Desert Trumpet
FRIENDS OF RED ROCK CANYON
January 2010

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DEATH VALLEY

Foreboding, luring, hot, dangerous, beautiful and unique.

by Chuck Kleber

In the fall of 1849, a party of 107 wagons, led by William Lewis Manly and Jefferson Hunt, turned south in their journey to California. It was late enough in the year that this seemed to be the safer and more sensible route. There was a route to the north, but that meant crossing the Sierra Nevada as winter approached. That was the route to freezing death chosen by the ill-fated Donner Party just three years earlier. The Manly Party, including many women and young children, trekked into a barren wilderness, so foreboding they called it "Death Valley." Theirs is a story in itself, but, incredibly, only one person died in the extremely harsh crossing. With near-classic understatement, one of the pioneers noted in his log, "Damned dubious looking country!" When they finally reached California's Santa Clara River Valley, Manly recalled, "Such a scene of abundance and rich plenty and comfort bursting thus upon our eyes, which for months had seen only the desolation of the desert, was like getting a glimpse of Paradise, and tears of joy ran down our faces." Death Valley was behind them . . . but not for others and not for history.

Death Valley is a foreboding place, the hottest in the nation, where Furnace Creek recorded 134 degrees on July 10, 1913, a record. It is also the lowest at 282 feet below sea level. No surprise that it is also the driest spot. Even some of the names are fearful, like 'Badwater'. Death Valley

lies southeast of the Sierra Nevada mountain range along the California and Nevada border. Although annual rainfall is normally a scant 1.5 inches, in 2005 Death Valley got four times that average. The miracle of a lake appeared, but it was shallow and the burning sun soon sucked up the water. It wasn't always that way. Even as recently as 12,000 years ago, short by geologic standards, Death Valley was a lake of great size, 100 miles long and 600 feet deep. But the climate changed and Death Valley took on the appearance we see today. What, then, does this barren and apparently lifeless area have to offer? Surprisingly, quite a lot. Even Ansel Adams was drawn to its stark beauty, leading him to make one of his few color photographs, "Sunrise."

A group of Shoshone Indians, the Timbisha, have lived in Death Valley forever according to tribal lore, certainly for at least 1,000 years. They knew where to find water, wildlife and plant life for sustenance. The mesquite was particularly important in building shelters and in other ways. Theirs is a regrettable story, not unusual in the history of Indian relations with state and federal government agencies and the pressures of migration to the West by seemingly unending numbers of whites. The Timbisha Shoshone soon found their land altered to suit the needs of mining companies like the Pacific Borax Company. Water became scarce and they were forced to move from traditional sites. Death Valley became a national monument in 1933, but the establishment of the National Park Service did little to improve things.

Death Valley, cont'd on p. 6

Felis, the Cat

"Cats cannot be made to do anything useful. Cats are meant for the fun of it." — P. J. O Rourke

Among the remains of Shillourokambos, an archaeological site on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, a small grave is unearthed. In it lies the skeleton of a small cat, roughly 8 months old. Close by, there is a larger grave containing a human skeleton—an adult of unknown gender—along with various grave offerings: stone tools, a lump of iron oxide and a handful of seashells. The cat had been intentionally buried alone, as an individual, not collectively with other animals as in nearby graves. Its body was oriented in the same westward-facing direction as the human's. Could the cat have been a beloved pet?

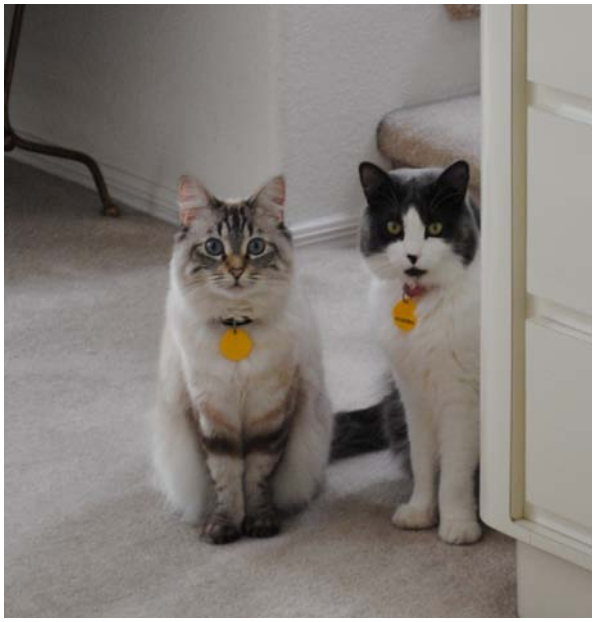
The sediments in which the graves were found dated to 9,500 years ago. The finds, uncovered during ongoing excavations in 2004 by the team of Jean-Denis Vigne of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, confirmed what scientists have suspected for some time: that people transported either wild or domesticated cats to the island more than 9,000 years ago, about 5,000 years before the Egyptians were reputed to have tamed and bred felines.

