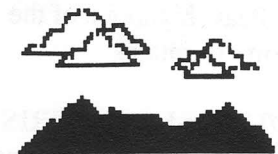


Hiking Horizons

"Taking you to new heights"

A Publication For Adventure Hikers of the San Diego Peaks Club

Vol 4, No. 6 (Issue 24) May - June 1995



Views from the Top

LET'S GO RAFTING. The creeks are swollen so we're sure to have a swell time. I've procured the rafts at the rock-bottom price of \$75 for the weekend. The site is the upper and lower Kern River. The date is June 3-4. This trip is open to others outside the SDPC, so you can bring a friend.

The **USGS TOPO MAP ORDER** was a success beyond my wildest dreams. **661 MAPS** were ordered, **SAVING SDPC MEMBERS** between **\$1000 and \$2000**. I will try one more time if I can get an order for 200 maps. **GIVE ME A CALL WITH AN ESTIMATE OF HOW MANY MAPS YOU WANT TO ORDER.** I will arrange another mass order if I get enough requests. You have a week after this issue comes out to give me a call if you are interested.

Dues are coming due. I'm trying to keep it at \$12, despite the postal increase and an increase in the cost of the newsletter. **Renew TODAY!**

SDPC would like to welcome new members Andy Schouten, Ren Higgins, Bill Simmons, Voytek Najgrodski, Skip Forsht, and Will Phillips. Membership now totals 119.

ALERT! and HELP!

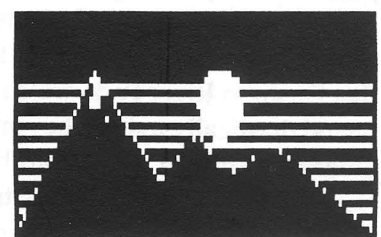
SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK THREATENED

Supervisors Dianne Jacobs and Bill Horn are recommending:

1. That the River Park (JPA) stop at I-15;
2. That the county's portion off River Park budget be reallocated to Supervisor Greg Cox's district for the Otay River Valley Regional Park;
3. That lands purchased by JPA with state bond prop 70 funds be retained by the county.

Background:

The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) was formed in 1989 as a cooperative action by six agencies: the Cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, Solana Beach, San Diego, and the County of San Diego. At that time, its jurisdiction, the focused planning area, was established as extending from the ocean at Del Mar to the source of the San Dieguito River, located on Volcan Mountain, just north of Julian.



When it was created, the JPA was given the responsibility for land acquisition, park planning, improvements, operations and maintenance that would transcend the boundary lines of its six member agencies. The JPA does not have zoning and permitting authority and does not impact private property rights.
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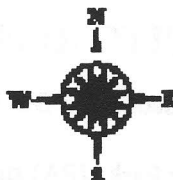
HIKER OF THE MONTH



The Hiker of the Month for May is **JOHN STRAUCH** for something dear to my heart—bridge playing. John and his partner, Evan Bailey, were crowned **NATIONAL CHAMPIONS** at a meet in Tucson in early April. National Open Pairs Champion is the top award in the world of bridge. This makes John the first three-time **HOTM**. He won it for finishing every hike in Schad's "Afoot and Afield in San Diego

County" and for completing the San Diego Peaks list of 112 peaks. John Strauch, "Club" champion!

The **HOTM** award for June goes to **MARK ADRIAN**. Mark currently



has 103 peaks to achieve the "macho" award for bagging 100 peaks on the list. He should earn the

"mega-macho" award for list completion in the fall. He has already finished the Desert Peaks list and hopes to finish the HPS and SDPC lists simultaneously on Comb's Peak, highpoint of the Bucksnot Mountains.

The **HOTM** for July is **CHRIS LANDA**. Chris and Mark have been helping me by putting nice register cans on the peaks, replacing, in some instances, plastic film containers. Chris recently passed the "50 peaks" mark to earn "mini-macho" status.

JPA CONTINUED

This action proposed by Supervisors Jacob and Horn would eliminate all park and trail planning east of Interstate 15. It would eliminate the county's financial contribution to the San Dieguito River Park, which would drastically reduce the parks ability to carry out its responsibilities, including ongoing park activities such as hikes, docent training, educational programs, tree-plantings, and trail maintenance. It would reduce the park's ability to seek additional grants for land acquisition and public park projects and to carry out those projects. It would eliminate Volcan Mountain and the river's source from the San Dieguito River Park and significantly reduce the current effort to purchase this magnificent property from a willing seller as public land. It would seriously jeopardize the existence of the JPA and its worthwhile programs, goals and objectives. It would imperil the lagoon

restoration planning effort, and the goals to create hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails from the ocean to the river's source.

HEARING: Tuesday June 6, at County Board of Supervisors, 9:30 AM, 1600 Pacific Coast Highway, 3rd floor.

WHAT TO DO: Call, fax, and attend the meeting. Don't let Jacobs, Horn and a small group of land owners destroy the JPA. They lost their court battle in November. Don't let them win by your apathy.

<u>Supervisors</u>	<u>phone</u>	<u>fax</u>
Greg Cox	531-5511	557-4025
Diane Jacobs	531-5522	696-7253
Pam Slater	531-5533	234-1559
Ron Roberts	531-5544	557-4025
Bill Horn	531-5555	557-4025

(Thanks to Britta Wichers of the JPA for this edited report).

ACT NOW



TRAIL TREATS

(trailside chat)



Foot Notes

Any members with an INTERNET address out there? E-mail me at pfreiman@ucsd.edu

My **PLANTAR FASCITIS** (inflammation of the heel of the foot) is *slowly* getting better. Last February I had to cancel the Hellhole Flat hike again (the first time canceled because of a rib inflammation after the Santa Rosa Ridge traverse). After the Pinyon Ridge traverse my foot was killing me. I took a month off of hiking and received acupuncture and a cortisone injection. It's getting stronger, but I'll lead easier hikes for the next few months to give my foot a rest. It's time to come up out of the desert anyway.

