

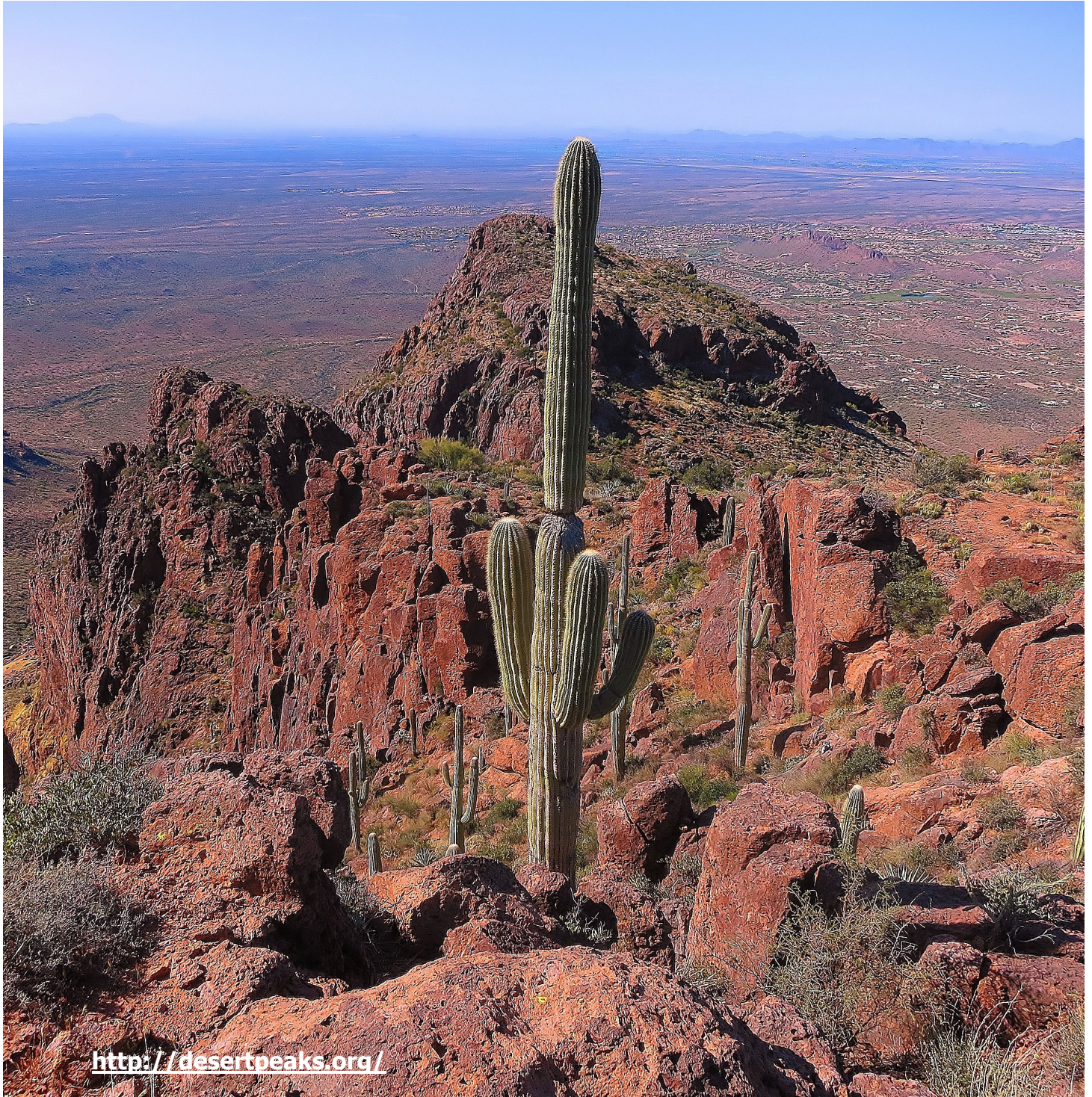


The Desert Sage

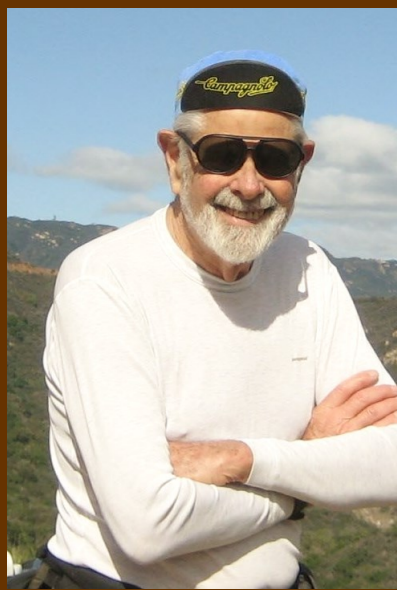
OUR 75th SEASON

NOVEMBER –DECEMBER 2015

ISSUE NO. 360



<http://desertpeaks.org/>



Chair's Corner

by
Paul Cooley

I recently read an article in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled "Cadiz water plan stalled" by Bettina Boxall (page B4), which was published on Tuesday, October 6,

2015. Some will remember that Cadiz Inc. has long had an ambitious plan to pump groundwater from the Mojave Desert to supply homes elsewhere. It is encouraging that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made the decision that a separate approval would be required for Cadiz to proceed with a pipeline on public land. Cadiz had hoped to build the pipeline along an existing railroad right of way, avoiding federal environmental review by doing so. It is also encouraging that Senator Dianne Feinstein has long opposed the Cadiz project. From the Times article: "Cadiz has acknowledged that over the long term, the project will extract more groundwater than is replenished by nature." The last thing we need in California is further drawdown of aquifers by overuse of groundwater. Let's all hope that Cadiz gets the message, but don't expect that. Please express your support to Senator Feinstein and keep watching the news.

