jog eleven miles down to the highway for help. Finally, a trucker was flagged down, and his first question to Mike was, “Well, Bud, what kind of rig do you have back there?” Mike turned red and said, “It’s a Monte Carlo.” I think the trucker let out a few expletives, but he did get the boys towed out.

We’re all anticipating the DPS banquet and didn’t think we could top last year’s program of Japhy Dhungana and Doug Mantle; but I think we will with the likes of John Robinson joined by Bob Cates, Jerry Keating, Ron Jones, and others notables. The emails have flown back and forth, and the old time stories of Big Picacho are the best. When Jim Jenkins was once asked, “What’s the worst trip you’ve been on?” Jim promptly replied, “The one where we buried the guy on the Mexican peak.” Poor Joe Darrow dropped back into the arms of a fellow climber right below Campo Noche, and within seconds all knew Joe was gone. The story goes they buried Joe under many rocks and proceeded to the summit. There’s a swell story in an old Sage. Email Jerry Keating for a copy. Ron Jones commented, “Joe is still there, and the rocks shift now and then showing snatches of Joe’s clothing. I know, because I’ve seen it.” The rest of the story gets even more bizarre. Joe’s wife being in a foul mood (and that’s even another story!) chose to not bring his body back to the U.S. However, when the subject of life insurance came up, we think officials returned to identify Joe’s gravesite. Meanwhile, the same weekend as Joe’s unfortunate demise, Erick Schumacher and companion, Joan Hack, were stuck in the great dry lake (then the great wet lake) in Graham Stevenson’s borrowed car (another muscle car). Erick says the mud was up to the station wagon’s door handles. In trying to find help, they became lost; and wandered late into the night. Two Mexican cowboys on horses eventually rescued them and gave them refuge in their humble cabin. And you thought DPSers were a light-hearted bunch of peak baggers and potluck loungers? Think again! The history is rich, the lore is true, and the heroes are bigger than life.

Sightings and hearsay of old-timers and new-timers in the DPS family: It was wonderful to see Jim Farkas recently who appeared to help Membership Chair Ron Bartell celebrate his 60th birthday. (See photo of Ron, too tired to raise his head, realizing he is no longer a frisky 50 year old.) But still a frisky 50 year old is Gary Craig who runs the Boston Marathon, again in April 2011. We heard from Lou Breechen’s daughter that Lou is ailing and would like to hear from his desert rat friends. A great leader from the past, Dick Ramirez
(and Alice) were seen recently in Santa Clarita. Janet Damen, queen of potluck desserts sharing the title with Jan Brahms and Barbee Tidball, was published in the Southern Sierran and Desert Report with a wonderful article, "Into the Woods with Methuselah," all about her hike among the bristlecones, the ancient trees of 3,000 and 4,000 years old, and tree relics that are double that age. And Ron Bartell, you were worried about turning 60? A few have heard from Henry Heusinkveld, one of the Big Picacho legends, who carried a broken legged companion out to safety. Henry is 91 and doing fine in Mission, Kansas. Our dear and best friend of the DPS, Charlie Knapke has journeyed back to St. Henry, Ohio, where his brother's family will care for him. We send prayers and love to our Charlie, who has given the best of the best to all the climbing sections of the Angeles Chapter.

In closing, we are all quite smitten with Paul Freiman's pup, Scooter. It was reported that after the Ghost Mountain climb, Ron Gras offered his truck in exchange for Scooter, and Paul responded, "No way, Ron." Then Ron said, "I'll trade my truck and my wife for Scooter." Again, Paul refused the offer as he hugged Scooter even tighter. Ron mumbled and walked away, "Some people can be so selfish." Well, Rich, I hope you find your wine, and Virgil and Daryn, I hope you find your final DPS peak, and Ellen and Ron, I hope a Scooter is in your near future.

And to all my fellow friends and beloved climbers in the DPS, be well, and be involved in exploring and loving our desert lands.

Your roving girl reporter, Mary McMannes "an equal opportunity gatherer of scoops and doggerel," (especially doggerels named Scooter.)

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**BILL GRAY**

**September 25, 1921—January 25, 2011**

Bill Gray died in January at the age of 89 years old. He was, in the words of hiking and climbing friends, a perfect melding of strength and kindness, understanding, humor and generosity. Everyone has a Bill story; how he figured out a route, how he carried an extra pack, how he stayed behind to help a tired hiker. And his dazzling smile always lit up the room when Bill appeared.

Born as William Joseph Gray III, in Los Angeles, Bill attended school in L.A. and later a Jesuit seminary in Washington. Leaving the seminary, he pursued a career in aerospace, predominantly at Hughes Aircraft. He was very active in the Sierra Club after taking Basic Mountaineering Training Course (BMTC) with his daughter Rita in 1979. From that point on, he went on to get his leadership rating and served in various management positions in the Desert Peaks Section (DPS), while climbing peaks in DPS, SPS, and HPS. Bill achieved his DPS emblem on Telescope Peak in 1988 and his SPS emblem in 1989. After marrying Keats Hayden, he and Keats were active in the Orange County Canyon Explorers Section where they hiked and climbed all over the country. Not only did Bill love his hiking days, but he was always working on projects, building, reworking, and re-organizing some better system for home or yard. He read extensively and contributed time and effort to various charities.

We join his wife and best friend of twenty-five years, Keats, and his four children, fifteen grandchildren, and great grandchildren in remembering Bill as one who enhanced our lives.

Submitted by long time friend Betty Krantz

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*Bill Gray at Horseshoe Meadow in September 2005 on the SPS old-timers rfp. Photo by Jerry Keating.*
Along with several friends, I put together a trip to hike to the top of Lookout Mountain and visit the nearby historic mining town of Lookout City. Lookout Mountain is located in the northern Argus Range on a ridge which extends east from the main Argus Range crest to create a prominent point overlooking the Panamint Valley.

Terry Flood and I were making plans to hike the Lookout Mountain highpoint when retired Bureau of Land Management land use planner Wes Chambers contacted me about visiting Lookout City. Wes was the Deputy Director for the BLM staff which wrote the comprehensive California Desert Plan from 1976-1980 which at the time was considered the largest public land management plan ever completed. To this day, that plan continues to provide important direction for land management decisions in the California Desert. Wes is also an amateur historian and has written about many different historic sites in the California desert. He has a website where people can read his narratives at www.dustyway.com.

