Among recent finds on what a friend, a mountains runner as I am, refers to as “the interweb” is a website for Desert Magazine (www.swdeserts.com). Many may remember Desert Magazine, started by Randall Henderson and published from 1937 to 1985. I read many issues of it and was always fascinated by it, learning more as my brother introduced me to the California desert by taking me out past Baker looking for geodes - some of which I still have. The website has an archive of all of the magazines and advertises that they will send two CDs with the complete set of magazines for $10.00. Ask me next month if it works - I sent for them the other day.

I rediscovered the magazine when I read recently that Ulysses S. Grant IV (yes, that Grant) had been chair of the UCLA Geology Department and remained there as a professor until he retired in 1959. I was surprised as I had attended UCLA in the 1950s and had some contact with the Geology department, so - of course - Wikipedia provided more information. Grant passed away in 1977, but among the references in Wikipedia was an article he wrote, published in Desert Magazine in March of 1962, entitled “A Midsummer Motoring Trip”. The trip was made with his brother in June 1913, through Banning, Palm Springs and Coachella, in an Overland coupe. It is a breezy but interesting account including the (undoubtedly overloaded) Overland having broken down west of the Salton Sea, forcing the brothers to walk quite a few miles for help. It is interesting to read about this “overland” trip, as it were, on dirt roads that now are highways.

Among other things in the news these days is water, of course. I don't know how many saw the front page article in the Los Angeles Times on April 2, 2015 with a photograph of Governor Brown and Frank Gehrke of the state Department of Water Resources walking across a meadow near Echo Summit, in the Sierra. The meadow should have several feet of snow but does not; it looks like a summer day there. The snowpack is 5% of average according to the article.

I love the desert, and it's a good thing, because we live in one. We should begin behaving like we live in a desert instead of lavishing water on non-native plants - and on golf courses in the Coachella Valley. Though California agriculture accounts for about 75% of the state's water usage, Governor Brown put it well when he said in his statement: “We all have something to do, and we all can do a little better”.

THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE

IS JUNE 14, 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/
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Cover Photo Credit
Chester Versteeg and Niles Werner led a DPS climb of Waucoba Peak on June 6-7, 1942. Relaxing on the summit are, from left to right, Fred Johnson, Martin Britt, Harry Paley, Rhoda Goertz, Freda Walbrecht, Chester Versteeg, Jim Tow and Morris Vehon. The photographer was Niles Werner. This is the earliest known photograph of a DPS outing and was drawn from the Niles Werner Collection in the Angeles Chapter Archives.

The Desert Sage

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
May 2015

The summit of Boundary Peak (photo taken by Penelope Smrz on January 25, 2015)

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

♦ 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 5 of this issue of the Sage.

♦ MAY 30-31   SAT-SUN   DPS, HPS, WTC
I: New York Butte (10,668’), Pleasant Point (9,690’), and Cerro Gordo Peak (9,188’): – Join us for a late spring weekend in the southern Inyo Mountains as we scale a couple of classic DPS peaks as well as a bonus trip up to the summit of one of the Great Basin Peaks Section peaks. Saturday we’ll start out from Long John Canyon near Lone Pine, California to ascend the long and steep southwestern ridge of New York Butte to its summit and return for a very strenuous day’s total of 8.3 round trip miles with 6,200’ of gain. Saturday night we’ll camp at our cars in Long John Canyon and enjoy a traditional and festive DPS Potluck Happy Hour. Sunday we’ll drive over to the eastern side of Owens Lake and head up into the Inyo Mountains. From our trailhead in the Cerro Gordo Ghost Town, we’ll first head north up the southern ridge crest to Pleasant Point and return for a total of 6.0 round trip miles and 1,850’ of gain. Then we’ll head south to hike up an old mining road to the summit of Cerro Gordo Peak and return for a total of 2.8 round trip miles with 1,150’ of gain. This is a DPS Outing co-sponsored by HPS and WTC. 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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<th>Regular</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
<th>Renews</th>
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## Activity Report

### Achievements

**Emblem**

#589  Howard Steidtmann  11/22/1994  
Signal Peak

#590  Tobi Tyler  6/3/2006  
Montgomery Peak

### New Subscriber

Jim Wick  2 years

### Sustaining Renewals

David Comerzan  1 year  
Burton A. Falk  1 year  
Paul & Pat Nelson  1 year

## DPS Membership Report

by Ron Bartell

### Membership Summary

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**New Subscriber**

Jim Wick  2 years

**Sustaining Renewals**

David Comerzan  1 year  
Burton A. Falk  1 year  
Paul & Pat Nelson  1 year

## 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!

I hope you all have recovered from the Chili Cook-Off. I hear the margaritas were good and a good time was had by all. I was camping in the Arctic on Svalbard to witness the eclipse on March 20th. What a sight! And auroras to watch that night also. I learned that Svalbard is an Arctic desert, so not much precipitation, but very cold. Sort of appropriate for a DPSer to visit in a way.

Here are some notes I am passing on from Chapter communications I have received:

The Safety Report for 2014 can be found here:


Accident forms and guidelines can be found at:

http://angeles2.sierraclub.org/safety_incident_reporting

In addition, Leaders, please report any accidents or incidents promptly to the above link.

There is a new website for Leaders (live since December) that also incorporates the LTC, OMC and Safety websites, which can be found at:

https://angeles2.sierraclub.org/leadership_and_outings

For those that have not ventured out yet - do so. There are flowers out in the desert in many locations, including Anza-Borrego. I enjoyed them in Jawbone Canyon last weekend. Daisies and lupines in great profusion.

Finally, for those interested, I have an Explorer trip write-up for Avawatz Mountain. The write-up is an easy alternative to the long hike on the dirt road on the standard route after it was closed by rock fall. Although 18 miles, it goes easily as a day hike and has an enjoyable "narrrows" section.

I would also like to correct an error in the DPS guide with regards to the south route to Whipple, which I did on February 15, 2015. After leaving the trailhead, the guide says bear left at the fork 0.8 miles in. If you bear left, the wash gets shallow and narrow after a mile or so to become a groove with low banks on both sides. Climb out of the wash left onto flat desert and look for a dirt road coming from the hillside to the right. Follow the road less than a half mile to a wash with a road fork. This is the fork at 1.9 miles referenced in the guide. Stay on the road you are following and continue to the leaching tank ruins. I could not verify it, but the dirt road to the leaching tanks is probably the right fork at 0.8 mile from the trailhead.

See you out there!
Exploring the Dead Mountains Wilderness: Mount Manchester (3,602’) and Homer Mountain (3,740’)
Leaders: Daryn Dodge and Kathy Rich
(Photos by Daryn Dodge)
February 14-15, 2015

This was our fourth scheduled Desert Wilderness High Points trip – in part to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Wilderness Act. This time we planned to climb the highpoint of the Dead Mountains Wilderness - Mount Manchester, located in the Dead Mountains north of Needles. These mountains got their name because they were once a sacred burial site for local Native Americans.

Most of our group of 9 drove in to the chosen trailhead for this peak climb the night before, while others chose to stay at a motel in Needles. Participants included Bob Wyka, Scott Sullivan, Elena Sherman, Ron Bartell, Christine Mitchell, Keith Christensen and Wasim Khan. The trailhead we used was 6.5 miles north of Arrowhead Junction on Highway 95. There was plenty of parking space just off the road here next to a sandy wash. A large sign welcoming you to the Dead Mountains Wilderness was posted across this wash in the direction of Mount Manchester.

Starting at 8:00 a.m. on what proved to be a rather warm day for February, we located an old dirt road that runs east northeast into the Dead Mountains Wilderness, but is now closed to motorized vehicles. We followed the road towards the Dead Mountains for about 1.5 miles, then split off heading more directly for the peak. The travel across the desert was easy and flat, with only a minor squiggle factor around the numerous creosote bushes. As we neared the peak, one large wash was crossed, soon followed by another, which the group used to reach the start of the northwest ridge of Mount Manchester. It was here we finally started heading uphill in earnest, although the terrain never exceeded more than Class 2. At the summit we were rewarded with a fine view of the Colorado River and the DPS peak, Spirit Mountain. Gordon MacLeod and Barbara Lilley had told us that they had left a register on the summit in 1986, but sadly it was now gone. We left a replacement register, and then returned to the cars using the same route we used to climb the peak.