BETH DAVIS gave me the complete series of Marshal South's articles from 1940 to 1948, plus other articles from the Desert Magazine. The articles will appear frequently in Hiking Horizons.

As **CAROL MURDOCK** was traveling back from the desert the weekend of Feb 4-5, she spotted a cougar sauntering in an open field near Santa Ysabel.

RICHARD CAREY has a new phone number: 224-9900.

CARL JOHNSON has lately had a bit of trouble in Mexico. Thieves stole his group's radios and batteries. They did miss one of the batteries and it was used to start all the cars for the drive across the border.

BILL GOOKIN, originator of Gookinaid ERG, an isotonic drink similar to Gatoraid, was contacted by doctors going to Rwanda last year. They realized Bill's drink was the perfect vehicle to replenish dehydrated bodies. Five hundred pounds of powder were donated, all that there was room for in the transport plane.

Thank you's to Gail Hanna, Mark Adrian, Chris Landa and Wes Shelberg for contributing to the newsletter.

Feb 4-5 Borrego Palm Canyon Traverse. Eight adventurers (Lorin Mitts, Jerry Higgins and brother Ren (AKA Warren), Mary McLain, Ranchita Ted, John Strauch, Paul Stuverud, and myself) met at Lorin and Mary's home in Borrego, where we would end the traverse. Instead of starting the hike at Sheep Canyon and hiking up Indian Canyon as described in "Afoot and Afield...", I chose to start in the Indian Reservation at the headwaters of the north fork of Borrego Palm Canyon. We all loaded into Lorin's van and headed up to Los Coyote Indian Reservation for the start. HOTM Mary Mitts lent her valuable assistance and drove the car back to the house.

The Indians have the trail marked on the maps they give you when you pay your entrance fee (\$10 per vehicle for day use), but I think I'm the only one who has taken this trail in the past six years. We had a very easy time staying on the correct route since I had overducked it in the past. Marching along the streambed we came to a four-foot snake in the path. We weren't sure what it was, but knew it wasn't a rattler. I knew Ted would have to pick it up because, well, that's something Ted does. Impressively nonchalant as Ted lifted we then realized that it was either dead or too cold to move. We took our photos and continued on to Pike.

As we rested at BM Pike at 5640 feet, two F-18's skimmed the ridgetops off to the north about 500 feet below us. Adventurers that we were, we continued on and found the "mortero rock" that Schad describes. So deep, some of the morteros are worn clear through the rock! (I guess those Indians found chores a grind too--editor). Indian researcher Steve Cowen found intact pottery here. I know the thrill, because on Sunday I found 1/4th of a vase, complete with a curved lip. We left both pieces for others to find. Sunday, we hiked down or around numerous waterfalls and, 1/2 hour before finishing, went for a swim. The best part came when Mary welcomed us back home with homemade

soup, salad, ice cream and brownies—a caloric challenge that we embraced!

Feb 26 Pinyon Ridge Traverse. Great weather, good friends, good hike, good time. Six club members met in Ranchita for the passage down the Pinyon Ridge to Yaqui Pass. Beth Davis, Jerry Higgins, John Strauch, Paul Stuverud, and Lorin Mitts joined me for this scenic hike illustrated by map last issue. We had lunch on BM Wilson, leaving at noon to proceed with the crosscountry portion of the adventure. It was a pleasant 70 degrees as we passed a watering tank for the animals' use during the summer. Upon reaching the last knoll before the 200 foot descent to Yaqui Pass, Jerry spotted seven bighorn sheep. A delightful climax for the 8-hour hike, but the real climax of the day was soaking in the jacuzzi at Ram's Hill. Ah.....nature!

Mar 25-26 Cactus Springs Trail Traverse.

The weather wasn't just great for this hike: it was perfect. This trip started near Pinyon Flat Campground on the northeast side of Toro Peak with Tim and Suzanne Pletcher, Beth Davis, Jerry Higgins, Lorin Mitts, Charles Hummel, Carol Snyder, Mark Bender, and yours truly. Eight of us put our backpacks down near Cactus Spring and bagged Sheep Mountain which is on the HPS list while Mark watched the packs. I hadn't hiked for a month because of my foot, so I was a bit slower than the others. We returned to the packs after more than 3 hours, having hiked 1100 feet of gain and 4 miles RT. After lunch we set off to bag Martinez Peak (on the HPS and DPS lists which Carol is trying to complete).

As Beth and I were slowing down, I

encouraged the group to race on ahead, and go for the peak if they could get to the start point by 3:00 PM. After they started for the peak at 3:20, Beth and I went down the trail to fetch some water and find a good spot to camp. I was then to head back and lead the others. We got to water after 30 minutes and pumped five liters. I figured that was enough to last the night and breakfast, so Beth and I trudged back up the hill to await the others. Looking at my watch I said to Beth, "It's 5:30. I hope they've made the peak by now." About thirty seconds later I saw them coming down the hill. Everyone was back by 6:00. It was dark at 6:30. Martinez gained 1400 feet with a 4-mile RT. Without slowpokes they did it in 21/2 hours. Total time for day one—9.5 hours.

During the night the temp dropped to 24°F and everyone was warm—except Lorin. Let me tell you something about Lorin's pack: it's about the weight of a feather when fully loaded. I don't know how the man packs so light!

It warmed quickly to a very pleasant temp by the time we left at 8:00 AM. This section of the trip was spectacular. Pinyon pines, desert apricot, mountain mahogany, brittlebush, and more. I always enjoy exploring new area, but this was something special.