In the April 9, 2004 issue of the journal *Science*, Vigny states, "The association of a human grave with both seashells and a cat grave strengthens the idea of a special burial, indicating that a strong relationship existed between cats and people." The burial testifies that this relationship was not merely pragmatic, but also involved spiritual links. It is the first and most well documented evidence of cat domestication.

While the Cyprus find provides the earliest archeological evidence of domestication, the process probably occurred in more than one place and one time. The next oldest evidence of the association of cats and humans is the find of a feline molar in an archeological deposit in Israel dating to roughly 9,000 year ago. Another tooth recovered in Pakistan dates to around 4000 years ago. Early Neolithic societies in the Near East bestowed special status on the cat, as illustrated by stone or clay figurines found at sites in Syria, Turkey, and in Israel where a 3,700 year old ivory cat statuette suggests that cats were common in the Fertile Crescent. One such figurine was also discovered at Shillourokambos.

Egyptians venerated cats. Their paintings of household cats collared, under chairs, eating from bowls, etc., are dated to 3,600 years ago, providing more unmistakable depictions of full domestication. Their bodies were as lovingly mummified as those of their owners. Animal mummies buried at 25 sites along the Nile in northern Egypt included 19 different species—various mammals, reptiles, birds, fish and scarab beetles. Cats were represented at 9 of the sites, more often than any other animal.

Still, the question as to exactly when and where the house cat, *Felis catus,* first arose has been a bit confounding to taxonomists due to the sparse fossil record and the lack of distinctiveness in many of the skulls. However through a 10-year study of DNA mutations, a team of researchers lead by Carlos A. Driscoll from the National Cancer Institute in Frederic, Maryland, identified a common cat-like ancestor which lived in Asia about 12 to 11 million years ago from which modern cats descended and spread. Their findings were first reported in the January 6, 2006 issue of *Science.*



Paris and Nikki

The first of the 37 species of the family *Felidae*—the lion, jaguar, leopard, tiger, and snow and clouded leopard—appeared when the *Panthera* lineage diverged from this progenitor about 6.4 million years ago. As sea levels fell, its wild descendents migrated at least ten times during that period to every corner of the world, except for Arctic and Antarctic regions, Australia and the wastelands of the tundra, where there are no trees to provide cover for prey.

In 2007, Driscoll, along with colleague Stephen J. O'Brien, chief of the Laboratory of Genomic Diversity, National Institute of Cancer was able to pinpoint the origin of the house cat after sampling the DNA of 979 cats from Africa, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Middle East, both wild and domestic. The results revealed 5 genetic clusters of wildcats. Four of these corresponded known subspecies of wildcat—*Felis silvestris*—dwelling in specific places: *F. silvestris silvestris* in Europe, *F. Silvestris, s. bieti* in China, *F. s. ornata* in Central Asia and *F. s cafra* in southern Africa. The fifth lineage included not only the fifth known subspecies of wildcat—*F. s. lybica* in the Middle East—but also the hundreds of domestic cats that were sampled, both purebred and mixed breed felines, from the U.S., the U.K. and Japan.

The *F. s. lybica* wildcats that were collected in the remote deserts of Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia were virtually indistinguishable from domestic cats. Since domestic cats were grouped only with *F. s. lybica* alone among wildcats, it meant that domestic cats (*Felis catus*) arose in a single location, the Middle East, between 70,000 and 100,000 years ago. The research was summarized in the June 10, 2009 issue of *Scientific American.*

Cats thrive as predominantly desert creatures, having spent most of their early history in arid lands. They are solitary hunters, carnivores that must eat meat and have a limited ability to digest anything else. Although cats are famous for doing as they please regardless of your wishes, they most likely chose to live among humans because it was advantageous for them.