We scheduled our outing for two days on November 17-18, 2010 and Rich Gnagy, who like Terry has also climbed many named highpoints throughout the desert, drove down from Sacramento to join our outing. The first day, Terry, Rich, Wes and I all met in Olancha and caravanned out to spend the night at the Minnietta Cabin which is maintained by the Friends of Public Land Cabins. This cabin is located in Thompson Canyon on the south side of Lookout Mountain which provided the perfect starting point for our exploration of Lookout Mountain the next day. (My photo of a Panamint rattlesnake which is a subspecies of the Red diamondback and was discovered next to the cabin during a previous visit, is included with this article.) Terry, a very knowledgeable amateur herpetologist was able to identify this rattlesnake from my photo which is indigenous to the southern Inyo County region.

Leaving the cabin next day, we started out by driving up an old mining road which extends all the way to Lookout City. This old road goes up Stone Canyon on the north side of Lookout Mountain but has a very difficult section about half way up which is a challenge even for 4-wheel drive vehicles. Parking at the difficult section at about 2,400' in Stone Canyon, the old road provides an easy three mile hike up to Lookout City at 3,579’. This is a very scenic hike which first goes up through a narrow, steep upper section of Stone Canyon before then heading out eastwards along the side of Lookout Mountain and descending some to reach the Lookout City town site.

Lookout City resulted from the discovery of rich silver-lead ore in 1875. The mine was purchased by investors which included George Hearst, U.S. Senator and father of William Randolph Hearst. The Modoc Mine was the biggest producer and along with other mines, including the Minnietta Mine in Thompson canyon where the cabin is located, formed the Modoc Mining District. By 1876, there were 35 structures, 2 smelters and a 10-stamp mill. The 10 charcoal kilns 25 miles to the east were built in Wildrose Canyon to supply fuel for the furnaces. Burro trains were used to carry the charcoal to the site in burlap sacks via a still useable trail on the eastside of Lookout Mountain. It’s estimated that about $2,000,000 was produced in the first fifteen years. By 1876, Remi Nadeau’s Cerro Gordo Freighting Company was hauling silver-lead bars from the town site. A well
preserved section of that trail along the Nadeau Road is visible just to the east of the Slate Range Pass when driving the Trona-Panamint Valley road. I first drove that old section of road with Wes Chambers when we were doing field inventory work in the late 70s for the BLM’s California Desert Plan.

There isn’t much left other than foundations at the old Lookout City town site, perched high at 3,579’ on the eastern flank of Lookout Mountain. Wes Chambers had an old photo which showed the structures back in the late 1870s and it was interesting how little evidence of the structures remained.

From the town site, we then hiked the road back westward a mile before heading up to the summit of Lookout Mountain. It was an easy 700’ gain up to the top and its splendid panoramic view of Panamint Valley and the precipitous upper reaches of Stone Canyon to the west which since 1994 has been inside the Argus Range Wilderness. Back in the 1870s, there was a wagon road which extended through Stone Canyon and crossed what is now the northern area of China Lake Naval Base to connect with the Darwin mining area. Another unique feature of that era is the ruins of a wagon stop which exist to the north of Balarat where this line extended eastward to Surprise City in the Panamint Mountains.

From Lookout Mountain, it was a pleasant hike back down the old road to our vehicles and pleasant drive back out to the Trona-Panamint Valley road.

BLACK BUTTE

December 12, 2010
By John Strauch

On Friday, December 10, as a warm-up for Sue Holloway’s second list finish on Saturday, fourteen hikers joined John Strauch for his first time list finish on Black Butte. John thought the hike would not be a long one (the peak guide estimate was two and a half hours, 1600’ gain), so we met at the Red Cloud Exit on I-10 at 11 am. The dirt road drive in to the Route A trailhead near Gulliday Well was 22.7 miles and took about 1 hour 40 minutes. We started hiking around one o’clock and headed for the steep drainage that leads to the peak.

The going was slow as we negotiated various dry falls on the ascent. As it became apparent that the hike was going to take longer than planned, a few turned back. We enjoyed some champagne on the peak, and John posed with a bottle of Black Butte Porter (Deschutes) and the peak register. The last hikers started down around four o’clock, so most of us finished in the dark. Some of us stopped for dinner at the Chiriaco Summit Coffee Shop, a tidy place with good food. From there we drove to the

Terry Flood, Rich Gragy, Wes Chambers and Steve Smith at Lookout City.

Christine Mitchell, Minna Roach and Carol Jepp take a break, almost back to the cars. Photos by Ron Bariel.

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Orocopia trailhead, arriving around ten o’clock.

Participants were John Strauch, Sue Holloway, Terry Flood, Carol Japp, Gail Hanna, Skip Forscht, Christine Mitchell, Ron Bartell, Greg Roach, Mirna Roach, Mary Motheral, Rich Gnagy, Rich Henke, and Rena Tishman. Considering the long drive in, the size of the group and the steep rugged terrain, we should have started at least two hours earlier.

WHIPPLE MTN, CHEMHEUVEI PEAK
January 29-30, 2011
By Ann Perkins

Dave and I met Anne Rolls, Ed Herrman and Edna Erspermer, and Jim Fleming (with his dog Maui) Friday night near the War Eagle Mine, where we had dinner and enjoyed Ed’s “lazy man’s fire” (ask him about this one). During the night other climbers arrived, so by the meeting time of 8 a.m. Saturday we were joined by Dave and Elaine Baldwin, Dan Baxter, Bob Wyka, Greg Gerlach, Tracey Thomerson, Peter Kudlinski, Brian Smith, and Gloria Miladin.

We got underway about 8:30, and followed a wash which ended up taking us more over than E of point 1806, but it worked just as well. We then followed directions in the guide, following the wash to the saddle at 3000’, then working left into a rather steep rocky gully, which took us to the E-W summit ridge. From here it’s an easy walk to the top. We arrived at 12:30 and enjoyed our lunch and the view of many surrounding listed peaks; Mopah and Umaph were prominent to the west. We also had a clear view of Lake Havasu and the urban sprawl of Lake Havasu City.