It took 80 minutes to reach Agua Alta Spring, where we had intended to spend Saturday night. The trail disappears after you leave Agua Alta, but a decent series of rock ducks lead the way. At 2:00 PM we were down to the 2000-foot level next to a cool, flowing stream with still about 10 miles to go and hopped back and forth across the year-round flow. Out at 5:00 PM we covered

17 miles that second day.

Special thanks go again to Lorin and Jerry for setting up the shuttle.

April 8-9 Santa Rosa Mountains, Barton Canyon Circumnavigation, by Mark Adrian



In my relentless pursuit of exploring remote and lonely places, I asked Paul Freiman to lead a trip to bag four of the benchmarks on his San Diego Peaks List that are in the Santa Rosa Mountains. These mountains must be the most rugged in our county, parts of which are incorporated into the newly-established 64,340 acre Santa Rosa Mountains Wilderness. Every time I hike these mountains, it is a very demanding experience.

We agreed to do this hike, including, Dawn BM (2795'), Alice BM (3594'), Crab BM (4485'), Zosel BM (4853') and Ruth BM (5070'). These BMs sit along the E spur ridges between Villager and Rabbit peaks, above the depths of Barton Canyon. Joining us were Lorin Mitts (of Borrego Springs) and John Strauch. We determined the best way to approach this project was the Coachella Valley side of the Santa Rosas. So, we began our trek by parking at the end of Fillmore Road, just NW of the town of Oasis at -80'.

Saturday afternoon, we departed about 5 PM to establish a base camp up Barton Canyon at about 1000' and get an early start Sunday morning to avoid the scorching desert sun. It took us about 2.5 hours to hike through several orange groves, some abandoned dirt roads, then up a rocky wash to our camp.

It was a hot steamy evening, and me without a tent, became a pin cushion for relentless mosquitos. Nevertheless, we were up at 5 AM Sunday morning.

Our first objective was Dawn benchmark which none of us had ever been to and weren't surprised not to find a register there. The day was very hazy, but the sun still made the early morning ascent quite warm despite the cool breezes. By 9 AM we were on Alice BM, then it was a slow meander up to Crab BM where we encountered a rattlesnake en route. Finally, we reached Zosel BM about noon, then after a short rest, we were on the main ridgeline about 1 PM heading N towards Rabbit peak. At the saddle just N of point 5859', we turned E and headed for Ruth BM, arriving there about 3:30 PM. Leaving there about 3:50 PM, we took a combination of ridgelines and loose gullys down to Barton Canyon's main wash, arriving about 6 PM. Since Paul's foot was ailing (No, I was just plain exhausted--Paul) Lorin and I struck out ahead for our camp before darkness set in. It was a long trudge down the wash/canyon with much brush and boulder hopping. We arrived at camp about 7:30, just before dark. Paul and John arrived around 9 PM. We struck the camp and departed about 9:40 PM hiking in the light of a half moon. About 11:00 PM we intersected a road we had spotted from above that we determined would expedite our return to the van, which, it did, and we arrived back at the van at 1:00 AM Monday morning. It was then about an hours drive back to Borrego (Lorin's house), where we transferred to Paul's car. We arrived back at Paul's house about 4 AM, and I got home about 4:30 AM. Trip stats : 20 miles, 6500+' gain, 7000' loss, 19 hours for Sunday only. This had to be the longest hiking day in my "career".

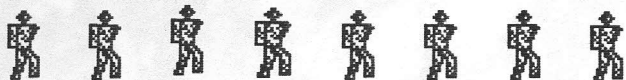
(I got home at 4am, took a shower, went to sleep for an hour, then went to work. I was ok until 11am, then had to come home because of exhaustion. Mark forgot to tell you that he had just returned from the Vatican, where he was four rows from the Pope, and had his boots and compass blessed by His Holiness. Darn, that was a good chance to have another 1st for the club by getting the HOTM pole blessed! I must take the blame for the time of the trip, however. My foot was ok throughout the hike, but my fitness level had suffered from several months of resting my foot. I figure I delayed the trip about 4-5 hours. We had a great time, though. We saw a rattlesnake (quite alive and well), a massive bighorn skull, and a hummingbird's nest, complete with two eggs the size of small jelly beans. The trip would have been better as a three day event. -Paul)



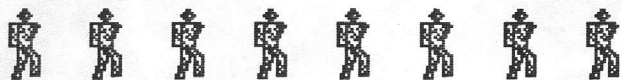
Ted playing with snake on Borrego Palm Canyon traverse



Pottery find in the north fork of Borrego Palm Canyon



WEEKEND OUTINGS



Apr 21-23 CANOE the Lower Colorado River. Carl 448-8542. Carl's traditional trip from Walter's Camp to Martinez Lake. Call for details. Sierra Club.

May 1 Happy 2nd Anniversary, Vicki, my lovely editor and wife.

May 1 STONEWALL-MIDDLE-CUYAMACA PEAKS LOOP. Last Monday hike with Al. 273-2494. Sierra Club.

May 6 Saturday. PALOMAR MOUNTAIN. Al 273-2494. Fry Creek to Boucher Hill.

May 6 Saturday. OLD SD FLUME TRAIL to Conejo Creek. Carl 448-8542. Starts at El Capitan Reservoir. Call for details. Sierra Club.

May 6-7 CUTCA VALLEY TRAILWORK. With these rains comes overgrown trails. Please help maintain the trails on the north side of Palomar. The HPS, under Alan Coles, is organizing this work party for the Forest Service. Hand tools will be provided and an overnight backpack will be necessary. Please contact Gail Hanna at her work 524-1698 or home 272-5141 no less than ten days prior to the event and she will have Alan send you the info. No experience needed. Our 1st Regional Wilderness NEEDS YOU!

