At our banquet coming up in May my tenure as your chairman will come to an end and I must say it has been a most memorable and enjoyable one. Working with the Management Committee members Ann, Ron, Pat, and Jim was delightful. Their support and cooperation made the tasks we tackled get completed, the year go by quickly, and my job easier. Each of these individuals had a big job to do and with their loyalty we got a lot done in a short time. And thank you to the extended management team consisting of Barbara, Brian, Daryn, Elaine, Gloria, Larry, Peter, Ron, Tina, Vic, and Virgil for which I relied upon heavily. A special thank you to Doug and our past chairs Mary and Christine of whom I called upon for guidance and to Burt, Sharon and Bob, who regularly contribute their colorful and articulate articles for the Sage. A final thank you to our leaders who put on an impressive showing of many and varied desert trips. To all - your ownership of your responsibilities, your cooperation amongst the team, and the time you volunteered have been very much appreciated and have made for a very successful year.

Whenever possible, we all need to be the salesmen for the Section. It is up to all of us to speak highly of the DPS, the desert trips we participate in, the members and friends we share the desert trips with, and above all, to recruit new members.

Our Section has never been stronger. Through our Outreach Program we have had a net increase of 25 members and subscribers over this time last year. Many of them are recent graduates from the Wilderness Training Course which will bring some new vitality to our Section.

It is the responsibility of the chairman to keep the Section alive through some measurable progress and change whether it is subtle or extensive. As I look back to last May reflecting on the plans I had laid out for our Section for the upcoming year, I believe we accomplished just about everything we set out to do and a bit more.

The Section by-laws were brought current and added to our website which, by the way, continues to be current, relevant, referenced, and has never looked better. We are well underway on version 6 of the DPS Road and Peak Guide. I am soliciting your help to send in corrections to the guidebook team or just give them encouragement and let them know that the Guide you just used is spot on.

We participated in a joint weekend with the Sun City Palm Desert Hiking Club where we found new friends with very similar interests to our own constituency. They are a fun loving group and the SCPDHC is well worth looking into if your plans take you out to the Coachella Valley.

We were successful at getting over 100 responses to the online survey which said we were doing a lot of things right by sticking to our extensive history of leading weekend trips with car camps and the responses gave very high scores to the leadership provided. The survey also pointed to the need to consider alternative methods to reach out to our members quickly and easily through electronic communication and voting (which has just successfully concluded).

What I did not expect to act upon so easily was a color Desert Sage distributed instantly to the majority of our members at zero cost. When that opportunity presented itself, I acted quickly and I hope that ultimately it will be with much success. People have a tendency to avoid change; however, over time their disinclination will wear off and what was once new will become routine and fully accepted.

To the DPS members and subscribers of the DPS Desert Sage our success this past year has been to leave the Section stronger than (Continued on page 3)
DESERT PEAKS SECTION LEADERSHIP, 2011 - 2012 SEASON

Elected Positions

Chair
Bob Wyka
P.O. Box 50, PMB 202
Lake Arrowhead, CA, 92352
(310) 570-9307
r.wyka@att.net

Vice Chair / Outings / Safety
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(818) 366-7578
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Secretary
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eckelmannr2@yahoo.com

Treasurer
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(562) 867-6894
paarredo@verizon.net

Programs / Banquet
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Simi Valley, CA, 93065-7352
(805) 578-9408

Appointed Positions

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(949) 640-7821

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DWBaldwin@aol.com

Membership Chair
Ron Bartell
1556 21st Street
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Merchandising
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Downey, CA, 90242
(562) 861-2550
miladingloria@yahoo.com

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.

Cover Photo Credit...
...goes to James Barlow…”looking southwest from the top of Mt Jefferson, Nevada, Sep 2010, DPS trip led by Tina Bowman & Mary McMannes.”

(Continued from page 2) Chair’s Corner Continued...

ever with a diverse, congenial, and growing membership excited about the future of the DPS and what it represents. DPS has an enviable rich and long history; a history of desert exploration, preservation, and climbing Desert Peaks. On behalf of the 2011-2012 management team, thank you for letting us be part of it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APR 27-29</td>
<td>Wilderness First Aid Course</td>
<td>LTC, Harwood Lodge, WTC</td>
<td>C: Wilderness First Aid Course: Runs from 7:30 am Fri to 5:00 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 March 23). For application contact (e-mail preferred) to Leader: Steve Schuster: <a href="mailto:steve.n.wfac2@sbcglobal.net">steve.n.wfac2@sbcglobal.net</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 28-29</td>
<td>Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice</td>
<td>LTC, SPS, DPS</td>
<td>M/E: Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice: For M &amp; 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&amp;W phones to Leader: Tina Bowman: <a href="mailto:tina@bowmandesigngroup.com">tina@bowmandesigngroup.com</a>. Co-leader: Tom Bowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 4</td>
<td>Boundary Pk., Montgomery Pk.</td>
<td>LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS</td>
<td>I Provisional: Pinto Mtn (3,983’): Enjoy panoramic views of desert scenery and spot wildflowers as you backpack in the Mojave Desert near Twentynine Palms. Saturday late-morning start and ~3 mile backpack to camp. Sunday climb a wash to the summit where you tower over Pinto Basin. Descend a ridge back to camp and then to the cars. All cross-country routes with some steep, rugged, and rocky sections, but at a steady, reasonable pace. 13 miles round trip, 2,400' of gain. Send e-mail with contact info and recent experience to Leader: Sarah Schuh, <a href="mailto:sarahschuh@gmail.com">sarahschuh@gmail.com</a>. Co-Leader: Misha Askren.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5</td>
<td>Mr. Pinos Navigation</td>
<td>LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS</td>
<td>I Provisional: Quail Mtn (5,813’): Enjoy the views of San Jacinto and San Gorgonio on this easy backpack from Boy Scout Trailhead to our campsite (4 miles, 630’ of gain) on the way to Quail Mountain in Joshua Tree National Park where we will set up camp, have lunch, bag the peak and then return to camp for happy hour Sat. Return to cars Sunday. Total of 12 miles round trip, 1,800’ of gain for the weekend. Bring backpacking equipment, 10 essentials, 6-8 quarts of water for entire weekend, all meals and potluck dinner contribution. Interested participants contact leader to submit recent backpacking experience and for more information. Fire or heavy rain cancels. Leader: Fran Penn (<a href="mailto:fpenn@rutan.com">fpenn@rutan.com</a>). Assistant: Bob Beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 5-6</td>
<td>Quail Mountain</td>
<td>OCSS, WTC, HPS, DPS</td>
<td>O: Annual DPS Banquet: Mark your calendars now for our annual soiree! Join your fellow desert explorers and friends for a wonderful evening. This year we will again enjoy the fine accommodations at The Proud Bird Restaurant in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on page 5)
Los Angeles (near LAX). Social Hour and No Host Bar start at 5:30 pm, followed at 7:00 pm by dinner. This year we are pleased to have Daria Malin, a 24 year-old climber and adventurer, present the program entitled “A Love Affair with the Inyos: A Double Traverse and other Solo Explorations.” Contact Jim Fleming at: jimp333@att.net.

♦ MAY 26 SAT LTC, WTC, HPS
I: Beginning Navigation Clinic: Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learn/practice map & compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many “I”-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 miles, 500’ gain. Send SASE, phones, $25 deposit (Sierra Club, refunded at trailhead) to Ldr: Diane Dunbar. Co-Ldr: Richard Boardman

♦ JUN 2 SAT LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Heart Bar Peak (8332‘): Practice navigation for Sunday’s check off on this 7 mile roundtrip, 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

♦ JUN 3 SUN LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email/SASE, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers: rmmyers@ix.netcom.com. Assistant Leader: Phil Wheeler.

♦ AUG 4 SAT DPS
I: Boundary Peak (13,140‘), Montgomery Peak (13,441‘): Join us on this very strenuous hike to summit a couple of spectacular peaks high up in the White Mountains north of Bishop, CA. The first peak is the high point of Nevada; from there we’ll cross the state line into California along a steep and rocky ridge to a peak high above all other DPS Emblem Peaks. Expect 12 miles round trip and 5,000’ elevation gain. Comfort hiking up very steep, loose, and rocky terrain at high elevation is essential. Contact leader at mkelliher746@gmail.com with recent conditioning and experience, including high altitude experience and vehicle/rideshare information, for trip status and details. Leaders: Mat Kelliher, Jim Fleming.