We started back about 1:15, and the way down was uneventful until near the end, when seduced by a good trail, the leader and most of the rest of the group continued past the point where we should have turned in a more easterly direction toward the cars. Dave B, Elaine, Anne and Ann (deserting her husband) broke off at that point and followed the GPS over hill and down dale and did arrive at the cars about 20 minutes sooner that the rest of the group, who had since realized the error of their ways. By this time, around 4:30, most of us felt that we would rather camp here than drive out the dirt road and look for another spot, so Ed lit up the fire again, and we pulled out the usual great assortment of appetizers, wine, chili, Mexican meatballs, and many great salads. We also had some champagne to celebrate the birthdays of Edna, Ed, Dave B., Dave P., and Jim.

The next morning Gloria departed at 6 a.m. for a babysitting job, and the rest of us set out at 7 for the Chemehuevi roadhead and arrived about 8, meeting Johnny Martinez and his friend Pietro who were joining us for this climb. Ed and Edna had overslept, so Ed said he would come along and maybe catch up with us. We set off through the cholla gardens about 8:30. Poor Maui had some trouble with the cholla, so often Jim became the heroic dog owner and carried her over bad places. When we began the climb, this time we chose the correct wash; on our last trip here we chose the wash to the west, as did two other leaders on previous trips, so it’s an easy one to miss. The canyon is steep and rocky, and we did
Our group of eleven met at 7:00 a.m. not far off Interstate 10 to consolidate into 4WD vehicles. We were Dan Baxter, James Barlow, Diana and Jorge Estrada, Jim Fleming, Greg Gerlach, Mei Kwan, Dave Perkins, Bob Wyka, and Tom and Tina Bowman, the leaders. All went smoothly till we were on the faint dirt road heading in towards Black Butte; then no other cars were in my rear view mirror. Back we went a short ways to find the others circled around Bob’s Range Rover, dead with a flat tire. Lucky Bob, he pretty much stood by while a pit crew changed the tire. Dan had a pump he connected to the battery, saving the leaders from digging out their pump. Since Bob and Greg’s gear was spread out on the ground, I snooped a bit and noted double stuff golden Oreos and later begged for one. Leaving the Range Rover behind for fear of another flat, on we went.

I was going to write about a better way to the 4WD parking spot, but now that I look at the driving instructions, I see that my navigator, Tom, neglected to tell me to turn right at the junction 2.4 miles from the Bradshaw Trail Road where 2WDs should park. No wonder the road got rather faint when we went straight ahead! Still, we had fun driving a bit in the wash and out of it on the faint road to the more obvious (and correct) road, proceeding to the usual 4WD parking spot. The Jeep, Chevy truck, and Toyota truck all made it fine.

A little after 9:00, we started our hike for Black Butte,
Tom leading us up Route A. The group did well in sticking together, and we enjoyed several little breaks on the way up and about half an hour on the summit, which we reached at 11:00. It was a bit breezy, but we were able to get out of the wind easily. We retraced our steps and were back to the cars about four hours after leaving. We drove back the correct and much more civilized way to the Range Rover and caravanned back to the other cars. Dave said goodbye to head home to watch the Super Bowl on Sunday.

From there we hopped back on Interstate 10 east to the Corn Springs offramp and drove in to the campground at the palm oasis. Although the burned palms looked rather sad, it was a decent place to camp for $6 per vehicle. A hand pump supplied water, and there were nice picnic tables, grills and/or fire rings, as well as pit toilets and some shaders. After setting up camp, we followed James to the nearby petroglyphs and enjoyed exploring those, which were quite numerous. Then it was back for happy hour, dinner, a fine campfire, and some toasted marshmallows. The calm and quite comfortable evening was most enjoyable.

Sunday morning Dan headed off early for home in Fresno, and our group of nine drove back out to the paved Chuckwalla Road, where we left several cars again. The drive in to Chuckwalla went quite smoothly, and we started for the peak about 8:20. Tom led at first; then I took over. Once again I didn’t look at the map or write up once we were under way. More or less, I just put my head down and went . . . up the wrong gully. The slope got a bit steep and loose, so I zigzagged to minimize rockfall on those below and make the going easier. Because everyone was careful, no rocks came down. We hit the ridge and saw that we were now on a ridge running somewhat horizontally to several hundred feet below the summit with some rocks to walk around or over, nothing tricky. The last part of the ridge rose to the summit with a rib of rock on the crest. I chose to go up the right side of the ridge, which soon had about twenty yards or fewer of a horizontal traverse, class 2 and pretty solid but exposed. I chose to go the high road here on rock, but the lower choice offered more dirt. Several participants opted out here, and Tom took them down a short ways to a saddle and out onto the south face of Chuckwalla. The main group reached the summit about 10:15; the others twenty minutes later. Inadvertently, I had made this a pathfinder route.

Just after 11:00 we left the summit, going down the route given in the guide, which, of course, went very well. Unfortunately, when we were about half-way back to the cars, Diana’s pole and then foot slipped on a boulder in the wash, causing her to fall and twist her ankle. She was able to walk back to the cars and didn’t think I needed to put the Sam splint on it or do any first aid. After some milling around at the cars, we caravanned back to the other cars and said our goodbyes. What an excellent group we had and a fine outing, aside from Diana’s first—and let’s hope, last—hiking injury. The first doctor’s evaluation was that it was sprained, but then the orthopedist confirmed that it was broken, requiring a cast for four to six weeks, but no surgery.

PYRAMID PEAK, EAGLE MTN #2
February 26-27, 2011
By Tina Bowman

The weather forecast wasn’t pretty—chance of snow and wind with gusts up to 40 mph—so all of the participants but one bailed. Leader Gary Schenk and participant Mary Jo Dungfelder spent the night at the Texas Springs campground at Furnace Creek; I had camped at “Slabby Acres” near the parking spot for Pyramid, sharing the area with only one rood maggot, i.e., an RV. Fortunately, I found a slab to park on that was out of sight of the maggot. This area is outside the boundary of Death Valley NP and is the site of a former trailer park.

