

ALERT.....

HIKE HIKE

JERRY SCHAD is going to lead a hike to Mt Gower Open Space Preserve on Sunday, Mar 6, at 8 am for the Sierra Club. 448-8131.

TERRI SUTOR, who has finished the HPS list 4 times, was honored with the John Backus Leadership award at the recent HPS banquet. Those of us who knew John recognize this as a very high honor indeed. Congratulations, Terri.

SAN DIEGO PEAKS CLUB

Reprinted below are the new outings by Carl Johnson 448-8542, as reported in the latest mailing of his "Baja list".

New Adventures

The following are some of the outings I have planned, some of which will be Sierra Club outings written up in the High Sierran. To help me plan the outings, let me know if you are interested. Usually my trips fill up quickly.

February 17-21, 1994, MEXICO CITY ADVENTURE

Take advantage of the low airfares between San Diego (non-stop) and Mexico City, \$160.00 round-trip/person, including taxes. Leave Thursday evening, return Monday morning, President's Day weekend. In and around Mexico City, see the sights!!! Cost - your cost. What a deal! Call for additional information.

February 26, 1994, UPPER SAN DIEGO RIVER CANYON AND WATERFALLS

High Sierran, my seventh, Sierra Club, somewhat annual, strenuous, full day+ hike, to one of the most remote, least hiked, major canyons, in this part of San Diego county. As a added bonus, if we ever get rain again, it has the "biggest" major waterfalls and pools in the county. A beautiful place. Call for reservations.

March 12, 1994, COWLES MOUNTAIN, PRIMITIVE NORTH SIDE HALF-DAYHIKE

High Sierran, my usual Cowles Mountain hike except, returning to the trailhead by way of an abandoned gold mine and new trails on the north-east side of the mountain and instead of my usual moderate pace - an "easy" pace, but still with plenty of boulder hopping and bush dodging. Call for directions and start time or look in the High Sierran.

March 18-20, 1994, LOWER COLORADO RIVER CANOE OUTING

April 8-10, 1994, LOWER COLORADO RIVER CANOE OUTING

High Sierran, two somewhat annual canoe trips on the lower Colorado River, from Walter's Camp, near Blythe, California to Martinez Lake, near Yuma, Arizona, on two different dates, due to popular demand and because I like canoeing on the river. Thirty-five miles on the river in two days. Leaving in the late afternoon on Friday, returning Sunday evening. Guided by El Coyote Pelón, no rapids, beautiful barren desert mountains, lush river vegetation, national wildlife refuge, isolation, and historical-mining landmarks. You must be able to paddle 35 miles or learn quickly! Limited to 16 persons, two persons per canoe. Cost - \$85.00, which includes camping fees, canoe-lifejacket-paddle rental, car shuttling, and to and from "gas" costs. Food is not included, pot luck dinner Saturday night. \$25 deposit. Call for reservations.

April 23, 1994, THREE SISTERS WATERFALLS DAYHIKE

High Sierran, three miles, surprisingly strenuous, moderately paced dayhike to a set of three waterfalls that are the "best" and "largest" bathtub falls in San Diego county. R.S.V.P.

June 18-25, 1994, SIERRA TARAHUMARA, "COPPER CANYON", BASKET MAKING
August 13-20, 1994, SIERRA TARAHUMARA, " COPPER CANYON", TARAHUMARAS
High Sierran, two different 9 day, 8 night trips to see these beautiful mountains. Fly from Tijuana to Los Mochis, take the train up into the mountains as far as Creel. Overnight stops and side trips to many unique and personal places. Rivers, waterfalls, unique forests, "jungles", Tarahumara Indians, cave paintings, historical villages, missions, some hiking or no hiking and more. Nancy and I feel comfortable with the area and know enough local people to see sights that most people would never have a chance to see. Summer is hot in Los Mochis, but the hotel and train is normally air conditioned. The mountains are not normally too hot - very pleasant. In August it is usually a little cooler and greener, due to afternoon thundershowers. Hotels are all very good, with the hotel in Cerocahui very charming and rustic(kerosene lanterns) and the Posada Barranca Miradora downright breathtaking. Breakfast and dinner are included in Creel. In addition to seeing the sights, in June, I have a Tarahumara woman lined up to teach us to make baskets as long as we don't go into competition with her. In August I have some visits with the Tarahumara Indians lined up. Costs - I have put together a package that includes everything, including air, train, transfers, tips, airport taxes, and hotels for \$850.00. Not included are meals, except Creel, breakfast and dinner(we encourage bringing and buying food to prepare and eating in inexpensive small family restaurants), side trips(usually no more than \$25.00 to \$50.00/person) and baskets. This is not a commercial tour. This is a small, personal, private, economical trip. If you are interested in one of these trips, let me know before it fills up. Minimum 12 persons, maximum 14 persons.