On the way back we ran across what appeared to be a UXO (unexploded ordinance). We took photos of it; Bob recorded the coordinates, and then we left it as it was without touching or disturbing it. I reported the find to the Bureau of Land Management when I (Continued on page 9)
The Desert Sage

May-June 2015

Trip Reports - continued...

(Continued from page 8)

got back. They were possibly going to go check it out. Most participants thought this was a bit of a longish trudge across the desert on a warm day. Round trip distance was 10 miles with 1,800’ of total gain.

For camping and happy hour, we drove partway towards our next destination, Homer Mountain. Since Homer Mountain was just on the other side of Highway 95, we simply drove 1 mile north from the Mount Manchester trailhead to a pole line road and turned west towards the peak. We followed the pole line road for 0.8 mile, and then turned right onto a signed Bureau of Land Management road. The group chose a flat campsite location less than a half mile up this road. There was a wonderful selection of food and drink brought by everyone. Bob and Wasim had brought firewood, so we had a nice campfire to round out the evening.

The next morning, 7 participants remained to attempt the summit of Homer Mountain. To get there we continued west on the dirt road for roughly another 3.2 miles, then turned south towards the peak on another dirt road for 1 mile until we reached an abandoned mine. This got us just over a mile from the summit. Overall the dirt roads to this spot were in good shape, although 4 wheel drive is highly recommended for going through a few short sandy (and rocky) washes.

We walked up the road from here, although one could have continued driving for another 0.2 mi. to where it drops into a wash. But being only a mile or so from the summit, I decided a short walk on the dirt road would be a good warm-up before charging off over moderately rocky desert terrain. We continued southwest to the right of the wash gradually gaining elevation. After about a half mile of walking we turn more west heading up a ridge that brought us to the steeper northwest ridge that leads to the summit. The final summit ridge was rather rocky and the highpoint was at the west end. This time a MacLeod and Lilley register was still here at the summit, which they climbed 2 days later after Mount Manchester back in November, 1986. Our group was the first to sign in since Don Palmer signed it in 2007! Homer Mountain does not appear to be a major destination for the desert mountaineer, although in many ways it was a more enjoyable climb than Mount Manchester (i.e., more interesting terrain, shorter hike, less heat). While on the summit, we thought of many reasons to yell “Doh!”, in honor of Homer Simpson of the long-running cartoon series. Round trip distance was 2.2 miles with 1,300’ of total gain. Thanks to all for an enjoyable weekend of desert climbing!

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 119)

Conglomerate Mesa (7,724’)
By Jorge Estrada and Diana Neff-Estrada
February 21, 2015

This day, February 21, 2015, we chose to hike a seldom climbed peak in the Southern Inyo Mountains. Conglomerate Mesa lies just outside the west boundary of Death Valley National Park, with terrain mixed with Pinyon-Juniper Forest, Sagebrush and Joshua Trees.

After a nice breakfast in Lone Pine, we headed east on Highway 190 past the “T” Junction with Highway 136, to BLM Road S111, and headed north to another junction, BLM Road S5 that would take us directly to the Mesa in about 8 miles. This was a good/rough 4 wheel drive road, where at times you would be driving in a wash.

We had explored this area a few years back after climbing Nelson Mountain during a Thanksgiving...
At that time, we had approached the Mesa from the White Mountain Talc Road to the northeast side, and we were able to hike about half way up, but we were turned back by snow and not being totally sure on which chute to climb. This time, we were more prepared and decided to try the southeast corner of the Mesa for our ascent.

We were able to find a wide spot on the narrow road, and parked directly across from the southeast corner about 6,200’ foot elevation. We started our hike around 9:50 a.m. in a shallow ravine that would lead us to the slope we wanted to climb.

From the 6,600’ level, it became very steep as we made our way up and over very loose dirt and talus. Without any major navigation difficulties we zigzagged around huge boulders and reached the mesa rim. The topo showed the high point in the back of the mesa to the northwest. We climbed a low summit to try to reach a vantage point to see where we needed to go, and saw the higher ridgeline to the northwest. The mesa was a Pinyon Pine wonderland!!

All the way up, we never saw a sign of a used trail and headed thru easy terrain to the summit ridge and found the highpoint. The summit register went back to April 12, 1981 and was placed by DPS Gordon Macleod and Harvey Hickman. We were the 3rd and 4th hikers to sign this year! But previously, it had not been signed since February 2014. On this perfect cool day, we enjoyed the views of the White Mountains, Cerro Gordo Peak, Pleasants Peak and Waucoba Mountain. Looking south, the north side of Olancha Peak was snow covered. Just below to the north/northwest was a vast flat area of Sagebrush and Diana wanted to go and explore it. We dropped from the summit rocks and climbed an unnamed peak on the other side of the flats. It turned out to be Peak 7,491’ and we were happy to get a bonus peak.

We headed back towards the mesa via a different route to a low point on the summit ridge. We reached the first low summit and were back on track, spot on where we came up.

This was Diana’s first major cross-country hike since breaking her right foot/ankle coming down from Mount Lamarck, courtesy of a tumbling 60 pound boulder during Labor Day Weekend. There were a couple of times she became anxious with all the loose rocks while ascending and descending the southeast slope. However, she was able to work through it, and it was a moral victory for her.

We found our shallow gully that would take us directly to our vehicle and were back by 3:30 p.m. Today, we would not see anyone the entire day, and we were truly lords of the mountain. Overall, we logged in about 6.5 miles and 1,800’ of elevation gain.

The summit register on Conglomerate Mesa was placed on April 12, 1981 by Gordon Macleod and Harvey Hickman.
DRIVE/ROUTE A/WESTERN APPROACH: From Desert Center, California drive 17 miles north on State Highway 177 to the Palen Pass dirt road, located about 10 yards north of highway milepost 17. (Or from Twenty Nine Palms, drive approximately 40 miles east on Highway 62 to Highway 177, turn right and continue south to a turn off the left, just yards from milepost 17 and turn left, continuing on 1.8 miles of sandy road and follow the directions below from there.) Turn right (E) and drive 1.8 miles of sandy road to a junction. Turn right and drive 3.9 miles to a fork with a fair dirt road coming in from the east. Park. The boundary of the Palen-McCoy Wilderness Area is a few feet east of this parking spot.

The above is from the DPS guide, and I came from the north, i.e., Highway 62. The road in is definitely high clearance and 4 wheel drive. Not because of how rough it is, but because of how sandy it is. I engaged 4 wheel drive on my Tacoma more for traction than anything else.

When we arrived at the trailhead, there was a sign saying that the road in was closed, as this was the boundary of the Palen wilderness area. However, there were tire tracks in that went quite a ways. Further up, this good, but closed road, began to suffer from numerous washouts that would have made driving it a more serious challenge. In any case, we camped for the night there, as it was very flat and nice. Although the elevation is just above 500' here, the temperatures dropped below freezing overnight.

We headed up the road about 7:00 a.m. and made good time for the first 8.2 miles or so to get to the base of the mountain. Lorraine and I stopped for lunch here, and then she headed back to the truck, as her knee was sore. From this point on the hike was over difficult, rocky terrain. The DPS guide's directions are hard to follow in that there are numerous forks and sub-forks in the drainage, and at the point where I was to take the right fork, I went left, miscounting the number of forks that I was at!

No big deal, though, as I finally made the ridge separating the two forks, and followed it up to the summit ridge. The views were fantastic in all directions.