We met Saturday morning and were hiking about 6:50. We had been reassured to see stars whenever we looked out during the night. Though it was a brisk 39 degrees with some breeze, we never had high winds. Off we went, hiking toward the 3900’ bump, not finding the faint road until we were at its end, not that it mattered. We followed route A up the ridge, keeping Mary Jo between the leaders for a while and then abandoning that to trade leads. We took some clothing and snack breaks but mostly moved along steadily, enjoying excellent views of other peaks dressed in snow. Mary Jo spotted a fossil sea snail and some other traces of shells in the

The petroglyphs at Corn Springs. Photos by Tina Bowman.
Back at the campground, we had some sprinkles of rain for an hour or so, not enough to get things really wet. We had goodies to share, the best, I'd say, being a chocolate cake to celebrate Gary's double nickel milestone.

Sunday morning we left the campground about 6:50 to drive to the parking spot for Eagle #2 and were hiking toward the base of the mountain about an hour later. The mighty Amargosa River was flowing above ground, but we crossed it with ease. Once we were climbing, we found the route well ducked, often with pretty clear but sometimes steep use trail. One duck suckered me into going to a false summit, but it was a short detour, and soon we were back on route. For some reason I didn't remember how steep some of the third class is on Eagle, but the rock is mostly quite solid and has great handholds and footholds. We scampered up to the top, getting there about 10:15, leaving almost an hour later. Just about everywhere we looked, we saw peaks covered in snow, though not Pyramid.

The downclimb went well, though Gary doesn't recommend beavertail cactus as a handheld. We were back to the cars about 12:40 and soon on our way to fight the Las Vegas traffic on I-15.

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**GHOST MOUNTAIN**

March 5, 2011

by Vic Henney and Sue Wyman-Henney

Although we technically completed the San Diego list in January, we decided to re-climb the peak and have a good desert party with friends. We met in Blair Valley in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. There were 34 participants in the celebration, 28 of whom joined us on the climb of Ghost Mountain. 13 of us arrived on Friday evening to begin celebrating early.

On Saturday morning, we drove approximately 3 miles from the main highway (S-2) to the trailhead. The weather was near perfect, with very mild temperatures and no wind. The roads are well signed and easily passable by 2WD. Parking at the trailhead is limited so we had consolidated vehicles in advance. The hike follows a well-maintained trail for about a mile (400' of gain) to the site of the Marshal South homestead, known as Yaquitepec. Marshal South and his wife lived here for 16 years, from 1931 to 1947. They raised and homeschooled three children at this site. Most of the adobe walls of the cabin have weathered away, but there still remained a couple of cisterns for gathering water, bedsprings, a doorframe and a few other more durable items. Marshal South was a contributor to *Desert Magazine* for many years. He wrote many articles on the natural history of the area and supported the formation of
Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The cabin site is on the west end of the ridge leading to the summit. The views are impressive in all directions, especially with the snow-covered mountains to the west of us.

The group continued on for another ½ mile (another 200' of elevation gain) to the summit of Ghost Mountain. The cross-country route is fairly easy walking through lots of agave and other desert flora. An easy move gets one to the top of the summit block and the register. We spent about an hour on the summit, enjoying some champagne and snacks before heading back to the trailhead.

Back at camp (in the group camping area about a mile in from the S-2), we enjoyed a wonderful potluck. Marlen Mertz provided a delicious marble cake decorated with mountain and hiking themed ornaments including an outhouse. Most of the participants elected to spend the night. At the campfire, Mary McMannes did an excellent job, as usual, as mistress of ceremonies. We all reminisced as to how we had met as well as about some of our more interesting mountaineering experiences. There were a lot of old timers on the hike but also some newcomers. We ended the evening with a sing-along with Sue and Shane Smith on guitars and with Sherry Harsh's wonderful rendition of Robert Service's The Cremation of Sam McGee.

Many thanks to all, especially to Dan Richter, Asher Waxman and Mary McMannes, for leading the hike. We had good representation from other San Diego Peak list finishers (Terry Flood, Paul Freeman and Shane Smith) who gave us a lot of encouragement and assistance along the way. It was a very enjoyable weekend for us.

Vic and Sue celebrating on the summit. Photo by Mary McMannes.

Mary Mothral, Christine Mitchell, Tom Scott, Sue Henney, Ron Bartell. Photo by Mary McMannes.

Sue and Marlen Mertz with Marlen's fancy cake for the occasion. Photo provided by Vic and Sue Henney.
THE SAN DIEGO PEAKS LIST
by Vic Henney and Sue Wyman-Henney

On Saturday, January 29th, Sue & I completed the San Diego Peaks list on Ghost Mountain in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (See write-up of March 5th celebration on previous page). We had been aware of the San Diego Peaks list for years, but had not given it much thought until Shane Smith encouraged us to try some of the San Diego peaks. Shane invited us on his San Diego Peaks list finish on Red Hill (in Anza-Borrego) where we met many friends old and new, which included some San Diego DPSers whom we hadn’t seen for years. We had never really equated desert peaks, which have always been our first love, with San Diego. And yet, of the 100 peaks on the San Diego list, 54 are in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and another 8 are in BLM desert wilderness areas adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. A few peaks overlap with other sections such as the DPS, HPS and Lower Peaks, but most do not appear on any other list.

The San Diego Peaks list has a lot of variety. Peak elevations range from 1150’ (Bernardo Mountain) to 6512’ (Cuyamaca Peak). At least one climb begins near sea level. Some peaks are in parks surrounded by residential areas, others are extremely remote and challenging to access, as are those in the Sawtooth Wilderness. Some peaks are accessed by good dirt or old overgrown 4wd roads, one by a paved path, some along an old railroad route, but most are cross country treks. Although we did do one backpack into the Collins Valley, all peaks on the list can be day hiked. One can actually drive into the Collins Valley, though most people that we met were hiking in. Rock, brush and endless cacti and agave are a staple of many peaks in Anza-Borrego, but these same cacti, agave and other plants do provide spectacular displays when in bloom. We discovered numerous canyons in Anza-Borrego with palm groves, running water and even, in some cases, Sycamore trees. Some of the peaks also have sites of historical interest such as the Marshal South Cabin on Ghost Mountain or great views of the Carrizo Gorge Railroad and particularly the Goat Canyon Trestle, the highest wooden railroad trestle in the U.S. recently in use. There’s also a passenger train sitting on the tracks in the upper gorge, though it is our understanding that the route is no longer in use. Many peak registers date from the 1970’s and early 1980’s. A number of these registers were placed by Gordon MacLeod and Barbara Lilly. Some of the peaks have dozens of visitors each week but many are visited only once or twice a year or even less often. Some of the access routes to peaks in Anza-Borrego involve going through spectacular canyons (Sandstone Canyon route to Diablo Mountain or the road between the two Split Mountains) or slot washes (West Borrego Mountain).