October 8-10, 1994, GRAND CANYON RUN

Run or fast hike from the North Rim to the South Rim, fly to and from Las Vegas, drive to and from the canyon, stay in motels. Cost - about \$150.00 to \$200.00. Twenty to thirty-five people. Let me know if you are interested or if you know of anyone else who would be interested.

November 4-5, 1994, NEW YORK MARATHON

Run the big one! Now is the time to apply for a number and if you are prompt and lucky, actually you have a pretty good chance of getting in the race. Then all you need to do is run it!

I hope to see you



El Coyote Pelón

P.S. If you are not on my computer mailing list ("Baja List") and you would like to be, send me \$2.00 to help cover postage.



Cerocahui

SURVIVOR ADVENTURES:

TOP OF THE WESTERN WORLD: Survivors Climb To The Summit

By Douglas Kari

On February 17, 1993, five members of Desert Survivors reached the summit of Aconcagua, highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere. Survivors general counsel and co-founder Doug Kari helped organize the expedition. This is his account.

Part I of Two Parts

Our quest to climb Aconcagua started from widely-scattered points on the continent. Me and my wife, former Survivors director Eureka Kari-Espanol, left Hollywood on February 4, 1993. At the L.A. airport we met Survivors member Steve Smith, who had travelled down from Ridgecrest, where he is Chief of Resources in the local Bureau of Land Management office. Former Survivors president Donald Falk, now a lawyer in Washington, D.C., departed from there. Norbert Riedy, a Senior Policy Analyst with The Wilderness Society, also began the journey from the nation's capitol. Nobby, who is based in San Francisco, had been sent to Capitol Hill to lobby for the California Desert Protection Act. Survivors Direct-at-Large Morgan Irby left from his home on the flanks of Mt. Diablo two weeks before the rest of us. He set out early to do advance preparation for the expedition. The rest of us aimed to rendezvous with him on the approach to Aconcagua.

About the Mountain

Aconcagua stands at latitude 33° in the Argentine Andes, 85 miles west of the Pacific Ocean. The trans-Andean highway connecting Santiago, Chile with Mendoza, Argentina provides ready access to trails that lead to the base of the mountain. At 22,834 feet, Aconcagua reigns as the highest mountain in the world outside of Asia. Because of its height and location near the Pacific Ocean, Aconcagua is often battered by storms and beset with howling winds. However, during the South American summer season from late December through early March, much of the snow melts away, and the weather stabilizes long enough to allow climbers a window of opportunity to reach the summit.

The first successful climb of Aconcagua culminated on January 14, 1897 following a heroic effort by the Swiss

guide Mattias Zurbriggen. After weeks of repeated attempts that left his companions exhausted and unable to continue, he reached the summit alone. Since then, Aconcagua has been climbed by hundreds of expeditions following various routes. The publications repeatedly warned us, however, that the high altitude and unstable weather make it a mountain that must be taken seriously. Scores of mountaineers have perished on its slopes.

The Best Laid Plans

Planning for the expedition began more than a year before we departed. Although I handled many of the logistics, it was understood that Steve -- who has climbed more than 700 mountains -- was the climbing leader. Survivor member Alise Benjamin also helped with logistics, as did Steve's wife, Debbie Smith. Most of the decisions made in the planning phase turned out to be good ones. The choice of which route to attempt was especially opportune. Several of us wanted to try the Polish Glacier route, which ascends the isolated eastern side of the mountain and offers the mountaineer some technical glacier climbing.

