If you receive and read the Desert Report, published by the Sierra Club California / Nevada Desert Committee, you can skip my column this month. If you do not, here's a brief tour of the December 2014 issue, which I found more than interesting. The publication is a treasure house of well-written articles, many of current interest, and good photography. It can be found (and supported if you want to) at www.desertreport.org.

The cover article by Shaun Gonzales is a fine exposition of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). Shaun gives us the website for the plan: www.drecp.org, where there are maps, detailed information, and where comments could be made until 23 February. Shaun's essay is complemented by a second one by Mosheh Wolf, entitled “Energy Versus Tortoises”, emphasizing that the current version of the DRECP does not adequately address protection of the desert tortoise and its increasingly limited and threatened habitat. One disappointing aspect of the DRECP is that it assumes the necessity of providing “as much as 20,000 megawatts” of large-scale solar development in the DRECP area, ignoring what many of us have pointed out, that that target could be met with distributed generation on local rooftops close to where the energy would be used.

Birgitta Jansen describes how volunteers from the Sierra Club and other groups such as Americorps and the Crossroads School in Santa Monica have helped in Death Valley, Panamint Valley, Saline Valley and other areas. Their work has included cleanup of aircraft crash sites, trail maintenance, and wilderness restoration work. Particularly of note is Birgitta's description of the very positive effect on young volunteers of their work in the desert back country - “their work and stay in Death Valley has often been a precursor to a change in the direction of their life's path”.

Robert Earle Howells highlights Juniper Flats, an area I had not known of, at least not by that name. Juniper Flats comprises “101,272 acres, administered by the BLM” bordering the north slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains. This area is also part of the DRECP and though it has already been designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, there is pressure for commercial use for renewable energy siting and other applications.

There is more: an article by Ambre Chaudoin on the Ash Meadows Fish Conservation Facility, which has had success in preservation of the endangered Devils Hole pupfish; one by Craig Deutsche, “Watching the Southwest Border” describing his half-day tour with three Border Patrol agents in the El Centro Border Sector, along the border east and west of Mexicali / Calexico. Sally Kaplan sets out the plan that she and her husband David Vassar have for producing a documentary exploring the Mojave, Great Basin and Sonoran deserts. The couple have done PBS specials, most recently the two hour “California Forever” and look forward to completing their new project. They would welcome support from those who care about the desert and its preservation. You can find out more about them at: www.backcountrypictures.com. Lastly, Connie Brooks writes about the Salton Sea State Recreation Area with its many bird species. Lee and I have watched as Snow Geese flew past, the sound of their wings majestic in the quiet of the desert morning.

THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS APRIL 12, 2015

The Desert Sage is published six times a year by the Desert Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. Subscription to The Desert Sage is ten (10) dollars a year. See back cover for ordering details. The Desert Peaks Section’s Sage is the property of the Desert Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. All rights reserved.

The Desert Peaks Section maintains a website at: http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps/
# Desert Peaks Section Leadership for the 2014 - 2015 Season

## Elected Positions

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<th>Phone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Paul Cooley</td>
<td>4061 Van Buren Place, Culver City, CA 90232</td>
<td>(310) 837-4022</td>
<td><a href="mailto:prc.calif@gmail.com">prc.calif@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair / Outings / Safety</td>
<td>Brian Smith</td>
<td>2306 Walnut Avenue, Venice, CA 90291</td>
<td>(818) 898-2844</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brian.s.smith133@gmail.com">brian.s.smith133@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Jim Fleming</td>
<td>538 Yarrow Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-7352</td>
<td>(805) 405-1726</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jimf333@att.net">jimf333@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program / Banquet</td>
<td>Gloria Miladin</td>
<td>11946 Downey Avenue, Downey, CA 90242</td>
<td>(562) 879-5426</td>
<td><a href="mailto:miladingloria@yahoo.com">miladingloria@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Pat Arredondo</td>
<td>13409 Stanbridge Ave, Bellflower, CA 90706-2341</td>
<td>(562) 867-6894</td>
<td><a href="mailto:paarredo@verizon.net">paarredo@verizon.net</a></td>
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## Appointed Positions

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<td>Archives</td>
<td>Barbara Reber</td>
<td>PO Box 1911, Newport Beach, CA 92659-0911</td>
<td>(949) 640-7821</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Chair</td>
<td>Virgil Popescu</td>
<td>9751 Amanita Ave, Tujunga, CA 91042-2914</td>
<td>(818) 951-3251</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gillypope@ca.rr.com">gillypope@ca.rr.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidebook Editor</td>
<td>Jim Morehouse</td>
<td>3272 River Glorious Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89135-2123</td>
<td>(702) 528-3712</td>
<td><a href="mailto:desertpeakssection@gmail.com">desertpeakssection@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailer</td>
<td>Elaine Baldwin</td>
<td>3760 Ruthbar Drive, Hawthorne, CA 90250-8473</td>
<td>(310) 675-4120</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DWBaldwin@aol.com">DWBaldwin@aol.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Records Chair</td>
<td>Ron Bartell</td>
<td>1556 21st Street, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266</td>
<td>(310) 546-1977</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com">ronbartell@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Merchandising</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:miladingloria@yahoo.com">miladingloria@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain Records (Registers)</td>
<td>Daryn Dodge</td>
<td>2618 Kline Ct, Davis, CA 95618-7668</td>
<td>(530) 753-1095</td>
<td><a href="mailto:daryn.dodge@oehha.ca.gov">daryn.dodge@oehha.ca.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountaineering Committee Chair</td>
<td>Brian Smith</td>
<td>2306 Walnut Avenue, Venice, CA 90291</td>
<td>(818) 898-2844</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brian.s.smith133@gmail.com">brian.s.smith133@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
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<td><a href="mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com">ronbartell@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tina Bowman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:tina@bowmandesigngroup.com">tina@bowmandesigngroup.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter Editor (SAGE)</td>
<td>Greg Gerlach</td>
<td>23933 Via Astuto, Murrieta, CA 92562</td>
<td>(626) 484-2897</td>
<td>greg@<a href="mailto:1955@verizon.net">1955@verizon.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webmaster</td>
<td>Kathy Rich</td>
<td>2043 Berkshire Avenue, South Pasadena, CA 91030</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Kathrynarich@gmail.com">Kathrynarich@gmail.com</a></td>
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## Cover Photo Credit

The cover photo is of the Mesquite Dunes in Death Valley National Park, which was taken by Mark McCormick on November 1, 2014.