♦ AUG 5 SUN LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, 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 Leader: Kim Homan

♦ AUG 29-SEP 3 WED-MON DPS
I: Mount Jefferson (11,941‘), Wheeler Peak (13.064‘), Ruby Dome (11,387‘), Arc Dome (11,773‘): Join us for a week in Nevada climbing these remote but relatively easy peaks - all are Class I except for Ruby Dome which is Class II. You may join us for some or all of the peaks. The tentative schedule is: Wed. meet at Tonopah at 8:00 am, drive to Mount Jefferson roadhead, climb is 2400’ gain and 4 mi rt. After the climb drive to Great Basin National Park. Thurs. climb Wheeler Peak (3100’ gain, 8.5 mi. rt). Fri. leisurely day, explore the Lehmann Caves, then drive to Elko and find a camping place. Sat. climb Ruby Dome (9 mi rt, 5000’ gain). After the climb either camp near there or drive to Battle Mountain to camp. Sun. drive to the roadhead for Arc Dome and climb the peak (4600’ gain, 12 mi.). Monday drive home. The peaks are not difficult, but the trip requires good conditioning and willingness to drive long distances. 4WD is minimal. Contact Ldr. Dave Perkins, Asst. Ldr. Ann Perkins with info. On conditioning and experience, and for more details.

♦ SEP 23 SUN LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS
I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Send email/SASE, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant Leader: Phil Wheeler.

♦ NOV 4 SUN DPS, WTC
Provisional MR: Bridge Mountain (7003‘): Mountaineering outing for Sierra Club members only. Climb interesting desert peak in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area near Las Vegas. Sat night car camp off 4WD road accessed from paved Lovell Canyon Road. Sun climb class 3 Bridge Mountain, 8mi round trip, 2,800’ (including 850’ on the return), then head home. Helmets and recent 3rd class rock climbing experience required. Send an email with recent...
experience and conditioning, H&W phones, and rideshare info to Leader: Sandy Lara (ssperling1@verizon.net). Co-Leader: Jack Kieffer.

★ NOV 17-18 SAT-SUN DPS, WTC
M/R: Castle Dome Peak (3788'), Signal Peak (4877'): Mountaineering outing for Sierra Club members only. Climb two sought-after desert peaks in the Kofa Wilderness of SW Arizona. Sat climb class 3 Castle Dome Peak, 6 mi round trip, 2,100’ and then have happy hour back at car camp. Sun hike to Signal Peak, 4 mi round rip, 2,000’. Helmets and recent 3rd class rock climbing experience required. Send an e-mail with medical form, recent experience and conditioning, H&W phones, and rideshare info to Leader: Stephanie Smith. Assistant Leader: Mike Adams.

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.

DPS ROAD AND PEAK GUIDE REVISIONS: A Call for Help
By Daryn Dodge

Thanks to all members who have been sending in updates for the various road and climb routes in our DPS Guidebook. If you recently climbed any DPS peaks, please send me updates, even if all you have to say is no changes are needed to the Guidebook. If there are changes to a drive or climb route, the more detailed the information is, the more helpful it is (i.e., specific distance to a turn to the 1/10 of a mile on a drive route, or specific elevations or bearings to features on a climb route).

I am gradually revising the routes, but have not been keeping up with revisions as they come in. I would enjoy having a co-editor willing to take on the role of revising some of the drive and climb routes or revising the maps.

A few observations thus far. Most climb routes have changed little or not at all. Just the descriptions are revised or short, alternate routes are added. On the other hand, a number of drive routes have changed. Some drive routes are getting shorter, which means a longer hike in to the peaks. If you have an interesting new route that is not listed in the Guidebook, and is not an all-day death march, please send it in! So far, I have new routes to Edgar and Mitchell (although the State Park there is currently closed) and a rumor of a new route to Stepladder Mtn.

DPS OUTREACH PROGRAM

The DPS MComm unanimously approved extending a reach out program to recruit new members and subscribers with an incentive for a free first year subscription to the DPS Desert Sage. If you have a friend that is interested in the desert and desert climbing please send their name and email address to our Membership Chair, Ron Bartell at ronbartell@yahoo.com. This program is an opportunity to showcase what the DPS is about by introducing your friends to our Section through participation on some of our desert trips, climbing desert ranges, reading our newsletter, and preserving our desert wilderness. This program applies to new members and subscribers only (those not previously associated with the DPS) and the existing criteria for qualifying for DPS membership still applies.
Treasurer’s Report

By, Pat Arredondo

DPS Account Summary
January 1, 2012 to April 15, 2012

INCOME
Banquet Tickets 629.00
Merchandise 210.00
Subscriptions 1,135.00
TOTAL INCOME 1,974.00

EXPENSES
Banquet Deposit 709.00
Postage Expense 29.00
Sage Expense 500.00
Sage Printing 387.00
Sales Tax 26.00
TOTAL EXPENSES 1,651.00

OVERALL TOTAL 323.00

CASH ON HAND 4/15/2012
Checking 3,309.00
Savings 501.00

SAGE EDITOR WANTED

The Desert Sage position is still open. We need someone with creative skills to continue the high quality newsletter our members deserve.

The Desert Sage has been produced since the 1940’s and needs its legend to continue.

If interested, please contact Bob Wyka at r.wyka@att.net.

Desert Sage - Electronic Version

You now have the option of receiving your Desert Sage via email. DPS members who have an email address on record have received or are receiving this Sage edition electronically via a link. For all other members/subscribers who do not have an email address, we will continue to send a hard copy Sage as usual. Any grandfathered member/subscriber who is/has received this edition via a link and desires to continue to receive the Desert Sage in hardcopy format through the US Mail, should send an e-mail to the DPS Membership Chair ronbartell@yahoo.com, or leave a message for the Desert Sage editor at 310-570-9307 requesting continued mailing of a hard copy. If you take no action, the Desert Sage will only be sent electronically to members/subscribers with an email address on file.

“Welcome to Death Valley! A Guided Tour Through California’s Death Valley National Park”

A colorful children’s book about the great desert national park written and illustrated by the three time Death Valley artist-in-residence Janet Morgan.

Starting early in the morning the big black ravens Ravenna and Ramone are eager to take us on a tour of their home. From sunrise at Zabriskie Point we fly us over evidence of the flash floods that have carved the land, down to the lowest, hottest and driest place in North America. Standing on the salt flats at Badwater Basin 282’ below sea level you can look up to the snowy top of Telescope Peak 11,000 feet above. Few people get far from the main roads and know little of the vast and varied beauty of the park, which is 3 million acres, the size of the state of Connecticut. Getting a child hooked on Death Valley will get them excited about geology, biology, and ecology, and our amazing national parks, opening them to endless things to learn about and enjoy.


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First, it seems that the DPS is becoming known outside of Southern California. I had a request a couple of months ago from a member of the Mazamas, a hiking and climbing club based in Portland, Oregon, to publish a brief article in their monthly bulletin on the history of the Desert Peaks Section. I looked over the article and made a couple of suggestions and it presumably will be published. Also, I had a question recently from a Sierra Club member living in New Mexico about GPS waypoints for the Lonesome Miner Trail in the Inyos. I didn’t find any information about waypoints, but referred him to a couple of write-ups in the DPS Archives, particularly Steve Smith’s. If anyone has waypoints for this trail, please let me know. We also seem to be getting interest in our trips from climbers in Colorado; we had four Colorado climbers sign up for the Palen/Big Maria trip, although they ended up not making the climb due to illness, and two Colorado climbers joined the Big Picacho private trip April 11th – 16th.

On the topic of Big Picacho, does anyone have a copy or know where to obtain a copy of Jerry Schad’s book, Parque Nacional San Pedro Martir, which includes topographic maps and route descriptions for Big Picacho? It’s no longer available through Amazon, or any out of print book search that I could find. Our Road and Peak Guide, rather than giving any route information for the Eastern approach, simply refers to the Schad book, but since it’s no longer available, perhaps we should update that route description to include more information.

And finally, the Angeles Chapter’s OARS system, an online system listing outings from all sections for the purpose of better publicizing our activities, is up and running on the chapter web site and I am at last ready to put the DPS outings on this system.

Happy Climbing,
Ann

The Desert Sage
Disappointment.