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Shoreline Butte (662’), Cinder Hill (-75’) and Longridge Peak (3,110’)
Leaders: Ann and Dave Perkins
By Ann Perkins
February 21-22, 2015

The Barchells’ (Ron Bartell and Christine Mitchell) finish of their list of 96 named Death Valley peaks and benchmarks was a success – 25 attendees, easy peaks, and good potluck food, as usual. Friday night we camped about two miles in from the 127 along the dirt but excellent Furnace Creek Wash road. We had agreed on a leisurely start the next morning, so we gathered at 9:00 a.m. for sign in and introductions, and then consolidated into fewer cars to drive to the trailhead for Shoreline Butte. Instead of driving back to the 127 and through Shoshone, we continued on the Furnace Creek Wash Road to its intersection with the 178, saving about 9 miles. The road continued to be excellent dirt. The starting point for Shoreline Butte is at the parking lot for the Ashford Mill site, and there was ample parking for our vehicles. Climbing this peak were Ron and Christine of course; Vic and Sue Henney, Mary Brooks and Sharon Marie Wilcox from Reno; Anne Rolls and Lisa Buckley from Crowley Lake; Linda McDermott from Tehachapi; Ann and Dave Perkins from Encinitas; Dave Boyle from Maine; and Gary Craig, Michelle Gomes, Ellen Grau, Gloria Miladin, Brian Smith, Rich Henke, Doris Gilbert, Ron Eckelmann, Mima and Greg Roach from the Los Angeles area. We certainly had a geographically diverse group. Ron Grau is taking care of his knee injury and decided not to climb, and Julie Rush stayed behind with her little dog.

We started at 10:10 a.m. across the dry Amargosa River, up an alluvial fan and a wash to the right, with several possibilities at that point. We probably didn’t choose the most direct route, but there was plenty of time. After about 30 minutes on the summit, we returned by a better route to the cars, arriving at 1:15 p.m. It was rather hot by that time so we huddled in the shade of vehicles and a large sign for a quick lunch before continuing on to Cinder Hill.

Moving on to Cinder Hill, which we had seen as a small red bump from the summit of Shoreline Butte, we assessed the peak’s difficulty and then swarmed up the hill by various routes. Julie joined us for this peak. After a 100’ ascent, all attained the minus 75’ elevation summit! There were congratulations, photos, and champagne, and then a general consensus that we should go to Tecopa Hot Springs for a soak. We drove back to the campsite, and most of us grabbed towels and continued to the hot springs ($7.00 entrance fee) and relaxed in the warm waters. I can’t say that we were relieving our aching muscles since the climbs weren’t that strenuous, but it felt good nonetheless. Back to the camp by about 5:00 p.m., just in time for happy hour with wonderful dips and Christine’s great deviled eggs, which merged into salads, stews, and desserts. Ron, Ellen and Linda had brought wood, so

(Continued on page 13)
Michelle organized a campfire, demonstrating her fire-building skills, and we were soon gathered around the fire while Ron B. regaled us with tales of how the quest for this list came to be, and tales of other lists as well.

The next morning the group went various ways. Brian, Gloria, and Michelle climbed Stewart Peak from the west, a different route from that in the guide (part of Brian’s Explorer quest). They reported that they made the peak after a long day and beat out the rain. Ron and Christine, Ann and Dave, Mirna and Greg, Anne, Lisa, and Dave Boyle climbed Longridge (948 meters, 2.5 miles ESE of Jubilee Mountain), following Ron’s suggestion. We parked on Hwy 178 where a dirt road goes north to Rhodes Spring, and headed south to a saddle just east of Point 831 meters, following the ridge from there south to the peak. We climbed over many ups and downs with some nice ridge walking and some steep rock (about 2,000’ gain and six miles), enjoying the good views from the top – the only eventful moment was when Ann heard and then spotted a rattlesnake rather close to the route on the way up. She and Christine watched from a safe distance as it rattled some more and then slid into a hole in the rock. The register went back to a 1978 entry by Andy Smatko, referring to the peak (unnamed on the topo) as “Longridge”. We got back to the cars about 3:00 p.m., just before the rain started in earnest. It was a fun weekend.

By around 2004 we were closing in on this list of 63 peaks, when we went on a DPS list finish trip to Sentinel, where Gerry Roach was one of the finishers. He mentioned that he had a list of Death Valley peaks on his website. When I checked it out after the trip I saw that his list had some peaks I’d never heard of – they were peaks named on the new 7.5’ topos but not on the 15’ topos. I’d completely overlooked this, but decided I had to expand my list to include peaks and benchmarks named on the 7.5’ maps. So after a trip to the UCLA map library to study the 7.5’ topos, I added 33 peaks to the list; Christine was not pleased, thinking we’d almost been done with the list. But she’s enjoyed the trips we’ve done to climb these added peaks.

Several peaks are very near the park boundary, and since many of the topos were printed before the monument expanded and became a park in 1994, it’s not easy to tell if they’re in the park since the current park boundary isn’t drawn on the topo. At the 2013 DPS Banquet, the speaker was Charlie Callagan, a Death Valley back-country ranger (who has his own Death Valley list); I asked him about these boundary peaks, and removed and added a couple of peaks from my

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Death Valley Peaks Lists
By Ron Bartell

Christine Mitchell and I have always enjoyed climbing and camping in Death Valley, starting with doing DPS listed peaks. The first Death Valley non-DPS peak we climbed was Striped Butte in 1989, when we finished Manly Peak early but weren’t up to doing Needle Peak in the afternoon, so why not something shorter like Striped Butte, even though it isn’t on the DPS list? In 1990 we did the last of the 19 DPS peaks in what would become Death Valley National Park in 1994, but kept going to Death Valley and started climbing unlisted peaks.

Before long, I decided to make a list of peaks within the park so we’d have a definite goal to work toward. I had most of the USGS 15’ topos covering the park, so I decided to base the list on those maps. Any named peak on a 15’ topo would be on the list, regardless of whether it was much of a peak; so, for example, Dantes View is on the list. And benchmarks named on the topo would also be on the list, but some of these weren’t even closed contours, just a point on a ridge, so only the “worthy” benchmarks would make the list. Peaks not named on the topos, even if they were good peaks, would not be on the list; this rule eliminated two excellent peaks: “Eureka Peak” (6,604’, 8 mi SW of Eureka Dunes) and “North Grapevine Peak” (8,460’, 3 miles NW of Grapevine Peak). Using these rules, there was one peak, Cinder Hill, with a summit below sea level, very appropriate for a list of Death Valley peaks; this had to be saved for our finish!

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Gerry Roach’s Death Valley list was the first such list I’d heard of, but I soon learned of others. Bob Sumner’s list turned out to have about a dozen more peaks (unnamed on the topos) than mine, as did Richard Carey’s. Vic Henney denies having a Death Valley list, but Sue Wyman says Vic just wants to climb everything on all the Death Valley lists he can find. Shane Smith, a few years ago, told me he’s working on all the peaks named on the AAA Death Valley map, including the ones outside the park. And then there’s Peakbagger.com, which has hundreds of peak lists, but no Death Valley list. However, the site lets you define your own lists; Paul Garry has defined a personal Death Valley list of 63 peaks. Querying the Peakbagger database for peaks in Death Valley National Park comes up with 168 peaks, 6 of which have summits below sea level; we’ve climbed 100 of them, but are going to ignore the rest for now.

Our list has three drive-ups (Aguereberry Point, Dantes View, and Zabriskie Point). Only two peaks are more than class 2 (The Grandstand, and Manly Peak’s summit block). We did four peaks as one-night dry backpacks (Sugarloaf Peak, Warm Benchmark, Leaning Benchmark, Owlhead Benchmark); we really enjoyed camping out in the middle of nowhere on these trips. The longest peak was Sugarloaf Peak, and is probably still the longest even from the closer approach that Bob Sumner found. The longest desert floor approach was four miles across the valley for Leaning Benchmark. Owl Benchmark and Owlhead Benchmark, on the far south boundary, felt the most remote. The toughest drive was getting into South Park, south of Porter Peak, to do Park Benchmark. Our most frequent companion was Dave Boyle, from Maine, who climbed 13 of the non-DPS peaks on the list with us. If you’d like a copy of our list, I’ll be glad to send it to you – see the last page of the Sage for my contact information.
I had heard last year that rock fall had closed the dirt road that leads to the standard trailhead on Avawatz Mountain. I do not know how long the walk is now to the peak from the closure, but I thought some of you might like to hear about the other Avawatz route from the north, which is in the DPS Guide, but not done very often. It is, after all 18 miles round trip, though the Guide suggests only 10 hours. Gloria Miladin and I decided to give it a try.