May 7 Sunday. SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK TRAIL RUN. See flyer on page 11. The course, arguably one of the most scenic trail events in San Diego County, starts at Kit Carson Park, cross a stream, and take the newly constructed I-15 undercrossing to the north shore of Lake Hodges. At the finish the fun keeps coming with live music, munch a variety of refreshments, vie for prize give-aways, browse through the eco-fair, and consume freshly brewed beer from Pizza Port.

May 13 Saturday. OUTLAW TRAIL with Richard and Patsy Hughes 287-3434. Leave town Fri. night and spend a balmy night in Palm Springs. Wake up before sunrise Sat. and hike the 8,000 ft Outlaw (aka Sunrise) trail to Long Valley. Descend via the tram. Call for sign up. Sierra Club.

May 13 Saturday. LAGUNA TO CUYAMACA. Hike the Indian Creek trail from Pioneer Mail in the Lagunas to Sweetwater bridge in the Cuyamacas. 13 miles, 1250' gain/ 2700' loss, 5 hours. The ceanothus should be in beauteous splendor, providing an impressive vista from Champagne Pass. Schad sez this is a three-star hike. I say "two-star". Not hard. Come on out. Paul 583-0266. (See "Afoot and Afield...", p. 167).

May 20 SANTA ROSA LOOP with Al 273-2494. Repeat of last year's hike (without the poodle). Start at 6200' and hike crosscountry to Toro Peak and Santa Rosa. 2600' gain. Sierra Club.

May 26-29 PICACHO DEL DIABLO. Carl 448-8542. Join Carl for this very strenuous Memorial Day weekend hike to the premiere mountain in Baja. (Sorry, trip filled when it was reported last issue).

May 27-29 Three Glorious days of ORIENTEERING! Lagunas. Call Bill Gookin 578-9456.

June 3-4 RAFT TRIP ON THE KERN. \$75 per person for the weekend. Call Paul for details 583-0266. Invite your friends to share the fun!!!!!!!!!!

June 3 Desert Divide. Saturday. Al 273-2494. Repeat of last years all-day hike to Tahquitz, Red Tahquitz, South and Ansell Rock peaks south of San Jacinto. Sierra Club.

June 10 SDPC exclusive! Idyllwild. Hike with Al up the South Ridge trail to Lily Rock and down and back to Humber Park.

June 14 The Sierra Club's Wednesday in the Mountains group has a bus trip planned to San Jacinto. For \$35 you get driven to the Palm Springs tram, up the tram, and then hike down to Humber Park where the bus will pick you up. Call Al for details 273-2494.

June 17 Another SDPC exclusive! Idyllwild. Hike with Al from the base of Suicide Rock crosscountry to Marian Peak via compass bearing. These last two hikes

are for members of SDPC and are not being publicized elsewhere.

June 24-25 Backpack to Laws Camp. Al's assisting Joanne Martin to this idyllic spot in the San Jacinto range 273-2494.

July 1-2-3 San Jacinto Backpack. Al 273-2494. Camp at Round Valley, then dayhike six peaks around San Jacinto. Sierra Club. Isn't Al sick of San Jacinto yet after spending the last month there?

July 8-16 Copper Canyon with Carl. 448-8542.

Aug 12-20 Drive to Copper Canyon with Carl 448-8542. Call Carl and Nancy for more info on the Copper Canyon trips.

WEDNESDAY

WALKABOUT

HIKES with JIM "Raccoon"

SUGG



Jim leads hikes for Walkabout International every Wednesday. His hikes vary in length and time from 8-16 miles and from 5-8 hours hiking time. They cover all areas of the county within 1 1/2 hours driving time. Many of the hikes are unique to this group! Al Holden frequently leads the first and third Wednesdays.

May 3 Palomar loop with Al.

10 Fortuna Mountain

17 6K Ridge in the Lagunas with Al.

24 Pine Valley Creek loop

31 Corte Madera Mountain

June 7 Morena Butte

14 Descanso to Green Valley Falls loop.

21 Monument Peak loop.

28 Kelly Ditch trail to Heise Park.



Climbing with Richard Hughes

April 15-16 Tajo (not Tahoe) Canyon, Baja CA Single to three pitches, moderate to hard (5.6 to 5.10d) on Tuolomne-like granite. Carpool: 7:15 pm Friday night at my house (4605 Estrella Ave). High clearance helpful but not essential (especially if you don't mind a few scratches in the paint). We've driven here in a VW Beetle, a Mercury Capri and a Honda Civic (your mileage may vary). Purchasing Mexican auto liability insurance before leaving would be a good idea (AAA or Anserv at 296-4706 can sell you insurance by fax) if you know you are going to drive.

April 22-23 Joshua Tree NP, Sheep Pass group site. Carpool: 7:30 pm Friday night at Poway/Penasquitos Park & Ride. Campsite cost is \$2 per person. Entrance fee is \$5 per car unless you have a pass.

April 29-30 Joshua Tree NP, Sheep Pass group site #3. Carpool: 7:30 pm Friday night at Poway/Penasquitos Park & Ride n.b. This is a joint trip with the Sierra Club. The campsite is actually reserved for the nights of April 25-30. Campsite cost is \$10 per person (to match the cost of the Sierra Club trip). Make check payable to either the San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Access Fund, the Nature Conservancy or the Friends of Joshua Tree and I'll send them in. Don't waste your money in the climbing gym; instead help support our climbing areas with this small donation. Entrance fee is \$5 per car unless you have a pass.

May 27-30 (Memorial Day weekend) Southern Yosemite. Mostly moderate to harder (5.6 to 5.10a) multipitch on Tuolomne-like granite (so far as I can gather). Area features Mammoth Pool, Shuteye Ridge, Fresno Dome, The Balls and Wawona. I don't know where Dave plans for us to camp but it all looks fairly close together. I have the guide and (regular) topos (thanks to Paul Freiman!). Carpool: 6:00 pm Friday night at Poway/Penasquitos Park & Ride. All of these areas are outstanding places for hiking and mountain bike riding as well as climbing. Pot-luck dinner on Saturday nights. Bring water and, if you have any, some firewood too. -Richard Hughes

SATURDAY WALKABOUT



HIKES with Wanda, Jim and Bill

Apr 22 West Mesa with Mac Downing. 9-10 miles.