Recently President Obama’s energy speech announced a plan to fast-track the Southern section of the Keystone XL tar sand oil pipeline through Texas and Oklahoma. Accordingly the Northern section will follow. So, the Keystone XL pipeline is practically approved.

An old and controversial subject is related to the gas industry’s extended practice of fracking. Fracking requires large amount of water mixed with sand and chemicals which are injected at high pressure to crack rock formation to release natural gas or oil. Approximately 70 percent of this toxic water returns to the surface polluting the air and, most importantly, contaminates the drinking water.

Recently the new Sierra Club Executive Director, Michael Brune, informed the board about the risks of fracking pose to our air, water, and climate. Immediately, the Sierra Club cut off the donations from gas companies and rewrote the gift acceptance policy. Good job Michael.

Virgil Popescu,
Conservation Chair
DPS MEMBERSHIP

Membership Summary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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</tbody>
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Activity Report

Achievements
Emblem
#582 James Barlow 3/4/12
Rabbit Peak

New Members
Amin Farraday 1 year
Wahim Kahn 1 year
George Kasynski 1 year
Laurie Loshaek 1 year
Ken Rose 1 year
Tanya Roton 1 year

New Subscribers
Kim Marcus & 1 year
Wendy Marcus
Bob A. Stuard 1 year
Lee & Nina Thomas 1 year

Sustaining Renewals
Mary Jo Dungfelder 1 year
John & Kathleen Lakey 1 year
Don Ricker 1 year

Renewals
Pat Arredondo 1 year
David & Elaine Baldwin 2 years
Doug Bear 1 year
Sharon Boothman 2 years
John Bregar 1 year
Harry Brumer 1 year
Dave Cannon 1 year
David Comerzan 1 year
Mark Conover 1 year
Vic Henney & Sue Wyman 2 years
Robert Hicks 1 year
Bob Hoeven 2 years
Sue Holloway 1 year
George Hubbard 1 year
Ron Hudson 1 year
Gary Hughes 1 year
Darryl Kuhns 1 year
Robert Langsdorf 3 years
Igor & Suzanne Mamedalin 1 year
Mike Manchester 1 year
Penelope May-Smrz 1 year
Gary Schenk 1 year
Don Sparks 1 year
Tom Sumner 2 years
Bruce Trotter 1 year
When: Sunday, May 20, 2012
5:30 pm Social Hour/No Host bar
7:00 pm dinner
(Includes complimentary wine at each table)

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

Program: Daria Malin presents:
“A Love Affair with the Inyos: A Double Traverse &
Other Solo Explorations”

Daria is a 24 year-old adventurer who, in February, is planning to do a solo trek into the Inyos for a seven day “experiment”, exploring inhospitable, rugged terrain in one of the most beautiful ranges we climb, including descending four canyons. One of these will be a first descent. Last summer, she accomplished a double traverse of the Inyo Range. Along with her new adventure this year, her presentation will provide more in-depth insight of the Inyos. Daria will also display an extensive array of the equipment required for solo canyoneering.

Silent Auction
This year we will conduct a silent auction of donated items instead of the traditional raffle. Please contact Jim Fleming (Banquet Chair) for more information.

Classic Wilderness and Climbers Cheap Book Sale
(Be sure to bring books to donate to the Sale)

Name(s): ________________________________________ phone or e-mail ______________________

Dinner selection: ______ Sirloin Steak ______ Salmon ______ Vegetarian Wellington
indicate number of each

Number of reservations: _____ $37 by May 10 ______ $42 after May 10

Total enclosed $_____

Please reserve by May 10. Mail a check payable to DPS and completed form to DPS treasurer: Pat Arredondo, 13409 Stanbridge Ave., Bellflower, CA. 90706-2341. Tickets will be held at the door. For Questions e-mail: Jim Fleming at jimf333@att.net or Pat at paarredo@verizon.net
Palen Mountain (Eastern Approach), Big Maria Mountain  
February 25 – 26, 2012  
By Dave Perkins

Several in our party camped Friday night at a large flat area near the railroad crossing at the former town of Inca, and Ann and I drove back out the next morning to the talc boulder at the intersection of the Midland Road to meet the rest of the party. By the time we had assembled back at the railroad crossing, the party consisted of Brian Smith, Greg Gerlach, James Barlow, Bob Wyka, Tracy Thomerson, Peter Kudlinski, Gary Bowen, Anne Rolls, Amin Faraday, Wasim Khan, Elena Sherman, Scott Sullivan, and Ann and Dave Perkins. Gloria Miladin chose not to climb Palen, since she had already done it and was still nursing an injured foot. We combined into 4WD cars (desirable for this road), and reached the roadhead (referred to as 2WD parking spot) about 9:30. We proceeded up the rocky canyon generally following climb route B in the guide.

The day was quite warm, which slowed the pace down a bit, and we reached the summit about 1:00. It was about 4:00 when we returned to the cars, and by the time we relaxed a bit and drove back to the Inca railroad crossing, it was beginning to get dark, so we decided to camp there instead of driving in toward Big Maria. This is an excellent campsite for a large party – flat and smooth. We had brought a supply of wood, but the evening was mild, so we just pulled our chairs up around a nonexistent fire ring and enjoyed the usual good DPS potluck!

The next morning we got an earlier start and drove the short distance to Big Maria, again combining into 4WD’s, which are more necessary here than on Palen. As the guide notes, power pole #46-3 is a good place to stop. We reached this point at about 8:00, and from here followed the instructions in the guide.

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We had no particular problems except for the very steep stretch just below the saddle, and decided when coming down to leave the ridge at an earlier point, angling down to the right, which was a bit less steep. Gloria joined us for Big Maria and kept up very well – we would never have known that she was recovering from an injured foot! We enjoyed the summit views, and James and Amin were intrigued by the sight of False Maria, a summit quite close by and not much lower in elevation, so on the way down they took a detour and climbed this peak, rejoining us in the canyon. We were back at the cars by about 3:00, and all agreed that this had been a fine desert weekend with good climbing companions.

Palo Verde Canyon is the standard DPS approach for Rosa Point, but HPS uses the ridge comprising the western edge of the Canyon as its standard, describing the approach through the canyon as an “...even scenic...” alternate. “Scenic” sounded good to us, so we chose to take this route in and were not disappointed. We made good time up the smooth, sandy bottomed, and gently sloping dry streambed through the morning chill and were treated to textbook views of multi-colored, layered and folded metamorphic rock outcropping from the steadily rising and undulating terrain we passed through. About 2.5 miles and 950’ of gain northeast from our starting point we came upon a spur ridge that rose steeply from the canyon and extended west to meet the top of the ridge adjacent to us; this was our route up onto the HPS standard ridgeline. Gloria, who in addition to having a sore foot, had visiting relatives waiting for her somewhere out in the Anza Borrego south of us, signed out at the base of the spur ridge and headed back down canyon. The rest of us made our way up the very steep and loose, rocky spur ridge along a well defined use trail that wound up through a hillside thick with healthy and abundant cholla. Occasional yucca, ocotillo, and cat claw accented the cholla garden and rendered the whole hillside reminiscent of a postcard image of ‘The Desert Southwest’. Despite their beauty, we resisted the urge to reach out and touch those spiny plants as we climbed up through them.

We traveled less than ¼ mile and gained about 250’ of elevation getting up the spur ridge to where it intersects the main north-south ridge of the HPS standard route. Up until this point we weren’t really aware of how high we were actually...
climbing as we moved up through the canyon, but once we got up on top of that main N-S ridge we were treated to a dramatic view of how far above the desert floor we had come. The ridge is narrow and the slopes on either side drop off sharply and are quite steep; from our airy perch along its spine we saw how isolated and high above it all we were. The desert floor surrounding our ridge was so vast, and the 1,200 vertical feet between it and us was absolutely full of nothing but empty space. To our west we could see the wide, gentle ridge that leads ultimately to Villager Peak, to our east brown and cream colored strata outcropping from the massive slopes of the hillside adjacent to Palo Verde Canyon towered above us. South were our cars, mere dots but discernible along the ribbon of highway cutting across the flat desert floor far below. North we could see our path, and we set off in that direction.