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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.
Trips & Events
March 2015 — May 2015

MARCH 8  SUN  DPS  DPS Meeting and Potluck
MARCH 21  SAT  DPS  DPS Chili Cook-off
MARCH 21-22  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC  Eagle Mountain
APRIL 11-12  SAT-SUN  DPS, LTC, SPS  Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice
APRIL 11-12  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC  Clark Mountain and New York Mountains High Point
APRIL 12  SUN  DPS  DPS Meeting and potluck
APRIL 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS, HPS, WTC  Pahrump Point and Stewart Point
APRIL 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC  Sentinel Peak
MAY 17  SUN  DPS  Desert Peaks Section Annual Banquet
MAY 30-31  SAT-SUN  DPS, HPS, WTC  New York Butte, Pleasant Point, Cerro Gordo Peak

- **MARCH 8**
  **SUN**  DPS  **DPS Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Tom Sumner in Sylmar for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 pm and potluck at 6:00 pm. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Tom Sumner at locornnr@aol.com.

- **MARCH 21**
  **SAT**  DPS  **21st DPS Chili Cook-off:** Join us this spring at the Culp Valley Campground in Anza Borrego State Park for this DPS Classic! Whether you like your chili Texas-style (no beans), traditional or vegetarian, bring your favorite recipe or just hearty taste buds to the DPS Cook-off. Cook for free or taste for $10.00. Cooks prepare chili from scratch at the site, then all enjoy happy hour, chili tasting and judging, and campfire. Prizes will be awarded by category, with special recognition for the Spiciest Chili, Best Presentation, Most Original Recipe, and the coveted Best Overall Chili. Send ESASE with your choice as Taster or Cook and chili type to receive directions, contest specs, carpool info and exploring/hiking activities to Hosts: Julie Rush (julierush11@gmail.com) and Jan Brahms (janbee@reneric.com).

- **MARCH 21-22**
  **SAT-SUN**  DPS, WTC  **Eagle Mountains #1 (5,320’):** Join us for this 11 mile, 3,100' gain weekend for a backpack in southern Joshua Tree National Park. We will start out from Cottonwood Springs and travel cross-country to our dry campsite at the base of the Eagle Mountains, 3.5 miles and 800' gain to camp. On Sunday, travel 2.5 miles with 1,700' of gain to the high point of the Eagle Mountains. Send e-mail with contact info and recent conditioning to Leader: Dave Scobie at davescobie@gmail.com and Co-Leader: Mat Kelliher at mkelliher746@gmail.com.

- **APRIL 11-12**
  **SAT-SUN**  DPS, LTC, SPS  **Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice:** For M & E candidates wanting to check off leadership ratings and/or others who wish to practice new techniques. Restricted to Sierra Club members with some prior basic training with the ice axe. Send Sierra Club number, climbing resume, email, home and work phones to Leader: Nile Sorenson (nsorenso@pacbell.net). Co-leader: Doug Mantle. E, C, Mountaineering.

(Continued on page 5)
APRIL 11-12  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC
MR: Clark Mountain (7,907’) and New York Mountains High Point (7,532’): Join us for a couple of 3rd Class Peaks. Saturday's climb to Clark Mountain will be about 2.3 round trip miles with 1,900' of gain, and Sunday’s climb to New York Mountains High Point and nearby New York Mountain will be about 5.0 round trip miles with 2,200' gain. This is a Restricted Mountaineering outing: participants must be current Sierra Club members and submit a Sierra Club "Medical Form". Helmet, harness, belay device, and experience with their use is required. Email Sierra Club number, contact information, climbing resume, recent experience and conditioning to mkelliher746@gmail.com for trip status and details. Leaders: Mat Kelliher and Brad Jensen.

APRIL 12  SUN  DPS
O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: Join us at the home of Larry and Barbee Tidball in Long Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 pm and potluck at 6:00 pm. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Larry and Barbee Tidball at lbtidball@verizon.net.

APRIL 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS, HPS, WTC
I: Pahrump Point (5,740’) and Stewart Point (5,265’): Come join us for a fun weekend of peakbagging near Death Valley National Park. Email Mat Kelliher at mkelliher746@gmail.com with contact and carpool info, recent conditioning, and experience for trip status and details. Leaders: Mat Kelliher and Bill Simpson.

APRIL 18-19  SAT-SUN  DPS, WTC
I: Sentinel Peak (9,634’): Join us for a trip into the Panamint Mountains of Death Valley to visit the ghost town of Panamint City and climb Sentinel Peak. On Saturday we’ll backpack up Surprise Canyon to Panamint City (6 miles, 4,000’ gain). Sunday we’ll hike XC to climb Sentinel Peak (9 miles, 3,400’ gain) before heading back down to the trailhead (6 miles). Send e-mail with resume containing recent experience, contact, and rideshare info to Leader: Crystal Davis (marie.crystal@gmail.com). Co-leader: Neal Robbins.

MAY 17  SUN  DPS
O: Desert Peaks Section Annual Banquet: Join your fellow desert explorers and friends for a wonderful evening at the Luminarias Restaurant in Monterey Park. This year’s speaker will be Steve Smith, a retired Bureau of Land Management Ranger, who will present “Preservation of the Desert Cabins”. The Social Hour and No Host Bar starts at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:00 p.m. and awards. For more information or to sign up for the DPS Banquet, please see the Banquet Flyer on page 6 of this issue of the Sage.

MAY 30-31  SAT-SUN  DPS, HPS, WTC
I: New York Butte (10,668’), Pleasant Point (9,690’), Cerro Gordo Peak (9,188’): Saturday we’ll start out from Long John Canyon and ascend the southwestern ridge of New York Butte to its summit for a very strenuous day’s total of 8.3 round trip miles with 6,200’ of gain. Sunday we’ll drive into the Inyo Mountains to the Cerro Gordo Ghost Town, then head north to Pleasant Point for a total of 6.0 round trip miles and 1,850’ of gain. Next, we’ll head to the summit of Cerro Gordo Peak for a total of 2.8 round trip miles with 1,150’ of gain. Email Mat Kelliher at mkelliher746@gmail.com with contact info, recent conditioning, and experience for trip status and details. Leaders: Mat Kelliher and Bill Simpson.

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 ANNUAL BANQUET

Sunday May 17

Where: Luminarias Restaurant
3500 Ramona Blvd.
Monterey Park
near junction of 10 & 710

Time: 5:30 pm Social Hour
7:00 pm Dinner
Includes complimentary wine at each table

Steve Smith presents:
“Preservation of the Desert Cabins”

Steve Smith was a BLM ranger in Ridgecrest area until he retired in 2004. He joined the DPS in 1965 and led his first trip to Maturango and Coso Peaks with Bill Banks in 1967. He and some BLM volunteers started maintaining the cabins in 1989. They worked on 36 cabins and continue to take care of them. Steve is working to spend at least one night in each cabin, and has done so in most of them. The most recent one was Walsh cabin atop Garlock Peak in the El Paso Mountains.

Steve has traveled to many places outside the USA, most recently to the Philippines and South Africa, but memories of our own Mojave Desert are never far from his mind. Steve's program will take us through his desert experiences of the last 50 years, specifically his work to preserve and maintain desert cabins.