Steve, however, insisted that we stick to the North or Normal Route, the one first scaled by Zurbriggen. Although regarded as less aesthetic by some mountaineers because of the lack of technical challenges, the route would also involve less time and equipment -- and less risk. As it turned out, difficult snow and ice conditions defeated nearly all attempts to climb the Polish Glacier route during the 1993 summer season.

But we made one significant mistake. Based on our research, Steve and I thought that February would be the warmest, driest month for the trip. In mid-January 1993, while we rushed about making final preparations, climbers on the Normal Route enjoyed long stretches of favorable weather. By the time we departed the United States at the beginning of February, storms began to form over the Pacific, earlier than usual, presaging the end of the summer season.

Snow And Wind

The trip started smoothly. In fact, we got a head start because of Morgan's advance work. By the time the rest of us arrived in Santiago, he had already found a van and driver to take us into the Andes, arranged lodging at Los Penitentes, hired mules to haul our gear to base camp, and secured climbing permits from the Argentine government. Promptly at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday February 6, a ten-passenger van pulled up to our hotel in Santiago.

Somehow the driver managed to pile all of our duffle bags on the luggage rack, and we all climbed inside.

A two-lane road brought us out of the city and into grassy countryside similar to California's Central Valley. Then the road began to ascend into the mountains. The landscape became more arid, appearing much like the desert ranges east of the Sierra Nevada. The scale of the setting, though, was something new and rather intimidating. Even as we reached a pass at over 10,000 feet, huge peaks loomed thousands of feet above us. Mt. Whitney, which at 14,495 feet is the highest point in the continental United States, would be a foothill in this setting. We crossed the border into Argentina with only a modest bureaucratic delay. By late afternoon the van delivered us to a rustic lodge at Los Penitentes, our home for the next two nights. Morgan greeted us upon our arrival. The weather, however, caused us concern. Snow fell intermittently from a dark, brooding sky.

The next day, Sunday February 7, we took a walk around town and visited the cemetery to pay our respects. A chill wind blew as I read the headstones of climbers from all over the world. That night it snowed again, and I fell asleep feeling depressed and pessimistic.

A Wretched Approach

The next morning -- Monday, February 8 -- the sun shone brightly. Nancy, the muliteer's assistant, shuttled us to the trailhead in her battered Peugeot. In good spirits we began the approach hike. The mules would depart later in the day with our equipment and meet us at camp that evening. The hike took us into the desolately beautiful Horcones Valley, along a muddy and churning river of glacial melt. At the far end of the valley, nearly thirty miles away, loomed the snow-flanked slopes of Aconcagua.

By late afternoon we reached the camp known as Confluencia, where two rivers come together. At dusk the mules trotted into camp carrying our gear and bringing food for dinner. I ate heartily -- and apparently poisoned myself in the process. Within a few hours I fell ill with uncontrollable retching and diarrhea. The cramping got so bad that I doubled up and moaned with pain. By early morning I had spent so much time outside, being sick in the 30° cold, that I shook uncontrollably. I began to worry that I might really be in trouble.

Steve, a veteran of many expeditions, had seen this sort of thing before, and he offered kind words of assurance.

Eureka bundled me up in my sleeping bag. By the time the sun hit the camp on Tuesday February 9, the illness had subsided somewhat, although I still felt terribly nauseous and utterly drained.

Nonetheless we had to move on. I crawled out of the tent while the others ate breakfast and broke camp. Nobby silently assumed my tasks, helping Eureka fold the tent and pack my belongings. When it came time to leave I dragged myself to my feet and forced myself to move up the trail. Each step was a battle against nausea and fatigue. It took me until late in the day to cover the fifteen miles to the next camp. Most of this distance came in crossing the desolate Playa Ancha, a windswept plain flanked by jagged summits. Despite my condition, the savage beauty of the surroundings left me awestruck.

The next morning, Wednesday February 10, I felt much better. I could hold down sips of water, and even managed to eat two crackers for breakfast. My self-confidence, however, was shot. I had this nagging fear that my body would fail me before we reached the summit.

