

EXPLORE THE LOWER COLORADO RIVER WILDLANDS

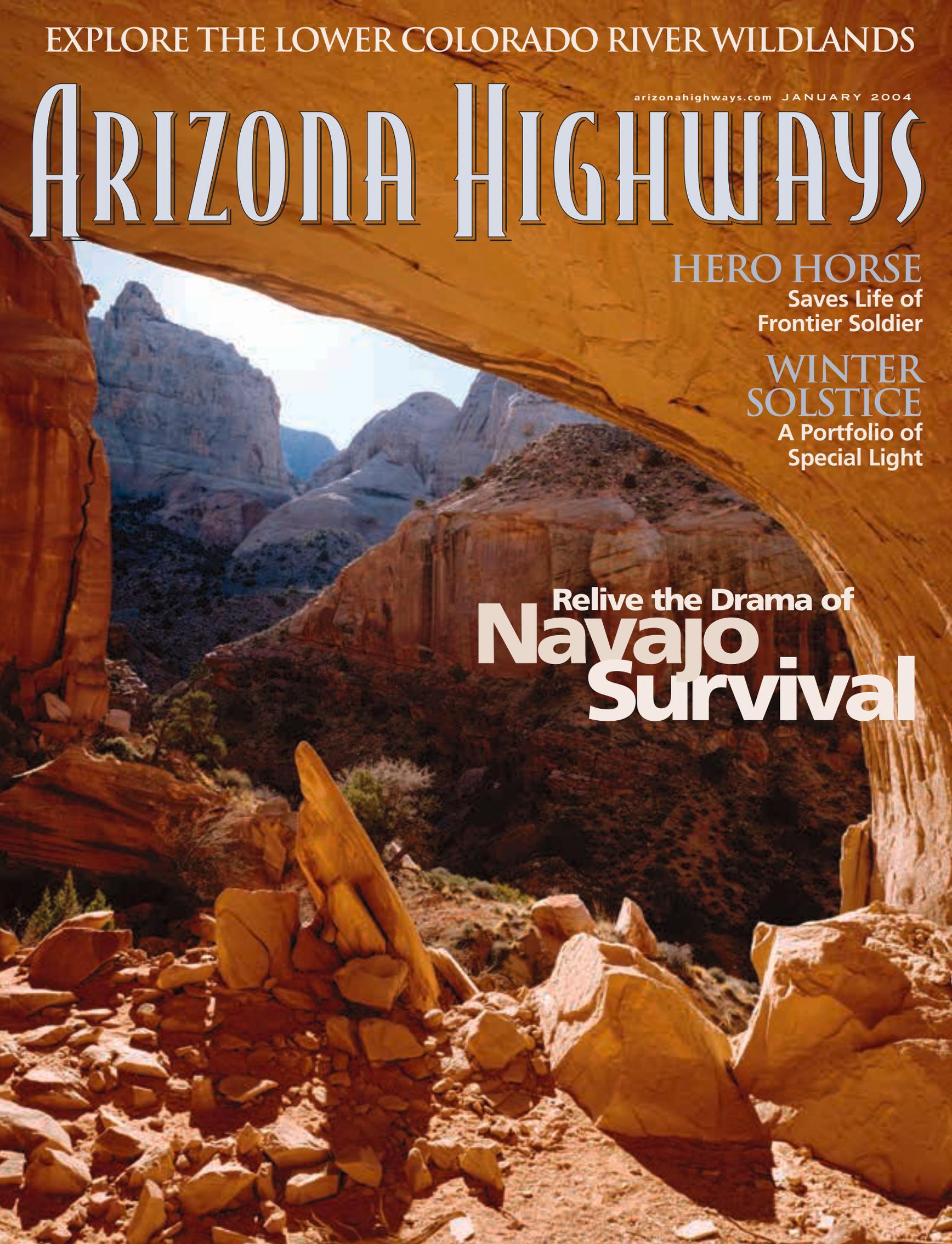
arizonahighways.com JANUARY 2004

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

HERO HORSE
Saves Life of
Frontier Soldier

**WINTER
SOLSTICE**
A Portfolio of
Special Light

Relive the Drama of
**Navajo
Survival**



6 COVER A Story of Navajo Survival

A writer walks into desolate sandstone canyons of northern Arizona where Indian families once made clandestine escapes from pursuing troops.

14 TRAVEL Historic River Crossing

Since the 1870s, Lee's Ferry has served wilderness travelers, fishermen and boaters as the best place to traverse or enter the sometimes-treacherous waterway.

34 ENVIRONMENT Restoring Wild Places

Tending and renovating the natural splendor in Cibola and Imperial wildlife refuges north of Yuma pose great ecological challenges.

30 INDIANS Hero Horse

As the story goes, the rescued racehorse-turned-Army-mount repays his rider by giving his life to save the ambushed soldier.

22 PORTFOLIO The Soft and Gentle Light of the Winter Solstice

Around December 22, the Earth tilts toward the sun at an angle that produces the "shortest day" and the delicate light that lures photographers and their cameras outside.



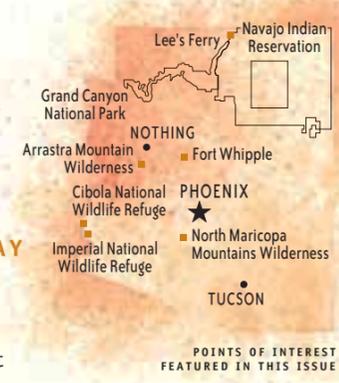
[THIS PAGE] Sunlight traces the filigree of a great egret's wings. To learn more about Colorado River wildlife, see the story on page 34. TOM VEZO

[FRONT COVER] A deep alcove near Navajo Mountain glows with the reflected light of a winter sunrise. In the 1860s, the Navajo people took refuge in similar remote canyons to avoid capture by the U.S. Army. See story, page 6. GARY LADD

[BACK COVER] Presenting a spiky facade, a dense stand of saguaro cacti greets a new day in Ironwood Forest National Monument. GEORGE STOCKING

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Deer Valley Rock Art Center
Visitors to this grouping of pictographs near Phoenix find it challenging to interpret messages chipped onto boulders by Arizona's ancient Indians.
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Two travelers make a casual stop in Nothing, Arizona, and discover fine art of a different kind.



{more stories online}

at arizonahighways.com

AN APACHE'S PLIGHT
Tso-ay, an Apache warrior, had a change of heart after participating in a 400-mile, six-day raid across southern Arizona, killing settlers and stealing horses and ammunition. He eventually helped the Army subdue the last of the Apaches. His reward is hard to understand.

GENE PERRET'S WIT STOP
There are many ways to indulge yourself during the holidays.

WEEKEND GETAWAY
Yuma and Martinez Lake
Visit the land of the lower Colorado River where the temperature hovers in the 70s and the water invites boaters. And relive Old West history at the Yuma Territorial Prison, at Yuma Crossing, in Old Town and even in the state's oldest domino parlor.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA
Wings over Willcox, which celebrates the return of the sandhill cranes to the Playa, and the Gem and Mineral Show at Quartzsite highlight January's activities in Arizona.

Critical Letters

You sure printed a lot of critical letters in the August 2003 issue. I had a hard time seeing why. One would be hard-pressed to find a magazine of higher quality than *Arizona Highways*. I use it to research my fiction, and I can't remember a magazine that I have found easier to read from cover to cover.

It really helps not having ads to clutter things up and not having to turn ahead 50 pages to read the last two paragraphs of an article. Plus the formatting of big, beautiful pictures, without the pages looking too wordy and intimidating, is also good.

The only thing I can figure about those readers who complained is maybe it's because they love the magazine so much, they get jumpy about the slightest sign of imperfection.