Silent Auction

We continue our silent auction of donated items. Please contact Gloria Miladin for more info.

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: Prime Rib/ potatoes _______ Salmon/Rice _______ Pasta Primavera _______

Desert selection: Chocolate Mousse Cake _______ Raspberry Sorbet _______ Indicate number of each

Number of reservations: _____ $45 until April 30 _____ $50 after April 30 Total enclosed $ _________

Please reserve by May 12. Mail 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: Gloria at miladingloria@yahoo.com or Pat at paarredo@verizon.net.
### Membership Summary

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### Activity Report

#### Sustaining Renewals

- Jan Brahms & David Reneric 1 year
- Gordon MacLeod 1 year
- Ken D. Olson 1 year
- Don Ricker 1 year
- Brian Smith 1 year

#### Renewals

- Lisa Barboza 2 years
- Ron Bartell & Christine Mitchell 2 years
- Doug Bear 1 year
- Gary Bowen 1 year
- Debbie Bulger 3 years
- Mark Butski 1 year
- Mark Conover 1 year
- Gary Craig 1 year
- Guy Dahms 1 year
- Edna Erspamer 2 years
- John Fisanotti 1 year
- Terry Flood 1 year
- Bruno Geiger 1 year
- Stacy Goss 2 years
- Ron & Ellen Grau 1 year
- Edward Herrman 1 year
- Gerry & Pat Holleman 1 year
- Gary Hughes 1 year
- Frederick O. Johnson 2 years
- Wasim Khan 2 years
- Patty Kline 1 year
- Robert Langsdorf 3 years

### Donations

- $300 from Gordon MacLeod

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**UPDATES ARE NEEDED TO THE CURRENT DPS ROAD AND PEAK GUIDE!!**

Please send road and climbing route updates to the DPS Road and Peak Guide Editor, Jim Morehouse, at desertpeakssection@gmail.com. Jim is working on a new Version 6 of the guide, so be sure and send him a quick email after climbing a peak with suggested updates to the Guide while the information is still fresh in your mind. The DPS and Jim also welcomes volunteers to join the DPS Road and Peak Guide Committee to assist with updating the current Guide. Please contact Jim via email for further information.
Greetings out there! As I write, the desert season is in full swing and, with rains over the last 2 months, one hopes a stellar wildflower show is on the way, especially for the Chili Cook Off. This event is now planned and will be at the Culp Campground in Anza-Borrego. Please support it.

I have received feedback from members regarding suspensions and reinstatements of peaks from and to our list. To recap, Maturango, Argus and Kino are currently suspended (meaning climbing them is not required to reach list finish status). The first 2 will remain suspended for the foreseeable future as a result of written documentation received from the camp commandant of China Lake prohibiting climbs on military property to gain their summits. Kino was suspended due to official closure of certain areas of Organ Pipe National Monument, including the trailhead area around Bates Well, by the Park Service. The closures were based on the frequency of illegal immigration, drug smuggling and the regrettable shooting death of a park ranger in August 2002. I was recently sent an article from the Arizona Daily Star, dated November 27th, 2014, (thank you Barbara Lilley) in which the Park Service announced the park is now completely open to the public over all its 330,000 acres. There is still some illegal immigration, drug smuggling and a heavy Border Patrol presence, but the Park Service has warning signs and a request to call 911 to report suspicious activity in the relevant areas. Above all, if you go, use common sense to avoid getting involved with a suspicious looking group of people.

This information was brought up in the February 8th Management Committee meeting and I am pleased to say the committee voted unanimously to reinstate Kino to the list. It is a worthy peak and has two excellent routes - both in the Guide. I can recommend the less used route, which enters from the northwest and does not go over the pass where many illegal immigrants often pass.

I also received some feedback on Navajo Mountain. Unfortunately, there was not enough detail to fully understand the issue, but some of our members received adverse comments for trying to climb one of the Navajo’s sacred peaks. I would welcome more details on what actually happened in this encounter. On my last visit in 2012, I found the main road improved and paved all the way to the Utah state line and a large tire painted with a sign indicating the left turn to the peak. I camped on this road and received no complaints. There is no obvious fork anymore to the "Navajo Trading Post" (where one might have presented a permit at some point in the past). In addition, maintenance crews regularly drive up the peak to maintain the radio installation on the summit, so, to some extent, the sacred nature of the peak is already compromised. While some locals may object to "foreigners" climbing their peak, I currently have no reason to believe the Tribal Council has imposed a ban. As on any peak, I would simply recommend respect for the peak and be courteous and respectful of local people while climbing it. It wouldn't hurt to quietly hike the peak, rather than noisily drive it.

Unfortunately, I have no peak explorations to report this period, though in January, I did enjoy exploring two lesser known desert parks in New Mexico - Kashe-Katuwe Tent Rocks and El Malpais NMs. They both exhibit interesting volcanic geology and have high viewpoints that provide great landscape views. Give them a try if you are in the area. Don't forget to support our next soirees chez Sumner and chez Tidball.

I'll see you out there!

Treasurer's Report

by Pat Arredondo

DPS Account Summary from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014

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Kino Peak (3,197’)
By: Greg Gerlach
December 5, 2014

I left Murrieta in southern Riverside County at 9:00 a.m. for the 383 mile drive to Ajo, Arizona, arriving around 5:00 pm. In the meantime, John Bregar and Jenna Ranston, driving down from Durango, Colorado and doing a day hike along the way, arrived in Ajo around 6:30 pm. Upon checking in at the La Siesta Motel, the clerk told John that travel restrictions have been lifted by the National Park Service in Oregon Pipe Cactus National Monument, and Kino Peak is now legal to climb. The clerk turned out to be right because the DPS Management Committee recently approved to reinstate Kino Peak onto the DPS Peak List.

The next morning, we were up at 6:00 a.m. and in John’s 4-Runner and driving down Arizona State Route 85 by 7:00 a.m. We followed the DPS driving directions to Bates Wells Road, paid the $8.00 entry fee to the National Monument at the self service kiosk, then continued about ½ mile past the Route B trailhead identified in the DPS Guide, parking at a narrow turnout. The drive took about 1 hour, 10 minutes from Ajo and a high clearance, but not 4 wheel drive vehicle, is required.