Heading north, we climbed up along the rising ridgeline over one first one bump, then another, then another. We were always climbing on this ridge, the path never too steep, but always rocky, always loose. We found cholla everywhere as we climbed; the cacti seemed to surround us, their little ‘cholla ball’ offspring covered the ground, waiting to take root seemingly anywhere we needed to pass through. Nearly every one of us picked up a cholla ball or two along the way, usually easily removed from our boots and pant legs with trekking poles. But sometimes they’d stab through and reach skin, then our group would pause, several of us huddled around the afflicted one to help pull out the tiny barbs with pliers or tweezers, while the rest waited sympathetically until the offending spines were removed, then we’d continue our way up, each time a little more vigilant to avoid the harsh seedlings than we had been a few moments earlier.

After another mile or so and 1,200’ of gain along our N-S ridge, we reached a saddle and turned northeast and descended into the upper portion of Palo Verde Canyon. Here we crossed the canyon and then climbed and traversed our way northeast and back up onto another north-south trending ridgeline at a saddle; this ridge would ultimately lead us to the western slope of Rosa Point. At this second saddle we were again treated to fantastic views; this time our view to the east was open and we could see out beyond the Salton Sea. The sky was clear of haze and we could see far out to the east: the green fields of Coachella Valley, the low and arid Mecca Hills, the Oroopia and Chocolate Mountains; all looked close enough to reach out and touch despite their distance from us. The breeze up on this saddle was steady and slightly chilly when standing still, so we kept moving and stayed warm by working our way up this final north-south ridge.

Like the previous N-S ridge, this one climbed steeply to the north over first one bump, then another, then another across loose and rocky, always thorny terrain. We travelled up this second north-south ridge for 1.1 miles and gained 1,400’ until we reached the west flank of Rosa Point. We then turned right and strolled up onto the broad, flat summit where we took a leisurely lunch break, leafed through the registers, took photos, and snoozed in the warm and soothing sunlight. While we all lounged on the summit Tanya casually told us that this was her 6th desert peak; now that she had gotten up on this one she could officially join the DPS.

Eventually, reluctantly, we gathered our gear to leave. Here Bob Wyka, Scott, Elena, Bob Stuard and James signed out; their adventure would
continue north while the rest of us headed west and south to come out. All five of them were heading to the summit of Mile High Peak and would then climb down off of that peak and back up onto the Villager Ridge. Bob Wyka, Scott, Elena, and Bob Stuard were then planning on turning south and coming out via the Villager Ridge, while James, who had packed in overnight gear, was heading on to Villager Peak to sleep under the stars on its summit. In the morning he planned to continue on to Rabbit Peak and earn his DPS Emblem by getting up on its summit. Somewhere along the way from Rosa Point to the Villager Ridge Bob Stuard was inspired to join James and go as far as Villager Peak before heading back down and out.

Meanwhile our main group headed back down the ridgeline we had come up; taking small breaks at the flat spots around 3,500’ and 3,000’ to search for Greg Daly’s missing GPS unit. Greg thought he may have left it behind somewhere on the wide, flat areas at those elevations during rest stops on an early January visit to Rosa Point; he had asked Jim and I a few weeks previous to look for it while we were up there. We gave it our best shot; eagerly, since Greg had promised the finder a margarita or two for their efforts, but we had no luck – the GPS was nowhere to be found and is now destined to become part of Rosa Point lore.

As we descended the ridge we eventually got down to the spur ridge that could take us east back down into Palo Verde Canyon. But after a little reflection we decided we’d rather not make the steep descent over its loose and cactus covered surface into the darkening canyon below. Instead we chose to make our way out onto the desert floor by continuing along the HPS standard route ridgeline. As we descended we watched the sun slowly set and the lights of the brighter stars and planets gradually flicker on in the fading light; just as we got onto the desert floor the last of the daylight dissolved into the deepening twilight, the natural lighting now coming solely from starlight and the bright half moon high overhead. We made our way across the desert floor toward our cars by watching vehicle headlights either traveling along Hwy 22S or pulling out onto the road from the

Thimble Trail parking lot. Our main group finally arrived at the parking area around 7:00 pm, about a half hour behind Bob Wyka, Scott, and Elena, who had waited for the first of our group to arrive before leaving to let us know they got out safely. We heard from Bob Stuard the next morning; he successfully added Villager Peak to his resume and got back safely to his car around 10:30 that night. And later James reported that after summiting Rabbit Peak the following morning he had a pleasant, leisurely trip back down and arrived at his waiting Yaris around 3:30 Sunday afternoon.

The weather report was for bad weather but we decided to go ahead with our planned hiking and exploration trip in the Butte Valley area of southwestern Death Valley National Park. CMC members Henry Arnebold and Terry Flood along with my son Shane Smith and I met Friday morning at the Badwater and Warm Spring road junction. We dedicated this trip in memory of our good friend and long time desert climber Rich Gnagy who had planned on participating.

Driving the Warm Spring Road westward towards the Butte Valley, after about 12 miles we took a 4-wd drive northward for a mile to the base of Gold Hill. As the 4-wd road got steeper, we decided to
walk the remaining mile of road to where it ended at a small abandoned mining area.

At roads end, we had a nice hiking ridgeline route directly up to the 5,492' high Gold Hill summit. The register showed that very few hikers ever go to this summit. The weather was deteriorating as we returned to our vehicles and continued the drive for another four miles to upper Butte Valley. It was getting late in the day as we drove the easy but slow going Warm Spring 4-wd road and reached the west end of Butte Valley. The weather had turned much colder with a strong wind and some rain so we decided to try and stay at the Geologist cabin. The Geologist cabin is a sturdy and well maintained historic rock cabin which I had last stayed in during a Desert Peaks outing on March 27, 1993.

Arriving at the Geologist cabin brought back some interesting memories for me. During that 1993 DPS outing, Ron Jones and I had lead a group to climb the Striped Butte and Manly Peak before spending the night inside the cabin due to a heavy rain. The next day, our DPS group did a day hike down Redlands Canyon and had to hike around Manly Falls at the bottom of the canyon. We had scheduled that hike down the canyon in part to see the canyon and the impressive 215’ high Manly Falls before the Briggs mining open pit mining operation began. Manly Falls was a relic dry waterfall which was soon to disappear into the Briggs open pit gold mine. With another group on October 10, 1994, we went back and rappelled down Manly Falls before the open pit mining began. That 215’ rappel required our tying two ropes together and was the longest rappel I ever did on any of my desert canyon descents.

The Geologist cabin is the first of three old cabins that you come to in upper Butte Valley. This cabin stands out prominently in the open at the junction where the Warm Spring Road meets the road going south to Mengel Pass and road going north to Redlands Canyon. Arriving at the Geologist cabin, we encountered a family who had driven down from Santa Rosa that had already taken up occupancy of the cabin with plans to stay for several days. They have been visiting Butte Valley and using the cabins for over 20 years and were very knowledgeable about the area since. They provided us with interesting information and informed us we were in luck because the other two nearby cabins were unoccupied.

Driving to Stella’s cabin which was a half mile to the south, it was nice to have use of such a comfortable old cabin which provided a weather tight shelter and a wood burning stove which kept us warm for the night. There was some heavy rain during the night along with some very strong gusts of wind but the four of us stayed comfortable inside the cabin. It was interesting to me that back in
1993 when our DPS group stayed overnight at the nearby Geologist cabin, we had encountered the same cold, windy and rainy weather. A cute little packrat which started searching for food during the night did wake us up a couple of times as he searched for awhile for food.

Saturday morning there was a heavy overcast with wind and intermittent light rain when we set out to explore the other cabin in the area and another cabin in the upper portion of Redland Canyon to the north of Butte Valley. A little way south of Stella’s cabin is Russell’s camp. The main cabin at Russell’s camp has four separate rooms, each with a wood burning stove. All three of the cabins in upper Butte Valley are being well maintained and kept clean by visitors.

As part of my work during 32 years of working for the BLM, I had coordinated an effort to preserve old cabins in the Ridgecrest region from 1989 until 2002. I had actively worked with many volunteers to try and preserve the few remaining historic cabins which remained on public land under the jurisdiction of the BLM’s Ridgecrest Field Office. So I was quite interested in seeing how well these three cabins in upper Butte Valley are being preserved and reading several NPS policy notices which were posted inside one of the cabins. Since 2002, I have continued to help through the Friends of Public Land Cabins group with efforts to try and protect the dwindling number of old cabins on public land in the northern California desert. For me, these cabins present an important tangible link with the deserts history and are enjoyable sites to experience when visiting desert areas.