Gina Ventola, Orlando, FL
The poor old editor believes you're right. Our readers keep us sharp, and we are grateful for the help.

Love the Humor

In regard to the man in the August 2003 issue ("Letters & e-mail") who thinks your humor section is "horrible": He is in serious need of lightening up before he has a bad heart condition. It's the first page I turn to.

Cindy Holt, Alta Loma, CA

About the letter trashing the humor page: What a narrow-minded point of view. How odd, the reader finds the humor stories "horrible," but apparently reads the page in every issue, including the March 2003 issue, which he found "particularly rotten."

Here is a win-win idea for him: Please, skip that page, leaving thousands of us happy and lowering your stress level.

Donna Symons, Badger, CA

I have just finished reading the August 2003 issue, and the first thing I always go to is "Humor." I love it. Please don't take it out of the magazine. It's the best part and gives me a laugh to start the day.

Doreen Blizzard, Cornwall, Ontario, Canada

Emery Kolb Remembered

Your article about "The Kolbs' Canyon" ("Taking the Off-ramp," August '03) brought back wonderful memories of Emery Kolb and his home on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.

My mom, Jeanne Cummings Schick, grew up at the Grand Canyon and worked for Emery when she was a teen-ager. Our family kept in touch with him, visiting him often through the years. When Emery was about 90 years old, we had Thanksgiving dinner with him at the El Tovar Hotel. He looked forward to the evening, even wore his tuxedo. But he never

Sarah Snow, Surprise

touched his wonderful meal. He was too busy entertaining us by reciting (from memory) the entire Gettysburg Address. What a character.

Barb Frizzell, Newtown, PA

The Kolb article (August '03) makes me appreciate how lucky I was to see both Emery Kolb and his 1912 movies, and get a personally autographed copy of his book.

Allen A. Watson, Edmond, OK

Great Pictures

The pictures in your magazine remind me how beautiful Arizona is. The back cover of the August 2003 issue has the most beautiful picture of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument I have ever seen. The colors are stunning. Way out here in Maryland, thousands of miles away, your publication gives me the best of all feelings: the thrill and joy of the natural beauty of Arizona. The manner in which you end your articles with your signature, "AH," reminds me of how your magazine makes me feel . . . Ahhhhh. That is a very nice feeling, indeed.

Doug Knowles, Towson, MD

Mountain Highs

In the August 2003 issue, we read, "Mount Graham, at 10,720 feet, is the second highest peak in Arizona." Really? Where did all the higher peaks go?

Stanley N. Davis, Tucson

The caption, of course, was incorrect. To set the record straight, the highest mountain peaks in Arizona, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, are in the San Francisco Peaks range near Flagstaff (Humphreys, 12,633 feet; Agassiz, 12,356; Fremont, 11,969; Aubineau, 11,838; Rees, 11,474; and Doyle, 11,460). The highest peak outside the San Francisco range is Mount Baldy (11,403) in Apache County.

Rock Face

The August 2003 issue was lying on our end table, face down. Another magazine was on top of it, leaving only the top 2.5 inches of the back cover exposed. My wife and I were both amazed to see a man's face, complete with mustache and Adam's apple. It turned out to be the outline of a mountaintop in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument's Grass Canyon.

Roy and Liz Snyder, Williamsburg, VA

Spring Baseball

Please don't wait 10 years for more articles about spring training baseball. Those readers who complained about your article in the March 2003 issue must not be aware that spring baseball is an integral part of Arizona and should be treated that way by your magazine. More articles, please.

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

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LINDA LONGMIRE

The Best Defense: a Thorny Solution

Ever wondered why desert succulents are so, well, so offensive? So spiny? So thorny? Well, it turns out that the best defense is a good offense—a strategy seen in the adaptations of water-laden succulents as protection from thirsty animals. The most easily spotted defense, spiny thorns, goes a long way in keeping

water-seeking animals at bay. Animals avoid quenching their thirst on other succulents that are defended with a bitter taste or toxicity.

Succulents that are neither toxic nor armed with thorns are preserved by other deterrents. Some survive because they generally grow in inaccessible locations, like rocky slopes or vertical cliffs that most animals find too challenging. The adaptation that is hardest to see is camouflage. Succulents that have grown under plants with a similar look are protected by this defense. The lead-colored slender stems of the night-blooming cereus, for example, grow inconspicuously under the dry branches of desert shrubs.

So next time you amble through a quiet Sonoran Desert setting, have a little compassion for the hard-to-approach succulents that have to struggle to protect themselves in their arid environment.

Bed and Breakfast Fit for a Queen

Who says beauty and practicality have to be mutually exclusive? When Charles R. Drake, an attorney and businessman, built a home in 1878 near the old presidio in Tucson, he designed it with durable 2-foot-thick adobe walls and a central *zaguan*, or breezeway, that optimized airflow, and decorated it with ornately carved woodwork and colorful leaded skylights brought by wagon from San Francisco.

Not coincidentally, this part-Mexican, part-Victorian home has weathered the years remarkably well. Of course, it didn't hurt that—when it was being subdivided into apartments in the 1940s—Louise Blenman, a member of the family that resided there from 1891 through



STUDIO SEVEN PHOTOGRAPHY

the early 1990s, carefully secreted the woodwork, doors and trim away in the carriage house. There the items remained until 1998, when the home was restored and converted into the Royal Elizabeth Bed and Breakfast, now in Tucson's historic downtown.

Information: (877)-670-9022; www.royalelizabeth.com.



LINDA LONGMIRE

Bicycle Boneyard

Relive your childhood by finding your old bicycle at Arizona's largest—and perhaps only—bicycle boneyard. All-Bikes, located along the Beeline Highway south of Payson, specializes in everything on two wheels.

Owner Ron Adler, who's been in the two-wheeler parts business for 31 years, has more than 5,500 motorcycles, including a 1954 Adler manufactured the year of his

birth, and even more bicycles in stock.

Adler says he has about every bike "ever made," including a 19th-century wooden bicycle and a Harley-Davidson bicycle. He also has some rare four-wheeled vehicles, including a 1957 German-made Gogomobile and a 1963 Amphicar—an amphibious

automobile.

Adler, who ships items anywhere, recalls the day a "40ish" woman nearly burst into tears when he showed her a baby-blue Schwinn bike with butterfly decals and a "Barbie hauler" basket just like the one she had as a girl.

Information: All-Bikes, State Route 87 at Rye (928) 474-2526.

THIS MONTH IN

1864
The temporary capital of the new Arizona Territory is established at Camp Whipple in Little Chino Valley near Prescott.

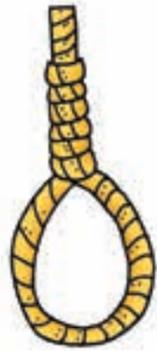
1876
La Paz suffers a smallpox epidemic, causing Colorado River steamboats to pass on by instead of stopping.

1887
A golden spike driven by Governor Zulich commemorates the completion of tracks of the Prescott and Arizona Railway. Fort Whipple troops fire a 100-gun salute.

1897
The mayor of Tucson blames "garbage and filth" accumulating on the streets as the cause for the city's diphtheria epidemic and pleads for sewers and more water.

1905
Geronimo rides in President Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade in Washington, D.C.

1954
Army headquarters announces that Fort Huachuca will be converted into a major military electronic proving ground.



First (Legal) Hanging

The first legal hanging in Yuma took place on May 2, 1873, opposite the only school in town. The teacher, Miss M.E. Post, not wishing her pupils to witness it, dismissed school for the whole week. The entire town of Yuma, undoubtedly including the school children, turned out to witness the hanging. The "victim" was named Fernandez and had been sentenced in the district court.