Although man may have "created the dog" as a creature quite different from ancestral wolves, little separates the house cat from his jungle relatives. He is a panther in miniature, a keen-sighted, skilled hunter who often presents his human companion with the gift of a mouse, bird, lizard or other unfortunate victim.

Unlike the dog, the cat does not serve. He is an equal, lying by your hearth as a matter of accommodation. Ask politely and he might only "consider" your request, not because he is unwilling or unloving, but because he understands his place—and yours—in the cosmos; and why not? "Cats," after all, "are the most successful predators alive today—other than us," says Stephen O'Brien.

Gracie

Leonardo De Vinci, bestowing his highest praise wrote, "Even the smallest of felines is a masterpiece." □

WATCH THE ATOM BOMBS EXPLODE . . . COME TO LAS VEGAS!

by Chuck Kleber

Hard to believe, but there was a time when people came to Las Vegas to watch atom bombs being detonated. From hundreds of miles away, people could see a flash and feel the rumble. The view from downtown hotels in Las Vegas was impressive as the classic mushroom cloud from some tests churned into the sky.

In 1950, the U.S. government was looking for a remote site to begin atomic testing, hopefully in some secrecy, and Nevada seemed to fit the bill. The entire state had only 160,000 people . . . just a couple bigger football stadiums. A barren, 1,300 square mile site was chosen for atomic testing, just 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Established by President Harry Truman in December, 1950, it was designated "The Nevada Proving Ground." The explosions began in January 27, 1951 under the name, "Operation Ranger."

Some atomic devices were on the ground and some suspended in towers. In just four years, over forty bombs were detonated. After a short moratorium of two years in the mid-1950s, tests resumed until the final one on September 23, 1992. In all, there were 928 openly noted tests in Nevada, of which 828 were underground. Not all the nuclear testing was with war in mind. "Operation Plowshare" had the declared purpose of proving that atom bombs could be beneficial to water resources by creating canals and bays. One blast opened an awesome crater, 1,280 feet wide and 320 feet deep. It is still visible.

As for nuclear waste, it remains a super-hot topic today, with Nevada locked in a bitter battle to prevent the Federal Government from storing nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, just 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

Note: The Atomic Testing Museum is located at 755 E. Flamingo and is open to the public. For information, call (702) 794-5161.

Thanks!!

Supporters of Red Rock have come through! A total of 1036 plates have been sold though November.

Now renewals of the plate are important to keep the funds coming.

You can pick up the plate at any Nevada DMV. Just turn in your old plate for a cost of only $61.00 plus a $5.00 transfer fee. Because The Red Rock plate is a charitable licence plate, ***$25 of the cost is tax deductible.*** A partial tax deduction is built into the cost of all charitable license plates. No need to wait for your plate to expire.

View the plate in full color on the DMV Nevada website under Charitable and Collegiate Plates at http://www.dmvnv.com/platescharitable.htm#redrock.

—Norman Wolin

News & Notes, continued on p.7

January PROGRAMS for RED ROCK CANYON

To provide quality programs, we limit the number of participants. Program times vary. Meet at the Visitor Center unless otherwise specified. To make a reservation, please call 702-515-5368, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If unable to attend a program, your cancellation is appreciated. Parents must accompany children on all programs. Please note: the Conservation Area is a Federal Fee Area. All entry or recreation fees apply. Visit www.redrockcanyonlv.org for hike information.

YOUTH PROGRAMS – *Limited space!*

Fri. 1, "January Chill" (Ages 2-10) - Join Missy for a chilly program all about the cold weather in the desert. We will learn why snow and rain are a major impact in the desert. We'll also read a story, participate in a craft and start off the New Year with a bang.

Sat. 2, "I See a Desert Track" (Ages 2-8) – Bring the youngsters out to Red Rock Canyon for a program all about the tracks of desert animals. We'll learn how to identify a desert animal footprint and what types of animals are around Red Rock Canyon.

Fri. 8, "Flying High with the Birds" (Ages 2-8) - This is a fun and interactive program with Missy all about the birds of Red Rock Canyon where children will learn interesting facts, participate in an activity and discover how spectacular birds really are!

Sat. 9, "Jr. Naturalists" (Ages 2-6) - It may be nice and warm in our homes this January, but what about all the animals that live outside? How do they deal with the chilly winter in the Mojave Desert? Come find out with Jen through stories, activities and a take-home craft.