Desert dreams remembered: On Memorial Day 1970, two friends and I decided to fulfill an adventurous dream: to climb Rabbit Peak in 24 hours - from the Salton Sea side. Lincoln Axe, Jim Evans and I began walking, in good weather and with a full moon, up a canyon from our cars. We started on a side road, as high as we could climb but still slightly below sea level, at 9 PM on the day before Memorial Day. We reached the top around 7 or 8 AM the next morning, napped for about an hour, and walked down a slightly different route - just for the heck of it - reaching our cars by 9 PM that evening. We encountered rattlesnakes galore and a few spiders, including a black widow the size

of a small tarantula, the biggest one I've ever seen. I don't recall ever hearing of black widows using orb webs, but that's where this one was; perhaps it had eaten the original occupant, I don't know. All I know was that I walked into the web, quickly backed off, then shined my flashlight on the critter to reveal the distinctive red hourglass on the shiny black abdomen. It was a wonderful adventure; the most dangerous part of it was that we then drove home. We all made it but I wouldn't do it again; sorting out reality from dream images is not a recipe for safe driving.

We are still seeking candidates for Banquet Chair and Mountain Records Chair. Please contact me or any other member of the DPS Management Committee if you are interested. We also need trips scheduled, as always.

In this issue:

Chair's Corner	Page 2
DPS Leadership	Page 3
DPS Trips and Events	Pages 4-6
Outings Chair	Page 7
DPS Membership Report	Page 7
Trip Reports:	
Honeymoon Expedition	Pages 8-9
Patterson and Wheeler	Page 10
Great Basin Peaks Section News	Page 11
The Rocks We Climb	Page 12
Desert Books	Page 13-17
Treasurer's Report	Page 17
DPS Membership Application	Page 18
DPS Merchandise	Page 19

THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE

IS DECEMBER 13, 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://desertpeaks.org/>

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Program / Banquet Open

Please contact any Management Committee member if you're interested in becoming the Program/Banquet Chair

Cover Photo Credit...

goes to Tommey Joh. The photo was taken on the way to Superstition Mountain in Arizona via DPS Route A on April 5, 2014. The City of Phoenix can be seen in the background.

Appointed Positions

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Kathrynrich@gmail.com

Mountain Records (Summit Registers) Open

Please contact any Management Committee member if you're interested in handling Mountain Records for the DPS

The Desert Peaks Section

explores the desert mountain ranges of California and the Southwest, stimulates the interest of Sierra Club membership in climbing these ranges and aids in the conservation and preservation of desert wilderness areas.



Trips & Events November 2015 — April 2016

The summit of Argus Peak (photo taken by James Barlow on March 30, 2012).

NOV 8	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
NOV 14-15	SAT-SUN	LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS	Navigation Noodle
NOV 21-22	SAT-SUN	DPS, HPS	Kingston Peak and Brown Peak
DEC 6	SUN	LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS	Navigation Noodle
DEC 12	SAT	DPS, WTC	Nelson Range High Point
DEC 13	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
JAN 10	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
FEB 7	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
MARCH 6	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
MARCH 12	SAT	DPS	DPS Chili Cook-off
APRIL 10	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
APRIL 13	WED	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Basic Safety System)
APRIL 16	SAT	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Belaying)
APRIL 23	SAT	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Rappelling)
APRIL 30-1	SAT-SUN	LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS	Advanced Mountaineering (Techniques/Anchors)

◆ **NOVEMBER 8** **SUN** **DPS**

O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: Join us at the home of Ron Bartell and Christine Mitchell in Manhattan Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Christine at christinebartell@yahoo.com.

◆ **NOVEMBER 14-15** **SAT-SUN** **LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS**

I: Navigation: Indian Cove Navigation Noodle: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sunday checkout. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com) . Assistant: Phil Wheeler. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

◆ **NOVEMBER 21-22** **SAT-SUN** **DPS, HPS**

I: Kingston Peak (7,335') and Brown Peak (4,947'): Join us for a fun weekend of desert peak bagging way out near the Nevada border in eastern California. Both peaks require a strenuous effort, which we'll exert at a moderate pace, and require comfort on rocky, thorny, steep, and loose class 2 desert terrain. We'll start out on Saturday in the Kingston Range Wilderness Area where we'll ascend to the high point of the Kingston Range via the Northern Ridge route, climbing up through its Pinyon, Juniper, and White Fir forested upper slopes on our way to commanding views in all directions from the summit. From the high point we'll return to our cars to enjoy a festive and traditional DPS Happy Hour Potluck around a roaring fire, and camp out for the night where we're parked. Totals for the day will be about 8 miles round trip with 2,850' of gain going in, 750' coming back

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

out. Sunday we'll break camp, drive north up into Death Valley National Park, and ascend Brown Peak via its western slopes, where we'll work our way up through alternating layers of chocolate and vanilla colored rock and then ascend a fun class 2 rib on our way to spectacular views up on the summit. We'll return the way we came in for a day's total of about 6.5 round trip miles with 2,000' of gain. Feel free to join us for one or both days. This is a DPS Outing co-sponsored by HPS. 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.

♦ **DECEMBER 6** **SUN** **LTC, DPS, WTC, HPS, SPS**

I: Navigation: Warren Point Navigation Noodle: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park for either checkoff or practice to satisfy the basic (I/M) level or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To participate, send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

♦ **DECEMBER 13** **SUN** **DPS**

O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: Join us at the home of Tom and Tina Bowman in Long Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Tina at tina@bowmanchange.com.

♦ **JANUARY 10** **SUN** **DPS**

O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: The DPS needs a host for the January 10, 2016 DPS Management Committee meeting and potluck. Please contact any Management Committee member if you're interested in hosting this event for the DPS.

♦ **FEBRUARY 7** **SUN** **DPS**

O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck: Join us at the home of Gloria Miladin in Downey for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Gloria at miladingloria@yahoo.com.

♦ **MARCH 6** **SUN** **DPS**

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

♦ **MARCH 12** **SAT** **DPS**

O: DPS Chili Cook-off : The Chili Cook-off is scheduled for March 12, so save the date. The venue and more information will be forthcoming in a future issue of the Sage and on the DPS website. Hosts: Julie Rush (julierush11@gmail.com), Linda McDermott (iwuvmts@live.com) and Gloria Miladin (miladingloria@yahoo.com).