LINDA LONGMIRE

Temple of Music and Art Lives on in Elegance

Theatergoers crossing the bougainvillea-draped patio of Tucson's Temple of Music and Art enter a make-believe Spanish hacienda. The graceful building was the dream of a group of determined ladies.

Some thought the lawless town of Tucson never would settle down. But by the turn of the 20th century, the Saturday Morning Musical Club had elevated local entertainment above cowboy banjos and dancing girls. In the 1920s, Madeline Dreyfus Heineman led a campaign to build an auditorium modeled on the Pasadena Playhouse for the club's cultural performances.

At the grand opening in October 1927, hostesses dressed in romantic Spanish finery to complement the architecture. The famed violinist Jascha Heifetz opened the first season,

and many other noted performers followed. In the second year, the organization, in financial difficulty, rented the main auditorium to a gentleman who would show "talkie moving pictures." Mrs. Heineman gamely referred to the new art as an extension of the original purpose of the Temple.

As the decades passed, the beloved theater hosted fewer artists and began to decline, and the decaying building served a variety of functions under a succession of owners. By the early 1980s, some residents suggested leveling it for a parking lot. Then in a dramatic turn, a new group of art lovers rallied to the rescue and

convinced the city to restore the building.

Following the historical renovation and a rededication in October 1990, the Arizona Theater Company now performs in the main auditorium of the renewed Temple of Music and Art, which anchors Tucson's downtown arts district. Beside the curving stairs that lead to an art gallery on the second floor, a cafe serves today's public.

Information: Temple of Music and Art and the Arizona Theater Company, 330 S. Scott Ave., Tucson, (520) 622-2823.



TIM FULLER

LIFE IN ARIZONA 1990s - TODAY

ROSS KNOX, GRAND CANYON MULE WRANGLER

Every working day of his life, cowboy Ross Knox leads pack mules with supplies down to Phantom Ranch, the lodge at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, then turns around and rides back up to the Rim again. This has been his job for almost 15 years. Knox says he's traveled 30,000 miles.

"The manager at Phantom Ranch used to figure the miles," explains the 45-year-old. "I told him he never should've started that, on account of it makes me tired."

Knox gets up at 2 or 3 A.M., packs a minimum of 10 mules and leaves with another cowboy by 4:30. It takes two to three hours to get to the bottom. After breakfast at the ranch, he begins



RICHARD DANILEY

the three-and-a-half-hour trip to the top. Each mule carries up to 200 pounds.

"These mules are packing supplies because they have problems (being around people)," says Knox through his handlebar mustache. "They're

like me. But we do all right."

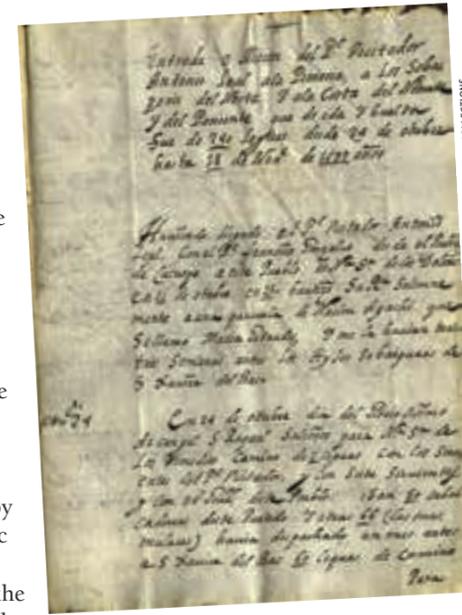
He grew up in central Oregon and quit school at 16 to work on a ranch in Nevada, and ran mules at Yellowstone National Park. When he isn't wrestling mules on narrow Canyon trails, Knox writes cowboy poetry.

Historic Writings Open for Public Inspection

They made history and wrote about it as they did so. Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, the Jesuit missionary who explored Arizona in the late 1600s and early 1700s, kept a journal. Gaspar Perez Villagro rode with the colonizing expedition into New Mexico in the late 16th century and wrote a book.

The original documents produced by these and other historic figures of the early Southwest are held in the Special Collections of the University of Arizona in Tucson. The ink on many of the pages looks as crisp as the day the writers put pen to paper.

While not usually on exhibition, these documents and books can be seen by the general



UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

public. Visit the Special Collections building adjacent to the University's Main Library on the corner of Cherry and University. Request to see the works of Kino and Villagro. Information: (520) 621-6423.



KIM WISMANN

Making Friends with Arthropods

Ever met a centipede you liked? Want to make friends with a roach that hisses? We've got just the place for you.

Dedicated to research and education, the Sonoran Arthropod Studies Institute houses hundreds of thousands of arthropods, those creatures of segmented bodies and jointed limbs. Every fourth Saturday of the month, the institute opens its gates deep in the hills of the Tucson Mountain Park. Visitors are invited in to the small world populated with the crawling bounty of the Sonoran Desert and a handful of other guests, like those Madagascar hissing roaches.

Says institute director Steven Prchal of the residents, "They're cool. They run the world."

Information: (520) 883-3945 or SASionline.org.



Question of the Month

Where is the world's largest horse-drawn parade?

The Parada del Sol

("walk in the sun") began proudly trotting through Scottsdale in 1953 as a small part of the Sunshine Festival. Now, with 150 entries and nearly 1,000 horses, the parade travels down 2 miles of Scottsdale Road each January.



LINDA LONGMIRE

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History Museum Tells Its Own Tales

Home to the Rio Colorado Division of the Arizona Historical Society in Yuma, the Sanguinetti House Museum has a history all its own. The two original adobe rooms of the house were built in the early 1870s, and shortly thereafter became home to Judge Henry Nash Alexander and his second wife, Mary Parcells. He served at Fort Yuma and the Pima Villages with the California Column during the Civil War, and later was Yuma county treasurer and a probate judge.

E.F. Sanguinetti, a pioneer merchant, purchased the home in 1890 and added to it as his family grew, creating an oasis that included gardens and



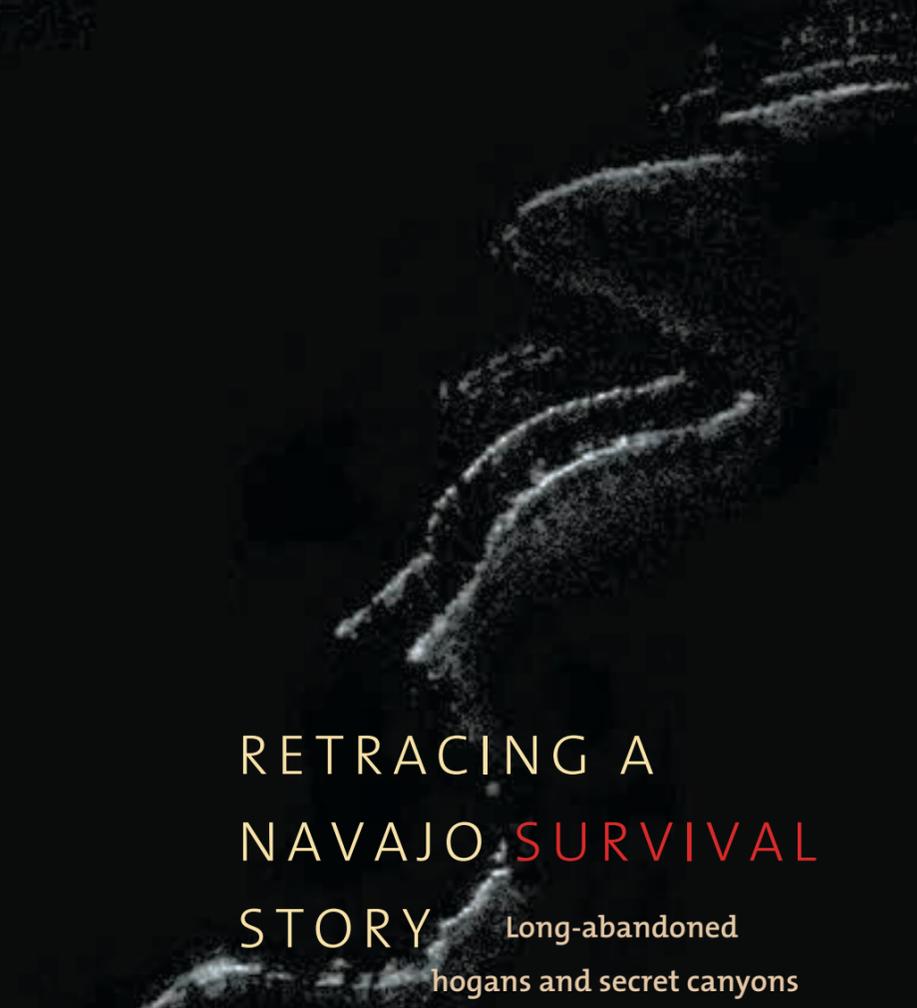
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, YUMA