We put on our boots, hoisted packs and started hiking south at 8:25 a.m. following Route B in the DPS guide. The hiking was easy for the first 4 miles or so, but the canyon got brushy the farther we traveled. We bypassed a couple of waterfalls located at 1,975’ in elevation on their left side that required several class 3 moves, then continued up to the U-notch, arriving at 11:30 a.m. After a 30 minute snack break, our group went south and up about 75’, then traversed southwest over to the ridge following a ledge system and an occasional duct; the traverse required 2 easy class 3 moves. Once at the ridge, we followed the class 1-2 route up the ridge to the summit, arriving at 12:35 p.m. The summit register book was placed on November 11, 2004 and only 5 pages have signatures. Also, we were the only group to ascend the peak in 2014 and there was only one ascent in 2013 and two in 2012. After signing the register, our group descended back down to the U-notch, where DPS Routes A and B meet. We decided to descend the mountain via DPS Route A in order to avoid the brush that we encountered on Route B. I read the route information in the DPS guide out loud, and only John was able to make sense of the description. From the notch, our group went north and up about 75’, then dropped down about 50’ on third class rock, then followed ducts and a use trail north to the ridge, where we dropped down to the canyon. Once in the canyon, we followed a use trail for several miles, which presumably originated from the U.S./Mexican border and had evidence of recent use, such as discarded bottles, clothes and food wrappers. We left the trail and angled over to John’s 4-Runner, arriving at 5:25 p.m.

Trip statistics: 13.1 miles, about 2,000 feet of elevation gain and 9 hours travel time. In addition, I posted our GPS track on the Peakbagger.com website.

A DPS group heading for the Funeral Mountains Wilderness Highpoint (photo by Daryn Dodge)
The desert mountains hold a special charm. Their barren façade is partly an illusion. Up close the drabness vanishes in the varied colors of mineralized rock, the surprising abundance of arid-resisting vegetation, the lush greenness of hidden springs. The panorama of range after range of desert mountains extending to the horizon, the purple shadows of late afternoon, the spell-binding sunsets, the star-studied night sky — all make the exploring and climbing of these desert peaks an exhilarating and soul-nourishing experience.

In fall, 2011 our Desert Peaks Section will be seventy years old — Seventy years of climbing these enchanting mountains that rise starkly out of the Southwest’s arid landscape.

You may ask how did this dynamic organization of desert enthusiasts all begin? The idea of a group dedicated to climbing desert summits originated in the fertile mind, vibrant personality, and boundless enthusiasm of a Los Angeles attorney and insurance broker named Chester Versteeg.

Chester was well known to Southern California Sierra Clubbers for some forty years. Except in summer, when he was off tramping through the High Sierra, he seldom missed the Chapter’s Friday night dinners at Boos Brothers Cafeteria in downtown Los Angeles, warmly greeting newcomers and old-timers alike. Chester’s enthusiasm was infectious and many a time, by force of personality alone, he was the driving force behind Chapter projects and outings. Members looked forward to his after-dinner lectures on the Sierra Nevada and other western ranges, illustrated with black and white lantern slides and occasionally sepia slides which Chester colored himself. He persuaded Club members to reinstitute the annual Southern California Chapter banquet and served as banquet chairman and toastmaster three times. In 1941 one of his outspoken ideas was to form a group dedicated to climbing desert summits.

Chester was born in Ashton, South Dakota, on October 1, 1887, son of Art and Melvina Versteeg. As a boy he worked at his father’s flour mill and dabbled in mechanical gadgets. He invented a mechanism for the grain elevator called the “Dakota” and sold the patent for it while still a teenager.

He might have remained in the flour milling business all his life had his parents not separated and his mother moved to Pasadena, California. Chester first visited California with his mother and sister in 1901, but returned to South Dakota to work a few more years with his father. But he was unable to resist the lure of the West. In 1906 he moved to Los Angeles permanently and attended Los Angeles High School, graduating with the class of 1909.

In 1909, fresh out of high school, the course of Chester’s life took a dramatic turn. He discovered the Sierra Nevada. He and a friend embarked on a planned several hundred-mile burro trip through the Sierra. After only two weeks his friend became ill and left. Chester sold his burro in Lone Pine and continued the trip solo, hiking all the way north to Yosemite, following the route pioneered by Theodore Solomons in 1896 (there was no John Muir Trail then). That summer of 1909 was one of the happiest of his life. He became thoroughly enamored with High Sierra and spent his next thirty-five summer vacations rambling through the Range of Light.

Chester entered law school at the University of Southern California in 1910. While there, he became well acquainted with one of his law professors named Clair Tappaan. Both had an interest in mountain hiking and camping. When Tappaan informed his young student of the newly-formed Southern California Chapter of the Sierra Club (formally established on November 1, 1911), Chester eagerly joined the organization. When the new chapter decided to build their mountain home in Big Santa Anita Canyon, Chester volunteered to help. Whereas most members hiked into the canyon on weekends to work on the stone structure, Chester packed in a tent and bedroll and set up camp at the site. He is said to have lived there forty days and nights, gathering boulders from the canyon, cementing them in place, and doing carpentry work. When Muir Lodge was dedicated on October 4, 1913, Chester was in proud attendance.

(Continued on page 11)
It required six years for Chester to acquire his law degree, years when he often worked all day and took night classes at the University. All this time he supported himself and his mother, Melvina. His work included riding his bicycle around downtown Los Angeles collecting rents for a real estate firm, and doing various jobs for the Los Angeles Examiner newspaper. He graduated with a law degree in 1916 and went into practice with the prominent law firm of Slosson and Mitchell. He successfully practiced law until 1920, when he started his own very successful insurance brokerage business.

Chester’s first love always remained the Sierra Nevada. For more than thirty-five years he continued exploring and climbing in the Range of Light and is credited with more first ascents (40) than anyone other than Norman Clyde. During his mountain treks he noticed that many prominent landmarks were unnamed. He organized the Sierra Club’s first Committee on Geograhic Names and was directly responsible for the naming of some 250 peaks, passes, lakes and meadows. He served on the Sierra Club Editorial Board for several years in the 1930s. In the late ’30s he worked with the Club to urge the establishment of Kings Canyon National Park. An article by Chester promoting Kings Canyon was printed in the Congressional Record and helped persuade Congress to establish the Park in 1940.

Chester was married in 1920. He and his bride, Lillian, spent their honeymoon on a month-long burro pack trip through the heart of the Sierra. A decade or so later Chester and Lillian’s two daughters, Janice and Betty, joined on their Sierra burro trips.

Over the years Chester wrote some forty newspaper articles, mostly on the Sierra Nevada, 25 of which appeared in the Los Angeles Times and some 15 more in the Los Angeles Examiner and other papers. Beginning in 1922, Chester wrote up accounts of Sierra outings for the Sierra Club Bulletin. He also composed a series of well-illustrated essays for Pacific Pathways, a magazine of the 1940s. Chester not only wrote about his favorite mountains, he talked about them too. His popular illustrated lectures, presented in engaging Versteegian prose, were usually well-attended and enjoyed by numerous groups.

While climbing peaks on the Sierra Crest, Chester often gazed eastward at range after range of tawny mountains fading to the distant horizon. His curiosity was activated. What were these desert ranges like? Were they as devoid of life as they appeared? Was water available? Chester decided to find out.