After exploring through Russell’s Camp, we headed back northward to explore Redlands Canyon. Driving 3 miles north past the Geologist cabin, we went over Redlands Pass and dropped down the canyon. A short distance down canyon is the turnoff to the south which leads to the main road head for climbing Manly Peak. A little ways further down the canyon, the road now stops at the BLM managed Manly Peak wilderness boundary. At that boundary, there is a short road to the south which ends at the well maintained Emmett’s cabin. After checking out that cabin, we next drove back into Butte Valley to climb the Striped Butte.

As we went over Redlands Pass and the Striped Butte came into view the strong wind continued as a steady, light rain began. We could see that the family staying at the Geologist cabin was parked at the northwest base of the Striped Butte. We also drove the one-quarter mile long rough road northward from its start off the Warm Spring road and parked at the same point. From here, it was about 800’ of gain to reach the 4773’ top of Striped Butte. Seeing the family with their young daughter up on the ridgeline approaching the top encouraged us to also get out in the wind and light rain and go for it. It was a wet one hour round trip hike and fun to again reach the top almost exactly 19 years after having climbed it with Ron Jones.
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Shane and our DPS group in March 1993.

It had been quite a few years since I had been gotten so cold and wet during an outing. We all had good clothing for such weather though so the biggest challenge was dealing with the wind when we had to walk a short distance along the summit ridgeline to the highpoint.

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Funeral Peak, 6,384'
Epaulet Peak, 4,765'
“Nelson Mountain,” 7,696'
March 19-21, 2012
By Debbie Bulger

This trip to Death Valley could be called a safari since we saw so much wildlife. The adventure began in the early morning of March 19 when we spotted a Northern Harrier as we set off to climb Funeral Peak. Funeral is the highpoint of the Black Mountains. To reach it one must trek two miles across the desert to the base of the peak. What appear to be dark wrinkles on the slope are bands of rock jumbles which make this easy slope more challenging.

Due to the recent rain there were patches of snow above 5000 feet and even puddles of water in depressions in the black rock. One can’t see the summit of Funeral either from the start of the climb or during most of the climb. Instead, one is teased by numerous false summits on a slope that seems to go on forever.

Returning to the cars, we all decided to head on home and not stay a third day. On the way out, we stopped at the former Warm Spring talc mine camp midway along the Warm Spring Road. It was a major talc mine operation which I remember being active during my DPS trips when going into Butte Valley in the 1960s and into the 70s. The NPS now has the house and surrounding area open for sightseeing. I was amazed to see that their facilities had included building a beautiful, large swimming pool at the remote desert setting. That pool must have sure felt good for the miners working there during the hot summer months. We enjoyed a final stop at the rustic Crowbar café in downtown Shoshone where we started planning our next desert outing.

Due to the recent rain there were patches of snow above 5000 feet and even puddles of water in depressions in the black rock. One can’t see the summit of Funeral either from the start of the climb or during most of the climb. Instead, one is teased by numerous false summits on a slope that seems to go on forever.

At the summit we were shocked to see the impression of a benchmark that had been stolen! Someone had chiseled it out. I am now scheduling layover days between climbs due to approaching geezerhood. This change has given me the opportunity to sleep late on some mornings, explore canyons, scout future trips, see petroglyphs, and spend more time botanizing.

On March 20, we discovered the clever home of a woodrat who recycled an old tire as a wall around its nest.

Epaulet is a longer hike than it used to be since the

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dirt road leading toward its base has been blocked by the NPS and is now in wilderness resulting in an extra four miles. In all the climb is 11 miles with about 2000 feet of elevation gain. We took about 10 and a half hours. It can also be climbed from Rhodes Springs to the west for a somewhat shorter hike.

Epaulet proved to be a wildlife bonanza. On our trek to the base of the peak, as I was remarking that the lack of water would create a lack of wildlife, we startled a black tailed jackrabbit. Then a flock of black-chinned sparrows flew by. Not too far from the summit I saw something move on the skyline. “Stop,” I cautioned. We watched quietly. Was it a deer? It moved slowly, and I saw it clearly. It was a bighorn ram. We watched for about 20 minutes as it grazed, descended a little closer, and then moved off to the right.

Closer to the summit there was a flock of quail and on the return, below the peak on a decommissioned dirt road, a four-foot gopher snake stretched out its full length.

During our layover time we visited two different petroglyph sites and poked around the Inyo Mine.

So called “Nelson Mountain” has an exceptional view. The drive to Nelson, first on the Saline Valley Road and then on the White Mountain Talc road, led us through a luxuriant Joshua Tree forest. As we bumped along in 4WD, I spotted a red-tailed hawk perched on the top of a Joshua Tree. We stopped to look. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw a tawny movement. At first I thought it might be a bobcat. Sage and other bushes broke up the view. “Oh my god,” I exclaimed, “It’s a badger!!”

I had never before seen a badger. Only six months before when I made out my Bucket List, seeing a badger in the wild was at the top of the list. I could have peed in my pants and jumped up and down if we weren’t trying to be quiet and inconspicuous. We watched for 30 minutes. The badger was vigorously digging up what we later identified as kangaroo rat burrows. From time to time we could see sprays of dirt being tossed up by the badger’s powerful claws. The badger would madly dash this way and that, back and forth. I suspect the kangaroo rat was running in the tunnels below heading from one escape route to another. Perhaps the red-tail was waiting for the badger to flush a kangaroo rat it could then opportunistically catch.

Finally we started the truck and inched forward to get a better photo. The badger looked at us and perhaps distinguished people inside the vehicle. I had the side window down. Richard got a few more shots, and the badger left empty handed.

Would we ever get to Nelson? We had been gaining altitude and finally parked on a level spot at about 6000 feet. It was getting colder. We planned to climb Nelson the next day. As we

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went to sleep, it was sprinkling slightly. The wind was strong. The Inyo Mountains were shrouded in clouds.

It started snowing. Before long with the high winds, the windows of the camper shell were occluded. We awoke to a winter wonderland. Who’d expect we’d be using the ice scraper on the windshield in Death Valley in March? Perhaps we wouldn’t be climbing Nelson this trip. I was concerned about the condition of the road. I didn’t want to slip off the tread. What was the forecast? We had been camping for over a week and hadn’t heard a weather report for a while. I pulled out the hand-cranked weather radio. By 9 o’clock the sun was shining brightly and the snow was melting at lower elevations. About 2 inches had fallen on the mountain. The wind had been blowing so hard that the snow stuck out like a flag on only one side of the pinon pines and Joshua trees.

“Let’s climb,” we decided, and walked up the old road to the Nelson Cabin maintained by Friends of Public Lands Cabins which we had explored the day before. As we climbed, I broke off “pinecycles” from the pinon pines to refresh myself.

The view from the summit is special. There is a 360-degree panorama of the desert. You can see the Racetrack, Dry Mountain, and Telescope Peak. The Inyos were peaking in and out of clouds as was Mt. Charleston.

We descended the steep ridge leading to the second cabin which we also took time to explore.

This was a memorable trip with three fine peaks, lots of petroglyphs, and very special wildlife.

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Muddy and Moapa
March 24-25, 2012
by Tina Bowman

A group of five convened before 7:00 Saturday morning at the start of the dirt road approach to Muddy Peak. We were Mary Jo Dungfelder, Yvonne Lau, Ken Rose, Gary Schenk (leader), and I (assistant). About five miles in we left Ken’s 4Runner and my Tacoma in a very large, flat spot before the road drops into the wash. Once in the wash, we had a wild ride in Yvonne’s Sportsmobile. The road is no longer passable to passenger cars about 5.2 miles from the start of the dirt; high clearance is a must and probably 4WD.

We were about to start hiking when another truck arrived at the trailhead, rather surprising, though people were camped in the Buffington Pockets area. Ken knew people these two guys knew! They were on their way in for Muddy Peak and Muddy Mountain. Off we went at 8:40, up and over the ridge, then down into Hidden Valley, enjoying the gorgeous, vibrant sandstone formations. The two guys caught up with us as we sauntered along the road. Because the road that goes south from 917T on the map is very, very faint and overgrown, we ended up going a bit too far southwest on the obvious road instead of south and ended up going cross-country towards the saddle. We found the correct road on the way back, though it disappeared for a stretch through a broad, shallow wash. Here’s how to find it on the way in. After coming down from the ridge, the road crosses two washes. Before the second, larger, sharper wash at 917T, look to your left to find the extremely faint road heading south. Take this faint road. If you lose it, just head south towards the obvious saddle. The going is easy.