Fri. 15, "Totally Tarantulas" (Ages 3-8) - Come out to Red Rock Canyon with the young ones and join Missy for a program all about tarantulas in the desert. Children will learn about the impact tarantulas have in the world through stories, an activity and a craft.

Mon. 18, "Snow Program" (Ages 4-9) – Join Ranger Gina for a snow program with the kids. There will be fun activities to enjoy.

Fri. 22, "Let's Go Green Together" (Ages 3-8) – Bring the young ones out to Red Rock Canyon for a wonderful program with Missy all about the importance of recycling. They will learn different simple ways to save our planet with hands–on activities, a craft and so much more. Let's become earth friendly.

Sat. 23, "Earth Tones" (Ages 4+) – Kids and adults will love to swirl and twirl their paint brushes at this nature based art class! Bring out the whole family and join Jen in a world of color and creativity through painting! No experience necessary, all supplies are included.

Sat. 23, "Tracking Mammals" (Ages 5-9) - Join Ranger Gina for a wildlife program for children. There will be fun activities for the kids to enjoy.

Fri. 29, "Cactus Kids" (Ages 2-8) – Bring the kids for a fun and interactive program all with Missy about the different types of cactus in Red Rock. Discover how cacti have adapted to the desert, through a hands-on activity and a craft.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Fri. 1, "Moenkopi Loop" (10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.) - Join Aaron on this short, colorful hike for an introduction to the natural and historical features of Red Rock Canyon. This hike, which takes approximately 1.5 hours, is a perfect way to start a visit to Red Rock. Easy; *No sign up is required.*

Fri. 1, "Reptiles" (Visitor Center presentations on-going, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.) - Ranger Jim will present a 20-minute PowerPoint talk and discussion at the Visitor Center on the reptiles of Red Rock Canyon. This program will be conducted 4-6 times a month. *No sign-up is required.*

Sat.2, "Red Spring" (Ages 10+) - Join Pat on a beautiful hike for viewing the Red Rock landscape. Mod; 3 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sat.2, "Features and Fun" (Visitor Center, on-going, 10:00 & 11:00 a.m.) - Start your hiking day off with a PowerPoint overview with Bob of scenic highlights, fun things-to-do and interesting animals at Red Rock Canyon. *No sign-up is required.*

Mon. 4, "Monday at the Rock" – Come out and hike with Jen and start "2010 Mondays" off with a little change of scenery, venturing out to North Cottonwood for a hike along the Mustang Loop. We'll see Red Rock from a different point of view and experience a whole other side of the Conservation Area. Mod; 5 mi.

Tues. 5, "Bats in Our Belfry" (Visitor Center; ongoing 20 min. program; 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.) – Go batty with Ranger Jim and learn about the mammal man has tried to emulate. This program is conducted twice an hour. *No sign-up is required.*

Tues. 5, "Bird Spring Range" - Hike with Chris to the main ridge of the mountains east of Mount Potosi. We will climb past Badger Pass with views of Las Vegas to the northeast. Moderately Strenuous; 7 mi. *Limited Space.*

Fri. 8, & 29, "Canyon Clean Up" - Join Janis and come out to Red Rock Canyon and help clean up a designated trail. Meet new people and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Let's do our part to keep "The Rock" clean!

Fri. 8, "Grand Circle, Part I" (Ages 12+) - If you've ever wanted to complete the Grand Circle, one of Red Rock Canyon's longest hikes, now is your chance with Claire. This hike will be divided into 3 sections over the next 3 weeks. The first part is from the Visitor Center to Lost Creek, a moderate 3.7 mile gradual hike through typical vegetation of the Mojave Desert. *Limited Space.*

Sat. 9, "Historical Walk" (Ages 15+) - Follow Ranger Jim into the past as he takes you on a trek into Sandstone Quarry's hidden past. Easy, 2 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sat. 9, "Hidden Forest" (Ages 10+) - Come with Pat on a hike that starts at Sandstone Quarry and goes up a wash past Calico Tanks. This is a gorgeous hike with *some rock scrambling.* Mod; 4 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sun. 10, "Rhyolite Ghost Town Road Trip" (Ages 12+) - One hundred years ago, as many as 10,000 people filled the boom-and-bust gold town of Rhyolite. Today, the area is one of the most famous ghost towns in the world. Join Aaron on this day long road trip to tour the town site. Using historic photos, newspaper accounts, and a trip to the nearby Beatty Museum, we will attempt to learn what life was like in this historic area. Easy, 3 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sun. 10, "Intro to Red Rock" (Visitor Center; on-going 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) – Come out and Join Ranger Gina for a 20-minute PowerPoint program covering geology, plants, and animals. *No signup is required.*

Sun. 10, "White Rock Loop" - Join George on a hike that is a must for all level hikers. It is enjoyable and a great way to exercise, with breathtaking views around White Rock Mountain. We'll have lunch overlooking the valley. Mod; 6 mi.