The route is easy to find. Drive north of Baker on Highway 127 to the Harry Wade Road plaque, turn left and drive an excellent quality dirt road 1.8 miles where you turn left on a dirt road that steadily deteriorates into soft sand through washes and then becomes periodically covered in lots of rocks. After 3.7 miles of this, fork left near an area of ground painted white onto a poor condition dirt road. This road steadily worsens and drops into a wide, rough wash, whose exit requires crossing several moraine-like, low mounds. All wheel drive came in handy here. After 0.7 miles of this, the road terminates at a concrete platform that used to be the California Studies cabin. References in the guide to a 4 wheel drive road that goes another 0.7 miles beyond the cabin are false. The spring with running water and a water tank are directly adjacent to the cabin platform and the road ends there. There’s also an outhouse there.

The route from the spring involves following a wash for over 7 miles as it slowly climbs towards Avawatz. The first part of the wash is impassable due to thick willows, but a use trail guides you up a foothill to the left, above all the vegetation, then back down to the wash once it is clear again. The wash is long and has Joshua Trees growing in it.

There is one section that is particularly interesting. A narrows involving some 3rd class waterfalls and a thicket with fresh, running water where we found an almost complete bighorn ram skeleton including a skull with big round horns attached.

After almost 7 miles, the wash climbs more steeply, narrows and winds around more. It becomes obvious you are nearing the end and 2 routes present themselves: continue in the main wash and climb the headwall as described in the guide, or take a side wash to the right.

The side wash soon gets steep with loose soil, but the climb to the ridge is only about 300’ and no rock climbing is required. On arrival at the ridge, turn left to a “summit” register at the end of a dirt road coming from the nearby military reservation at Fort Irwin. This is a goal for army patrols to navigate to, I think. Continuing on the ridge, you eventually enter a valley that slopes up towards Avawatz.

Unfortunately, we did not realize we were looking directly at Avawatz and so hiked the left side of the valley, needlessly crossing several ridges that came down from hills to the left of us. We were aiming for a saddle on the horizon, thinking it would lead us to our peak. Having got there, we realized we had walked past Avawatz and its subsidiary summit and now had to climb its north ridge from the saddle in the teeth of a howling gale in which it was hard to stand up and progress. Things would have been easier had we followed the right side of the valley and climbed directly up the subsidiary peak, which is, of course, the way we returned. We reached the summit after just over 6 hours, after 1:00 p.m. The wind was too severe to sit and eat, so we headed back down into the valley and had lunch at the beginning of the ridge back to the aforementioned “summit” register. We hiked back to the car uneventfully, arriving around 6:30 p.m. for a total elapsed time of just over 11 hours.

Before dark we drove down the rough dirt road and camped in a flat spot about a mile from the Harry Wade Road. Next day, we took the DPS Guide’s advice and drove out to Saratoga Springs, noticing on the way there that the Amargoza River was flowing quite freely across the desert – not a common sight, I think. The Saratoga Springs are several pools surrounded by long reeds and bulrushes. They are quite the oasis and we saw waterfowl, mainly coots, happily swimming in those pools. We spent a very pleasant morning exploring the area, before heading back to Los Angeles.
However, before gas rationing began in June 1942, two more memorable desert peak outings were scheduled. A triple-peak trip to Cerro Gordo Peak, Coso Peak and Maturango Peak was led by Chester and assisted by Elsie Strand over April 11-12, 1942. With Chester again leading and Niles as assistant, Waucoba Mountain was ascended in a two-day backpack over the weekend of June 6-7, 1942. Ten climbers reached the summit, again attracted by Chester’s enthusiastic prose: “The highest peak in all the Inyo Range! You will get a real kick out of this climb because several of your friends - maybe you, too - will, on the summit of old Waucoba, qualify for membership in the new Desert Peaks Section.” Besides Chester and Niles, the summiteers were Parker Severson, Freda Walbrecht, Martin Britt, Harry Paley, Jim Tow, Rhoda Goertz, Pat Carmical, and Fred Johnson. Niles Werner qualified as the second climber to ascend all seven peaks and become a member of the Desert Peaks Section.

With gas rationing taking effect in June 1942, desert peak outings were severely curtailed. Chapter Schedule number 111 (November 1942-February 1943) proclaimed that “Scheduled activities are temporarily suspended until the transportation situation is improved.” Parker Severson wrote that “We did manage to get some of desert peaks that were not too far away during the war years when gas rationing was on. Getting enough gas was a problem. We doubled up in cars, and got gas by scrounging gas coupons in all sorts of devious ways, short of nocturnal raids on car tanks.”

According to Fred Johnson, who as a teenager climbed with the new section, there were two significant unscheduled desert climbs during the gas rationing period from June 1942 until September 1945. First was a climb of White Mountain on October 12, 1942, on which Freda Walbrecht and Harry Paley finished the seven summits and became DPS member’s numbers 3 and 4. Also on this trip was Georgie White, who later pioneered commercial river rafting on the Colorado River.

The following year, Harry Paley, Freda Walbrecht, Martin Britt, Charles Hitch, and Fred Johnson ventured into southern Nevada to climb Charleston Peak over the weekend of September 17-19, 1943. Thanks to Harry, who had a “C” gas coupon book, they were barely able to scrape enough gas to make the trip.

With war’s end, all the pent-up energies of Chester and his small band of desert enthusiasts burst out in renewed activity. The first post-war scheduled outing was a climb of Waucoba on November 10-12, 1945, led by Niles Werner and James Tow, announced in the chapter schedule with the comment that “The Desert Peaks Section comes to life again.”

Late in 1945 the DPS was reorganized as a formal section of the Southern California Chapter, with dues, officers, and business meetings instituted. Chester was offered but declined the chairmanship, so James O. Tow was elected first chairperson. Other first officers of the DPS were Freda Walbrecht, vice chairman; and members at large Harry Paley, Niles Werner, and Chester

(Continued on page 17)
Membership zoomed to new heights (23), and the beginning of 1946 saw the section as a well-established fixture of the Chapter. The flame was now bright; no longer was it a tiny flicker kept going solely by the eloquence of its founder.

The year 1946 witnessed a full DPS schedule. Peaks scheduled and successfully led were Coso Peak and Maturango Peak, leader Parker Severson; New York Butte, Niles Werner; Telescope Peak, Henry Greenhood; Waucoba Mountain, Parker again; White Mountain, Harry Paley; and Kofa Mountain, leader Parker Severson. The latter, done over the Thanksgiving weekend (November 28-30), was the first outing away from the trans-Sierra desert ranges. The DPS was discovering that there were excellent peaks all over the Southern California deserts.

Freda Walbrecht, a Los Angeles attorney of some renown, was elected DPS chairperson in 1947. There were ten scheduled outings that year, including the first ascent of Boundary peak and Montgomery Peak, led by Niles Werner over the Memorial weekend, May 30-June 1, and Charleston Peak, also led by Niles, September 13-14. Also in 1947 Parker Severson designed the DPS emblem; “It occurred to me that the most fitting symbol to use would be our noble desert animal, the Bighorn.” The emblem was earned by climbing all seven original qualifying peaks.