♦ **APRIL 10** **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 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Barbee at lbtidball@verizon.net.

(Continued on page 6)

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- ♦ **APRIL 13** **WED** **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**
M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP12): Basic Safety System: First of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today's indoor evening workshop of four hours reviewing ropes, harnesses, helmets and basic climbing gear will take place in Pasadena. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, pamckusky@att.net).
- ♦ **APRIL 16** **SAT** **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**
M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP12): Belaying: Second of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today, at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on belaying and principles of anchor building. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, pamckusky@att.net).
- ♦ **APRIL 23** **SAT** **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**
M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP12): Rapelling: Third of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Today, at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on repelling. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, pamckusky@att.net).
- ♦ **APRIL 30– MAY 1** **SAT-SUN** **LTC, DPS, WTC, SPS**
M/E-R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP12): Rock climbing techniques and anchors: Fourth of four climbing workshops open to Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on climbing and anchors. As space is limited, priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send email or sase, phones, Sierra Club number, resume to Leader: Dan Richter (818-970-6737, dan@danrichter.com). Assistant: Patrick McKusky (626-794-7321, pamckusky@att.net).

The DPS needs a host for the January 10, 2016 DPS Management Committee meeting and potluck. Please contact any Management Committee member if you're interested in hosting this event for the DPS.

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.

Outings Chair

by Leo Logacho



A Scenic Peak Near Las Vegas

Greetings everyone,

Let me tell you about a scenic peak as I continue in my attempt to inspire readers to come, experience and enjoy our DPS outings.

Walt Whitman wrote: “Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth”.

These words remind me of a beautiful desert outing to climb Pahrump Peak, which is located in the incredibly rugged and barren Nopah Range of Southern California.

My first attempt to climb the peak was in January 2013. Miriam Khamis and I started early on a cold winter morning. The lonely beauty of the climb was both impressive and domineering at the same time. Because of the peak’s remoteness, we turned back about half way up the peak. It was my first real DPS hike and the loneliness was overwhelming.

The experience left me a bit wiser as I prepared for my second attempt to climb Pahrump Peak by joining a DPS outing on April 18th, 2015 lead by Mat Kelliher and Bill Simpson. The outing members were Mark Butski, John Ray, Miriam Khamis, Gary Bowen, Greg Gerlach, Anne Rolls, Lisa Buckley, Michelle Gomes, Wasim Khan and I. It was a beautiful, well organized hike and the views from the summit were stunning when we reached the top – we could see the entire Spring range of southern Nevada to the east with Charleston Peak being the most visible and the Panamints range to the west with Telescope Peak being the most visible.

Pahrump Peak is rarely climbed and the few people that get to see the impressive views are aware of its beauty, thanks mostly to the DPS list. Make sure you visit this marvelous place.

DPS Membership Report

by Ron Bartell

Membership Summary

<u>Type</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Sustaining</u>
Member	119	23
Household	28	
Subscriber	25	3
Totals:	172	26

Activity Report

Renewed Lapsed Members

Walt Hill	2 years
John McCully	1 year

Sustaining Renewals

Sharon Boothman	2 years
Karen Isaacson & Brian Leverich	1 year
Barbee & Larry Tidball	1 year
Bruce & Terry Turner	1 year

Renewals

George Barnes	1 year
Stephan Bork	1 year
Beth Davis	2 years
Daryn Dodge	1 year
Beth Epstein	3 years
Howard & Barbara Eyerly	2 years
Sharon L. Moore	2 years
Greg Vernon	1 year

**THE DPS NEEDS ONE MEMBER TO
SERVE AS PROGRAM/BANQUET
CHAIR AND ONE PERSON TO TAKE
CARE OF MOUNTAIN RECORDS
ASAP!!**

Please contact any DPS Management Committee member if you're interested in either position.



Trip Reports

Boundary Peak from the vicinity of Trail Canyon Saddle (photo taken by Alois Smrz).

Honeymoon Expedition By Randy Bernard

In September of 1970 my fiancée, Joyce Davis, and I searched through the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter (hiking) Schedule looking for a weekend that had no important hikes listed. We wanted to climb a peak that we needed towards finishing the DPS list if there was! We found that October 23rd, a Saturday, was open so we invited a few friends to our wedding in Pasadena, California. My best friend, Don French, was the best man, and Don's father, a Presbyterian minister, would marry us in my parents' Lutheran church. Over one hundred people showed up; it must have been the spice cake!

After the reception, we spent the night at Big Bear Lake, looking for bears, but we also wanted to go on a honeymoon. Therefore, we decided to join our friends on an expedition to Mexico to climb Pico de Orizaba, Volcan Popocatepetl and Volcan Iztaccihuatl, the third, fifth and seventh highest mountains in North America, respectively. Only number one Mount McKinley (Denali, 20,310') in Alaska and number two Mount Logan (19,541') in Canada are taller than 18,491' high Pico de Orizaba. We would have nine days to fly to Mexico City and climb these peaks by taking off work the three days before the long Thanksgiving weekend. Upon arrival at the Mexico City Airport (7,400'), we packed our food boxes into Wally Henry's friend's Chevy pick-up and rented four VW bugs. At four people per car, we had a lot of room for our wedding party of sixteen!