Mon. 11, "Monday at the Rock" - Join Jen for a hike on the First Creek trail to the mouth of the canyon, following a wash for a distance; some rock scrambling is required thereafter. We will look for seasonal waterfalls that can be found in the canyon. Mod; 3-4 miles.

Tues. 12, "Art . . . Naturally" (Ages 10+) - Come out and try painting with Jen at Red Rock and you're sure to find a hidden talent! All you need to do is bring yourself and a love of nature as we create an acrylic masterpiece worth showing off. This is a "no pressure" all fun art class. *No experience is necessary,* ***all supplies included****. Limited Space.*

Tues. 12, "Geology of Southern Nevada" (Visitor Center; on-going from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.) - Ranger Jim will present a 20 minute PowerPoint talk and discussion at the Visitor Center on the geology of Red Rock Canyon. This program will be conducted *twice an hour*. *No sign up is required.*

Tues. 12, "Blue Diamond Hill" - Join Chris and venture to the top of the big hill across from the Red Rock Visitor Center, taking in the views of Las Vegas and checking out the remains of the gypsum mining operation. Moderately Strenuous; 9 mi.

Wed. 13, "Keystone Thrust" (Ages 12+) - See and learn about one of Red Rock Canyon's geology wonders. Join Claire for this 3-mile hike to an interesting land formation where we will see the old and the new come together. We will *scramble down* a dry waterfall and see the affects of water on sandstone. Mod; *Limited Space.*

Wed. 13, "Rattlesnake Canyon" (Ages 12+) - Explore two little used canyons in

South Fossil Ridge with Aaron. Starting near Blue Diamond, we will climb up deep narrow Rattlesnake canyon and then cross over into another to return. We will have to *scramble and navigate a few dry waterfalls* to see all the hidden places these canyons hold. Strenuous, 4 mi. *Limited Space.*

Fri. 15, "Moenkopi Morning" - Join Janis on this easy hike around the Moenkopi Loop Trail and enjoy the beautiful scenery that Red Rock Canyon is known for. Easy; 2.5 mi.

Fri. 15, "Grand Circle Part II" - Join Claire for Part 2 of the Grand Circle, where we will hike from the Willow Springs picnic area to Sandstone Quarry. This nearly 5-mile section will take us on a familiar part of the White Rock Loop and then down into the mid-section of the Scenic Drive, where we'll hike through washes and see a burn area in recovery.

Sat. 16, & 30, "Corn Creek Spring Walk" - Corn Creek Spring feeds three ponds at this headquarters of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. It is a major bird watching area and is prime habitat for aquatic and land plants and animals. Join Bob during the morning to observe all these creatures in a surprising setting, and learn about the history and future of the area. Easy, 1/2 mi.

Sat. 16, "Lost Creek to White Rock" (Ages 10+) - Hike with Pat along the escarpment from Lost Creek to White Rock. We'll stop by a spring and a water tank along the way. This hike offers beautiful scenery of Red Rock Canyon. Mod; 4 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sun. 17, "Beginner Mountain Biking" (Ages 10+) - Whether you're new to mountain biking or you are unfamiliar with the trails, join Jen and John for a relaxed ride in North Cottonwood along the Mustang Loop. *No experience is necessary*, but you do need to provide your own gear. Mod; 6-7 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sun.17, "Red Cap" - Join George on one of his favorite hikes in the Calico Hills—short, challenging and fun. From Sandstone Quarry we'll have a short trek to the east side of Red Cap, then, we'll *scramble* to a tinaja that's overlooking Calico Basin and the colorful Calico Tank trail. At last, we will *scramble* up to Red Cap, the highest point in Calico Hills. Strenuous, 3 mi.

Mon. 18, "Monday at the Rock" - Join Jen for a hike along the SMYC loop through a *"*cactus garden*"* and along the base of the escarpment. Connecting to the Ice Box trail, we will *scramble* into the canyon to look for a seasonal waterfall, then head back the same way we came. Mod; 5.5 mi.