A word about Freda Walbrecht: She was born in York, Nebraska, in 1903. She studied law and practiced in Oregon for eight years. She came to California in 1934, set up a law practice in Los Angeles, and joined the Sierra Club. Freda was a determined woman and a competent climber in the 1930s and into the early ‘50s. One of her major goals was to climb all the 14,000ers in California. She joined the Werners, who had the same goal, on many of their ascents. To finish the list she hired Norman Clyde, the Sierra’s foremost mountaineer, as guide and load carrier. She completed all the 14,000ers, becoming the first woman to do so, when Clyde led her to the airy summit of North Palisade. She was probably the only DPSer, in those times, to be accepted for membership in the prestigious American Alpine Club. In her later years Freda slowed considerably, but continued to climb mountains at her own pace.

In 1948 Parker Severson was elected DPS chairman. The year saw nine scheduled trips. The first scheduled climb of Rabbit Peak was led by Bill Henderson, January 31-February 1. The was one of the last DPS outings attended by Chester Versteeg. On the summit he pulled out pen and paper and, inspired by the grandest and most touching literary artistry, wrote the epic poem “Wild Rabbit.”

You sneak up on him, mile by mile, Foot by foot, bit by bit. Four jaws are grim, there’s no smile; Then a final lunge and you’ve captured it - THE RABBIT!

For seasoning use sage or wild pea, And, if you want to pep it up a bit, Dip the meat yonder in the Salton Sea. Yum yum, boys and girls, this is it - THE WILD RABBIT!

Telescope, White Mountain, Boundary or New York Butte, You bet, we like ‘em all a bit. But today - no steak tough as a climber’s boot; Today, tender and sweat, this is it - WILD RABBIT

Parker Severson later added a final stanza:

Alas, what prompts we mortals so vain, To (Continued on page 18)
pursue this mighty sore-muscle game; Plodding with sweat and tears through storm and rain, To crown these noble summits with our name? - WILD RABBIT

In subsequent years, numerous other climbers added their own stanzas to the epic poem.

The DPS bylaws authorized the section to schedule two Sierra Nevada outings each year. The first and only one in 1948 was a climb of Olancha Peak, June 19-20, led by Niles Werner. The first DPS Triennial Banquet was held at the Hollywood Athletic Club, May 4, 1948. “It was a tremendous clambake,” wrote Parker Severson, “The only important person who wasn’t there was the Governor.” The speaker was Dr. James Bonner of Caltech.

In 1949 Henry Greenhood became DPS chair person. There were 11 scheduled trips that year, including the first scheduled climb of Glass Mountain, May 28-30, led by Bill and Margie Henderson; Lone Pine Peak in the Sierra, August 13-14, under Parker Severson; and Henry Greenhood and Antonio Gamero’s Idyllwild to Palm Springs traverse, October 1-2.

Changes came to the DPS list of qualifying peaks during the 1947-1949 period. The Section played “tag” with the U.S. Navy. Coso Peak and Maturango Peak, both within the boundaries of the China Lake Naval bombing range, were deleted, added, deleted, added again and deleted a third time during the late ‘40s and early 50s. 1947 to 1949 witnessed the expansion of the list of qualifying peaks from seven to 16, with the addition of Boundary Peak, Montgomery Peak, Grapevine Peak, Castle Dome Peak, [Little] Pica-cho Peak, Martinez Mountain, Rabbit Peak, Glass Mountain, Dry Mountain, and Sentinel Peak. The new emblem requirement remained at seven peaks, but required the climbing of four newly designated emblem peaks: New York Butte, Montgomery Peak, Telescope Peak, and Rabbit Peak, the latter the first emblem peak away from the trans-Sierra ranges.

During the late 1940s and early ‘50s, a number of noteworthy individuals joined the Desert Peaks Section and contributed much to the organization. Their names deserve to be remembered. Other than those already mentioned, this “honor list” of those who should not be forgotten are Lloyd and Rosemarie Balsam, Eric and Elsie Kent, Willard and Marion Dean, Bill and Betty Crookston, Bob and Emily Bear, John Del Monte, Luella Todd, Virgil Sisson, Irene Charnock, Walter and Bernice Heninger, Sam Fink, Alda Van Pappelendam, Antonio Gamero, Tom and Trudie Hunt, and Georgie White who, as previously mentioned, became the “first lady” of Grand Canyon rafting. One early DPSer still active today is our own Barbara Lilley, who was climbing with the section as early as 1950.

1950 saw the birth of the DPS Newsletter, edited by section chairman Bill Henderson and ably assisted by his wife Margie. Bill believed that communications between the Management Committee and the section’s membership would be improved if he wrote a letter to the membership to keep them abreast with activities and issues pertaining to the section. He did just that. The nine newsletters issued during Bill’s term of office were addressed to “Dear Member”, written in the first person and signed by Bill. So began, 61 years ago, the long saga of today’s Desert Sage.

Chester Versteeg retired from DPS activities in 1950, well satisfied with the progress and popularity of the section. Always restless by nature,
Chester Versteeg and the Early History of the DPS - continued...

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Chester pursued other projects.

As an alumnus of the University of Southern California, he noticed that there were Sierra peaks honoring Stanford University and the University of California (University Peak), but nothing to honor his institution. To remedy this, Chester organized and led an ascent of a then-unnamed 13,968-foot summit about five airline miles north of Mount Whitney and proposed the name “Trojan Peak.” The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, at the request of Chester and university president Dr. Fred Fagg, accepted the name Trojan Peak and the pool of water below it as Lake Helen of Troy. In 1951, shortly after the names were accepted by the USBGN, Chester founded the Trojan Peak Club, open to interested U.S.C. students and alumni.

In his later years, Chester worked on a history of the Sierra Nevada, interviewing over 400 pioneers and other persons with knowledge of the Range of Light. But he was beaten to the punch by Francis Farquhar’s superb history of the range published by the University of California Press in 1964.

Chester Versteeg, 76 years old, passed away on November 2, 1963. Perhaps his greatest legacies were the 250-odd Sierra peaks, passes, lakes, and meadows he named, and as “founding father” of our Desert Peaks Section.

One more Sierra place name needs to be mentioned. At the urging of Chester’s many friends, the United States Board on Geographic Names accepted the name “Mount Versteeg” for a 13,470-foot summit on the Sierra crest immediately north of Trojan Peak. Over the Labor Day weekend of 1965, I led a dedication climb of Mount Versteeg, sponsored jointly by the SPS and the DPS, unfurled the Versteeg family flag, and placed a register on the summit containing a synopsis of Chester’s life and accomplishments.

SOURCES: Los Angeles Times, Sierra Club Bulletin, Pacific Pathways, various issues. Interview with Mrs. Lillian Versteeg, Chester’s widow, in Laguna Niguel. Selected Chester Versteeg papers and correspondence donated by Mrs. Lillian Versteeg. Interviews with Louise Werner, in Alhambra and later at the Artesia Christian Home. Correspondence with Parker Severson, Freda Walbrecht, Fred Johnson, Bill T. Russell, Charles Knapke, Dennis Kruska, John Ripley, and Robert Cates, the latter Chair of the Angeles Chapter’s History Committee.

Note: Part 1 of this article was published in the March-April issue of the Desert Sage.
As spring approaches, more peaks are snow free, which increases opportunities to work on the Great Basin Peaks list. Who will be out hiking in the Great Basin this season? The following members have provided their peak numbers to show their current progress:

Robert Stolting: 9
Mitch and Janice Brown-Silveira: 21
Laura Newman: 22
Kathy Rich: 23
Marge Sill: 24
Daniel Baxter: 24
James Barlow: 29
Bob Morrill: 35
James Morehouse: 36
Tobi Tyler: 46
Howard Steidtmann: 49
Dave Porter: 54
Randy McNatt: 59
Charlie Winger: 64
Mary Brooks: 66
Daryn Dodge: 67
Ken Jones: 75
Sharon Marie: Wilcox 80
Larry Dwyer: 92
John Ide: 114

Looks like a new list finish is on the horizon!

We’ll check back as autumn ends to see everyone’s progress, plus add others that decide to share their peaks.

Our Toiyabe Chapter webmaster, Dennis Ghiglieri, has our new website format done. Check it out on the link below. Thanks Dennis!

We now have a page on Facebook. Please add pictures or reports from your trips to share with other hikers.