aviaries. The house now exhibits artifacts, photographs and furnishings representing the area's history from the 1540s to the present.

Next door to the museum is the Adobe Annex, constructed in 1873 as the home of Jack

Mellon, who became one of the Colorado River's most famous steamboat captains. The society's library and archives are housed in the annex as well as the museum gift shop.

Information: (928) 782-1841, www.yumalibrary.org/ahs/.



RETRACING A NAVAJO SURVIVAL STORY

Long-abandoned
hogans and secret canyons
tell of a desperate escape

BY CRAIG CHILDS

On a foot journey

across far northern Arizona, two of us find ourselves deep in the Navajo Indian Reservation. Carrying on our backs weeks' worth of supplies, we walk among staggering red desert cliffs. There are faint trails here and there. Not hiking trails, necessarily, but the paths of deer through sand and boulders, the shortcuts of shepherders and long-abandoned horse routes between mesas.

We are walking into a ceremony, although we do not yet realize this. By happenstance — or maybe by the plan of this desert landscape — we follow an old, nearly forgotten Navajo road. As people had done more than a hundred years before us, we cross to safety, walking the road to sanctuary.

At dusk, we climb into a mesa's cliffside too





steep to offer a place to sleep. We keep going, slashing our way across ledges and fissures, groaning under the weight of our bulging packs.

Night falls and still we find no place to set our camp. We become separated, and in the moonless dark I stop, holding onto the trunk-twist of a juniper tree for balance. I listen and cannot hear my partner. We are trying to reach the flatness of the mesa top. I listen for his boots pounding through rocks. I listen for the rasp of his breath, for his pack grating against bush and stone. Nothing. I cannot rely on his route-finding now.

I continue alone, but become stranded on a ledge, thinking I can inch my way across an open face of stone. How far is the drop? I cannot see in the dark. This far into the wilderness, floating in the void of the inner reservation, mistakes cannot be made. I panic, feeling my boot soles slipping. I drop to a knee, face pressed to the coarse grain of sandstone bedrock, and desperately shrug out of my pack. The weight of the gear slips from my back. My pack grunts as it falls, ledge-to-ledge, out of sight. I will have to chase it down and hope that nothing turns out to be too badly damaged.

At least now I am free of its weight, able to steady myself on the ledge.

I wait, catching my breath. Then I look up and see the shape of my partner against the stars. He's maybe 80 feet above and has heard the fall.

He calls down, tells me that he has found the way—an old domestic sheep route, he says, carved up the cliff's side. Just look for the switchback cuts and then a jury-rigged gate of boulders and juniper limbs off to my left.

In less than half an hour, I retrieve my pack and meet him along the sheep route, coming through a gate held closed by a badly rusted kink of bailing wire. The moon is just rising, sending knife blades of milklight through the canyons below. We march ahead, nearing the mesa top. Coming to a flat area, we both stop. A circular shape stands on the ground ahead of us. We split and circle it from opposite sides. It is man-made, very old and mostly collapsed.

"Hogan?" my partner asks.

I reach out and touch the wood. It is juniper, left to the weather for perhaps a century. The beams had been chosen for their straight lines and girth, and had been corbeled into each other, once composing walls and a ceiling. The shape is traditional,

the construction techniques familiar.

This is a Navajo dwelling.

"Hogan," I affirm.

The wind and sun have peeled back, layer by layer, the wood's surface. The entrance, framed by fallen posts, lies open to the east. We do not even consider entering it. After circling the structure, grazing the wood with our hands, we turn and continue along this old route to find a place to sleep. As we leave, I glance back once, burning this image into my memory: the skeleton of a hogan incrementally illuminated by the rising moon. And then I remember.

LESS THAN A YEAR earlier, I sat in the firelight glow inside a hogan. The floor was red dirt, the woodstove in the center made of an oil barrel sawed in half and planted into the ground. Across from me an old Navajo singer sat in a chair, and standing beside him was his grandson, a man in his 30s. The singer was maybe 80 years old, and he wore a down jacket grungy from years of shepherding. He spoke no English, so his grandson translated. I sought permission to walk with a traveling companion in a nearby labyrinth of desert canyons.

The singer listened to our questions, told through his grandson, and he spoke back in liquid words of Navajo. Instead of giving us permission, he told us a story. His old hands, dark and wrinkled from working with leather and livestock, opened and folded as he spoke.

He explained through his grandson how, when he was a child, most kids were taken from their parents and carried off to Indian boarding schools, and not returned for 10 years. His own parents sent him into hiding, and so as a child, the singer wandered alone into a realm of vast chasms, a place where he could never be found. Each time the people came from the Indian school, he vanished into this lost country.

This was the same country we were seeking permission to enter.

The story continued. It went back to 1864, when the U.S. government rounded up Navajos and marched them out of

Then I look up and
see the shape
of my partner
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stars.
He's maybe
80 feet above
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heard the fall.



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 6 AND 7] As the Navajo Indian Reservation crosses into New Mexico, Split Mesa's cliffs jut nearly perpendicular to the parched and cracked earth. On the horizon across the state border, Arizona's Sonsela Buttes rise in purple shadow. ADRIEL HEISEY

[LEFT] Encouraged by summer rains, fresh green growth carpets Tsegi Canyon along its winding course within Navajo National Monument. GEORGE H.H. HUEY

[ABOVE] More than 200 years old, the woody framework of a forked-stick hogan, formerly covered with mud, demonstrates the sturdiness of its ancient design. BERNADETTE HEATH

**Seven years later,
they emerged.
They were emboldened
by their escape,
by their perseverance,
enduring years of life
in a barren and
treacherous landscape.**



[ABOVE] Rebuilt by Navajos who returned to Canyon de Chelly after the 1864 Long Walk, a stone hogan testifies to the Indians' perseverance and strong ties to their homeland. DAVID H. SMITH [RIGHT] Sunrise highlights the dramatic configuration of spires and cliff faces at Adeii Eechii Cliffs east of the Painted Desert on the Navajo reservation. ROBERT G. McDONALD