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Once we were at the saddle, we found some use trail and eventually some ducks. As we approached the notch where the third class begins, we could see the other two guys on top and coming down. We waited till they were down before we scrambled up the chute and on to the summit. Unfortunately, it was rather hazy, marring the view. After lunch, down we went. I thought I spied the end of the road just beyond a low bit of sandstone and was pleased that I was right. It was easy to follow until we got into that broad wash area. We had seen what looked like a track beyond another sandstone formation and headed for that. Yes, the road picked up again, leading us back to the more obvious road a short distance away. As we headed up over the low ridge to the parking area, Mary Jo saw a horny toad and picked him up for us to admire. We were back at the trailhead in under eight hours. After lots of bouncing—and singing along to the B-52s—we were back to the smoother road and the other trucks.

On we went to the Moapa trailhead, where there is a nice sign at the flat parking area. The road didn’t require 4WD to leave the pavement, but it now actually continues more than another four miles to an area of petroglyphs, not ending at the 8.7 miles from the pavement. Mary Jo’s vegetarian chili—nice and spicy—was a hit, along with Yvonne’s homemade sourdough bread. We teased Ken about his canned German potato salad, but it turned out to be quite tasty. I provided some munchies and tangerines for dessert.

Sunday morning after enjoying Yvonne’s blueberry scones, we took the Sportsmobile over the ridge to a large parking area in Jack’s Pockets just to the right of where the road comes down from the low saddle. We started hiking before 7:15, admiring some flowers as we headed toward the wash and up to the saddle on the ridge. When we reached the base of the third class, we looked about a bit before finding the route on the left. After the first short section, the route was well ducked to the ramp and easier slopes. We followed use and sheep trails and some ducks, eventually gaining the summit ridge. The knife-edge went well, and we were soon on the summit. On both Muddy and Moapa the register books were missing and only some sheets of paper were in the ammo boxes. Fortunately, I had books with me.

Our descent was careful and uneventful. Rather than going east along the ridge to the spot where we gained it, we dropped down from the small saddle to the base of the massive summit ridge wall, saving a bit of time and distance. We also stayed close to the base of the wall on the way back. Coming in, Gary had followed some ducks and sheep/use trails, but the upper route by the wall went quite well, better than the other. We were back to the Sportsmobile by 3:15 and soon back to the other parking area. While we were enjoying fine weather for Moapa, it was raining at home. I had rain and snow—not sticking—from east of Stovepipe Wells till close to Owens Dry Lake on my way to Independence. Gary reported snow over Cajon Pass. Another excellent weekend of climbing with a fine bunch of folks.
Pinto and Eagle Mountain  
March 24-25, 2012  
By John Cheslick

It was a perfect weekend for hiking in Joshua Tree National Park. The weather was perfect, not too hot and not too cold and a nice warm night for camping out. Daryn and I were hoping for more flowers but the lack of rain reduced the number of flowers that could be found.

We met at 9 am at the trailhead for Pinto. We had eight participants including the leaders: Daryn Dodge, Elena Sherman, Scott Sullivan, Greg Gerlach, Kathy Rich, Amin Faraday and Johnny Martinez. The late starting time enabled most people to sleep at home Friday night, avoid the Friday night traffic and still make it to the hike on time. We met three other people at the trailhead and I tried to convince them to join our hike but they wanted to do Pinto on their own.

It was a nice climb up the ridgeline and then on to the summit. We took our time; it took us four hours to get to the summit and then three hours down. On the way down we discovered a new species of snake. We named it reptile plasticus and it had some of the group fooled for a short while. Beside that it was an uneventful time down the peak. Johnny had a ride waiting since he was only going to join us for Pinto.

Daryn knew of a spot right outside the park boundaries near the interstate that was very convenient and passenger car friendly. It was an amazingly warm night with hardly any wind. A couple of us commented that this was one of the warmest nights we have spent in the desert. We had a “Beverage of the World” happy hour that resulted in about 6 bottles of wine for the group. Needless to say, there was more than enough wine to go around.

For Sunday, we were originally going to do route C on Eagle but I decided to do route A since it was more straightforward and was a little shorter. Brian Kessler joined us for this hike. He had tried this peak twice before but for various reasons the trips got cancelled. The third time was the charm for him and it was also his first DPS peak. It took us 3 and ½ hours to get to Eagle and 2 hours and 40 minutes on the return, right in line with the guidebook’s estimate.

We saw more flowers on Sunday than Saturday. The area around Eagle is higher and it appeared that it also got more rain. We wound up seeing a small pool of water on the way back. The route involves a 3 mile walk across the desert with some small ups and downs, then you head up a canyon, leave the canyon about halfway up, hike to a notch and then the peak is visible in the distance. There was some conversation about when to leave the canyon. The guide says 4,200 feet but we left the canyon closer to around 4,500 feet. Either way works. Daryn lead us on the way down and Elena took numerous pictures of the flowers on the way back to the cars.

Thanks to all the participants and to Daryn for assisting.
TRIP REPORTS  -  continued...

Desert Peaks Section/Sun City Palm Desert Hiking Club Joint Weekend
March 31—April 1
By Burt Falk

In an effort to acquaint members of the relatively new SCPD Hiking Club with the prestigious ivy-covered walls of the 70 year-old Desert Peaks Section, a two-day hiking/climbing event, including an afternoon barbeque at the Sun City home and garden of Ken & Dotty Linville, took place on Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1.

A good time was held by all, including the telling of many ever taller desert tales. The hike was a rousing success.

SCPDHC members are encouraged to consider joining the DPS, while DPS members looking for a retirement location with an “active life style” are encouraged to consider throwing in the towel, moving to SCPD, and joining our 210 member hiking club.

Friday the 13th on Devil's Peak
April 12-13, 2012
By Dave Perkins

It actually started on Thursday the 12th when James Barlow, Brian Smith, John Bregar, Anne Sunderland and I met at about 8 am in Calexico. We were headed for the eastern Diablo Canyon approach to Picacho del Diablo. We had brought a dirt bike, Dave’s infamous rope ladder, and a bit of climbing gear. The bike we left with one vehicle at the Santa Clara Rancho at about 11 am. They are now charging a $5.00 fee to park, and we also donated rice, bean, chocolate, and oranges for their larder. We all got in John’s car with our gear in the back and drove the approx. 5 miles to the trailhead. James then took John’s car back to the ranch, rode the bike back to the trailhead, and hid it carefully. It’s good to have someone young on the trip who doesn’t mind adding a 5 mile bike ride to an already strenuous climb! Meanwhile Anne, Brian, and I started up the trail to the waterfall. I had climbed the waterfall in 1976, but it’s much
the entire day in or on my sleeping bag pretty well unable to move, but not in a lot of pain. We all felt that if James and John had really moved fast and had been fortunate in contacting the appropriate authorities we might get out of there by Sunday afternoon, so we were amazed and delighted when a blue and yellow navy chopper arrived at our location at 10 am. It had a crew of 4 and lowered a basket with an orange suited rescuer. He said he could take all three of us plus our packs, and we were soon aboard and flying toward San Felipe while viewing this amazing range of mountains.

On arrival there an ambulance was waiting to take me (at some speed, which was rather painful) to a navy clinic in San Felipe where the knee was x-rayed, diagnosed, and splinted, and by late morning we were enjoying lunch in San Felipe with a beach view. The military personnel and the doctors we encountered on this adventure were all very competent, kind and helpful (as were my climbing companions), and made this experience as good as it could have been considering the circumstances. John and James did an amazingly speedy job of hiking out the canyon and locating help. There seemed to be a general consensus at the end that everyone would try the western approach next time.

Postscript: My wife took me in to Kaiser at 9 am on Tuesday morning to have the knee checked – we had expected a visit of a few hours at most. It was found that the tendon had ruptured, separating the quad from the patella, and finally at 6 pm screws were being drilled into the patella to reattach the tendon. Big Picacho strikes again!

(Dave Perkins being loaded onto the rescue helicopter.)