Just which desert mountain Chester first climbed and what year are undetermined. Fortunately, Chester wrote up many of his ascents in the Los Angeles Times. Although most of these articles relate to the Sierra Nevada, two of them describe desert ascents.

The Times of May 22, 1939 described an ascent of Telescope Peak from Mahogany Flats by Chester Versteeg and three other Sierra Clubbers—Leland Chase, Bill Roberts and Bob Rumohr—all of Los Angeles. The foursome placed a new register on the summit and hurried down in a cold, howling wind.

The Los Angeles Times of July 16, 1939, in its Sunday Rotogravure Section, contains a well illustrated article by Chester Versteeg of a climb of White Mountain. Accompanied by Bill Crookston, Chester described the descent as “the hardest trip of my life”, through deep snow that had softened under the afternoon sun.

So Chester’s climb of New York Butte with Virgil Sisson and Larry Jeffries on June 1, 1941 was not, as previously reported, his first desert peak. However, Chester was delighted with what he found there. The mountain was not barren at all. Its upper slopes were clad with juniper and Pinyon pine. There was a spring of icy-cold water just below the crest. The view across Owens Valley to the snow-called Sierra crest was breathtaking.

According to Louise Werner it was on New York Butte’s rounded summit that cool June day in 1941 that Chester conceived of a Sierra Club group specializing in...
climbing desert summits. The Friday after his New York Butte climb, Chester was at Boos Brothers, talking up his new idea. But his proposal took a while to reach fruition. Louise Werner described the birth pangs of the section: “If there was any one quality that especially characterized Chester, it was enthusiasm. Out of his infectious enthusiasm was born the Desert Peaks Section. It did not, however, spring full-fledged, like Minerva from the head of Zeus. Chester’s flame all but died under the soggy indifference he encountered every time he brought up the subject. It took a good deal of fanning and blowing before it caught a few individuals who went along, at first, mainly because Chester was such a persistent salesman. We can see him yet, before a crowd of Friday-nighters at Boos Brothers, trying to warm us to the idea.”

Chester appeared before the Executive Committee of the Southern California Chapter, then located in the Philharmonic Auditorium Building across from Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles. After listening to Chester’s persuasive pitch, the Committee authorized the creation of an honorary climbing group - no dues, no officers, no meetings - to be known as the Desert Peaks Section. Per Chester’s suggestion, membership would be attained by climbing seven desert peaks east of the Sierra Nevada. North to south, they were White Mountain Peak, Waucoba Mountain, New York Butte, Cerro Gordo, Maturango Peak, Coso Peak, and Telescope Peak. Chester exclaimed that all of these peaks “present marvelous desert panoramas. White Mountain, Waucoba Mountain, and New York Butte present as fine views of the High Sierra crest that can be found.”

Two individuals who were early converts to Chester’s desert peak idea were veteran climbers Niles and Louise Werner. Niles was Chester’s right-hand man in promoting and co-leading desert trips.

Niles Werner was born in Goteborg, Sweden, in 1890 and came to the U.S. in 1908. Trained as a structural engineer, he moved to Los Angeles in 1922 and joined the Sierra Club shortly thereafter. He soon became an accomplished climber on Club outings throughout the western U.S. and Canada.

Louise Top was born in Sioux Center, Iowa, of Dutch parents, in 1902. She moved to Los Angeles in 1930 and became a women’s physical education instructor. Louise joined the Sierra Club in 1934 and met Niles on a climb he led to Telescope Peak that same year. They were married in 1937 after Niles proposed on the trail. One of their first projects together was to finish off the list of 14,000ers in California, which they accomplished during the years 1938 to 1949.

The Werners were a superb photographer-writer team. Niles’s photos of Sierra Club outings, from the Sierra Nevada to the Canadian Rockies, and later of desert mountains, appeared often in the Sierra Club Bulletin and other periodicals. Louise was an accomplished writer; her articles on desert peaking, usually accompanied by Niles’ photos, were published in Desert and Summit magazines in the 1950s and ‘60s.

Chester wasted no time in scheduling activities for the new section. On the weekend of November 15-16, 1941, Chester and Niles led the first official section outing, a climb of New York Butte. The Chapter schedule proclaimed, in typical Versteegian prose, “Here is your opportunity to knock down one of the seven peaks required to make you eligible for the new Desert Peaks Section. New York Butte presents one of the grandest alpine views on the entire continent, the Sierra Crest from Olancha Peak to Mount Tom.” The route was up Long John Canyon to the spring at the canyon head, where the party spent a cold night. Early next morning the group followed an old miners’ trail up to a cabin and spring near the crest, then climbed north to the 10,668-foot summit. Besides the leaders, participants on the DPS’s pioneer outing were Braeme Gigas, Harry Paley, Pat Carmical, Katherine Smith, Freda Walbrecht, Bill Crookston, Carl Durrell, James Tow, and Harry Greenhood.

As fate would have it, momentous outside events intervened to put a temporary damper on the fledgling section. With the Pearl Harbor attack plunging the U.S. into World War II, desert climbing activities were reduced to occasional forays by a handful of enthusiasts.

Note: Part 2 of this article will be published in the next issue of the Desert Sage.
What is the best thing to do on Super Bowl Sunday? Go hiking, of course! Great Basin Peaks Section members decided to hike a snow-free Tahoe OGUL list peak, Desert Creek Peak (8,958’). Instead of TV screen views, we relaxed in fresh air with 360-degree mountain views from Desert Creek Peak and Black Mountain. Our view included Bald Mountain that we hiked last autumn when it was in the proposed Wovoka Wilderness. Great news is that it is now the newly designated Wovoka Wilderness. It was joined by the designation of the Pine Forest Wilderness, giving Nevada two new beautiful designated wilderness areas.

Our Toiyabe Chapter webmaster, Dennis Ghiglieri, is diligently working on redoing our webpage for a new host system. Plans are to make the GBPS outings easier to locate and include a blog for member interactions. Thanks Dennis for your many years of work on the chapter website.

We now have a page on Facebook. Check us out and please add pictures or reports from your trips.

For details on membership, recognition categories, peak list, and trip reports check out Great Basin Peaks Section: http://toiyabe.sierraclub.org/GreatBasinPeaks.htm

Quartzite Mountain (7,133’)
By Sharon Marie Wilcox
October 2014

We left Reno attempting to stay a day ahead of predicted storms. Our route down the Eastern Sierra, through Death Valley and towards the Las Vegas Range was storm-free. Blue-sky hikes on Tungsten Peak and Pleasant Point were enjoyed before heading to Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

The new Desert National Wildlife Range visitor center was a surprise, so we stopped to tour the interesting displays. Unfortunately, the weather report indicated that the storm would catch us that evening. We cut our visitor center tour short planning to set-up camp before it rained.