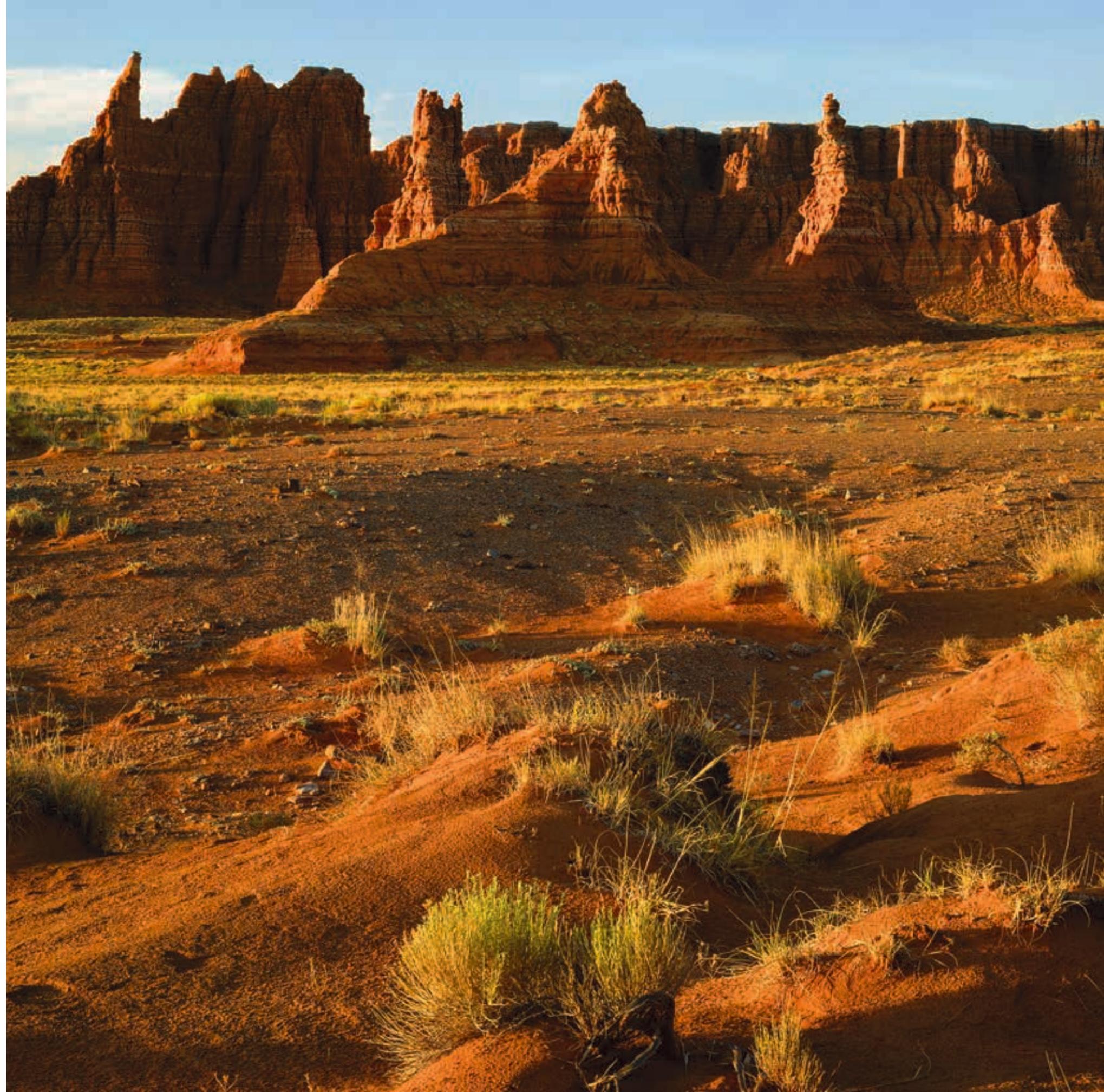
Arizona, a winter trek known as the Long Walk that left many dead. There was a small group, he said, a few families from Kayenta and Black Mesa, that fled to the west. Troops chased them, but they slipped like ghosts into this realm of hollow canyons. The troops paced back and forth, sending out scouts, trying to follow tracks, but found nothing. The Navajo families were gone.

Seven years later, they emerged. They were emboldened by their escape, by their perseverance, enduring years of life in a barren and treacherous landscape. They carried with them a new ceremony, a religion of survival and triumph.

In the shadow flicker of firelight, the singer explained to us the importance of such rituals like vanishing into the wilderness in search of a ceremony. He told us that they are protection. They are the way to live.

NOW, NEARLY A YEAR after meeting the singer in his hogan, I move across this mesa top in the first light of morning, carrying my belongings on my back. I remember the singer's story as I walk. I remember also the weeks that followed my conversation with him, weeks of difficult travel as I crawled and climbed through the same maze of dim canyons that he had walked as a child, the same place his ancestors had gone to escape the U.S. troops, a country that now, on this return trip, lies maybe 40 miles ahead of us.

In the warmth of sunrise, my partner and





I stop to survey the land ahead, deciding which approach to take to surmount an extensive row of cliffs. I realize this must have been where the troops had stalled. By the directions the singer had given me, I am able to re-create the scene from 1864. The refugee families must have come through here on their way to the canyon maze. They knew that if they could find a way through the cliffs ahead, the troops would be stymied behind them. Relying on our own knowledge from years of travel through difficult terrain, we scrutinize every cliff band and each shadowed break.

There is only one real choice, a steep canyon leading to a butte leaning against the highest cliffs. For the rest of the day, my partner and I struggle up this canyon. Every quarter-mile or so we find some remnant of a sheep gate or a cleared trail—the purple glass of an antique bottle, a strand of rusted barbed wire.

As we reach a high pass toward the cliff top, we come to the remains of another hogan. Its juniper beams rest one across the next in a huddle where a dwelling once stood. To one side lies the outline of a sheep corral turning to dust. I kneel to the ground in front of the hogan and lift a lost shirt button. Turned between my fingers, it gives off rainbow colors. It is made of shell.

The pass leads to a ramp handcut into stone, which puts us on top of the cliff. Looking down hundreds of feet, I see this is the only passage for miles. A person would have to know this land well to find this route. The troops in 1864, I imagine, were strangers to this place. The Navajo escapees, on the other hand, understood this country.

They knew that not far beyond these cliffs were shadowed passageways of canyons, a place so deep and byzantine that it seems like the exposed plumbing of the Earth. No one was able to find the Navajo refugees after they descended into this sandstone underworld.

Continuing along our route from the second collapsed hogan, we follow a narrow, high platform of sandstone and piñon trees pinched between the heads of two great canyons. Eventually, the pinch becomes so narrow that cliffs peel away to either side. We walk this narrow passage until finally it crumbles into a harrowing gap spanned by a bridge of stone and wood.

At first, neither of us crosses the bridge. We study it, peering down the surrounding plunges of cliff. It seems solid to the eye. It

also seems old. It offers the only way through. The entire landscape behind us thins into this single passage, a tight walk to the other side.

Again, I think of the Navajo families fleeing into the canyons beyond here. I imagine them in this very place, perhaps the first people to build this bridge. For them, this was the breakaway point, the parting of the Red Sea that would close on the troops behind them.