One of our toughest and more memorable hikes was that of Red Top and Point 4684, the highpoint of the Sawtooth Mountains, hiking down Pepperwood Canyon from McCain Valley to the desert floor, crossing Canegrake Valley and ascending the two peaks. This hike took us almost 14-1/2 hours and due to the very short days, about 4 hours of the hike was in the dark. But it was a beautiful pleasant moonlit night as we hiked out and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We were met by the border patrol as we reached the trailhead. They had been monitoring our progress as we hiked out. We had a nice chat with the border patrol officer about the area and what we had seen there. With the peaks in the San Diego area often near the border, we encountered the
border patrol 5-6 times. They were always very pleasant, even helpful in reaching one summit, Tecate Peak, just outside of and overlooking the Mexican town of Tecate.

The Los Coyotes Indian Reservation is now open again to hikers on the weekend, which helps in access to a number the Anza-Borrego peaks.

We enjoyed doing the San Diego list and especially the desert peaks on the list and all of the new areas of Anza-Borrego that it encouraged us to explore. We would certainly recommend the list to anyone wishing to explore more of this part of the desert.

VILLAGER PEAK, RABBIT PEAK
March 4-6, 2011
by Mat Kelliher

There really isn’t an easy way to climb these two peaks in the Santa Rosa Mountains. To bag both of them via the standard approach you’ve got to cover 21 round trip, cross-country miles with 8,700’ of elevation change across steep, loose, rocky, brushy, and thorny desert terrain. The peaks are located in the Anza-Borrego Desert, so for a good chunk of the year its way too hot out there to even consider making the attempt. Plus there isn’t any water anywhere along the way, so everything you’re going to need to drink, you’re going to have to carry along with you.

A couple of different strategies are employed by hearty peak baggers to add these two to their “been there, done that” lists. Some opt for nailing the peaks in one intense, grueling, very long single-day push that can take anywhere between 14 to 30 hours to complete, and which requires at least some portion of the “dayhike” to be done in the dark. Others try spreading the effort out over a couple of days. They’ll take the first day to pack all their gear up to a spot just below Villager, where they’ll set up camp. At first light the next morning they’ll set off on a tough 8.0 mile round trip mission over steep, loose, rocky, and thorny desert terrain to get first Villager, then Rabbit, then return to Villager and camp. They’ll have gone up and down, up and down, up and down, over an agonizing number of bumps along the way for a total 4,000’ of gain; 2,500’ of it on the way out, the other 1,500’ of it on the way back. Arriving back at camp they’ll quickly pack up and head out for the 6.5 mile, 4,700’ descent back down to the trailhead; likely spending some portion of the trip out in the dark.

On March 4, 2011, Tanya Roton, Stella Cheung, Winnette Butler, Bruce Craig, Jim Fleming, and I set out to try a slightly different strategy for getting those peaks that we hoped would be slightly less grueling and would allow us the opportunity to do a little relaxing while there to enjoy the spectacular scenery high above the desert floor. We planned to extend the journey into a three day, two night stay. This trip would also serve as my I-provisional backpacking trip with Jim Fleming acting as my evaluator. Our plan was to take the first day to pack all our gear and water up to base camp, spend the second day going after the peaks and then get back to camp for a little happy hour revelry, and then after a leisurely cup of coffee and a little breakfast take the third day to work our way down off of the hill to finish up at the trailhead.

At the trailhead Friday morning we weighed our packs with Winnette’s new luggage scale and confessed about how many liters (L) of water we were each carrying. At exactly 7:00 am Tanya (40 lbs/8L), Stella (35 lbs/7L), Winnette (38 lbs/7L), Bruce (didn’t weigh in/10L), Jim (65 lbs/14L), and I (60 lbs/12L) set off to the north across the desert floor. Our pace was slow due to all the weight we were carrying, but the weather was perfect with cool temperatures throughout the day, and we made steady progress up the ridgeline. The Ocotillo cacti were in full bloom and at the lower elevations a few of the barrel cactus had just begun to bud and flower. About 3 miles up we cached a little of our water; enough to get us through this last stretch on Sunday as we descended. As we continued our ascent up along that ridgeline, the views of Anza-Borrego began to unfold and spread out below us; the Lute Ridge, once so dominant on our flank was now just a little ripple marking our starting point way, way below; the badlands far to the south could just barely be made out through the haze of the desert floor. Working our way up through the rocky sections, the dry Clark Lake opened up to our west.

We got up to the saddle (5,567’) beneath Villager Friday...
evening in plenty of time to set up our tents and make dinner before dark. Strong winds had been blowing in from the east for the last hour or so of our ascent and they cooled the temps down quite a bit. It had gotten cold enough up there that after eating we all just hopped into our tents and sleeping bags to stay warm and then quickly drifted off to sleep. The wind stayed with us, blowing pretty hard sometimes, until midnight. Saturday morning we had coffee and breakfast and headed off for the peaks. Villager Peak (5,756′) was only ¼ mile away, so we got up onto it right away. After signing in to the register, we headed off to get Rabbit. We worked our way through the rocky sections along the ridgelines across seemingly endless bumps along the way to our peak - up, over, down - up, over, down - up, over, down; all while we quietly absorbed the scenery of the Coachella Valley and Salton Sea to the east, the stark ruggedness of Anza-Borrego and dry Clark Lake to our south and west. The weather was pleasant again all day; cool but not cold, gently breezy. Finally we got to the last of the steep uphill; we worked our way up through the Class 2 rock and found ourselves on the summit of Rabbit Peak #2 (6,640+). After eating lunch and lounging up there for a bit we headed back to base camp, passing one group of two hikers who were planning on sleeping on Rabbit that night, and running into a group of six who were planning on sleeping on Villager that night.