On a clear day in Mexico City you can see

Volcan Popocatepetl and Volcan Iztaccihuatl rising into the sky some 40 miles southeast of the city. Our first peak was Popocatepetl, the fifth highest. We drove up the road past the village of Amecameca and over Paso de Cortez (mountain pass) to the climbers' hostel 'Altzomoni', which is located at the foot of the peak. There were two or three hundred Mexican hikers sleeping everywhere because it was a Mexican holiday! Our group found a spot on the concrete floor and tried to sleep. At 3:00 a.m. the lights came on and everyone got up and started getting ready for a before sunrise start up the mountain. The plan was to walk up the trail to the landmark of 'Las Cruces' (this is a monument of three iron crosses), then put on our crampons. Crampons are sharp steel points that you tie onto your stiff climbing boots; the steel points dig into the ice or hard packed snow, and when you walk the front points are used to stab the back of your legs. After hiking in and putting on our crampons, we climbed straight up the forty degree slope before sunrise to the summit while the snow was still frozen. We needed to get up the slope before sunrise because the snow turns into mush and becomes impossible to climb once the sun comes out! There were climbers all over the mountainside, some above, and some below us. Every once in awhile someone would kick a rock lose and yell "**Torque, Torque.**" One rock flew by and missed my head by a foot or two! Joyce and I continued the ascent to the rim of the volcano, which is 17,717' high, looked down into the throat of the volcano and breathed sulfur for a minute or two. We ate lunch and returned to the cars for the short drive over to the trailhead for Volcan Iztaccihuatl.

(Continued on page 9)

Trip Reports - continued...

(Continued from page 8)

The next morning, we put on our full frame backpack and started our climb up Volcan Iztaccihuatl to a saddle where a small (20 person) climbers' hut is located. This hut is at an elevation of approximately 14,500', which is about the height of Mount Whitney, the highest point in the lower 48 states. Breathing is not too bad in the daytime when you are awake; you just have to remember to take long, deep breathes. But try sleeping in a little hut when your breathing goes on automatic. After a short time you wake up short of breath, then you hear the others moan; 'Oh my head aches'. You have to take a few long, deep breathes to build up your oxygen and then try to go back to sleep.

The next morning, we walked up to the 17,126' high summit of Volcan Iztaccihuatl, seventh highest, which is sometimes called "the Sleeping Beauty" because it has the appearance at a distance of a sleeping lady dressed in white. Later that day, we returned to the City of Puebla for a good night's sleep and to add more food to our packs.

The next morning, we drove east to the trailhead for Pico de Orizaba in our four VW bugs and Chevy pick-up truck. The first part of the dirt approach road was made up of powder and dust, and when driven upon clouds of dust would blow up into the air, making it impossible to see or breathe, so the following VW would back off ¼ to ½ mile. At intersections, you had to look for a faint dust cloud to know which way to go. After passing a small village the road improved to a poor gravel path. We were half way up this poor gravel path to the Piedra Grande climbers' hut when we drove through a dry wash and **BANG!** The Chevy hit a large rock that punched a hole into the differential cover, which started to leak oil!! Our team shoved a bar of soap into the hole,

then wrapped a plastic bag over it and used black tape to keep it in place, then added a can of STP oil treatment to the rear end and continued up the rough road to the 14,010' high hut. After a good dinner, we went to bed early.

The next morning, which was Thanksgiving Day, Joyce had an up-set stomach; therefore, she stayed at the hut. Our group needed a predawn start on Pico de Orizaba to get across a rock field. At sunrise we reached the Jamapa glacier where we stopped to put on our crampons, then continued up to the top of the mountain. I feasted on a can of turkey and some crackers on top of the highest mountain in Mexico, a nice Thanksgiving dinner!

After returning to Southern California we meet our doctor, Frank Riseley, on a hiking trip. He gave Joyce a prescription for her Mexican bug; it didn't seem to help her stomach. However, on July 31, 1971, Glen was born and Joyce then seemed to feel better.

This honeymoon should never be forgotten, and that is why I am putting it in writing!

Expedition leaders: Wally Henry and Paul Lipson. Participants: Beth Henry, Bob Hurley, Horace Ory, George Hubbard, Paul Kluth, Ed Hill, Harold Johnson, Roy Magnuson, Randy and Joyce Bernard, and the pick-up owner and three others whose names are lost to history.



Trip Reports - continued...

Mount Patterson (11,673') and Wheeler Peak (11,664') By Debbie Bulger August 12, 2015

Chocolate and vanilla peaks with splashes of raspberry greets one on a climb of these striking peaks



Chocolate and Vanilla peaks make for colorful hiking.

on the California/Nevada border. Richard Stover and I had climbed Mount Patterson in 2007, but descended without summiting nearby Wheeler Peak since there were very high winds that day. We returned to these colorful peaks to stand atop Wheeler.

The road to the Mount Patterson trailhead beyond Lobdell Lake had greatly eroded since we were last there. The route is now a jeep track. Our choice of a midweek day hike for the climb almost assured us that we would encounter no ATVs chugging their way to the summit. As hoped, we saw no one else as we walked along an old road. Once at the top of Patterson, we saw a new, well-anchored American flag wildly flapping in the strong wind at the summit.

From the summit of Patterson, we walked along the ridge, mostly on a 4 wheel drive road, about 2 miles



Debbie Bulger on top of Wheeler Peak.

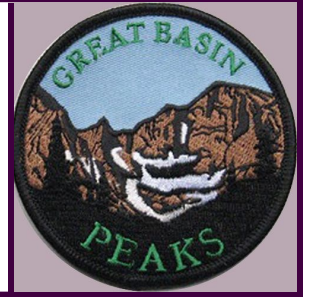
to Wheeler Peak. Upon reaching the top, we decided to descend the Deep Creek drainage instead of returning via the road. We were rewarded with profuse flowers on this mid-August day: Two kinds of Lupine, one blue and one white, Corn Lilies, yellow Monkey-flowers, various members of the Sunflow-



Debbie Bulger descending Deep Creek.

er family, and a whole hillside of Monument plants, to mention a few. Returning by the Deep Creek drainage added a few miles to the descent, but it was well worth it.

Great Basin Peaks Section News



Great Basin Peaks Section News By Sharon Marie Wilcox

Welcome to the youngest Great Basin Peaks Section members, Jarek Stolting, 12 years old, and Ameila Stolting, 10 years old. Both completed their seventh peak to qualify as members on the summit of White Mountain Peak this past August.

Their favorite peak so far? Jarek's favorite was White Mountain. He liked that there was green grass, marmots, and clouds that curled up the mountain towards them. Amelia said she loved the marmots since they are cute, cozy, and fat. Mount Augusta was Amelia's favorite peak. She liked seeing the peak once on the ridge. In addition, Amelia thought that it was a tough hike to the ridge, but when you could see the top it was real easy.