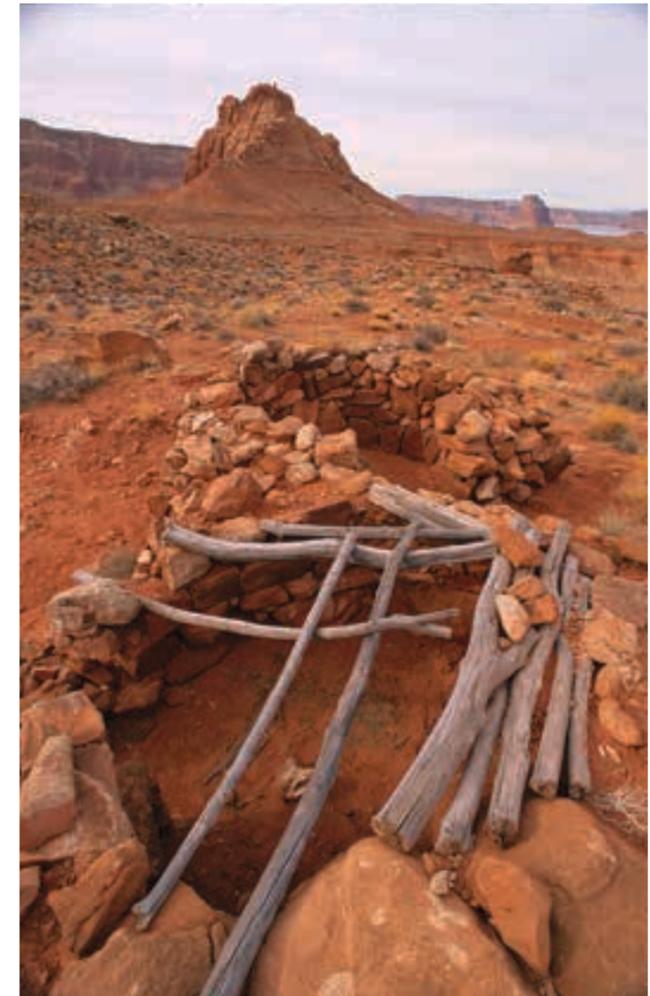
My partner goes first, leaving bootprints in the fine dust. Wind blows them clean before he reaches the other side. I follow, and stop in the middle. Cliffs hang below my hands. I think that if the troops had not known about this single causeway, they had no hope of tracking the families they were after. This is how the families got away, slipping the trap right here.

When I began this particular journey, I had not even thought of the singer's story or the canyon refuge I had traveled through the year before. I am just traveling with a friend across northern Arizona. Coming into Navajo territory is happenstance of the trek. I only walk where the land tells me to go, following mesas and canyons. This route has led me to here.

It is the land, I realize, that tells the stories we live by. By merely placing one foot in front of the other, I have been propelled along a story older than I, older even than the Navajo people, a story of landscape, of patterns set by geology, by erosion, by time. I continue across the bridge onto the wider blocks of bedrock on the other side, and from there, I vanish within the canyons, following this story into the shadows. ■■

Arizona native Craig Childs, who now lives in Colorado, has devoted his life to traveling the wilderness Southwest. For this article, he walked for a month through a remote quarter of the Navajo Indian Reservation.

This route has led me to here. It is the land, I realize, that tells the stories that we live by.



[OPPOSITE PAGE] Owl Bridge overlooks soaptree yuccas and desert shrubs along the trail to Rainbow Bridge northeast of Glen Canyon Dam.

[ABOVE] Weathered logs and stones remain as evidence of a Navajo shepherd's shelter in West Canyon near Lake Powell. BOTH BY GARY LADD

historic Lee's Ferry

A celebrated crossing for early travelers
now launches Colorado River adventures

TEXT BY TOM DOLLAR PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY LADD





DOWNRIVER FROM GLEN CANYON DAM, Lee's Ferry today operates as a drop-off point for Colorado River rafters and trout fishermen. But that's a relatively new use of the ferry.

Before the dam harnessed the snarling power of the river, Lee's Ferry served as a lifeline for Mormons and other pioneers moving into the Southwest. Because the cliffs along Marble Canyon gave way on both sides of the river, the location proved ideal for a ferry, but the crossing was treacherous nevertheless. Many drowned trying to make it across the river, a lot of them in bad weather.

Disease also plagued the ferry. At least one family was decimated by diphtheria. And the person who established the

ferry, John D. Lee, was later executed as the leader of the Mountain Meadows (Utah) Massacre of 1857 in which a raiding party slaughtered about 140 persons moving west in a wagon train.

But without the ferry, migration to the Southwest across the Colorado River would have been nearly impossible.

Today the route to the ferry crosses the new Navajo Bridge and leads to an Interpretive Center, constructed of native stone by Navajo workers and operated by the Glen Canyon Natural History Association. Travelers can park there, walk across the old Navajo Bridge and peer out at Marble Canyon. The old bridge, dedicated in 1929, was replaced by the new bridge in 1995.

To get to the ferry from the center, drive

a quarter-mile north on U.S. Route 89A and then right onto a blacktop road for another 5 miles.

At the ferry, a line of pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles towing trailered fishing boats wait to back down the launch ramp to the Colorado. From the launch site, fishermen will motor upstream into 15-mile-long Glen Canyon where water is clear and cold, ideal for the thriving rainbow trout population.

At the other end of the launch ramp, river runners are rigging two oar-propelled rafts for a white-water run through the Grand Canyon. A young couple from Moab, Utah, are on a "busman's holiday." River guides themselves, they are going to celebrate 10 years of marriage by rowing

behind the launch area's parking lot.

Beginning in the 1870s, Lonely Dell Ranch, which is now managed and protected by the National Park Service as part of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, was home for a succession of hardy men and women who ferried settlers moving from Utah to Arizona across the fickle and sometimes treacherous Colorado River.

Countless generations have crossed the Colorado at the location of Lee's Ferry, the only place in 700 miles where the entrenching Canyon walls diminish and offer access to the river at each bank.

When members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began to settle in Arizona, Lee's Ferry became the natural corridor from their homes in Utah. John D. Lee was "called" by the church prophet in 1872 to move his family to Paria Canyon and operate a ferry for the Mormons and all others who came this way. Lee was the first of the ferrymen who served during the following 57 years, and the crossing came to be known by his name.

Another ferryman, Warren Johnson, saw his faith sorely tested when four of his children died in the summer of 1891. For 16 years, Johnson, a devout Mormon, and his wife, Permelia, had lived at Lee's Ferry. They tilled the rocky soil and planted crops, built shelters for themselves and their animals, erected a blacksmith shop and sorghum press, constructed earthen dams to capture the Paria River's waters for irrigation — and when the rampaging river breached the dams, drowning their crops, they rebuilt and replanted.

When hostile Navajo or Paiute Indians threatened, Johnson pacified them. When the untamed Colorado at their doorstep ran wild, wrecking the ferry Johnson operated, he constructed a new one. When pioneers complained that Lee's Backbone, the wagon track worn from the rock face on the south side of the Colorado, was too hazardous, Johnson and his crew hacked out an alternate route, called "Johnson cut-off." When their own food cache ran low

and browse for their livestock withered in drought, the Johnsons somehow eked out a living.

Then death struck. Five-year-old Jonathan was the first. His symptoms were



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 14 AND 15] River-rafters prepare to shove off from Lee's Ferry, the only launching spot on the Colorado River in a 700-mile stretch. **[OPPOSITE PAGE]** Navajo Bridge spans Marble Canyon and the Colorado 500 feet below. **[ABOVE]** Late-March blooms at Lonely Dell orchard light up with morning sunshine.

not uncommon — fever and sore throat. Six days later, he was dead. Next, 11-year-old Laura took sick, followed by Permelia, nicknamed Millie, and, finally, the eldest child, 15-year-old Melinda. The family fasted, prayed, laid on hands and sang hymns. They dosed the children with home nostrums of the day — turpentine, coal oil, sulfur, liquor

and saltpeter, and mercuration of iron — and allowed a visiting Cherokee Indian to administer his remedy of liquor and potassium nitrate every seven minutes.

Nothing helped. In less than two months, all four children were dead and buried side by side in a small cemetery near a bend in the Paria River. Belatedly, the cause of death was determined to be diphtheria, unwittingly borne to Lee's Ferry when the Johnsons took a family into their home while they waited for the river flow to drop for safe crossing. The visitors had buried a child by the side of the trail just days before, dead of an unnamed illness.