30 SUNDAY! Palomar Mountain with Wanda Zack.

May 6 Morena Butte with Jim Sugg.

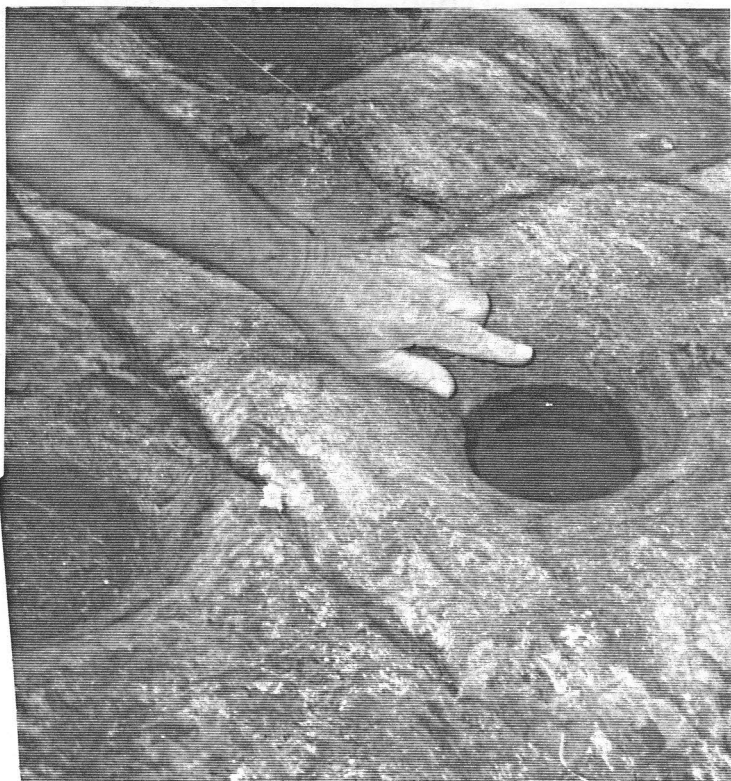
13 Pine Valley Creek with Wanda Zack.

20 Noble Canyon shuttle with Bill Babcock. 11 miles downhill.

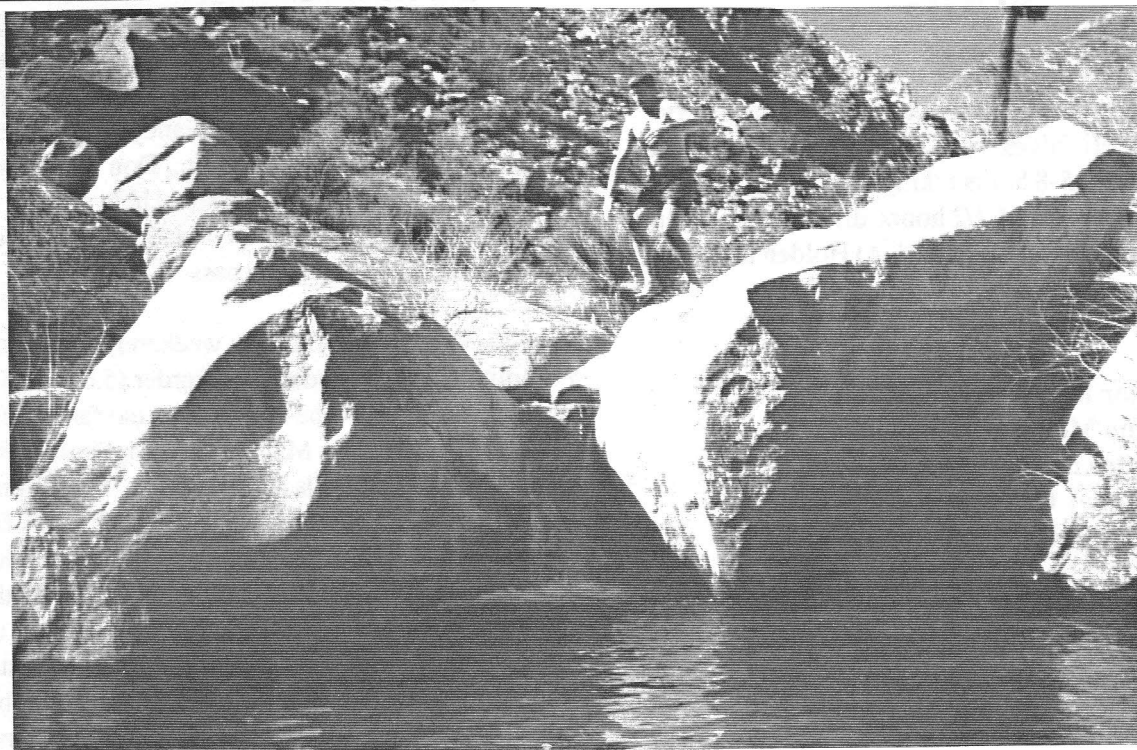
27 Indian Creek trail with Mac Downing.

June 3 Stonewall Mine and Peak, hike and history lesson (aka Info-hike) with Wanda Zack.