Join the GBPS! For details on membership, recognition categories, peak list, and trip reports check out Great Basin Peaks Section at: http://www.sierraclub.org/toiyabe/great-basin-peak-outings

Exploring Our Public Lands on Great Basin Peaks
By Sharon Marie Wilcox

In March, Larry Dwyer led a group up Pah-Rum Peak (7,608’) as a joint Sierra Club/Friends of Nevada Wilderness outing. Pah-Rum is located in the Fox Range Wilderness Study Area and is the range highpoint. Our route headed up Rattlesnake Canyon for a pleasant, steep hike to the summit for about 2,600’ gain and 6 miles round trip. For those interested in peak lists, Pah-Rum is also a Nevada prominence peak. Great Basin Peaks promise spectacular summit views. During lunch, we viewed Pyramid Lake to the south, the Smoke Creek Desert, San Emidio Desert, plus many notable surrounding peaks still visible on this cloudy day.

Larry also planned a hike to Rawe Peak (8,343’) at the north end of the Pine Nut Range. The Old Como Road out of Dayton leads to the hike’s starting point. The rough, rocky road passes the old mill ruins and town site of Como adding a possible exploration of the historical 1860’s mining town. This hike has some minor rock scrambling and brushy areas varying in distance depending on your starting point. Our parking spot gave us about 1,500’ gain and 6 miles round trip. Our bonus was a nice black bear track in the mud.

Thanks Larry for planning these two enjoyable outings and sharing information on the difference between wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and areas with wilderness characteristics. These hikes are possible to enjoy because of public lands. Public lands enable us to access the many peaks and outdoor areas we all enjoy. To help preserve and protect our public lands please, email the members of the Nevada Senate and ask them to vote No on Senate Joint Resolution 1. This resolution would transfer a majority of public lands into state and private control, preventing us from enjoying their endless opportunities. Public lands are currently managed by the BLM and U.S. Forest Service, and contain many recreation areas and critical wildlife habitat. Let’s work to keep them public.
Desert Peaks Section
March 8, 2015 Potluck, Hosted by Tom Sumner

(Photos taken by Mary McMannes)

From left to right, Edna Erspamer, Vic Henney, Sue Wyman-Henney, Ellen Grau, and Mirna Roach

From left to right, Greg Roach, Gloria Miladin, and Brian Smith

From left to right, Ellen Grau, Julie Rush, Mirna Roach (in front), Mary McMannes, and Gloria Miladin

From left to right, Vic Henney, Kathy Rich, and Greg Roach
Desert Peaks Section Chili Cook-off
March 21-22, 2015
Hosted by Julie Rush, Laura Webb and Jan Brahms

(Photos taken by Mike Sandford)

The 21st Annual DPS Chili Cook-Off
March 21-22, 2015
Co-Hosts: Julie Rush, Jan Brahms & Laura Webb
By: Julie Rush

After a gallant effort to plan a fall event near Death Valley, finding a more suitable venue for a gathering of the chiliphiles was a bit of a challenge. Anza Borrego Desert State Park came to mind, and with the assistance of desert denizen Laura Webb, we scoured the park for four days in early January, 4-wheeling thru the outback of the park in all directions looking for a “home”, as it were. Culp Valley Primitive Campground proved to be a lovely space for all 41 participants! After all, it was to be the first day of Spring, and the desert bloom did not disappoint us. Spring wildflowers were impressively gorgeous.

As co-host and chief parking attendant for the event, I was able to creatively make room to have all nine cooks encircled around a picturesque landscape of granite boulders and silver cholla. Early arrivers enjoyed day hiking to Maidenhair Falls and Pena Springs and later, an intimate camp-fire and camaraderie with a starry, windless Friday evening. Although many busy hikers arrived throughout all of Saturday, a space for car and tent camping was able to be procured for all! By noon all cooks were present, and commenced to sauté, scorch, sear, grill, poach, reduce, steep, stew, simmer (and even freeze) their secret recipes, all the while scheming, concocting and contriving ways to get a vote. Elena Sherman modeled her enviable “Breaking Bad:” yellow apron as on-lookers relaxed, hiked, flowered, birded or socialized.

Fresh-lime margaritas, from mixicologist Bob Wyka, and also provided in-absentia by Brian Smith-on-a-stick who was in Norway to observe the solar eclipse, commenced to flow some time (hard to remember) before the 4:30 p.m. gathering for happy hour and Cooks’ Introduction. The chili contestants were expressive if not inventive. Their limitless promises of delectable, culinary experiences sounded more like bribery for votes to me. Why, even Gloria Miladin used child labor, her adorable grandchildren, Hannah and Lucas, to pluck the voters’ heartstrings!

The ballot package (creatively made by Dave Baldwin!) was passed out to all the qualifying tasters who, after passing strict voting regulations requiring 2 picture IDs and proof that they could still read and write, grabbed their spoons to begin their quest for the “Best

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Chili” stopping now and again to refresh their margaritas. A cake was offered by Karen to celebrate Ron Hudson’s birthday, and the usual happy hour fare was enjoyed by all. And as the ballots began to be tallied, the campfire soon became the gathering place for the well-watered and chili-contented.

The award presentation began a little later and was lively and thoroughly entertaining. Thanks to our “calligrapher-of-the-desert”, Elaine Baldwin, for hand-lettering the winners’ names for each certificate—by camp light no less!

Here are the ballot results for the 21st Annual DPS Chili Cook-Off:

Best Overall: Peter Christian “Anza-Pedro”

Best Traditional: Kelley Laxamana “G.O.T. Chili ?” (Good Ole Traditional Chili)

Best Texas Style: Laura Webb “Tex (New) Mex”

Best Vegetarian: Linda McDermott “Dirty Dog”

Spiciest Chili: Peter Christian “Anza Pedro”

Most Original Recipe: Gloria Miladin with Hannah and Lucas Heintz “Chilly-Chili Ice Cream”

Best Presentation: Mirna Roach “Tango Turkey”

Honorable Mention: Ann Perkins’s “Chili Buck”, Janet Damen’s “Carne Comfort” and Karen Andersen’s “Veggie-Delish”

A special recognition gift was also given to Dave and Elaine Baldwin for their tireless efforts as Cook-Off hosts over the last five years.

(Oh, if anyone did not get the microwave potato bag instructions, contact me for them and enjoy.)

Early Sunday morning, a hike to Wilson Benchmark and Pinyon Ridge enticed 12 participants, and other folk slowly broke camp and headed for various needed peaks, high points or hot springs on their way home. Some of us sauntered up the newly built Culp Valley Lookout Trail to admire the prolific flower bloom and view the Borrego Valley and beyond. Great to see all those daunting peaks like Villager and Rabbit in the distance, which most of us have hiked at least once.

The 21st DPS Chili Cook-Off was a wonderful gathering of old and new friends, with great food, good drink and bad jokes. I could not have even begun such a feat without Laura Webb and Jan Brahms. Jan was not able to attend the weekend, but her organizational and graphic design work were top notch. I’d like to add one more thing. With the generous approval of all the cooks, proceeds of $100 has been donated to the Anza Borrego Foundation, the organizational arm that works to protect, preserve and expand our Anza Borrego Desert State Park.

So, here’s to the 22nd DPS Chili Cook-Off to come. Hosts will be Gloria Miladin, Julie Rush and Linda McDermott. We are crazy gals to volunteer for this, but we like to have fun in the desert.

See more pictures in a quick slideshow that can be viewed at this link: https://21stdpschilicookoff.shutterfly.com/
EAST ORD MOUNTAIN

A few pieces ago, I “dissed” East Ord as the “Rodney Dangerfield” list peak that “don’t get no respect”. On reflection, I decided I should try to dig up something interesting about it and give it its chance at a place in the (desert) sun. And, while it is probably on no one’s list of the ten “favorite” or “most beautiful” List peaks, its outwardly drab rocks, when examined, actually tell the whole story of the plate collision that has shaped the West… from B.C. (before collision) to its aftermath! (No glacial geology this time).