His Mormon faith taught Warren Johnson that the hardships of his mission at Lee's Ferry would earn him God's favor, but when his children died, he felt forsaken. He revealed his raw anguish in a



One man's feet froze when he LOST HIS WAY in a snowstorm; he died of blood poisoning. . . . Pneumonia killed another. A mother and infant died during childbirth . . .



[TOP] Lee's Ferry Fort, constructed in 1847 as protection against Indians, was never needed for its intended purpose. **[ABOVE]** Gravestones at Lonely Dell chronicle the lives lost at Lee's Ferry, including the four Johnson children, who all died within two months. **[OPPOSITE PAGE]** Ruts carved by metal-banded wagon wheels still gouge the steep rocky slope up from the river's east side, called Lee's Backbone.

letter to church elders: "What have we done that the Lord has left us?" Likening Johnson's afflictions to those of the biblical Job, church prophet Wilford Woodruff replied that he had done no wrong and urged Johnson to remain steadfast. Johnson persevered as ferryman at the "Mormon Crossing" for another five years until a haywagon he was driving overturned, throwing him to the ground. His broken back paralyzed him permanently, so the Johnsons moved from Paria Canyon after 20 years of offering ferry service as well as a helping hand to anyone in need.

The deaths of the Johnson children were neither the first nor the last at Lee's Ferry. Kanab, Utah, was a three-day ride north and Tuba City, three days south, so there was little help for anyone felled by accident or illness. One man's feet froze when he lost his way in a snowstorm; he died of blood poisoning. Another man, despondent over a divorce and loss of family, drank himself to death. Pneumonia killed another. A mother and infant died during childbirth; a toddler was killed when a loaded shotgun accidentally discharged.

Mishaps involving animals, machinery and ferryboats were common. A rearing horse fell and crushed the thighbone of

Jim Emmett's son, Bill. Emmett, Warren Johnson's successor as ferry proprietor, set the fracture without a cast. The leg healed improperly, leaving Bill with a lifelong limp.

Strong currents sometimes wrenched ferryboats from their moorings and swept them downstream to shatter against rocks. Cables and ropes snapped, dumping people, wagons, farm equipment and livestock overboard. Strong swimmers saved themselves; a pet dog, a Newfoundland, once swam out and pulled its master safely to shore.

In times of drought, river flow was reduced to a trickle, and travelers could wade across; sometimes in winter they could cross on solid ice. But during spring runoff, when more than 100,000 cubic feet of water per second hurled past Lee's Ferry, crossing was impossible. Other times it was simply treacherous. Seven people drowned at the crossing, the first being Lorenzo Wesley Roundy, a Mormon bishop,

who attempted an ill-advised ferry during a spring flood surge. Ferryman Johnson, also thrown into the river, clung to a floating wagon and was plucked from the roiling waters by men rowing a skiff.

Once they crossed the Colorado, Mormon pioneers hightailed south to Navajo Spring on today's Navajo Indian Reservation. There they found decent grazing for sheep and cattle, reliable water and stone cabins for shelter. Some pioneers marked their passing by pecking their names and dates of travel onto the dark varnish of nearby boulders:

"To St. John,s [sic]
Geo. Brown
Of Summit County Utah
September 29, '84"

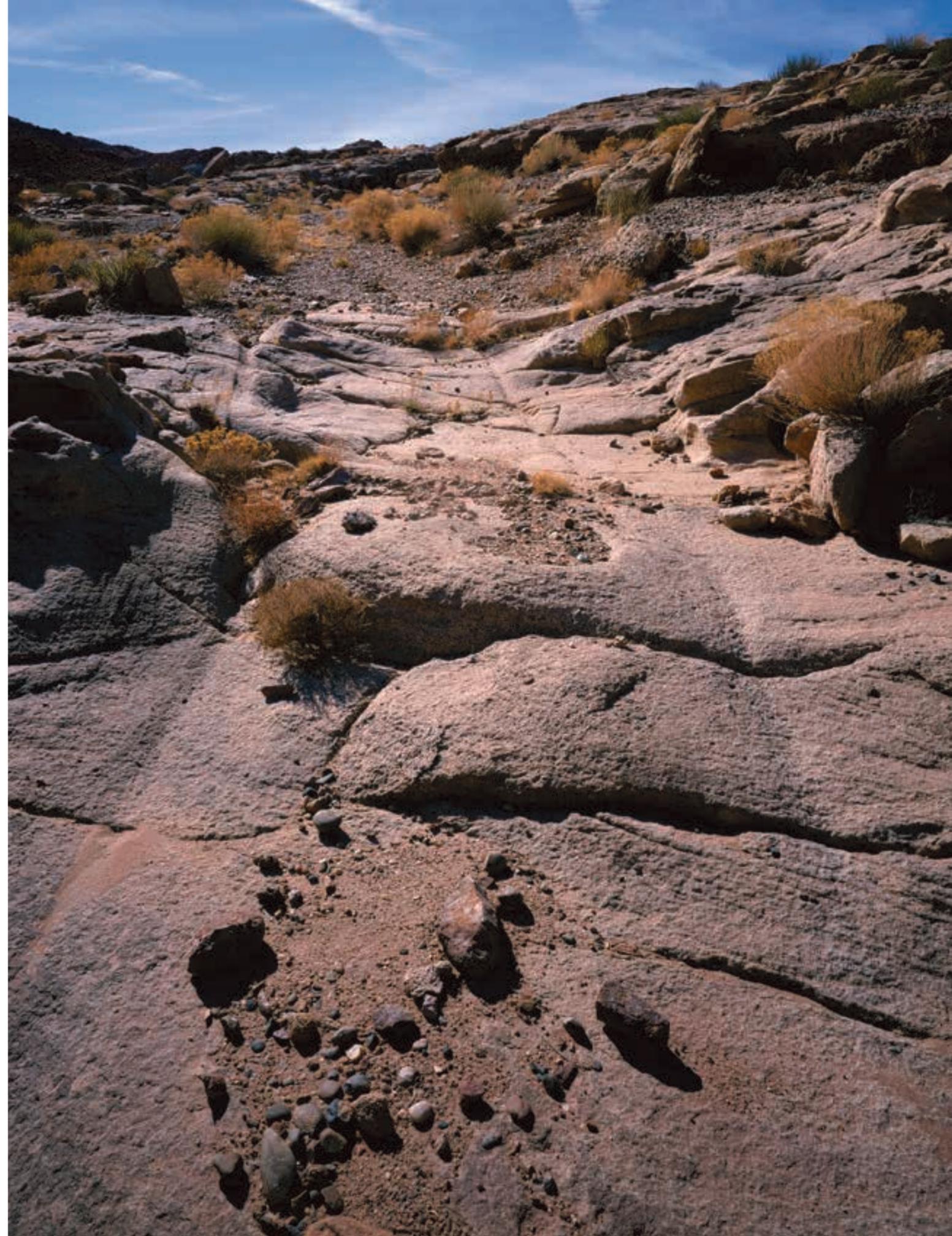
One inscription, "Herman Snow 1881," is upside down. Was Snow a prankster? Or had the boulder tumbled over in a flash flood? An old and oddly written name, "Namattics [or "N. Amattics"?], Oct. 8, 1876," is nearly indecipherable.

It was a rough life at the ferry, but not without rustic diversions. When work crews were on hand to excavate a road into the side of a hill (a dugway), construct ferryboats or string cables across the river, there was much merry-making. In her diary, Sadie Staker, a Lee's Ferry schoolteacher, writes of dancing to fiddle tunes until midnight.

And there were well-known passersby. One famous traveler was William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, who crossed at Lee's Ferry in 1892, accompanied by his usual Wild West Show entourage and a group of Englishmen looking to develop a hunting lodge on the Kaibab Plateau.