10 Palomar -Fry Creek Campground start with Bill Babcock.



Mega-morteros

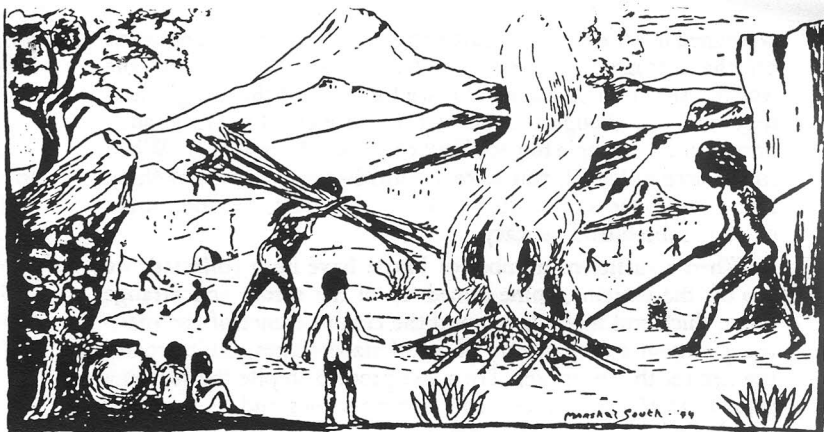


Cooling down near the end of the Borrego Palm Canyon hike

"Brown and golden and rich! Something like a roasted yam, yet holding also an indescribable tang of pineapple and of mango." That is the way Marshal South describes roasted mescal, the most prized delicacy at Yaquitepec. This month he tells how the mescal hearts are gathered and roasted—eaten. The South family practices the rite of mescal roasting in much the same manner as the Indians who once lived on Ghost Mountain and left their ancient fire pits behind.

Desert Refuge

By MARSHAL SOUTH



Old-time mescal roast. Ink drawing by Marshal South.

THROUGH the east window the ragged mass of an unfinished wall bulks like ebony against the pale dawn light. Except for the vibrant blundering notes of the big carpenter bees about the eaves troughs, Ghost Mountain is wrapped in a cloak of silence as absolute as though it was the first morning of the world.

Soon the sun will be up. Already the jagged rocks along the eastern ridge, where the mountain crest plunges into the shadowy lowlands, are beginning to glow pink. Lone, dead mescal poles are gaunt against the sky. Between the bulk of giant boulders the silhouettes of gnarled junipers are an edging of black lace. Rider is already awake, lying quiet and thoughtful in his covers, awaiting the arrival of the goldfish.

Every morning, just as the sun looms above the horizon, the goldfish make their magical appearance, swimming gracefully down the length of an old smoke-tinted ceiling beam. First, along the dark length of the stretching timber that is their promise, appear the shimmering waves of a pale golden sea. Then, suddenly, in the midst of it, there are the goldfish. A long line of them. Flashing, ruddy-gold fellows of assorted sizes, all headed south. Their appearance, and the ceremony of counting them, marks the official beginning of a Yaquitepec day. Rudyard and Victoria always wake up to take part in this tally of the magic fish, and always are baffled. Because, no matter how many times they count them, they never can arrive at the same number twice. "Twenty-two," says Rudyard. "No, seventeen," declares Victoria. And they are both wrong—or maybe both right. For when Rider, the countmaster, makes the check, there are but eighteen. And as he goes over his count to verify it, there perhaps will be fifteen. Or nineteen. Magic is in the goldfish, that changes their number, from second to second, with the rapid lift of the sun. Sometimes we think that those people whose houses are so well constructed that there are no spaces beneath the corrugations of roofing iron through which the sun can paint glowing goldfish upon beams are missing a lot of fun.

Mescal roasting was hurried this year. We really ought to have done more of it, for the children love the brown, delicious, natural sweet. But there have been so many other tasks, and days have been so crowded, that we found it hard to use the necessary time.

Those days that we did manage to spare were picnics indeed. For we drift now through that enchanted period of spring when the rock crest of Ghost Mountain is vibrant with the crystal notes of orioles and canyon wrens, and all the white, gravelly stretches are gay with a carpet of desert flowers. To set forth in the early dawn, armed with shovels and digging bars, and bearing food for a day's outing, is sheer delight. There is a tang to it, and a wide sense of freedom that belongs not to this age, but to another, when man was not so enmeshed in miseries of his own devising. Bare feet fall softly upon whispering gravel. From the junipers, as one brushes past their dark green branches, exhales an aromatic fragrance. In the stillness we imagine we

see, just ahead, the shadowy shapes of those simple hearted children of the desert whose dusky feet traced out these ancient trails between mescal hearth and mescal hearth in the long vanished years.

Mescal roasting is a family affair. Tanya and I find and bring in the sprouting plants that are ready for the baking. Rider helps dig the pit and fetches stones to line it. Rudyard and Victoria trot hither and thither, lugging in fuel. They cease their labors occasionally to hunt for snail shells or to admire the tiny thickets of desert ferns that grow in cool sheltered niches at the base of giant boulders.

It must have been like this in the old days, which only the silent rocks and ancient junipers remember. Then, as now, the orioles flung their liquid notes along the slopes. The blossoms of the desert pea bush crowded the space between the boulders with gay bouquets of dazzling yellow. The bodies of those who moved to and fro at their tasks were innocent of clothes. The old days and the simple dwellers of the desert are gone. "They killed them all off," an old Mexican woman once said to us sorrowfully. "They killed off all those poor people. But, *gracias a Dios*, maybe the padres at least saved their souls."

Mescal roasting is strenuous work. There is the pit to be dug. And afterwards it has to be roughly lined with stones. On these old hearths, where the earth is permanently black from the scorch of unnumbered ancient fires, the digging usually is not so hard as it would be in fresh ground. Also there are plenty of fire blackened stones that have been used and re-used numberless times in the past. This lessens the labor somewhat. But still the work requires considerable effort.

The dimensions of the pit can be governed by ambition—and the size of the proposed baking. About three feet across and from 18 inches to two feet deep in the center, when stone lined, is the average size of the pits we make. The stone lining is hasty and crude—just sizeable rocks laid together in a pavement over the bottom and up the sloping sides to the rim.