Saturday morning saw James and John heading down the canyon to try and get a chopper. I spent different today – the pool is considerably deeper at the foot of the falls. There was a rope on a bolt to the left of the waterfall so I got out some slings and prussicked up so I could haul up packs. As we were in the middle of this operation a couple of guys came along and said “Let us show you the way we get up this waterfall.” One at a time they did a sort of Tarzan traverse on the rope, running from the dry side to the smaller slick landing by the falls. The rest of our party managed this after I hauled up the packs. We proceeded up canyon about 3 miles above the falls and camped at 5 o’clock, where John identified several species of warblers, cactus and palms for us.

The next day, continuing up the canyon, we did hundreds of stream crossings and pushed through a huge amount of brush. It seems that this route hasn’t been done much lately if the amount of brush is any indication. We also climbed a couple of notable waterfalls, and one high slick rock traverse above the stream. I attempted to take GPS readings, but alas couldn’t get enough satellites. At about 5 pm we were 2 to 3 miles from Campo Noche when yours truly slipped on a rock, fell, and dislocated his patella (see postscript). Anne, who is a nurse, ably splinted the knee with a foam pad and gorilla tape and I was moved down the canyon where there was a sandy area with spaces suitable for tents. The climb had now turned into a rescue. Fortunately, the area where we camped was large enough so that we were able to get GPS waypoints to aid in this rescue.

Saturday morning saw James and John heading down the canyon to try and get a chopper. I spent...
CERRO PINACATE, MEXICO

Since we are on a bit of a volcanic kick, let’s head down to Sonora and have a look at our grittiest, harshest, most hard-core List volcano. The black, roughly circular blemish of the Pinacate Volcanic Field can easily be seen from space against the light-colored sands of the Gran Desierto. An estimated 150 to 180 cubic kilometers of lava vomited forth to build this scorched and blasted wilderness, which contains within its borders a rogue’s gallery of volcanic landforms, some of which are among the most remarkable on Earth.

Pinacate is a direct creation of the ripping-apart of the margin of southwestern North America by the overridden East Pacific Rise and/or seafloor spreading zone. This geology is quite unique on the planet and has, of course, given us the infamous San Andreas Fault. Just because the North American plate overrode the spreading zone doesn’t mean we killed the beast; it appears to have survived subduction under the continental margin just fine, and continues, as we speak, its nefarious plot to tear Baja and most of western California away from North America, eventually giving the old mapmakers who portrayed California as an island the last long-delayed laugh. Beneath the Sea of Cortez is a (geologically) young seafloor spreading zone, with basaltic oceanic crust being generated at linear spreading centers offset at right angles in a zigzag pattern by transform faults. (The

Red Sea, another nascent spreading zone which tore northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula apart, is somewhat similar.) We thus infer that the “unzipping” is in a more advanced stage south of the border, probably beginning around Cabo San Lucas and inexorably heading north. After all, the only thing keeping the Coachella and Imperial Valleys from being Sea of Cortez beachfront property is the enormous delta complex of the Colorado River, which has piled up alluvium to form a broad above-sea-level natural “levee”. (Ever wonder where all the cubic miles of rock removed from the Colorado Plateau went? Think Borrego Badlands.) The location of the “zipper pull” -- the transition from extension (Gulf) to compression (San Andreas) is obscured by all this sediment cover, but an ominous sign can be seen at the south end of the Salton Sea where two tiny little volcanoes -- Rock Hill and Obsidian Butte -- rise next to, significantly, a geothermal power plant.

Pinacate almost certainly formed along a northwest-southeast-trending rift caused by the cracking apart of the continent at the head of the Gulf rift. Interestingly, it’s a little bit to the east of the Gulf axis-Imperial Valley-San Andreas trend, but this is not unusual; for instance, some of the San Andreas motion is carried by two big parallel faults to the west -- the San Jacinto and Elsinore. Why there was such a prodigious outpouring of lava at that one center, it’s impossible to say; perhaps a mantle

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“hot spot”. Activity began about 4 million years ago with the creation of a basaltic shield volcano – most of the mass of the DPS Pinacate Peak. Remember my discussion of the various kinds of volcanic peaks in my Humphreys article? Here we’re dealing with essentially oceanic magma associated with the encroaching seafloor spreading zone - this stuff is hot, black, iron-rich and runny like Hawaiian lavas because it has a very low content of sticky silica. And – lo and behold, it has created a broad, gently-sloping Hawaiian shield volcano in the desert! While researching this article, I found aerial photos of this thing and it looks EXACTLY like a miniature version of Mauna Kea, the Hawaiian high point, which I “climbed” (well, I walked up the dirt road from about 9,000'). And, just as is the case with Mauna Kea, the high point is a cinder cone erupted after the shield had formed. The Pinacate magma chamber was active for some time, because the lava evolved in its chemistry – it began as typical basalt, but grading with time into a trachyte, a lighter-colored lava that, while still silica-poor, has much less of the dark heavy ferromagnesian minerals and is mostly feldspar. (Hawaiian volcanoes are born and die with such a short geologic lifespan that they have no time for their lavas to evolve.)

Many other remarkable features of the Pinacate Volcanic Field make it a garden of delights for volcanologists. It is known for its number (some 500) and variety of cinder cones, some of which have lava flows coming from their bases; continuing

(A’a flow from Pinacate.)

(South from Pinacate summit over a maze of cinder cones.)

with flattish floors; the most spectacular examples of these features on Earth along with some in the volcanic regions of the African Rift Valley. (Ubehebe Crater is a smaller example.) While they are still rather mysterious, the best explanation is that ascending heat from rising magma encountered groundwater and set off a tremendous steam explosion, as there is little in the way of volcanic ejecta associated with these things.

While there are stories of eruptions among native peoples in the region, there has been no activity since Europeans have been in the area. (Did you know that the apparent first ascent of Pinacate Peak was by the redoubtable Padre Kino, scouting out the surroundings in 1698?) But, as the edge of the continent continues to crack apart, there is no reason to think that Pinacate is extinct. More likely, it's just taking a siesta before roaring back to life.
TO DANCE ON SANDS (2007), Marta Becket

AMARGOSA (1999), A Film by Todd Robinson

AN ARTIST’S SOLITARY JOURNEY (2011), Emanuel Dale

In 1951, when I was a sophomore in high school, my Dad took me and my good friend, Jim Scott (also a DPS member) on a week-long, spring-vacation exploration of the greater Death Valley area.

One of the places we stopped was Death Valley Junction where we were surprised to find an unexpectedly nice-looking building complex in the middle of nowhere. The image of that sun-baked outpost has remained with me ever since.

A similar experience must have occurred for Marta Becket in the spring of 1964. Recalling a trip through eastern California with her husband, Tom Williams, during one of her one-woman, cross-country dance tours, she describes her first impression of Death Valley Junction thusly: “Then there was a long winding drive through beautiful desert, with a faint tinge of golden sunlight trying to come through the drizzle.” After a sharp curve, “an old gas station loomed into view, with pillars and a deep porte cochere.”

“We need to get gas,” Tom said. It was so dark, I could hardly see. Two donkeys were in a pen along side the filling station. A scruffy looking man filled our gas tank while Tom made small talk with him. I turned to look around, and what I saw was a long colonnade on the other side of a small park of trees and sage brush. There were a few people coming out of what appeared to be a hotel. The whole structure stretched around the entire park like an enormous ‘L.’ Through the evening drizzle, it appeared like a mirage from out of the past. I immediately felt a great pull to the place.”

TO DANCE ON SANDS (2007), Marta Becket

Marta Becket was born Martha Beckett in New York City in 1924. In her autobiography, To Dance on Sands, she describes her mother, Helen, as “melancholy most of the time. She would play sad songs on the piano and sing softly to herself. I began to associate Mother with sadness.”

Also, Becket’s parents divorced sometime near her birth. “One morning, I was carried into the front room and transferred into the arms of a man. The man rocked me from side to side and told me he was my father. He smiled at me, but his face seemed stern. He wore silver rimmed glasses that glinted in the dim light. Behind the glass panes, his eyes were blue. Mother’s were brown. My eyes were brown, also.”