Their thoughts on bagging peaks? Jarek said that at first they were hard, but are getting easier. Amelia said that it has been difficult, but it was easier with family.

They both agree that Tohakum Peak was the worst. There were so many ticks! The ticks even overshadowed the awesome view of Pyramid Lake. They hope to never see a tick again.

Which peaks are their next goals? Amelia is excited to do Mount Whitney. Jarek wants to do Tule Peak to see the view of Pyramid Lake.

Robert, their father, said, "When I first started taking them, they protested about it being hard. However, I still encouraged them to go. After some time they realized that to see the awesome views, animals, and other sights it takes hard work, but it is rewarding. I hope when they get older and look back on this they remember the hard work and good times they had with family accomplishing a goal".

It is exciting to see these young members exploring the amazing landscapes leading to Great Basin peaks. One goal of the Great Basin Peak list is to provide a variety of peaks enabling family members of all ages to experience peak outings together. The Stoltings are a great example and they didn't even start on the easier peaks. Good luck to them as they continue to explore new peaks.



From left to right, Amelia, Robert, and Jarek Stolting on White Mountain Peak (photo by Scott Angus).



The Rocks We Climb

by *Bob Michael*

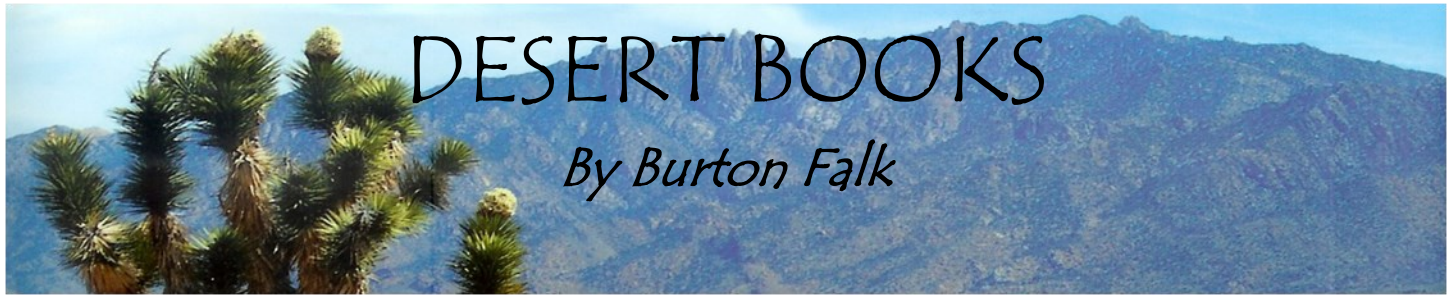
STEPLADDER MOUNTAINS (also MOPAH and TURTLE)

November brings its blessed cooling to the desert, and once again our passion turns to lower peaks. Let's have a look at one of the more bizarre peaks on the List, a set of curious crags that rise out of one of the wilder stretches of the eastern Mojave. At first glance, this peak appears third and maybe fourth class, but it yields surprisingly easily to a high second class route, partly because of the odd rock that comprises most of it – a “jungle gym” of mostly solid holds – chunks of rock embedded in a matrix, rather like a coarse conglomerate. But, this is no sedimentary conglomerate like the awesome Crestone conglomerate, with some boulders as big as [old-school] Volkswagens, that makes up the spectacular fourteeners Crestone Needle and Peak in southern Colorado (and which also delivers holds-a-plenty on otherwise formidable peaks). Rather, it's a legacy of unimaginable volcanic violence in the Miocene epoch, which, as we've noted in previous ROCKS, was a lively and happening time in the Pacific Southwest, with the crust cracking apart under tension, opening the door for volcanic magma to rise from the depths in several places and spew out over the landscape. When you drive down or up the Conejo Grade on the 101 between Camarillo and Thousand Oaks, you're traveling on Miocene volcanics. The Vasquez Rocks near Acton (beloved of early-day directors of Western movies) and the colorful, fossil-rich badlands of Rainbow Basin north of Barstow are (subsequently folded and uplifted) terrestrial sediments deposited in Miocene grabens, or basins, that foundered and subsided along normal faults between uplifted blocks – essentially Basin-and-Range tectonics.

The rock sequence in the Stepladders is quite simple in the overview. The basement is high-grade ancient Precambrian metamorphic gneiss dated at about 1.6 billion years. No doubt there was a sequence of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks – sandstones and the thick limestones we're familiar with – because remnants of these rocks are found to the west. (See my recent Coxcomb write-up.) However, these have all been eroded away leaving not the slightest trace, no doubt in the Cretaceous period where we have evidence of compression and regional uplift in the far

eastern Mojave resulting from the compression of southwestern North America from the subduction of the East Pacific plate. A little Cretaceous granite (certainly a cousin of the granites further west) intruding this ancient basement is exposed. The rest of the rock sequence – and the stuff we climb when bagging Stepladder – is several hundred meters of volcanics, consisting of lava flows, tuff breccias – explosion debris cemented by ash – and lahars, volcanic debris mudflows. (A lahar from Nevado Ruiz volcano killed an estimated 23,000 people in Colombia in 1985.) Because of faulting and erosion, it's not possible to pin down an exact total thickness for these volcanics. Differences in chemistry as we go up the volcanic section – andesite capped by dacite capped by basalt -- imply that this material came from different volcanic vents over time. While the Mopah - Stepladder country must have been a violent and nasty place in the Miocene, it's these breccias and lahars, shattered chunks of lava in a hardened matrix, that make up the bucket holds that make the route on Stepladder such fun.