Tues. 19, "Euro-cultural impacts of Red Rock Canyon" (Visitor Center; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.; 20-min presentations) - Join Ranger Jim at the Visitor Center for a on the history of Red Rock Canyon. This PowerPoint program will be conducted 4-6 times. *No sign up is required.*

Hlkes, *continued on page 7*

Desk Schedule

Fri/1	P. Glovin	R. Porche
Sat/2	W. Barbuck	W. Barbuck
Sun/3	B. Jackson	OPEN
	D. Baker	
Mon/4	L. Fox	OPEN
Tues/5	H. Weldon	OPEN
	M. Slagle	
Wed/6	G. Fazio	V. Sperry
	P. Herman	
Thur/7	R. Rossnagel	F. Davis
		J. Barrett
Fri/8	P. Glovin	P. Boghossian
		R. Porche
Sat/9	P. Vandooremaal	K. Nelson
Sun/10	A. Lewis	OPEN
	D. Baker	
Mon/11	S./S. Stenzel	L. Fox
Tues/12	H. Weldon	K. Jackson
	M. Slagle	
Wed/13	G. Fazio	L. Arthur
	P. Herman	
Thur/14	R. Rossnagel	F. Davis
		J. Barrett
Fri/15	P. Glovin	R. Porche
Sat/16	J. Kisosondi	OPEN
Sun/17	B. Jackson	M./L. Utah
Mon/18	D. Baker	L. fox
Tues/19	H. Weldon	V. Sperry
	M. Slagle	
Wed/20	G. Fazio	OPEN
	P. Herman	
Thur/21	R. Rossnagel	F. Davis
		J. Barrett
Fri/22	P. Glovin	P. Boghossian
		R. Porche
Sat/23	B. Jackson	J. Swanson
	K. Nelson	
Sun/24	A. Lewis	M./L. Utah
	D. Baker	
Mon/25	L. Fox	OPEN
	W. Townsend	
Tues/26	H. Weldon	OPEN
	M. Slagle	
Wed/27	G. Fazio	L. Arthur
	P. Herman	
Thur/28	R. Rossnagel	F. Davis
		J. Barrett
Fri/29	P. Glovin	R. Porche
Sat/30	J. Swenson	OPEN
Sun/31	OPEN	M./L. Utah

Changes? Call Kate at 515-5350

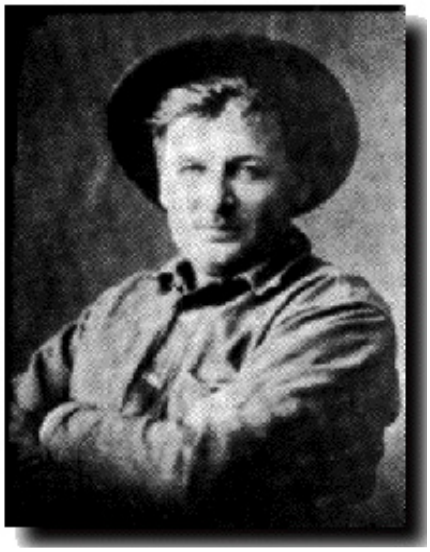
Death Valley, continued from page 1.

Hostility remained as the Shoshone were moved again and again; for the last time in 1936. But they are still there in Death Valley, and determined to thrive. A tribal spokesperson, Pauline Esteves, wrote: "The Timbisha people have lived in our homeland forever and we will live here forever . . . it is part of us."

Riches were in Death Valley, but the taking was not easy. Prospectors searched for gold, silver, zinc, copper, lead and borax. Borax, "white gold," proved to be one of the richest finds of all, and with it legends grew, like the enormous 20-mule teams than hauled the ore over great distances to transportation points. For years, Mojave, California was the nearest rail spur . . . 165 miles away. The 1870's were a decade of immense importance for Death Valley. The first borax mine was established in 1872 at Teel's Marsh, Nevada, near present-day State Route 360. At Ash meadows, just 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, borax was so abundant that it lay on the ground like cotton balls. Aaron Winters discovered the site in 1881, and when he found that the cotton ball shaped lumps burned green, he knew it was borax. "We're rich!" he shouted.