Saturday evening the winds stayed calm long enough to allow us to enjoy happy hour, and linger over our dinners illuminated by a gorgeous sunset. We were camped under New Moon skies, so once it got dark we were treated to a spectacular night sky filled by beautiful twinkling stars. The winds came up again around midnight, this time from the west, and blew pretty hard all night long.

Sunday morning we woke up early, had coffee and breakfast, packed up our gear and headed out right at 8:00 am. Temperatures steadily climbed as we descended, and as they did, we began to get close to depleting our water supplies. We noticed as we picked our route down through the rocky sections of ridgeline that someone had come through and torn down the numerous ducks that helped mark our route up; the ducks we had placed near our water cache had also been removed, but we were able to find our stash without them. We came down along the ridge line and marveled as the tremendous view of the desert below began to close in around us; soon the Lute Ridge dominated the skyline directly ahead of us, and we came out onto the desert floor for that last one mile stretch before reaching the trailhead. Once at the cars we took note that we’d each brought just enough water to complete the trip comfortably and well hydrated; the weight we’d each carried was significant but not too wearying, and that we were all in good spirits and felt that we’d treated ourselves to a pretty good weekend out in that beautiful desert.

DPS MARCH MEETING & POTLUCK
March 13, 2011
By Mary McMannes

There was nothing but fun happening at Tom and Danny Boy Sumner’s on a pre St. Patrick’s Day potluck in beautiful green Sylmar, and what a surprise to see so many old-timer friends show up. To start off the festivities, I presented Tom (a.k.a. Tomaso) and Danny Boy with a banner. “Some people fly American flags, and others fly Confederate flags, but in this house, it’s the DANNY BOY flag, forever.” They were both delighted to get the banner, and Danny barked in great approval. A second presentation was made to Sherry Harsh with some nostalgic photos that Owen Malloy had found in his files. Everyone’s favorite photo was Sherry on the summit of Mt. Williamson in her youthful decades as an M-rated leader for SPS and DPS. We all agreed that youth is not over-rated, and those were the days, my friends, we thought would never end. And by the way, it was a pleasure seeing Owen Malloy up at Mammoth. He is looking great (after losing 25 lbs.) and is trim and healthy.

Dean Acheson and Cinnamon Acheson (woof woof) made a surprise appearance. Dean’s been dividing his time between his ranch in Colorado, his elderly folks in Indiana, and a busy busy job. He was a sight for sore eyes, that’s for sure. Maui Fleming (recently starring in a Kelso sand dunes photo) had brought Jim Fleming, so it was an evening that was going to the dogs. Since we were short on hors d’oeuvres, everyone jumped into the main courses with gusto. No one can beat Tom’s award winning chili, although many try. How wonderful that

Tom and Danny Sumner (hosts of the potluck) display new banner presented to them by DPS. Photos by Mary McMannes.
Jim Hinkley brought steelhead salmon wrapped and grilled in foil. The Perkins had a delectable eggplant casserole, and Mirna and Greg brought wraps and a fresh green salad with ingredients all grown in their own garden. Ann and Dave are on their way back East for New England’s Mud Season. But they’ll be back in time to celebrate Virgil Popescu’s DPS List Finish on Pleasant Point, May 7. Sue and Vic Henney were commiserating over Jan Brahms’s broken foot (alas, we didn’t know Vic would have his own mishap a week later.) We dove into the Henney’s great chocolate cake (I call it THE CAKE) and also Jan’s lemony dessert. We all convinced Dave Reneric to lead us up the high points of Great Britain starting in Scotland, ascending the Munros. We’ll call it Scotch on the Rocks.

Other than the names mentioned above, we were happy to reunite with: Tina Bowman, Ron and Christine “Bartelli’s” (Ron enjoying his final days of the fabulous fifties.) Jack Wickel, Edna Erspamer, Julie Rush, and earlier in the evening. Bob Wyka and Peter, Brian Smith and Gloria Miladin. (If I missed anyone, let me know.) Thanks, Tom and Danny. We’ll come to your house any time and all the time. Your potlucks are the greatest.

**MUGGINS PEAK, CERRO PESCADORES, PICO RISCO**
**March 11-15, 2011**
**by James Prichard**

On March 11, friend Pat Doherty and I climbed Muggins Peak as a warm up for my list finish attempt on Cerro Pescadores and Pico Risco. Muggins Peak, located twenty miles east of Yuma, AZ, is a prominent desert peak of interest in the small but rugged Muggins Mountain Wilderness Area.

The approach is well described in *Hiking Arizona* by Bruce Grubb and Stewart Aitchison; however, I could find no evidence of a summit route on the west. A summit route is better described as: follow the water course on the south by southwest side. Mark Adrian has an archived route description on the DPS web site (verified by a local farmer) which I would further modify. The climb of Muggins Peak proceeds up the prominent gully on the south by southwest side to the saddle between the two summits. The western peak is slightly higher. The overhanging waterfall at the base of the gully can be negotiated by a scary third class ledge immediately to the right or, more prudently, by a steep sloping sidehill ramp more distantly to the left (west). After the initial problem the route proceeds steeply up the gully—“follow the water”—with a scramble to the right on third class terrain shortly below the prominent saddle between the two summits. From the saddle a dog leg down to the left avoids an exposed section of ridge and leads to the final third class scramble to an airy traverse and the top. One should take care of keeping the downhill route in mind! Muggins Peak (3 miles round trip, 3 hours, 1200 feet gain) is a short but sweet desert peak.

On March 13, after meeting with Coloradoans Jim Long and Susan Cooper, the three of us darted down through Mexicali to Kilometer 21 of Highway 5, as described very accurately by Daryn Dodge in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Desert Sage*. We encountered a berm block 3 miles in on the “straight” road to Cerro Pescadores. Cars like our Subaru had found a sandy way around to continue another few miles on the “straight” road. No other problems were encountered other than a 90 minute wait to get back through the border.

On March 15, four of us left early from Potrero County Park (nice park!) near Tecate to cross the border at 5 AM. We then proceeded via Highway 2 to La Rumorosa (55 peso toll) and then south on the very rough road.
signed Parque Constitucion de 1857 following "Bethel", "Ponderosa", and "Laguna Hanson" signs. The signed turn to Rancho San Luis is one mile south of the Park entrance, a hard three hour plus drive. Pico Risco was my last list peak—definitely an accomplishment for me, being a long time Washington resident and taking all of 55+ years to complete the list. Hoorah!!