Radiometric dating establishes that the Stepladder volcanics were deposited over about 3 million years in the early Miocene period, from 21 to 18 million years ago. What was the source? Although it's not possible to trace individual strata in this chaotic and high-energy environment, the “smoking gun” of varied evidence points to the Mopah Range to the south, where our Mopah Peak is – you guessed it – the neck of a Miocene volcano. (Tough and, by definition, vertical volcanic necks tend to make gnarly peaks!) Radiometric dating in the Mopahs indicate that volcanism there went on for a longer period – from 22 to 14.5 million years ago – than the rocks that comprise the Stepladders, so the older and younger flows went elsewhere than the Stepladders. The Mopah-Stepladder volcanics appear to have been deposited in a north-northwest-trending trough, because our Turtle Mountain just to the west is a structural “high”, composed of the Precambrian gneiss which underlies the Stepladder-Mopahs. North-northwest-trending Basin and Range faulting, beginning in the Miocene, (sound familiar?) completed the job of uplifting and forming the current mountain blocks. (And I still shudder to think I did the crux move on Mopah unroped.)



THE HISTORIC DESERT: JOSEPH WALKER AND THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL, PART I

The epic 1804-1806 journey of Lewis and Clark confirmed that transcontinental travel between Missouri and the Pacific Coast was difficult but possible. In the 1820s, fur trappers discovered a breach in the Rocky Mountains at South Pass, Wyoming making a future wagon trail to Oregon feasible. The British and their fur-trading firm, the Hudson's Bay Company, had good reason to be concerned regarding their claim to what is now Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Western Montana.

To the south, the Santa Fe Trail, a commercial route leading from Missouri to New Mexico, a Spanish possession, was opened in 1821. And in 1829, the Old Spanish Trail, linking Santa Fe to another Spanish possession, Alta California, was first opened for commercial use. The Spanish, too, felt the hot breath of the Gringos on their necks.

Between 1810 and 1830 a million or so Americans had taken part in the so-called Great Migration, passing through or coming out of the Appalachians to settle in the Mississippi Valley. Many of these same settlers were willing to move on to even greener pastures.

By the late-1830s, thanks in part to James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Prairie* (1831), and glowing, often exaggerated, reports from returning fur trappers, Americans were aware that adventure, land, and opportunity were available to the west. All they had to do was venture through dangerous Indian country, cross the Rocky Mountains, find their way through a little known desert, and then conquer the completely unknown Sierra Nevada. Surprisingly, many were ready to give it a try. If only someone knowledgeable could lead them

through to the land of milk and honey, the state-to-be where bowers of flowers bloomed in the spring, and, although unknown to them at the time, the land soon to witness one of the most frenzied gold rushes in world history

Which brings us to the story of Joseph Walker, the man who, among other remarkable exploits, blazed the first viable route between the Rocky Mountains and California.

WESTERING MAN: THE LIFE OF JOSEPH WALKER (1983), Bil Gilbert

Bil Gilbert (1927-2012), author of *Westering Man*, was contributing editor at *Sports Illustrated*, winner of numerous journalism awards including induction into the Journalism Hall of Fame, and the author of five additional volumes, most notably *The Trailblazers* (1973). Combining impressive writing skills with an obvious love of the subject, Gilbert's 315-page biography brings to life a man who played a key role in western U.S. history.

That said, it should be also be noted that because Joseph Walker lived a long and fruitful life, only a few of his many adventures involve the desert areas in which the DPS climbs.

Indeed, the 10-year period during which Walker completed most of his desert-related exploits was between 1833, when, as a member of Captain Benjamin Bonneville's expedition, he and a group of men found an overland route from Alta California to the Salt Lake area, and 1843, when Walker was hired by Joseph B. Chiles to lead a wagon train from Fort Laramie to California.

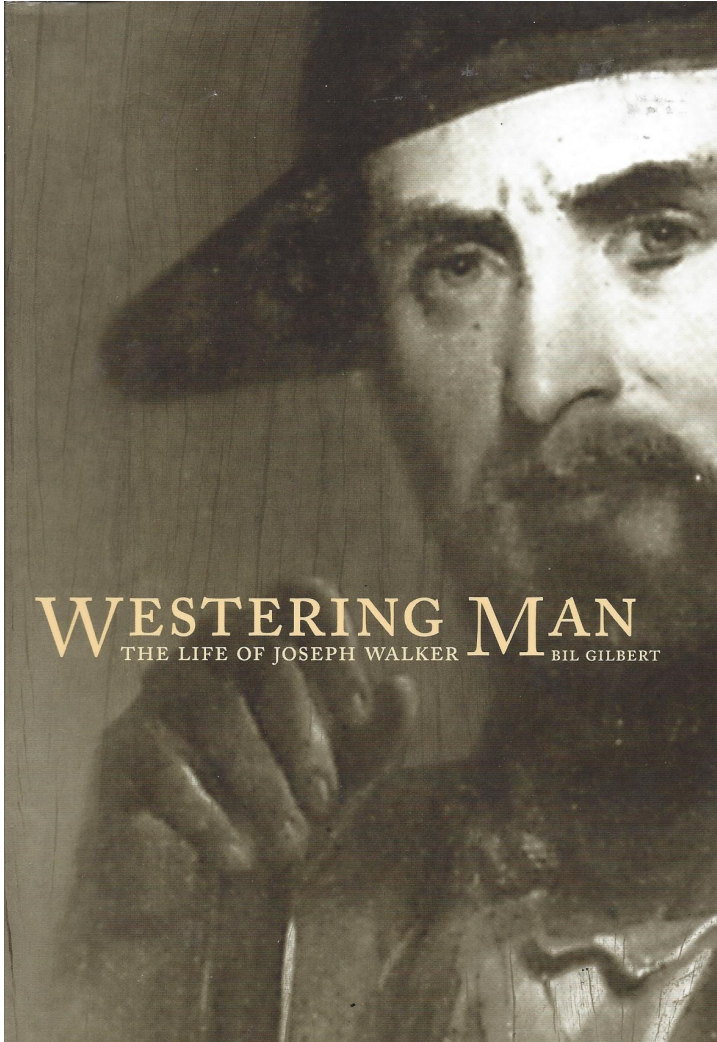
Joseph "Joe" R. Walker was born into a large family of Scotch-Irish descent in Roane County,

(Continued on page 14)

Desert Books - continued...