For this reason, I am closer to my mother,” I thought.” Henry Beckett, Martha’s father, was a newspaper journalist who reviewed theatrical productions. He fired young Martha’s artistic imagination by introducing her to the vibrant performing arts culture of New York City, including a concert at Carnegie Hall conducted by Arturo Toscanini and a performance at Radio City Music Hall featuring the Rockettes. Helen Beckett encouraged Martha’s interest in painting, music, and dance, enrolling her in progressive schools emphasizing the arts, even while Henry discouraged the practice declaring “She shouldn’t even be taking art courses in high school. She should be taking the academic course to prepare her for the business world.”

Henry’s concern was ignored, however. By the time Martha turned fourteen she was enrolled in ballet classes, had composed several piano pieces, and was painting backdrops for dance productions.

In 1942, at her mother’s bidding, Martha dropped out of high school and began a career as a dancer in New York City. While in her twenties she was a member of the Corps de Ballet at Radio City Music Hall; she appeared in Show Boat, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn and Wonderful Town on Broadway; and she started making solo, self-choreographed dance appearances. In a review of one performance at a Russian restaurant/night club in Montreal, a French newspaper misspelled her name Marta Becket, an appellation of which she became so fond she adopted it as her own.

Unfortunately, Martha’s mother maintained an overly possessive rein on Martha. She once told her daughter “A man cannot love a woman when she is going to have a baby…” (Your father) told me that.” Martha assumed

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that the divorce was her fault and decided to “do everything possible to make up for the terrible thing I did by being born.” Indeed, early in her career, Martha felt weighed down living with Helen and often taking her on out-of-town engagements.

At the age of thirty, in 1954, Marta embarked on a succession of one-woman, cross-county concert tours for which she planned the choreography and made the costumes.

But as talented, good-looking, and as well-traveled as she was, Marta remained psychologically inhibited. As she relates in To Dance on Sands, it wasn’t until she was thirty-four that she had sex and then it was with her road manager.

In the early 1960s, Marta met and married Tom Williams, the man with whom in 1964 she discovered the Death Valley Junction building complex. Built by the Pacific Coast Borax Company in the early 1920s, the U-shaped, Mexican Colonial-style structures once housed company offices, a store, a dorm, a 23-room hotel, and Corkhill Hall, a building used as a community center for dances, church services, movies, funerals, and town meetings. Returning in 1967, Marta and Tom rented the empty hall and, with long hours of hard work and much personal expense, converted it into what was to become her personal showcase, the Amargosa Opera Hall.

On February 10, 1968, with an audience of 12 “huddled up against the cold,” Marta presented the first of her new shows, an endeavor she continued, no matter whether there was an audience or not, three days a week during the season and one night per week in the summer, for the next 40 years. Because there was no admission fee at first (only a box for contributions), Tom “enthusiastically” announced Marta’s shows, and also supported himself and Marta by working as a bartender in a nearby Nevada brothel.

During their first summer in Death Valley Junction, runoff from an intense rain storm flooded the Opera House. After cleaning up the mess, Marta decided to take on yet another one-woman project, i.e., painting murals of Renaissance audiences “in gilded boxes and balconies, conversing with each other, some gazzing down at the stage, some laughing and drinking wine, other just with rapt attention” on the interior walls of the hall, a project that lasted until 1972.

In January 1970, The National Geographic Magazine included the story of Becket and the Opera House in an article on Death Valley. And, “as time went on, more stories about the Opera House came out...in local papers, Sunset magazine, Desert Magazine and Wild West magazine.”

As Marta’s reputation spread and her audiences grew, it became apparent that the woman and her art-filled Opera House were a national treasure, and so, circa 1974, with the aid of the Trust for Public Lands based in San Francisco and other friends, the Amargosa Opera House, Inc. was formed, an entity which eventually bought the Opera House and the entire town of Death Valley Junction (population 10). The building and the paintings within would be saved for posterity.

But all was not well on the home front. Tom, perhaps feeling alienated with Marta’s focus on her artistic pursuits, became involved with a local woman. Marta wondered, “Does being an artist mean I’m carrying a disease that makes me unlovable. I don’t know why Tom wanted to marry me in the first place. I have always had this talent, this drive. Maybe he expected me to change.”

Following a divorce in the mid-1980s, Marta gave up her one-woman shows and began to share performances with a local handyman, Tom “Wilget” Willett, a gregarious sort of man who, with no prior experience as an actor, played Marta’s perfect foil.

Unfortunately, Wilget died in 2005 after which Marta carried on alone. In To Dance on Sands, published in 2007, Marta, then at the age of 81, admitted that even though she was slowing down, she was not giving up. “I am grateful to have found a place where I can fulfill my dreams and share them with the passing scene as long as I can.”

AMARGOSA (1999), Documentary Film by Todd Robinson

Have you ever wondered what difference there might be between your own self-perception and what others think of you?

Well, whereas Becket in her autobiography describes herself as a person who, although encumbered with relationship problems with her mother, her father, and, later, her husband, attempted to live an art-driven life. Todd Robinson, in his 93 minute documentary, Amargosa, presents Becket as an ethereal being, riding on a cloud of creativity far and above the madding crowd.

Indeed, if you’re like me, you’ll come away from the film with a much different idea of Becket than you would if you read only her autobiography.

In Amargosa, we first meet Becket, a tall, slim figure, clad in...
black, making her way across a desert landscape with a dancer’s graceful pace. Could this be the same woman who wrote an autobiography explaining her life in detailed utilitarian terms? Or is this woman a passionate eccentric similar to so many who have sought solace in the desert?

Well, let’s be honest, Becket is an eccentric—but in the best sense of the word. In the same sense that Gauguin, abandoning his family in France, moved to Tahiti to paint; in the same sense that Beethoven, no longer able to hear what he had written, composed his Ninth Symphony; in same sense which J.D. Salinger, after writing his best works, chose to become a recluse in rural New England.

Released in 2000, *Amargosa* was a finalist for best documentary feature Academy Awards that year, and an Emmy winner for best cinematography in 2003. And, whether you care about Becket or not, cinematographer Curt Apduhan’s caring look at the Death Valley Junction area—eye candy for desert lovers—is worth the price of admission. (Available from Netflix, or for purchase at Amazon.com, $19.95.)

Shot in the winter, clouds cast shadows over broad alluvial fans; rain drips from tamarisk needles; creosote bushes flail in the cold wind; wild horses run free. By means of aerial photography, we view Death Valley Junction as it lays stranded and lonely amid miles of nothingness; we fly over local mountains—one in particular that looks as if it might be Eagle Mt (North); we hover over the sculptured contours of Death Valley’s sand dunes. We wonder how a person can remain passionately creative in such a barren landscape.

*Amargosa* offers a host of photos and memorabilia from Becket’s early years, including several clips of her dancing. One of the most remarkable clips, however, is that of Marta, probably in her 70s, dancing *en pointe* for several minutes. Except for a couple of lapses—an attempt to film ghosts in the hotel for instance—this is a near perfect film.

Rent it or buy it. You won’t be disappointed.

**AN ARTIST’S SOLITARY JOURNEY** (2011), Emanuel Dale

The reason for beginning this essay on Marta Becket in the first place is because photographer Emanuel Dale sent me a volume of his *An Artist’s Solitary Journey* for review.

Upon receiving the copy, however, I realized that photography alone was not enough to properly understand Marta Becket. Deciding to look deeper into the subject, I purchased *Dancing on the Sands* and *Amargosa*, and I’m glad I did. The time and effort spent delving into Marta Becket’s remarkable life was well worth it.

A working photographer for 40 years, Dale, writes in the preface to his 78-page volume of photographs: “This book is about someone who has listened to that little voice inside of her that wants to create, the voice most of us ignore or put aside. Marta Becket started listening to that voice at age four and never looked back…Marta says that things can be stolen or taken from you, but you will always own your creativity. My wish is that this book will give viewers permission to listen to their own voices and follow their dreams.”

Dale’s 32 photos, mostly in black & white, offer evocative views of Death Valley Junction, the weather-beaten Death Valley Junction building complex, Marta painting, Marta making up for a performance, and, along with many others, Marta repairing dancing shoes.

The winner of awards for his “compelling and original art,” Dale avers that his “favorite subject is people.” He quotes Marta, who in Todd Robinson’s *Amargosa*, said: “For those who accept a life of self-exploration through willful act of creation, the journey offers the ecstasy of all that is possible, along with the agony of unattainable perfection. It is a solitary road into the unknown self and offers no destination but the journey. But for those who follow, it does lead somewhere, and such a life will never be uninteresting.”

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