The U.S. Borax Company sponsored a famous and long-lasting radio series that began in 1930, half-hour episodes they called *Death Valley Days*. They were exciting, and they were based on true stories as narrated by "The Old Ranger." The broadcast of December 10, 1942 concerned real pioneer woman, Lura Ann Church. The Old Ranger opened the program with exaggerated down-home vernacular, "They was all pretty remarkable, them pioneer women. Our story opens . . . ." After awhile, the commercial came on: "Get a good supply of 20 Mule Team Borax at your favorite grocery store or market tomorrow. It's the correct cleanser for your coffee-maker." Twenty-two years after the radio debut, *Death Valley Days* moved to television for a lengthy run of 558 episodes. Hosts included famous actors Ronald Reagan, Robert Taylor and Dale Robertson. It was, arguably, the most successful TV series ever. It helped to make Death Valley famous to people across the nation.

It is near-impossible to talk of Death Valley without noting one of the West's most unique characters, Walter E. Scott, "Death Valley Scotty." He was an unscrupulous, but likable entrepreneur who convinced a wealthy New Yorker to grubstake Scott in his development of a gold mine that never was. The support didn't last, but Scotty found a new backer in rich Chicago executive, Albert Johnson. They became such



Walter E. Scott, aka "Scotty"

good friends that the friendship endured even after it was clear that Scotty had hoodwinked Johnson into providing him with money for that non-existent mine. Johnson decided to build a beautiful ranch in Death Valley in the 1920's where he and his wife could live. Scotty was everywhere during its construction, often referring to it as "my castle." Over $2 million went into its construction, and both Johnson and Scotty enjoyed every minute, including entertaining. When Johnson died in 1948, he gave "Scotty's Castle" to a foundation, but Scotty remained and became an attraction in himself. Scotty died in 1954 at the age of 82, and is buried nearby. The National Park Service bought the Castle in 1970 for $850,000.

To many, Death Valley has a special beauty and attraction. The Death Valley '49ers hold their annual encampment there; they've been doing it for 60 years.

Note: To learn more, go to Death Valley N. P. on the web or enter www.nps.gov/deva/

Hikes, cont'd. from p 4.

Tues. 19, "Blue Diamond Bike Trails" - Come hike a section of the Old Spanish Trail with Chris and look for burros or other wildlife. This is a 5-mile loop hike that climbs to the top of the ridge behind the community of Blue Diamond and has a wonderful view of the surrounding areas. Moderate.

Fri. 22, "Tort Talks" (Visitor Center; ongoing from 10 a.m. - noon) - Join Janis in the Visitor Center and learn some interesting facts about Nevada's state reptile, the Desert Tortoise. All ages welcome. *No sign-up is required.*

Fri. 22, Grand Circle, Part III (Ages 12+) - Join Claire for part 3 as we finish our tour of the Grand Circle. This portion of the trail takes up past the Calico Hills from Sandstone Quarry, where we'll see some intriguing rock formations, to the Visitor Center. This hike includes a little bit of *rock scrambling*. Mod; 3 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sat. 23, "Astronomy Program" - The Las Vegas Astronomical Society will have member telescopes available to view objects in our night sky at the Visitor Center. Please call for time. An entrance fee will be charged.

Sat. 23, "Arnight-Knoll Trail" (Ages 10+) - Join Pat in taking in the beauty of the Red Rock Conservation Area along the Arnight-Knoll loop. We'll see a variety of plant life and possibly some wildlife along this scenic trail at the base of the escarpment. Mod; 3.5 mi. *Limited Space.*

Mon. 25, "Monday at the Rock" - Hike with Jen and you will be amazed at what is hiding on this hill, and there's only one way for you to see it yourself! Abundant barrel cactus, buckhorn cholla, yucca, and not to mention the fossils that carry their own bit of natural history and fascination. Mod; 4 mi.

Tues. 26, "Woof! Walk" - Don't leave Fido at home! Bring your dog out for a 3-mile hike with Jen to the Calico Hills, and enjoy the fresh air of Red Rock Canyon with man's best friend. Moderate.

Tues. 26, "Predators of Southern Nevada" (Visitor Center; on-going, 1-3 p.m.) - Join Ranger Jim at the Visitor Center for a 20-minute PowerPoint talk and discussion about the wild things of Southern Nevada. This program will be conducted once an hour. *No sign-up is required.*

Tues. 26, "Krafft Mountain Loop" - Join Chris and hike along the east side of the Calico Hills and climb over Gateway Saddle before dropping into Gateway Canyon behind Krafft Mountain. *Rock scrambling* is involved. Moderately Strenuous, 5 mi. *Limited Space.*

Fri. 29, "Pine Creek Full Moon Hike" (Ages 12+) - Join Aaron on this night hike into Pine Creek Canyon. Under the light of a full moon, we will hike down among rare desert trees to a fern filled pool before returning. Flashlights are required. Mod; 3 mi.