Digging in these old hearths always gives us a vivid sense of their antiquity. The blackened earth extends downward to great depths. Their age must be measured by many centuries.

About the hardest part of the proceedings is gathering the mescal hearts. The sprouting plants first must be found—and suitable ones always are widely scattered. You have to catch them in just the right stage. If the flower shoot is not high enough you lose a great deal in content. If it is too high the succulent juice pulp has begun to transfer itself to the upbuilding of the stalk. The ideal stage is when the sprout is up about 15 to 18 inches. At this period maximum plumpness—as far as roasting purposes are concerned—has been attained by the hearts.

Your plant located, the next task is to remove the central heart so that it can be roasted. This means taking practically the whole plant, with the exception of the extreme woody root, and divesting it of leaves. The old timers did this by means of chisel-pointed hardwood digging sticks. With these they

wrenched out the swelled heart and its attached sprout and pried off the surrounding dagger-pointed leaves. We still use the wooden sticks on occasion. But we have found that a light iron digging bar, although it is heavier, is more effective. It is sometimes quite a struggle to get off all of the stubborn leaves. When this is accomplished, you have a whitish-green club, something like a grotesque animal foot. This is the heart, the forerunner of your subsequent delicacy.

When a sufficient number of hearts have been collected, we lop off the extreme, spine-armed tip of the sprout and arrange them, thick end inwards, around the circumference of the roasting pit upon a low coping of good sized stones, built around the rim for that purpose. Then you proceed to pile the fuel in a great heap all around, covering coping stones and hearts alike. For this purpose any handy dry fuel will do. Usually we use the old dead butts and stalks of mescals themselves, intermixed with occasional dead branches of juniper, if there are any around. Apparently, from the comparative rarity of charcoal in the old fire hearths, this was the course followed by the ancients. Dead mescal butts provide intense heat, but leave almost no charcoal as compared with wood.

When the fire is lighted it must be kept well fed and blazing hotly for from a half to three quarters of an hour. Mescal hearts are stubborn things and can stand lots of heat. The blaze blackens them and makes hot the rim of rocks upon which they lie, heating also the lining of stones in the pit. Coals and blazing fragments fall into the pit and add to its temperature. It is a hot job and long mescal poles come in handy for stirring and arranging the blazing fuel.

At the end of half an hour or so the fire is allowed to die down. When it has dwindled to a mass of glowing embers, through which scorched mescal hearts and blackened rim rocks smoke hotly, you go around the edge of the pit, with a pole or a long handled shovel, and tumble scorched hearts, hot stones and embers all together into the pit. Then the rest of the hot ashes are piled in a mound above them. And over all a thick, heaped covering of earth. Then you go on to the same round of proceedings at the next roasting pit. Or you go home. The job is done.

And you leave your mescals cooking in their primitive oven for *two days*. At the end of the second day you go back and open up the pits. Things will have cooled down by then so they easily can be handled. The hearts that you take out won't look very inviting. They will be charred and earth plastered, and the shoots will be limp, brown sticky things. But don't throw them away. Carry them home tenderly and with reverence. For beneath the scorched, charred envelope lies something more delicious than many a famed delicacy of civilization.

Take a knife or a hatchet and carefully trim off the outer crusting, and the prize lies before you. Brown and golden and rich! Something like a roasted yam, yet holding also an indescribable tang of pineapple and of mango. Roast mescal! In all the desert there is nothing quite like it. And it must be tasted to be appreciated. It will keep, too, if you slice it and dry it for future use. But we at Yaquitepec seldom get this far. Our enthusiastic youngsters believe in living in the present, and the golden brown stuff doesn't keep very well with us. It tastes too good.

Our desert tortoises are awake again. All through the cold months they slumbered, hidden away in dark corners behind trunks and boxes in the house. Well sheltered in their hide-outs they were oblivious of the icy blasts that roared above Ghost Mountain. That is, two of them passed the winter in this orthodox fashion. The third—General Machado, our latest acquisition and by far the biggest of the three—scorned the protective folds of the covering which we had laid over him. He vanished at the beginning of winter, and we could not find him.

Then one day, Rider, poking about in the dark hinterland of the storeroom with a flashlight, came hurrying out with the sorrowful news that General Machado was dead. "Frozen, poor

thing," Rider said dolefully, shivering at the icy wind howling about the house. "Come, see for yourselves."

So we went and saw for ourselves. There, six inches from the floor, in a dark corner, wedged between the wall and the leg of an old cupboard, was General Machado, stiff and stark. Cold and rigid, his legs dangling out of his shell, and already mouldy looking, he hung there like a dead stiff coyote across the top of a barb wire fence.

We could not reach him without moving a quantity of piled boxes and stored stuff. His appearance, in the wan beam of the flashlight, told us that we couldn't do any good if we did reach him. It was too cold to undertake the job, anyway. And besides we hadn't much heart for it. Somehow the sight of our poor pet hanging there lifeless, as upon a gibbet, cast a gloom over us. Several times during the winter when we really ought to have moved stuff in that corner to get at things we wanted, we invented excuses.

With the coming of spring, the other two awoke. They came down the aisle between the trunks and stores looking for green grass. "We ought to get that other dead tortoise out of the corner," Tanya said reluctantly. "The weather is warming. It's not healthy."

No one wanted the job. But it had to be done. So Rider brought the long iron fire rod with the hook at the end of it and Rudyard fetched the flashlight. "See if you can hook him out," I said glumly, trying to decide whether we would bury him or keep his shell as a memento. "Be careful though. He's probably pretty smelly."

The youngsters grubbed in the corner, on hands and knees. There came a sudden exclamation. "*He's not here!*" Rider's voice was startled.

Flashlight in hand Rudyard backed out from under a table. His eyes were wide. "Someone has spiwited him away!" he said hoarsely.