Our drive on Mormon Well Road became a very rough, rocky, washboard drive as we turned onto Gass Peak Road. We camped at the trailhead where Quail Spring Road is gated. Hoping tomorrow’s predicted storm might pass overnight; we celebrated Halloween with costumes, treats, and a feeding frenzy.

After listening to howling wind all night and waking to rain with heavy low gray clouds, we were uncertain about the hike to Quartzite Mountain. Our early start was delayed until 8:00 a.m. when the rain turned to a drizzle. We decided to leave and hiked up the road that varies from wash to road as it winds up the canyon. Passing Quail Spring guzzler we were always on the lookout for Bighorn Sheep.

A variety of interesting Mojave Desert plants and changing plant communities distracted our weather thoughts as we gained elevation. Two of my favorites were the pink feathery Apache Plume and uniquely shaped Joshua Trees.

At about 6,400’, we left the road and headed up to the ridgeline. Rain had ceased and lifting clouds revealed patches of sky. A large burn area left charcoaled skeletal remains of trees to navigate near the ridge. Along the ridge, we scrambled over rocky areas to get both summit areas.

Protected by rocks on the summit knob, we found shelter from the chilly wind to relish the view, eat lunch and take photos. Since dark clouds were building again and cold wind increasing we didn’t linger as long as we’d like. Even though the storm caught us, we still delighted in another memorable day enjoying a Great Basin Peak plus Mojave Desert Vegetation.
Desert Peaks Section December 14, 2014 and February 8, 2015 Potlucks, Hosted by Tom and Tina Bowman

(Photos taken by Tina Bowman)

Left to right, Julie Rush, Mary Jo Dungfelder, Jim Fleming and Paul Cooley at the February 8, 2015 potluck

Dave and Elaine Baldwin with Barbara Sholle in between at the December 14, 2014 potluck

Left to right, Dave Baldwin, Gloria Miladin, Pat Arredondo and Ron Bartell at the December 14, 2014 potluck

Christine Mitchell, Ron Bartell and Paul Cooley at the December 14, 2014 potluck
MOUNT JEFFERSON, NEVADA

While writing up the glacial geology of Pellisier Flats (Mount Dubois) for my White Mountains piece last time – a gently rolling narrow tundra’d plateau at great elevation with glacial cirques taking great arcuate bites out of its eastern flank – I kept thinking, “There’s another peak on the List that this reminds me of”. And, just after emailing the article to our hard-working Editor Greg Gerlach, it hit me…”Of course! Mount Jefferson!” (Which I climbed with my buddy George Quinn with his at-the-time 80’s vintage Oldsmobile, real Detroit heavy metal – I still don’t know how we got that lowrider out of there in one piece!) (As an aside, I’ll bet you wouldn’t have thought I’d be discussing so much glaciation in a desert peaks list – one of the things that make it surely one of the world’s most varied and diverse peaks list!).

As with almost all mountains, the glaciation of the past million years or so is the last chapter of the story, so let’s go back to the beginning. The Toquima Range is, of course, one of the biggest and highest of the army-of-caterpillars-crawling-north Basin Ranges that make up most of Nevada – a topography that is actually fairly unique on Earth. Internally, the Toquimas are a real crazy quilt of complexly faulted sedimentary rock intruded by granite and blasted by violent volcanism. Lightly metamorphosed early Paleozoic sedimentary rocks – quartzite, argillite (mildly metamorphosed shale) and limestone of Cambrian and Ordovician age are the oldest “basement” rocks exposed in the central Toquimas. These rocks have been thrust-faulted by compression from the west and mildly “cooked” by the later Paleozoic Antler and Sonoma orogenies discussed in more detail in my White Mountains piece, and by all the younger igneous activity.

The much-discussed Nevadan orogeny, caused by the over-riding of the East Pacific, or Farallon, plate by southwestern North America in the Mesozoic and the consequent generation of vast quantities of granitic rock, was manifested even here by granite plutons intruding the “basement” rock. This far east, we really can’t call this Sierra granite, although it’s part of the same “big picture”. It’s interesting that the Toquima granite is Cretaceous in age whereas the Sierra batholith is mostly older Jurassic, suggesting that the generation of granite was moving eastward with time along with the orogeny in general. The granite is exposed south of Mount Jefferson between the gold-mining district of Round Mountain at the western base of the range and the ghost mining town of Belmont in the eastern foothills. As is typical in this geologic setting, valuable mineralization is concentrated at the edge of the granite in the Belmont, Barcelona, and Manhattan mining districts, where granite is in contact with the sedimentary rocks, breaking them up so that hot, trace-metal-rich fluids can react with them (especially the limestone) and precipitate out metallic ores. (Round Mountain is different – it’s in the younger volcanics).

The rock of Mount Jefferson proper was formed by younger and unthinkably violent volcanic activity, a later stage in the long saga of the overriding of that oceanic plate. Geologists, trying to make some sense of the bizarre and complicated deformation of the western United States since the start of the Nevadan orogeny (a pattern really found nowhere else on Earth – intense compressional deformation extending deep into the central Precambrian core of the continent) have come up with the “flat subduction” megathink theory to try to explain it all. It sounds far-fetched, but it seems to best explain what we actually observe.

Instead of plunging down into the mantle at a fairly steep angle beneath the edge of the overriding continental plate – the “normal” situation – (think of the fairly narrow chain of the Andes hugging the western margin of South America), the Farallon plate for some unexplained reason seems to have (Continued on page 16)
pushed eastward underneath North America at a very shallow, almost flat, angle – think of running your hand between the floor and a carpet. This is the only way we can explain enormous compressional stress transmitted far eastward into the continental interior, so that (personal experience) the front range of the Colorado Rockies, basically an enormous north-south anticlinorium (got to use that word again!) made of ancient Precambrian continental core, is visible in the far, far distance from the high point of...NEBRASKA! Then, during the Oligocene period (ca. 34-23 MYA) the oceanic plate appears to have delaminated from the bottom of the continent and foundered to oblivion as it melted into the mantle. Suddenly (geologically speaking), the previously-insulated southwestern part of the continental plate, structurally weakened by all the tectonic activity just ended, was exposed to the full fierce heat coming up from Earth’s core through the mantle – and all volcanic hell broke loose in the West. Enormous caldera-forming megavolcanoes such as (fortunately) have never been experienced by humans blew out in such places as northwest Wyoming, making the Absaroka volcanic pile (not to be confused with the much younger, and basically unrelated, Yellowstone supervolcano), the colossal San Juan volcanic complex of southwestern Colorado, and smaller volcanic centers scattered throughout the Great Basin, including the Manhattan and Mount Jefferson calderas in the Toquimas.