Now, having completed the DPS list, I think the list should be limited to 100 with the original criteria for selection in place—geology, range high point, history, archaeology, etc. I wonder why Canyon Point is on the list, why Pico Risco is not called Pico Rasco, and why Cerro Pescadores is not called Sierra Cucapa Summit?

I suggest the creation of a second supplemental desert peak list—perhaps a second hundred. I would nominate Notch Peak, Ibapah, La Madre, Kumiva, Tohakum, Funeral, Muggins, and Duffer.
Peter Wild has been on my horizon for several years now. I first cited him as the editor of *The Autobiography of John Van Dyke* in my review of Van Dyke’s *The Desert* (1901) way back in the March/April 1999 issue of *The Desert Sage*.

In addition to the books reviewed here, Wild has also penned a series of monographs on notable desert writers, including: J. Smoak Chase, Marshal South, J. Ross Brown, Ann Zwinger and George Wharton James. He was considered one of the foremost poets of the American West, and for 40 years he was a Professor in the English Department at the University of Arizona.

My intention was to contact Wild and explore what led him to devote so much of his career to studying literature of the American Southwest. Unfortunately, I discovered that Wild—born in 1940—died in February 2009.

“The best laid schemes o’ mice and men…”

**THE OPAL DESERT: Explorations of Fantasy & Reality in the American Southwest (1999)**

Published in 1999, *The Opal Desert*, for the most part, is a collection of reviews previously published in *Puerto del Sol*, the literary journal of the English Department of New Mexico State University. The volume’s fourteen chapters consider various authors, each chapter consisting of comments from Wild supplemented with passages from the author being reviewed.

*Opal’s* subtitle, “Explorations of Fantasy & Reality in the American Southwest,” is derived from Wild’s premise that “over the last hundred years or so, we have embraced a huge set of contradictions. Our culture has turned the desert, as if it were a limitless, exotic putty, into just about anything people want it to be. In this we keep swinging between the wide poles of fantasy and reality... (W)riters who focus on desert nature want a landscape infused with God, scientific fascinations, romantic mysteries, or some other emotional propellant.”

A sampling of Wild’s take on selected desert voices, most of whom will be familiar to readers of *Desert Sage*:

Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narratives of...*(1542)—surviving an 8 year odyssey, much of it spent with Indians in Northern Mexico, Cabeza de Vaca envisioned “the New World, not as a battleground, but as a pacific garden...achievable if men only would employ their better instincts.”

William L. Manly, *Death Valley in ’49* (1894)—while Cabeza de Vaca viewed the desert as “a new place, a land of spiritual rebirth,” Manly, another desert survivor, “chromatically confirms the desert’s traditional, ghastly image...he shows that traditional values are found true and carry the day.”

J. Ross Browne *Adventures in Apache Country* (1869) and Samuel Woodworth Cozzens, *The Marvelous Country* (1876)—contemporaries, both wrote of the Arizona Territory during the mid-1800s. Browne, however, was the more reliable of the two, describing only events or things he had actually witnessed or offering skeptical views of implausible tales he had merely heard. Cozzens, on the other hand, “has no such hesitations. He delivers almost everything as fact, and they are facts in the superlative.”

Mary Austin—the author of the renowned *The Land of Little Rain* is brought down to earth a tad as Wild contends: “This hefty woman scoffed about the nation in a large, flowered hat and skeins of turquoise jewelry. Standing on the lecture platform, she made ridiculous pronouncements about the very ethnic groups she thought she was praising. At her worst, Mary Austin is embarrassing, but at her best she wrote some of the most delicate passages ever printed about America’s deserts.”

To be fair, however, Wild also contends that Austin could write “(p)assages...seem to have sprung out of the earth itself, and it is not to strain for metaphor to compare them to the flowers that appear unexpectedly from the stony desert soil after winter rains. They seem impossibly crafted by a divine hand unlikely, iridescent, yet there they are.”
Charles F. Lummis, *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893)—this bright, enthusiastic journalist holds an important place in the literature of the American Southwest. His *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (Land of Pretty Soon) remains one of the best books ever written about New Mexico. The man who walked from Ohio to California was once the city editor of the *Los Angeles Times* and who as editor of the western periodical, *Land of Sunshine,* encouraged new authors such as Mary Austin, Eugene Manlove Rhodes and Maynard Dixon. Lummis is described by Wild thusly: “What he lacks in intellectual depth and finesse he makes up for with direct experience, enthusiasm, and immediacy, the always youthful guide at his happy best...What he said is what...most desert authors have been expanding and embroidering upon ever since.”

Other authors considered in the *Opal Desert* are John Van Dyke, William Hornaday, John Wesley Powell, William E. Smythe, J. Smeaton Chase, Joseph Wood Krutch, Edward Abbey, Ann Zwinger, Charles Bowden and Peter Reyner Banham.

**TRUE TALES OF THE MOJAVE DESERT: From Talking Rocks to Yucca Man (2004)**

Whereas *The Opal Desert* reviews literature of the entire desert Southwest, *True Tales of the Mojave Desert* focuses only on its namesake area. And whereas *The Opal Desert* concentrates on authors, *True Tales* is a geographic anthology consisting of fifty-six short passages culled from books, magazines and newspapers, and prefaced by comments by Wild.

Arranged in chronological order, *True Tales* kicks off with two excerpts from anthropologist A. L. Kroeber’s *Handbook of the Indians of California.*

The first, “The Talking Rocks and the Chemehuevi Origin Myth,” considers the petroglyphs left by the Chemehuevi, a tiny Paiute tribe described by Wild as a group which, “driven out of better lands by more powerful neighbors...were consigned to wander the desert, surviving on lizards, roots, rats, and whatever else fortune brought their way.”

“What the Sky and Earth Did: The Mohave Origin Myth,” contrasts the beliefs of the Chemehuevi with those of the Mohave, a Yuman group, “a powerful and numerous tribe well aware of their role as the area’s foremost presence. Tall, well-fed, and athletic, they fished along the Colorado River and farmed its rich bottomlands, enjoying the luxury of taking breaks to travel widely.”