Although part of the highest range in this part of the Mojave, topping out at 6,309’ on (Middle) Ord Mountain, East Ord starts with a big disadvantage; no pretty rocks. No shining granite palisades like Big Picacho; no picturesque giant boulders like Coxcomb; no massive limestone cliffs like Charleston; no rainbow sandstone like Guardian Angels or Bridge. Just kind of a dense dull gray-blackish stone, weathering brownish, good for cobblestones maybe but nothing to write home, or articles, about. This is mostly because, this far west, we’re largely in the roof of the engine room of the Nevadan orogeny. “Pretty” sedimentary rocks tend to form in quieter, lower-energy environments. Pretty granite forms deep in the engine room; Sierran-age granite does crop out in the Ords and likely underlies them at depth, but here we’re just mostly in the cooked peripheral zone. And yet… careful geologic study of these drab rocks reveals the entire history of the Nevadan orogeny and subsequent events. (Most of this piece is adapted from “Geology and Mineral Deposits of the Ord Mountain District, San Bernardino County, California” by F. Harold Weber, Jr. [California Division of Mines & Geology Special Report 77, 1963])

On the west side of East Ord is exposed a total of 2,000 feet of quartzite (metamorphosed sandstone) and marble (cooked limestone) intruded by Nevadan (Mesozoic) granite. Any fossil information in these rocks was destroyed long ago, but from regional relations this has to be a remnant of the great sedimentary sequence laid down over more than a quarter billion years on the quiet continental margin we’ve discussed before which lasted from the Precambrian to the end of the Paleozoic (ca. 250 MYA). As we go west in the Mojave, these remnants become increasingly scattered, mangled and cooked.

(Continued on page 25)
The Rocks We Climb - continued...

(Continued from page 24)

beginning of the Great Tectonic Plate War of the Nevadan orogeny – as they are intruded at the base by typical younger Jurassic-Cretaceous Nevadan granites. (Remember, this happened at great depth.) Another clue connecting these rocks with the Triassic start of continental-margin subduction volcanism is the fact that they’re mostly andesite – yes, from “Andes” – the signature rock of this process. (In my Atacama article a few years back, I mentioned that mile after endless mile of andesite became almost monotonous.) So we have the whole story of continental-margin subduction tectonics – first, massive surface eruption of andesites, later buried and intruded at depth by granites generated later and deeper in the process – in these at-first-glance boring rocks. (Some of the airborne ash from these left-coast volcanoes drifted east over the quiet Triassic backwater of the Colorado Plateau and fell out, creating what Ed Abbey wonderfully called the “poisonous Chinle badlands”).

As is the story with other Basin and Range-type mountains, after the Nevadan orogeny spent itself there was great regional uplift and erosion, exhuming rocks that had formed at great depths. The Miocene (23 to 5 MYA) was, here as elsewhere, a time of great crustal extensional stress, forming both strike-slip (lateral) and normal dip-slip, or uplift, faults in this area. The lateral faults in the southwestern Mojave have a northwest-southeast-trending grain, which suggests that they were shaped by the regional crustal stress field caused by the opening of the lateral northwest-southeast San Andreas system to the southwest. From crosscutting relationships, it appears that this cracking opened up pathways for hot, chemically-rich fluids to rise from somewhere in the depths and precipitate out as ore-bearing veins in the cooler, lower-pressure near-surface regions. This gave us the metallic deposits of the historic Ord Mountain Mining District, predominantly copper but including values in gold and silver, even tungsten and molybdenum! Precise figures are not known but from old mine records a total of about 2,000 tons of ore were shipped between 1898 and 1953.

As a final touch – even in the Ords we find an odd summit plateau of subdued relief with steep sides all around, something I’ve written about in my past two pieces on the Whites and Toquimas. The 6,309’ summit of (Middle) Ord Mountain, an off-list bag (accessed by a rough 4 wheel drive road; I had to start from the bottom) is one of these! Another ancient uplifted erosion surface? Even one of our (at first glance) least interesting peaks has many stories to tell!

(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.
Michel Digonnet's 1997 volume, *Hiking Death Valley*, provided an excellent guide to one of California's premier desert wonderlands. In 2013, Digonnet published what this reviewer believes to be an even superior work, this one exploring California's seldom visited desert gem, the 1.6 million acre Mojave National Preserve.

As Digonnet comments, "The east Mojave Desert is used mostly as a throughway, be it by freight trains rumbling along endless railway, by compressed natural gas flowing through buried pipelines, by high-voltage electrons surfing power lines, or by the swelling ranks of humans whizzing by on the interstates. The majority of drivers who actually enter the preserve use it as a convenient shortcut to get someplace else. Like the electrons and the freight, they never touch the land. In any given year, less than 70,000 people stop by the preserve's visitor center. The east Mojave Desert is still...a place known by very few."

To browse a few pages of *Hiking the Mojave Desert* is to realize that Digonnet has been meticulous in regard to the accuracy of the information he provides. The list of specialists he consulted in preparing his volume is a virtual Who's Who of desert knowledge and expertise. Best of all, it is abundantly clear that the author truly enjoyed gathering his material.

Leading off with obligatory information necessary for any desert guidebook--the park's minimal facilities, weather, best seasons to visit, geology (including a four page chart of the geologic periods from Proterozoic to Pleistocene), flora, fauna, Native American history, railroad history, and mining history are described. In his section "Safety Tips and Regulations," Digonnet reviews water needs and its availability, backcountry regulations, rock climbing considerations (many canyon hikes have dry waterfalls to be surmounted), backcountry driving, and wilderness ethics.

The hikes described are divided into eight geographic sections: Kelso Basin, Clark Mountain Range, Ivanpah Mountains, New York Mountains, Mid Hills,
The Desert Sage

Desert Books – continued...

(Continued from page 26)

Providence Mountains, Granite Mountains, and Lanfair Valley, all of which are accompanied by excellent maps “hand drawn on a computer by the author from USGS topographic maps.” The book’s photos and sketches, also top drawer were shot or drawn by Digonnet.

Of special interest to DPS members are Digonnet's guides to climbing three list peaks, Clark Mountain, New York Mountain, and Granite Mountain (north), in which some of his information came as a surprise to me.

For example, I didn't realize that the upper drainage of the Cottonwood Wash, including all of the Cottonwood Basin—the route by which I climbed Granite Mountain many years ago—is now a part of the Sweeney Granite Mountains Desert Research Preserve, and that public access is strictly prohibited. Digonnet climbed Granite from the north side, via Bull Canyon, a more difficult route which took him 11 hours to complete.

Furthermore, I was not aware that access to Edgar Peak (and Fountain Peak, Mitchell Caverns and the Providence Mountains Campground) was no longer possible. Due to the 2011 cutbacks in the California State budget the entire Providence Mountains State Recreational Area, which is enclosed by but not a part of the Mojave Desert National Preserve, is closed until further notice.

To give you a sample of Digonnet's excellent descriptions, consider the following samples:

Kelso Dunes: "Rising 500 feet above their surrounding, the spectacular Kelso Dunes are the second tallest in the California Desert, exceeded only by the Eureka Valley's mighty dunes. Climbing their highest summit is understandably the preserve's most popular hiking destination. Yet the Kelso Dunes are so vast that they offer endless possibilities for enjoying the magic world of sand in seclusion—the immense barren playas, the rippled slopes, the sensual hollows and finely sculpted crests."

Soda Lake: Hiking across Soda Lake "is a muddy, slushy, tedious business. It is so messy you may not even make it through. But this hike throws you instantly into a different world. The landscape vibrates with the surreal light reflected by the salt pan...This is tantalizing scenery, alien and raw yet strangely attractive."

Cima Dome: "About 10 miles across but only 1,200 feet tall, Cima Dome is more like a swelling than a true mountain. Yet it is a special place: it is host to the world's largest Joshua Tree forest, and it holds the record for the most symmetrical dome in the United States." Not the "world's prestigious mountain...but it is a geological oddity, and climbing it is so easy it's hard to pass up."