A caldera (apt name; Spanish for “cauldron”) is a roughly circular volcanic collapse feature caused by a volcano that, you might crudely (but quite accurately) say, “barfs its guts out” so that the unsupported superstructure that was call a volcano collapses into the void below. Crater Lake is a small and very pretty example. The Mount Jefferson caldera, which comprises the entire big mountain, is at least 15 kilometers across. The original depression is completely filled with a thickness of several thousand meters of mostly rhyolitic tuff, or lithified volcanic ash flows. In a very real sense, the mountain turned itself inside out! Everything from chips to enormous chunks of country rock -- granite and sediments -- some over 100 meters (bigger than a football field) in length! — are embedded in the tuff, showing the inconceivable violence with which this thing exploded.

Some volcanism continued here into the Miocene period, although nothing like the Oligocene. This was the time when an east-west directed tensional tectonics really got going in the southwest, continuing to the present day, cracking and splitting the crust into north-south trending blocks; some foundered and became valleys buried in the debris from the alternating risen blocks where we sign summit registers today. All this interesting geology of the Toquimas just happened to be part of a risen block; who knows what is forever buried beneath the neighboring valleys? Could the gentle plateau summit of Jefferson, like Dubois, be a tiny relic of some long-vanished low-lying erosion surface?

Pleistocene glaciers put the final touches on our peak; as with the Whites, the topo shows no obvious glacial feature on the windward western side, but, as is the case with Pellissier Flats, several splendid “Geology 101” deep cirques are carved into the leeward eastern snow-collecting side of the summit plateau. Aren’t we lucky to live at the end of one of Earth’s great glacial periods, rather than before one? The mountains would still be big and impressive, but nowhere near as pretty. No Yosemite-like valleys; no carved horn peaks; no alpine tarns beneath north faces!
In the last issue of Desert Books, we left Jedediah Smith and his party of trappers— who during the fall of 1826 had become the first non-Native Americans to cross the desert between southwestern Utah and Southern California— reposing uneasily at the Mission San Gabriel. The Governor of the Mexican Province of Alta California, José María Echeandía, was not happy that the Americans had entered his domain without permission, and, although he tolerated them, he informed them that they must leave a.s.a.p., following the same route by which they had arrived. They could not, as Jedediah had requested, continue north in California.

But, as also previously noted, Jedediah was not the sort of man who took no for an answer. Although he agreed to Echeandía's demands, he had his own idea of what constituted California.

In mid-January 1827, Jedediah and his men left San Gabriel, re-crossed Cajon Pass, but instead of continuing east across the Mojave, the way they had arrived, they turned northwesterly, crossed the Antelope Valley and the Tehachapi Mountains, and entered the south end of the San Joaquin Valley.

In his excellent biography, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, Dale Morgan describes what Jedediah and his men found there: "...the country...was not at first encouraging; (they) rode down out of bare, rolling hills into desolate alkali plains (to find themselves) surrounded with endless tule marshes, almost impossible of access." Continuing north along the western base of the Sierra Nevada, "swift streams began to tumble down, joining as a great river which flowed north toward San Francisco Bay...The country took on a more fertile aspect, with oaks and sycamores growing along the streams; (they) found beaver again, and elk, deer and antelope in abundance."

The trapping was so good that by early May, 1827, Jedediah and his men had accumulated over 1,500 pounds of beaver pelts. Their problem was how to transport the furs to the annual rendezvous (Continued on page 18)
which was to be held that year, starting July 1, near the Great Salt Lake.

Also, because they were still searching for the Buenaventura—the legendary river they believed drained the Great Salt Lake into the San Francisco Bay—the trappers traveled as far north as the American River but found no such breach in the Sierra. More troubling yet, a heavy snow pack forced them to return south to the Stanislaus River where they established a camp.

Had Smith crossed the Sierra via the American River, it is possible he could have found the Humboldt River in Nevada, a passage across the Great Basin—established by Peter Skene Ogden a year and a half later—by which many gold-seekers reached the Golden State during 1849 and the 1850s.

To expedite his return to Utah and the rendezvous, Jedediah decided to leave most of his men camped on Stanislaus while he and two others, Silas Gobel and Robert Evans, on May 20, 1827, began their epic crossing of the Sierra Nevada and the Great Basin.

"Peak on peak, and not a pass! A snow-hell of a week, with horses balking in the drifts to drowse and stiffen, standing."

The route by which Jedediah Smith crossed the Sierra Nevada in June, 1827, was a source of conjecture until 1943, when Francis P. Farquhar, two-time president of the Sierra Club and long-time editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin, published an article detailing his findings on the subject. Farquhar, after careful research, proposed that rather than crossing the Sierra Nevada via Sonora Pass, as had been commonly believed, Jedediah "chose a route north of the (Stanislaus) which brought him to the summit of the Sierra near the present Ebbetts Pass, whence he descended to the East Carson River, crossed to the West Walker, and rapidly left behind him the snows and dashing rivers of the Sierra Nevada for the waterless sandy deserts, where there was no sign of vegetation."

Indeed, proceeding east across central Nevada on a route that can only be surmised, the trio encountered some of the most difficult desert in North America.

"The very devil's land it was—all tumbled rock and shale and sand where squatty cactus starved and no sage grew."

Following long days of travel in the relentless heat, Robert Evans collapsed and could go no farther. Leaving him, Jedediah and Gobel pressed on to the foot of a nearby mountain, where, at last finding water, they returned to rescue their companion.

The three men straggled up to the shores of the Great Salt Lake on June 27, where local Indians told them that the trappers were gathered further north at “the Little Lake” (Bear Lake). On July 3, reaching the rendezvous at last, their arrival was celebrated with a cannon salute (the first wheeled vehicle ever brought this far west) for they had been given up as lost.

The rendezvous of 1827 broke up on July 13, and five days later, with eighteen men, two Indian women (probably the squaws of Canadian trappers), and two years worth of supplies, Jedediah set off, first to rejoin the men he left on the Stanislaus, then to trap his way up the California-Oregon coast to the Columbia River. If he got back in time for 1828 rendezvous, well and good. If not, his partners in the firm of Smith, Jackson & Sublette would see him two years later.

Regarding his choice of a return route to California, Jedediah wrote, "...it would be impossible for a party with loaded horses and encumbered with baggage to ever cross (the Great Basin). Of the (nine) animals with which I left the (Stanislaus) but two got through to the
(Continued from page 18)

(rendezvous), and they were, like ourselves, mere skeletons. I therefore was obliged to take the More circuitous route down the Colorado which although much better than that across the Plain was yet a journey presenting many serious obstacles."

And so Jedediah set off for California following the route he had pioneered the previous fall. And, as predicted, he and his party did encounter a "serious obstacle."