"Oaha!" Victoria cried breathlessly. "I know! The angels! They came and tooked him!" She bolted to Tanya to impart this amazing news.

But it wasn't the angels. For that afternoon, after we had hunted unsuccessfully for General Machado's body, we met him coming down the aisle, calm and distinguished looking. He had an air about him. An air of authority, such as any really worth while general ought to have. "Out of my way," he seemed to say haughtily. "Can't you see I am in a hurry. I have to rejoin my command."

So we restored him to his command. And they welcomed him with sour looks. For they do not like General Machado. Nor do we, now. Well, not much. For we feel, somehow, that he has been guilty of dying under false pretenses.

Quail calling from the ridges. "*Chouk!*" And again: "*Chouk!*" The bustling flutter of the purple finches who are putting the finishing touches to their nest in the tiny house atop the high pole at the center of the ramada. The sun has dipped far to the west now, and the shadow of the house roof reaches out to the chunky little squaw-tea bush that stands in the center of the white gravel court. Along the rocks of the terrace nod the blue-flecked chia sage blooms, and the desert four-o'clocks are just opening their white flowers. On the slope, beyond the little flat through which the foot trail winds, a clump of desert paintbrush flames a splash of scarlet.

• • • ATTRACTION

*Then worship not the good men do,
But do it, you, as well.
All hearts who wisely live and true.
To Light and Truth impel.
Whate'er you are you but attract
Exactly as you earn
And they who only good enact,
To them will good return.*

—TANYA SOUTH

THE DESERT MAGAZINE

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK



TRAIL RUN

6 MILE RUN • 4 MILE HIKE

SUNDAY, MAY 7, 1995 • 8 AM

THE TRAIL...

MOST SCENIC RUN IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY!

The run begins at Kit Carson Park behind North County Fair Shopping Center in Escondido. The trail runs through the wildflowers in Kit Carson, crosses a stream and onto the newly constructed I-15 trail undercrossing. From here it will wind through a portion of the San dieguito River Park "Coast to Crest Trail" along the north shore of Lake Hodges past streams, under trees, over bridges and finishing on the shore of beautiful Lake Hodges.

FEATURES

- A bountiful variety of food including fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Micro Brewed Beer Garden. . . Pizza Port Solana Beach Brewery will feature their Honey Ale & Pipes Pale Ale.
- Ecological/Environmental Expo featuring a variety of booths focusing on the San Dieguito River Valley, the environment, running gear, hiking, biking & trail info.
- San Diego hiking legend Jerry Schad, author of "Afoot & Afield in San Diego" will lead the hikers.
- Live music and dancing.
- All participants receive a top quality 100% cotton T-shirt with the new S.D.R.P. Trail Run logo.
- Pancake Breakfast - includes eggs, juice, links & bacon. \$3.00. Benefits the Del Dios Volunteer Fire Department.

TEAM COMPETITIONS

Open Women, Open Men, Open Mixed, Military, Corporate, Law Enforcement & Government. Teams consist of 3-5 members. The fastest 3 times score for the team. Each team member must fill out a separate entry form and submit them together.

AWARDS

Awards will be given to the top 3 male and female finishers in every division. Prizes will be awarded to the first place teams.

PRIZE DRAWINGS

Prizes from Patagonia, Wild Animal Park T-shirts, See's Candies, Dinners from Pizza Port and more!

REGISTRATION

Register by mail before April 30, 1995. Day of race registration begins 7am.

BENEFICIARY

Proceeds from this event benefit the San Dieguito River Park & the San Dieguito River Valley Land Conservancy, organizations preserving natural open space and creating trails for hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.

INFORMATION/VOLUNTEERS

Elite Racing, Inc., (619) 450-6510 or (714) 548-4897.

adidas
Official Shoe

JAZZ
FM98

PIZZA PORT
SOLANA BEACH
BREWERY

QUALCOMM

Elite Racing
Sports Marketing • Management



patagonia

ENTRY FORM

Mail entry form, fee to: San Dieguito River Park (SDRP) Trail Run
10509 Vista Sorrento Pkwy., Ste. 102, San Diego, CA 92121

Name (first) _____ (last) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ M F Age Race Day _____

TEAM NAME: _____

TEAM DIVISION: _____

WAIVER: (MUST BE SIGNED)

I hereby release San Dieguito River Park, Elite Racing, Inc., Tim Murphy, USATF, and all municipal agencies whose property and/or personnel are used, and other sponsoring or co-sponsoring company(ies), agency(ies) or individual(s) from responsibility for any injuries or damages I may suffer as a result of my participation in the San Dieguito River Park Run or Hike. I hereby certify that I am in good condition and am able to safely compete in this event. I will additionally permit the use of my name and pictures in broadcasts, telecasts, newspapers, brochures, etc. and I also understand that the entry fee is non-refundable. As a participating athlete I certify that all information provided in this form is true and complete. I have read the entry information provided for the event and certify my compliance by signature below.

Signature of athlete

Date

(Signature of parent if under 18 years)

Date

IF ATHLETE IS UNDER AGE 18: This is to certify that my son/daughter has my permission to compete in the San Dieguito River Park Run or Hike, is in good physical condition, and that race officials have my permission to authorize emergency treatment if necessary.

FEES:

(all entry fees include T-shirt)

Entry for Run and Hike

After 4/7/95 \$18.00 \$ _____

After 4/30/95 \$20.00 \$ _____

Team Entry (3-5 people) \$ _____

After 4/7/95 \$80.00 \$ _____

Pancake Breakfast \$ 3.00 \$ _____

Souvenir Sweatshirt \$20.00 \$ _____

Size (please circle): S M L XL

If you would like your race number mailed to you add \$1.00 \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

T-shirt size (circle one) S M L XL XXL

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:
SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

CHECK ONE: ☐ Run ☐ Hike