In addition, Digonnet's historic notes are well-researched and interesting.

"The combined output of all the historic mines in the New York Mountains probably did not exceed a few hundred thousand dollars." However, "by establishing early on the presence of mineral assets in the east Mojave Desert, it sparked further prospecting and additional strikes..."(I)n 1881 a reduction plant was installed in Needles, even before the town was founded...A railway...was constructed across Lanfair Valley to connect the mines to the mill," which, although short-lived, helped open the area "to homesteaders and supported...other mines as far north as Death Valley. Ironically, this beneficial infrastructure stemmed from a mistake—a gross overestimation of the New York Mountains' mineral worth."

Hiking the Mojave Desert is a gem, 452 pages in length, including descriptions of approximately 150 hikes, and, best of all, the author's personal comments on each. Digonnet is also the author of Hiking Western Death Valley National Park (2013), and is currently preparing another volume Hiking Joshua Tree National Park. I can't think of a better speaker for a future Desert Peaks Section function.

LAST WATER ON THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY, A Cultural and Natural History of Tinajas Altas, (2012), Bill Broyles, Gayle Harrison Hartmann, Thomas E. Sheridan, Gary Paul Nabhan, Mary Charlotte Thurtle

Since Desert Books began reviewing desert-themed (Continued on page 28)
volumes sixteen years ago, El Camino del Diablo (The Devil's Highway), the historic route across southwestern Arizona, and Tinajas Altas, a series of natural tanks close by the Camino, have been considered on many occasions.

Indeed, arranged alphabetically by author, this column has reviewed the following volumes referring to that vast, arid expanse located between the Rio Sonoyta and the Colorado River: Dead in Their Tracks, John Annerino; Outpost of Empire: A Biography of Eusibio Francisco Kino, Anza's California Expeditions, Herbert Bolton; Blue Desert, Charles Bowden; Sunshot, Bill Broyles; Desert Gold, Zane Grey; Desert Heart: Chronicles of the Sonoran Desert, William K. Hartmann; The Sierra Pinacate, Julian D. Hayden; Camp-Fires on Desert and Lava, William T. Hornaday; Last Stand at Papago Wells, Louis L'Amour; New Trails in Mexico, Carl Lumholtz; The Desert Smells Like Rain, Gary Nabhan; The Devil's Highway, Luis Urrea; and Lady Bought With Rifles, Jeanne Williams.

Until 2012, however, when Last Water on the Devil's Highway finally arrived in bookstores, there had been no one-volume devoted wholly to the cultural and natural history of Tinajas Altas and El Camino del Diablo.

The genesis for Last Water on the Devil's Highway dates back to the late 1990s, when the U.S. Air Force, then the overall manager of the Barry M. Goldwater Range, proposed to fund a project that would research the history and significance of the area.

And although many authors contributed to the original two-volume work, The Only Water for 100 miles, published in 2000, only five co-authors, Broyles, Hartmann, Sheridan, Nabhan, and Thurtle, followed through on the notion that the scientific report should be amended into "a more accessible book that would explain why Tinajas Altas is a magical place worthy of respect and preservation."

Last Water on the Devil's Highway, the resulting user-friendly version, published in 2012, leads off with an introductory chapter, "Desert Water," explaining the area and why it remains of such great intrinsic value.

Specifically, Tinajas Altas and the Devil's Highway are located in the region known as the Western Papagueria, a swath of northwestern Sonora and southwestern Arizona bounded by the Sonoyta River on the east, the Colorado River on the west, the Gila River on the north, and the freshwater seeps along the coast of the Gulf of California on the south.

The word tinaja is Spanish for an earthenware jar, while Tinajas Altas (generally translated as 'High Tanks') "is a name which also applies to the mountain range containing (the) string of pools, a nearby pass, and an adjacent archaeological site used extensively in both prehistoric and historic times."

Located in a steep 400' defile in the east face of the Tinajas Altas Mountains, the fifteen natural water catchments, "varying in size from a wash bucket to a backyard pool," have been estimated to hold at least 20,000 gallons of water when full.

The source of water in that otherwise waterless area has been important to humans for millennia. For Native Americans--most recently the Hia C'ed O'odham, a western branch of the O'odham; for untold numbers of Spanish and Mexican-era explorers; and, in the 1850s,
for the travelers on their way to and from the gold fields of California, to find water there was often a matter of life and death.

But is the water of Tinajas Altas actually potable? Indeed, water that stands in natural tanks year round can contain an "odd mix of bacteria, viruses, toxins, dead animals, salts, and unusual chemical and mineral concentrations." Raphael Pumpelly, traveling along the Camino with his family in 1915, wrote this of the water they found in nearby Tule Tank: "Its water was both brackish and offensive, but facing thirst on the desert one can't be squeamish. Several months later a friend who had been over that route on a survey asked: 'How did you like the Tule water?' 'Not much,' I answered. 'Naturally,' he said, 'for we found and left a man in it two years ago.'"

The chapter, "First Europeans to Forty-Niners," explains the problem in determining who the first European was to stop at Tinajas Altas. In the fall of 1540, following his conquest of Cibola in western New Mexico, Francisco de Coronado dispatched Captain Melchior Diaz to travel west to the Colorado River to rendezvous with Hernando de Alarcon, who, sailing up the Gulf of California and ascending the Colorado River, was meant to deliver much-needed supplies for Coronado's expedition. Although the mission failed (in fact, Diaz himself died during the endeavor), his men may have visited the tanks both going from and returning to New Mexico.

The historian, Herbert Bolton (1870-1953), believed that the Jesuit Father, Eusebio Kino, stopped at Tinajas Altas in February, 1699, during his first expedition from north-central Sonora to the Colorado River. Later historians disagree, however, claiming that what Bolton thought to be Tinajas Altas was instead the Cabeza Prieta Tanks, some 15 miles to the east. Because the problem of accurate distance measurements--in Kino's time distance was calculated in leagues, a league being the distance that could be traveled in an hour--and because Kino's notes are often contradictory, whether or not the Padre was the first to visit Tinajas Altas may never be resolved.

Another Jesuit Father, Jacob Sedelmayr, probably stopped at the tanks while returning from his missionary trip to the Colorado River in 1750, while Captain Juan Bautista de Anza apparently just missed the Tinajas Altas on his brilliantly-led Mexico to California and return expeditions of 1774 and 1776.

In 1770, in order for the Spanish to secure their overland route to California, two missions and a village of Hispanic settlers were established near the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers. In July 1771, after continued mistreatment by the Spanish, the Quechan (Yuman) Indians rebelled and slaughtered more than 100 soldiers, priests (including Father Francisco Garcés, the first European to cross the Mojave Desert,), and settlers. It wasn't until the California Gold Rush some seventy years later that the trail was reopened.

It is estimated that at least 20,000 gold seekers followed the Southern Route, via portions of El Camino del Diablo and the Yuma Crossing, in their haste to reach the gold fields. "Hundreds died along the way, some of them buried at Tinajas Altas. This is when the trail acquired its hellish name."

Last Water on the Devil's Highway describes the 1854 Gadsden Purchase, in which the U.S. purchased from Mexico much of southern Arizona, including the Tinajas Altas area and most of the Camino del Diablo. Accounts of the subsequent border surveys--the 1854 Emory Survey, and the 1891-1896 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers survey, both of which provided the first accurate maps of the area--are also explored.

Use of the Camino dwindled rapidly after 1880, when the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its line between Los Angeles and Tucson, and except for a few hardy campers the Tinajas Altas area remained relatively untouched until 1941, at which time the military acquired virtually all the land south of what is now Interstate 8, between Yuma and Ajo, for the Luke Air Force Gunnery Range.

Last Water on the Devil's Highway is replete with excellent photos and maps--both historic and recent; a brief natural history, including appendices on the region's mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and vascular plants; and a brain-numbing list of references. Published by the University of Arizona Press, this 274 page, quarto-size volume is an excellent read; a definite must for any serious desert library.
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