Wild also samples works by or about several other Mojave notables, including but not limited to Fransisco Garces (1776), Jedediah Smith (1827), John C. Fremont (1844), William L. Manly (1849), Olive Oatman (1851), Charles F. Lummis (1885), Frank Norris (1899), John Van Dyke (1901), Edna Bush Perkings (1922), John Steinbeck (1939), Peter Reyner Banham (1982), ending with Ann Jalenga’s article, “Yucca Man” (2001). Inexplicably, Wild ignores Mary Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain,* a Mojave classic if there ever was one.

**THE NEW DESERT READER (2006)**

*The New Desert Reader* (TNDR) is an updated and expanded version of Wilc’s 1996 *The Desert Reader* (TDR), both of which are arranged in chronological order and both of which consider the literature of the entire desert Southwest. Rather than focusing on the authors or the geography, however, *TDR & TNDR* were compiled to demonstrate how our view of the desert has changed over the years. Indeed, desert authors first described the arid lands as an area to be despised (think William Manly), then as a refuge for the human body and soul (think John Van Dyke), then as a place that must be protected (think Edward Abbey) and more recently as an area morphed into “an inviting stage for technology on which anything becomes thinkable, and may consequently happen” (think Peter Reyner Banham).

Examples:

From Manly’s *Death Valley in ’49:* “Thus we traveled along for hours, never speaking, for we found it much better for our thirst to keep our mouths closed as much as possible and prevent the evaporation. The dry air of that region took up water as a sponge does...Our thirst began to be something terrible to endure, and in the warm weather and the hard walking we had secured only two drinks since leaving camp.”

From Van Dyke’s *The Desert:* “You shall never see elsewhere as here the dome, the pinnacle, the minaret fretted with golden fire at sunrise and sunset; you shall never see elsewhere as here the sunset valleys swimming in a pink and lilac haze, the great mesas and plateaus fading into blue distance, the gorges and canyons banked full of purple shadow...And wherever you go, by land or by sea, you shall not forget that which you saw not but rather felt—the desolation and the silence of the desert.”

On Edward Abbey: “After World War II, conservationists were still lulled by the delusion that fair play would work in the board rooms and political back rooms of America...It seemed that President Eisenhower’s warning about losing our freedoms—(including) the traditional American freedoms of open space and unbounded nature to an all-controlling military-industrial complex had materialized into an oppression reality...”

“Enter Edward Abbey, who not only confirmed frustrated hikers in their self-righteous ire but with the gallows humor of a revolutionary spurred them on to dismantle the invasion of technology gone amuck.”
Instead of building more roads into the wildness, Abbey, in Desert Solitaire, thundered, “Let (the visitors) take risk, for Godsake, let them get lost, sunburnt, stranded, drowned, eaten by bears, buried alive under avalanches.”

On Peter Reyner Banham: “Banham comes from a position opposite that of former farmboy Abbey, a European tradition extolling a contemplative detachment, an aloofness from, if not a horror of, the prospect of hiking all day in sweaty socks only to collapse unwashed into a well-seasoned sleeping bag at night.”

From Banham’s Scenes in America Deserta: “All true desert lovers are in the terrible quandary that if their beloved desert is to be protected enough to survive, it must also be regulated enough to cease to be desert in the sense they love.” “But here let it be noted that if I hear the overtones of desert-buff conversations correctly, then loving the desert implies accepting, if no more than that, the presence of Las Vegas.”

Wild defends his premise further by quoting sixteen additional desert authors, including but not limited to Horace Greeley, John Wesley Powell, Mary Austin, J. Frank Dobie, Aldo Leopold and Ann Zwinger. The New Desert Reader contains excerpts from four authors not considered in the original Desert Reader, i.e., J. Ross Browne, Charles F. Lummis, Tony Hillerman and Ann Japenga.

THE GRUMBLING GODS: A Palm Springs Reader (2007)

The Grumbling Gods is a thirty-seven chapter anthology excerpted from a variety of books, magazines and newspapers describing the Palm Springs area (including the Coachella & Imperial Valleys), edited and prefaced by Wild. The title comes from the author’s contention that the local Gods, e.g., the Cahuilla Indians’ Tahquitz, must be angry with the “seemingly endless surge of prosperity (spreading) ever more rapidly in new towns over the whole valley eastward across the desert in a rampage of upscale condominiums and acrylic-green gold courses...”

Wild’s acerbic view aside, however, let’s end this review of a top notch reviewer with his comments on three prominent Coachella Valley authors:

On George Wharton James, The Wonders of the Colorado Desert (1906)—“A stereotypical Southern California kook, creating himself as he goes along and avoiding complete lunacy by hitching his wagon to an ascending star and becoming a Barker of circus proportions, wild-eyed about his new home as an Edenic promise fulfilled.”

“Fortunately...James was much more than that.... (He was) a travel writer who also had the toughness to clap on his hat and sally forth into the wilderness of the desert and actually do the things he said he did.”

On J. Smeaton Chase, California Desert Trails (1919)—“(H)e was high-strung and a man of near preternatural abilities to see and describe. For that, he never was able to achieve the objectivity he desired. He suffered too much; he became too excited, despite his aversion to cracked rock and foregrounds stretching to horizons of sand, by the surreal flickers all around him..."

“(S)ometimes hallucinating from exertion and dehydration, (Chase) tries to make sense of a phantasmagoric land that, as reality wavers before him, sometimes seems bent on killing him.”

On Edmund C. Jaeger, The North American Deserts (1957)—“Jaeger’s prose, although certainly agreeable, is somewhat staid, as befits his aim for accuracy. The man himself hardly was so. A person of conservative religious beliefs, Jaeger had his eccentricities. In the early days, tourists around Palm Spring stood shocked to see a naked man running about the sand dunes outside town. However, this and other of Jaeger’s rumored predilections need not be explored here; what counts is that Jaeger, more than anyone else, gave accurate portraits of a fascinating landscape, inspiring the public to treasure a unique legacy and throw its support behind protecting of Southwestern heritage.”

Peter Wild is gone, but not forgotten (Uh oh—Wild frowned on clichés). His perceptive and informative views on the literature of the Desert West will be sorely missed. I only wish I had had a chance to get to know him personally.
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THE DESERT SAGE
30
May/June 2011
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