(Continued from page 13)

Tennessee on December 13, 1798. His paternal great-grandparents, John and Katherine Walker, in 1728, had emigrated from Ulster Province in the north of Ireland to western Pennsylvania, part of an



estimated 50,000 Ulstermen who had been recruited by an agent of William Penn to come to America and help settle the frontier. To the agent's chagrin, the new settlers squatted on the first unoccupied property they found and refused to leave.

Gilbert characterizes those Scotch-Irish emigrants as having been victims of political, economic, and religious oppression for centuries, so when they arrived in Pennsylvania they "found the absence of law and order to be one of the utopian attractions of the place... (They) were fiercely loyal to, usually only to, their families... (and) inclined to hole up in

out-of-the-way defensible places, putting as much distance as possible between themselves and even their distant kin and compatriots."

Soon after the first Walkers arrived in Pennsylvania, several of their many offspring began their own emigration. In 1732, five Walker sons, including Samuel, Joe's grandfather, moved into the Great Valley, near the current-day Lexington, VA.

In 1787, Samuel's son, Joseph, Joe Walker's father, married Susan Willis, and in 1797, figuring that Tennessee by then was relatively safe from Indians, the couple settled in Roane County, Joe's birthplace, about fifty miles west of the current Knoxville.

Young Joe Walker grew up in a family that eventually consisted of two sisters and four brothers, all of whom were said to have been large and hearty. "As for size," Gilbert notes, "Joe Walker, after he had grown up to be a frontier hero, was known to stand six-four and weigh well over 200 pounds..."

In 1819, following Andrew Jackson's successful campaign against the Creek Nation, thus removing the Indian menace, members of the Walker family were again on the move. Joe, along with his older brother, Joel, his younger brother, Big John, and his sister, Susan and her family, set off in wagons heading west for Fort Osage on the Missouri River, thirty miles downstream from the site of present-day Kansas City.

At that time, Fort Osage was as far west as President Monroe's administration intended white settlement to expand. The vast prairie beyond was meant to be kept open for the Indians--not only the indigenous tribes, but also for the relocation of eastern, woodlands tribes who were occupying valuable land and annoying the settled white communities.

(Continued on page 15)

Desert Books - continued...

(Continued from page 14)

The Walker men, however, were once again not content to stay put. It is surmised that in 1821 Joe Walker joined a band of trappers working out of Taos, New Mexico, who, out of necessity, were extremely secretive. As Gilbert points out, "Once they left Missouri and entered the territory reserved for the Indians, they were non-persons so far as the U.S. Government was concerned and received no protection from it."

In the spring of 1825, Joe and his brother, Big John, were hired on as members of a 35-man survey commissioned to lay out a wagon road from Missouri to New Mexico and to buy easements for it across the territory of several Indian tribes. And in 1827, Joe Walker was back in Missouri, the newly appointed sheriff of the newly created Jackson County, the largest community of which was the boom town of Independence.

Walker apparently didn't enjoy being a sheriff, as, two years later, he "adamantly" declined to run for the office. Instead, in 1830, he joined forces with the French-born, West Point educated, U.S. Army Captain, Benjamin Louis Eulallie de Bonneville, on a four-year tour of western America, the objectives of which were to trap, find a route to California, and make a reconnaissance of the Mexican territories.

To this day, however, the relationship between Walker and Bonneville remains opaque. By the time the party of 110 men reached the Rocky Mountains, Walker's trust in the Captain had become tenuous. In fact, for the first two seasons, Walker kept his crew in the field trapping, avoiding Bonneville and his headquarters as much as possible.

At the trappers' rendezvous in Green River, Wyoming in 1833, "Walker passed along the word that he wished to recruit at least forty good men for an expedition from the Green River all the way to California. The response was enthusiastic. Though there was still a great scarcity of facts about the

place, California was already rumored to be the warm, golden, natural Eden of the continent."

And at this juncture a curious discontinuity in the recorded history of the California Trail occurs. In 1850, Washington Irving, author of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*, published *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* based on his interviews with and the papers of Bonneville. In the volume, Irving, a literary lion of the time, described Walker as an "insubordinate incompetent who wandered off to California and thus wasted the resources of the trusting Bonneville." Most historians disagree. Gilbert suggests that Irving, attempting to explain his friend Bonneville's lack of success as a fur trader and explorer, hoped to shift some of the blame to Walker.

Walker and his men left Green River on July 27, 1833, and by mid-August the group, then numbering about 60 men, was just north of the Great Salt Lake. Continuing west, following the Humboldt River, the trappers skirmished with a band of skulking Piute Indians, during which 39 of the native people were killed.*

Again Irving casts aspersion on Walker's character (although by today's standards, Irving's assertions would seem valid). "We feel perfectly convinced that the poor savages had no hostile intention, but had merely gathered together through motives of curiosity."

Upon leaving the Humboldt Sink, Walker and his men trekked southwest, passing Carson and Walker Lakes, and then, following the Walker River, they arrived at some unknown location north of Mono Lake. From there, on October 1, with their supplies nearly exhausted, they started up a narrow game trail into the Sierra Nevada. Their hope was they could find a way through the massive range, "and that if they did, California would be as bountiful as rumored."

(Continued on page 16)

Desert Books - continued...

(Continued from page 15)

The exact route that Walker and his group took through the Sierra remains unknown to this day. What we do know is that it took them 29 days, struggling along "on half rations, making many camps where they spent a freezing night without either food or fire, huddled in their blankets and wet buckskins."