The Basest Camp

Wednesday's hike brought us out of the Horcones Valley and onto the flanks of the mountain. By early afternoon we reached the plateau at 14,500 feet known as Plaza de Mulas, the traditional base camp for the Normal Route. Plaza de Mulas appeared like a Wild West mining camp. I counted more than 40 tents of various sizes and shapes -- including one lopsided place where liquor could be bought. A number of colorfully dressed mountaineers, mostly European, milled about. Before long we began hearing stories of successes and failures on the mountain. We learned that about half of the climbers were achieving the summit, and the other half were not.

Then someone came running into camp with bad news. At Camp I, a place 2,000 feet higher up the mountain called Plaza Canada, a climber had been stricken with pulmonary edema, an illness related to altitude. The poor fellow was coughing up a lot of blood. Some Argentine mountain rangers grabbed equipment and rushed off to try to help him. I knew on an intellectual level that a climb like this entailed a certain degree of danger. Now, for the first time, I felt this on an emotional level as well. My body had already betrayed me once. Would I be the next statistic?

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Top of the Western World - *continued*

Onto The Mountain

On Thursday February 11, we bid farewell to Eureka and embarked on the first leg of the Normal Route. She would wait for us at the Hotel Refugio, a partially completed "hotel" (more like a military barracks) set in a spectacular location about a half-mile from base camp. Our objective was Camp I at Plaza Canada, 16,500 feet, where the climber had been stricken the day before.

We shouldered our 60 pound packs and set off on the well-defined trail leading up the broad lower slopes. My body felt fairly strong, although I still had little confidence in myself. But my worries subsided for the time being as I settled into a routine: one breath per step for a "fast" pace, two or three breaths per step when the going got steeper.

With patience we made progress despite the thin air. After a few hours we arrived at Plaza Canada, where a rock shelf provides flat places suitable for pitching tents. We found a large blood stained sheet, apparently a remnant from the stricken climber, but never learned of his fate.

We stashed a load of food, fuel and equipment and then started back down to base camp. We planned to return the following day to occupy Camp I; after that we would carry a load to Camp II, then return to Camp I. Then we would move up to Camp II, and so on.

Climbing high and then descending to a lower camp to sleep helps the body adjust to the altitude. Shuttling loads also becomes necessary where the climbing strategy calls for having sufficient equipment and supplies high on the mountain to be able to wait out bad weather -- which is what we had decided to do.

Weather continued to be a dominant issue. As we descended to Plaza de Mulas, thick clouds gathered over the peaks, as happened most every afternoon. By the time we reached the tents a light snow began to fall. This definitely was not the summer weather that we had expected.

END OF PART ONE - See Next Survivor for Conclusion

Tarahumaras Win Colorado Race

In August, California Native guides Doug Stewart and Lynn Reinecke escorted a team of seven Tarahumara Indians from Mexico's Copper Canyon to Leadville, Colorado, where they competed against 294 runners from around the world in the Leadville Trail 100, a one hundred mile ultra-marathon race.

The annual race begins and ends at Leadville, in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, and follows a punishing mountain course which winds through the Sawatch Range, twice rising to an altitude of 12,600 feet. This year's runners were further handicapped by cold rain.

Competing against highly trained runners in high-tech running shoes, the

Tarahumaras, with no special training, ran in sandals made from discarded tires, which Lynn and Doug salvaged from the Leadville dump. Instead of running shorts they wore their traditional costumes.

Victoriana Churro, a 55 year old Tarahumara, won the race with a 40 minute lead. Tarahumaras Cerrildo Chacarito, 38, and Manuel Luna, 30, placed second and fifth. Churro's winning time was 20 hours two minutes and 33 seconds.

This was the first time these people had left their native state of Chihuahua and during the trip, they discovered a new favorite food: pizza. During the race, they kept up their energy with a more traditional Tarahumara food, *piñole*, ground corn meal mixed with water.

The cave-dwelling Tarahumara people number around 60,000 and grow up running on the steep mountain trails amidst the spectacular scenery of Copper Canyon. Four times the size of Arizona's Grand Canyon and almost 300 feet deeper, Copper Canyon is located in Northern Mexico's Sierra Madres.

ZIGGY By Tom Wilson