Fri. 29, "Echo Canyon/Fossil Ridge Loop" (Ages 12+) - Join Claire for this interesting hike through Echo Canyon and up to Fossil Ridge. We'll see evidence of ancient sea life throughout the hike and take in the incredible views of various mountain ranges and colorful sandstone formations from the top of the ridge. Mod; 3.5 mi. *Limited Space.*

Sun. 31, "La Madre Spring and Beyond" - Join George on a hike that will explore La Madre Spring, the rock cabin and beyond. Mod; 6 mi.

It's been fun . . .

As many of you already know, this is my last issue as Editor of the *Desert Trumpet.* It has been a wonderful experience and one I have thoroughly enjoyed over the years.

My first issue of the *Desert Trumpet* was the June 1997 edition. With only 6 months as a member, it was rather a shock to be handed the newsletter and told to "handle it." With the help of people who submitted some articles, my research and writing, and the services of a great graphic artist, Christina Wilkenson, to publish, I was off and running.

In those days, the *Desert Trumpet* was an every other month, or sometimes quarterly, publication, along with a monthly 2-page "update." Our then-president, Warner Skomars, wanted a monthly newsletter, whatever it took. I began writing various announcements, reproducing the hike list, and anything of note. I also added "page 2" short pieces on things happening around the West that had to do with nature. Those quickly expanded to single topic natural science features.

Eventually the publishing was shared among Christina, Don Schoengold and Enrico Litterini on a rotation. Christina taught me how to publish, as well.

Desert Trumpet

Editor
Barbara Wolin

Contributing Writers
Louis C. Kleber
H. Dan Wray
Barbara Wolin

Publishers
Norm Kresge
Barbara Wolin

Administrative Assistant
Phyllis Lisi

Wardrobe Mistress
Norman Wolin

The *Desert Trumpet* is published monthly by and for FORRC members.

FORRC is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated solely to the welfare of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. FORRC provides volunteers and funding for projects, including environmental education, teacher workshops, natural resource protection, cultural resource monitoring, hike programs and other services. Annual individual membership is $25.00. General meetings are held four times a year; Board meetings are held on the third Friday of each month, time/location announced in the Bulletin Board. Messages may be left at 515-5360. Visit our website at www.friendsofredrockcanyon.org.

Chuck Kleber, a wonderful writer, began to write front page features for us. Informative "Facts About . . ." items and Quizzes followed and were quite popular. His humorous berating of readers who got less than acceptable numbers of right answers was worth taking the test. That partnership has lasted more than 12 years.

The late Jack Ryan began submitting some unique front page features and specials. Dan Wray, too, started submitting features, unusual items and road trip reports several times a year. Norm Kresge joined the publishing staff (as one of 4 people at the time) beginning with the March 2002 issue. Since the August 2003 issue, he has been my sole publishing partner, alternating every quarter with me. He also became a contributing writer, describing his spectacular hiking adventures in less travelled areas.

It really has been fun!

—Barbara Wolin

January Bulletin Board

For information concerning any event, call the Visitor Center at 515-5350

Event	Date	Time	Place	Comments
"Features & Fun"	*1/2*	10:00 & 11:00 a.m.	Visitor Center	Visitor Center Presentation on scenic highlights, animals, fun things to do;
Canyon Clean-up	1/8 & 1/29	T. B. D.	Visitor Center	Call to reserve
Rhyolite Ghost Town Road Trip	1/10	T. B. D.	Call	All day; includes Beatty Museum.
Art . . . Naturally	1/12	T. B. D.	Visitor Center	All supplies included.
"Earth Tones" (4yrs. to adult)	1/23	T. B. D.	Visitor Center	Call 702-515-5368 to reserve. All supplies included.
Annual Art Contest	2/4	9:00 a.m.	Visitor Center	Contact 702-515-5330 for info.

"Friends of Red Rock Canyon is dedicated to the protection
and enrichment of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area." Conservation Area."

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OF
RED ROCK CANYON
P.O. Box 97
Blue Diamond, NV 89004
www.friendsofredrockcanyon.org

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