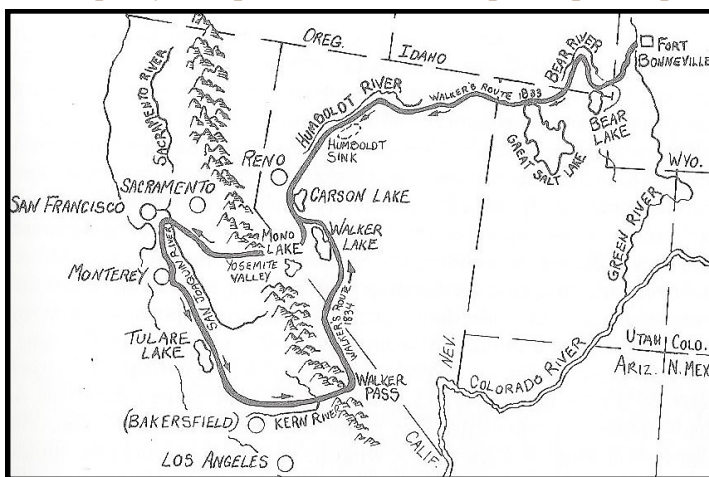
On October 20, based on a journal kept by Zenas Leonard, one of Walker's men, we know that the group came to the brink of the Yosemite Valley, thus becoming the first non-natives to view the natural wonder. Unable to descend the steep valley walls, they eventually found a route into the San Joaquin Valley via the ridge somewhere between Yosemite Valley and the equally impressive Tuolumne Canyon.

The trappers followed the San Joaquin River to Suisun Bay, where, after a short rest, they continued on to make contact with Mexican officials in Monterey. It was during this segment of their journey, some seventy miles north of the capital of Alta California, "that the broad Pacific burst forth to view." The mountain men were so awed by the scene that "(t)hey spent two days playing around in the sun and sand and often simply staring out, fascinated by the sea."

Walker's meeting in Monterey with José Figueroa, the governor of Alta California, went well. Figueroa was so impressed with Walker and his trappers that he invited them to stay all winter, travel freely, kill as much game as was necessary, and trade with the local Indians. Quite the opposite of the cool reception Jedediah Smith received when he arrived in Southern California in 1826.

The trappers spent the winter of 1833/1834 in a comfortable camp near the Mission San Juan Bautista, and on February 14, 1834, eager to return to a planned June rendezvous with Bonneville on the Bear River, they set out to find a new and better route to do so. They had absolutely no desire to repeat their experiences among the rocks and cliffs and snows of the Sierra Nevada.

Heading southeast first, paralleling the Sierra Nevada, the trappers turned up the Kern River somewhere near present-day Bakersfield, and with the help of the Tubatulable (Pine-nut Eater) Indians, discovered what is now known as Walker Pass,** leading to the Owens Valley. Although water and pasture were plentiful in the long valley, Walker, in an attempt to speed up their return, decided to leave the safety of the eastern slopes of the Sierra, and head directly across the desert to the Humboldt Sink.



Joseph Walker's Route, 1833-34

Three days later, finding no trace of water along the way, Walker's men became rebellious. They demanded to return to the eastern Sierra. Walker conceded the point and thus, turning west, the men continued along the base of the great range until they came to their old route by which they reached the Humboldt Sink on June 8. Unfortunately, the Paiutes of the area once again posed problems. And once again, the native people suffered the brunt of a "ghastly replay of the events of the past fall." Indeed, although three of Walker's men were wounded, fourteen of the Paiutes were killed. Protective of Walker's reputation, Gilbert suggests that during this "second encounter not only the Paiutes but (Walker's) own men were determined to have at each other, no matter what (Walker) said or did." After the one-sided fray was complete the trappers continued up

(Continued on page 17)

Desert Books - cont...

(Continued from page 16)

the Humboldt, crossed over to the Snake and then went on to the Bear River, where in July 1834, a year after they had left for California, they rendezvoused with Bonneville.

Walker had found a viable route from California to the Great Salt Lake area. Would he be able, nine years later, to return to the Golden State, along the same desert trail, with a wagon party of emigrants?

In Part II of Joseph Walker and the California Trail we'll examine what happened in 1843, when, for a fee of \$300, Walker set out to guide a party of 38 emigrants to California via Walker Pass.

* Bernard DeVoto, in his Pulitzer-Prize winning volume, *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947), explains that the Digger Indians, metal-covetous, angered the trappers by stealing their expensive steel traps. "Individually, in the open, and with your eyes on them, Diggers were the most harmless of living creatures. They were such Indians as could exist in this desert: living without shelter or in sagebrush huts, feeding on whatever was at hand, the carp and suckers of alkali-tinctured streams, sunflower seeds and bulbs and roots of desert plants, piñon nuts, grasshoppers and black crickets and the grubs of seasonal flies that breed in alkali pools."

** Francis Farquhar, in his *History of the Sierra Nevada* (1969), notes that the Mexicans told Walker that there was a way around the mountains to the south, presumably Tehachapi Pass. Walker and his men, however, turned off through the southern Sierra before getting that far.



Treasurer's Report

by *Laura Newman*

*DPS Account Summary from
January 1, 2015 to
September 30, 2015*

INCOME

Banquet Book Sales	\$79.30
Banquet Silent Auction	\$112.00
Banquet Ticket Sales	\$2,510.00
Merchandise	\$190.00
Subscriptions	<u>\$1,540.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,431.30

EXPENSES

Banquet Awards	\$49.05
Banquet Expenses	\$200.00
Banquet Payment	\$2,220.00
Postage for Merchandise Mailing	\$37.00
Sage Mailing	\$535.57
Sage Printing	\$767.70
Sales Tax	\$32.47
Web Page Expenses	<u>\$129.73</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,971.52

CHECKING BALANCE

\$4,019.42

TOTAL BALANCE

\$4,019.42

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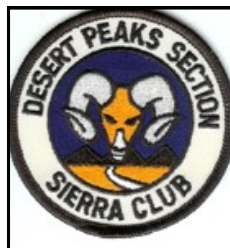
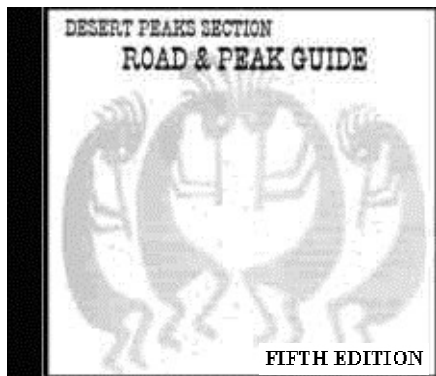
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