Morgan describes Jedediah's deadly encounter with the formerly friendly Mojaves thusly: "(The Indians) dissembled well, and Jedediah had no intimation that their hearts were bad. He remained three days among them, recruiting his horses and trading a few articles of merchandise for beans. wheat, corn, dried pumpkins and melons. Jedediah's ability to learn from experience was evidenced by the superior condition of his party this year: three days' rest put his animals in shape to travel."

On or about August 18, "leaving the horses and half of the company on the left (east) bank, Jedediah loaded a part of his goods on rafts of cane grass, and moved out on the broad river. The Mojaves had waited patiently for this moment. Raising the war cry, they fell on the ten men and two women who remained behind." Within minutes all the men, including the most able Silas Gobel, were dead and the two women were prisoners.

Meanwhile, the nine remaining members of the party surely feared they would soon join their murdered companions, "for hundreds of Mojaves were scattered along the banks of the river, and to defend themselves the whites had only their butcher knives and five guns." If that wasn't trouble enough, all their horses and most of their supplies had been lost.

As would be expected, however, Jedediah remained cool and courageous. He gathered his eight remaining men along the river bank and told them to fire their guns only when the shot would be certain of killing. In his journal, he wrote, "Gradually the enemy was drawing near but kept themselves covered from our fire. Seeing a few indians who ventured out from their covering within long shot I directed two good marksmen to fire they did so and two indians fell and another was wounded. Upon this the indians ran off like frightened sheep and we were released from the apprehension on immediate death."

That night, under the cover of darkness, the men headed west into the Mojave Desert, where the next morning they located a spring that Jedediah had visited the year before. During the following six days, Jedediah guided his group westward along what was to become the Spanish Trail, until reaching the Mojave River, where they were able to trade cloth, knives and beads for horses, sorghum candy, and a few vessels for carrying water.

Nine and a half days after the massacre on the Colorado, the men crossed Cajon Pass and emerged into the San Bernardino Valley, where, to sate their hunger and make jerky, they butchered a few cattle.

Notified of the trappers' arrival, the overseer of Rancho San Bernardino, owner of the cattle, rode out to meet them. Not only did the Californian treat the trappers kindly, but, by trading them for items which they had packed on their backs from the Colorado, he also supplied them with enough horses for them to continue to the camp on the Stanislaus. On September 18, three months after splitting up, Jedediah's men were reunited.

And thus concluded Jedediah Smith's desert explorations. But since we've spent this much time with the trailblazer, let us briefly consider his life until his tragic death in May 1831, three and a half years later.

Remaining only two days with his party on the Stanislaus, Jedediah and three of his men then set

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out for Mission San Jose, seventy miles to the southwest. Because most of their supplies had been lost during the skirmish with the Mojaves, this seemed to be his only choice. As he noted in his journal, our "last and only resource (was) to try once more the hospitality of the Californias."

Governor Echeandía, who was in Monterey at the time, was not happy to learn that Jedediah and his companions had turned up at Mission San Jose. In fact, because of their previous breach of trust, he had the trappers arrested and held in the Mission's guard house.

It was only after the Captain of an American ship, then in Monterey, guaranteed Jedediah and his party's good conduct, along with Jedediah's promise that he and his men would leave his province immediately, that the governor released the trappers.

Instead of leaving, however, Jedediah and his men once again disregarded their promise, this time spending the next five months trapping and exploring up and down California's Central Valley.

In early June, after following the Trinity River to the coast, the trappers turned north crossing what is now the CA/OR state line on June 23, reaching the Rogue River on June 27, and arriving at the Umpqua River on July 12. On July 14, the Umpqua People, after a "mortal offense" to one of their chiefs in regard to a stolen axe, attacked and massacred fifteen of the trappers. Jedediah, who was away reconnoitering that day, managed to reach the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Vancouver on August 10, where George Simpson, governor of the trading company, happened to be visiting. Simpson sympathized with Jedediah over his losses, but he also chastised him for upsetting the Indians. In spite of the fact that Simpson's and Jedediah's firms were competitors in
the fur trade, the governor generously sent a large party to accompany Jedediah south in his attempt to rescue any missing men and their lost possessions.

In mid-December the rescue party returned to Fort Vancouver with 500 beaver pelts, 39 horses, all in bad condition, but with no additional survivors. Jedediah was paid $2,600 for the goods, and in return he agreed that his fur trade company would confine its operations to the region east of the Great Divide. Although Jedediah had survived his third Indian massacre, he wouldn't be so fortunate the future.

During the spring of 1829, Jedediah organized an expedition into the Blackfeet territory of Montana, where, although a large cache of pelts was collected, the hostile Blackfeet forced the trappers to leave the area.

At the 1830 rendezvous, Jedediah and his two partners, David Jackson and William Sublette, sold their company at a good price, after which Jedediah left the fur-trade business and returned to St. Louis.

Jedediah was not the retiring type, however. On March 3, 1831, as a partner in a new supply company, he and a group of 74 men and twenty-two wagons left Missouri, setting out, via the Santa Fe Trail, on a trade mission to New Mexico.

On May 27, while Jedediah was out alone looking for water for his party near the Cimarron River in present day southwest Kansas, he met a band of Comanches. There was a brief face-to-face stand off until the Indians scared his horse and shot him in the left shoulder. Jedediah wheeled his horse around and with one rifle shot killed their chief. The Comanches then rushed Jedediah, who having no time to draw his pistols, was stabbed to death with lances.

Jedediah Smith was a true-blooded American hero. During his eight years spent exploring the West, (1823 -1831), he became the first man to reach California overland from the American frontier, the first to cross the Sierra Nevada, the first to travel the width of the Great Basin, and the first to reach Oregon by a journey up the California coast.

He was a deeply religious man who never smoked, got drunk, or used profanity. A courageous leader and a competent outdoorsman, Jedediah Smith was always ready to explore what might lay over the next mountain range or across the next river in the then uncharted American West.

The lean six feet of man-stuff, shouldered wide, too busy with a dream that grew inside for laughter. He was seeing all the white map westward as a page on which to write, for men to read, the story of a land still lying empty as the Maker's hand.

Jedediah's explorations in northwestern California are commemorated in the names of the Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, the Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail, and the Smith River. In Oregon, a tributary of the Umpqua River is named for Smith, and, in Wyoming, most of the western slopes of the Teton Range are named the Jedediah Smith Wilderness.

* Unless otherwise noted all quoted material above is either from Morgan, or from Smith's personal letters and journals, while all italicized passages are from Neihardt.

SAGE PHOTOS AND REPORTS NEEDED !!!

The SAGE needs articles and photographs, including cover photos, that pertain to outdoor activities of interest to Desert Peak Sections members and subscribers. Please note that trip reports should include trip dates and identify trip participants and photos should indicate when and where the photo was taken, what it is of, who is in it, and who took it. Please email SAGE submissions to gregrg1955@verizon.net no later than the second Sunday of even numbered months.
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