A 35-year-old New York dentist, Pearl Zane Grey, showed up in 1906. He was enthralled by the people he met, notably Jim Emmett and a character named Buffalo Jones. The protagonist of Grey's *Heritage of the Desert*, August Naab, was based on Emmett. Many incidents recounted by Emmett, a gifted storyteller himself, are described in Zane Grey's novels of the Western frontier.

Traveling to the Arizona Strip, Territorial historian Sharlot Hall crossed at Lee's Ferry in 1911. Of her wagon ride along the dugway on the Colorado's south bank, she wrote: "The road looked as if it had





Two big construction projects CHANGED LEE'S FERRY FOREVER. The first was the completion of Navajo Bridge . . . The second was the erection of Glen Canyon Dam.

been cut out of the red clay with a pocket knife. Sometimes it hung out over the river so we seemed sliding into the muddy current. . . .”

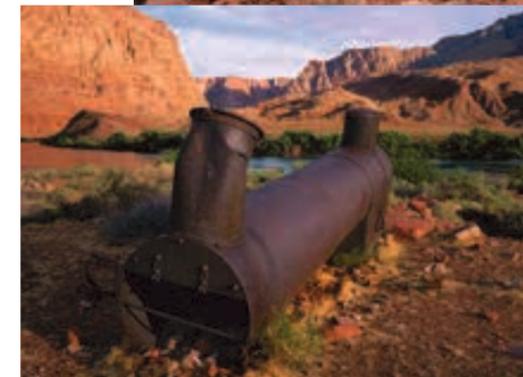
In 1912, former President Theodore Roosevelt passed through Lee's Ferry on a hunting trip. A photograph shows the ever-vigorous Teddy in wire-rimmed spectacles, a slouch hat, galluses and puttees—chopping wood.

Robert Stanton, an engineer, and Charles Spencer, a promoter and schemer, were two who came to Lee's Ferry and stayed—at least for a while. Stanton's survey party arrived in July 1889 to evaluate the feasibility of building a railroad through the Grand Canyon. To do so, they had to run the Colorado River. The party's first attempt was aborted when three in the group drowned.

Later that year, Stanton returned to try again, arriving at Lee's Ferry on December 23. An old photo shows Stanton's group sitting at Christmas dinner spread on an outdoor table, courtesy of the Warren Johnson family. Lacking only fresh vegetables, the menu included three soups, turkey, beef, chicken, “Colorado River salmon,” plum pudding and various cakes and pies.

When his railroad dream proved too costly, Stanton turned his attention to gold mining, for which he imported large dredges to remove the precious ore from Colorado River silts. But the gold particles were too fine to be processed, the mining operation failed and Stanton had to place his company in receivership.

Stanton's failure did not deter Spencer. Within a year, starting in 1910, Spencer had radically altered Lee's Ferry. The fort, which the Mormons had built as protection against Indians and later had been Robert Stanton's headquarters, was converted into



[OPPOSITE PAGE] The Colorado River momentarily swirls with mud swept in at the entrance of the Paria River, upstream from the ferry.

[TOP] Hikers descend Spencer Trail after a climb of 1,500 feet from the Colorado.

[ABOVE] Relics from Charles Spencer's mining operation still litter the banks of the river as it flows from Glen Canyon to Lee's Ferry.

a mess hall. A blacksmith shop, laboratory and bunkhouses were put up, and work crews were hired.

Overnight, Lee's Ferry, formerly a scene of pastoral tranquility, became a clanking, stinking, industrial gold-mining operation. Steam boilers belched coal smoke while pipe dredges injected air and water into the soft Chinle shale to displace tons of earth, and water sucked from the Colorado was mixed with shale and carried by flume to amalgamators.

To transport coal for the boilers, Spencer's crew improved an ancient trail descending the Echo Cliffs and renamed it the Spencer Trail. When that plan didn't work, Spencer commissioned a 92-foot steamboat, a stern-wheeler named, naturally, the *Charles H. Spencer*, to haul coal 28 miles downstream from Warm Creek.

Like Stanton before him, Spencer could not profitably separate gold from the Chinle shale, and his mining enterprise failed. Equipment and buildings were

abandoned, and the *Charles H. Spencer* sank in a few feet of water. Part of its hull and boiler are still visible in the Colorado's clear waters.

Two big construction projects changed Lee's Ferry forever. The first was the completion of Navajo Bridge, which ended the era of pioneer ferrying. The second was the erection of Glen Canyon Dam, which tamed the once mighty Colorado River. The National Park Service bought Lee's Ferry and Lonely Dell Ranch in 1974, becoming guardians of its place in history and overseers of its continuation as a center of activity for world-class fishing, wilderness adventure and as the takeoff point for the ultimate experience in river-rafting. **▲**

Tucson-based Tom Dollar recommends Lee's Ferry: From Mormon Crossing to National Park, by the late P.T. Reilly, for those wanting to learn more about the historic river site.

Gary Ladd of Page says Lee's Ferry is a key crossroads where he's launched and ended many river trips and hikes.



LOCATION: Approximately 115 miles north of Flagstaff.

GETTING THERE: From Flagstaff drive north on U.S. Route 89 to Bitter Springs, then continue north on U.S.

Route 89A. After crossing Navajo Bridge, turn right at the sign indicating Lee's Ferry.

LODGING: Marble Canyon Lodge, (800) 726-1789, www.mcg-leesferry.com/welcome.html; Lee's Ferry Lodge at Vermilion Cliffs, (800) 451-2231, www.leesferrylodge.com. Camping at Lee's Ferry, www.nps.gov/glca/lfcamp.htm.

RESTAURANTS: Marble Canyon Lodge and Lee's Ferry Lodge have restaurants.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Although Lee's Ferry is open year-round, the best seasons to visit are winter, spring and fall.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: www.nps.gov/glca/ferry.htm.



The Soft and Gentle Light of WINTER SOLSTICE

A PORTFOLIO BY GEORGE STOCKING

THE WINTER SOLSTICE IS that day of the year when the Earth's "tilt" relative to the sun makes the sun appear as far south in the sky as it can go. This axis tilt of our venerable planet creates the seasons, and in the northern hemisphere, around December 21 or 22, the sun makes its shortest arc across the sky, bringing the "shortest day" of the year and the first day of winter.

Virtually every ancient civilization, from the Druids to the Aztecs, placed significance on the day and celebrated the beginning of a new season and with it the rebirth of their natural world.

To me as a photographer—a card-carrying member of a cult that worships light—the significance of this day is a little different. On and around the winter solstice, the sun's light has to penetrate more of Earth's atmosphere to reach the northern hemisphere. This soft southern light of the solstice finds nooks and crannies of the countryside that harsh summer sunshine fails to illuminate. Winter light flows like water over the deserts of the Southwest, revealing a softer and gentler-looking landscape. All the images in this portfolio were shot within a two-week period on either side of the winter solstice. ■

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 22 AND 23] The morning sun plays across the spiky armament of cholla and saguaro cacti in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Rising abruptly in the background, the shadowed face of the Ajo Range provides a convergence of moody grandeur. **[RIGHT]** The vermillion glow of sunset filtered through a receding storm paints the Mazatzal Mountains an eerie shade of winter in central Arizona.





WINTER SOLSTICE

[ABOVE] The day's last light plays an edgy symphony across a mountainside covered with cholla cacti in the Black Mountains above the gold-mining town of Oatman southwest of Kingman.

[RIGHT] Sharply delineated by the crisp light of a winter's afternoon, the sculptural form of a decaying saguaro dominates a view of Alamo Wash below the Ajo Range.





WINTER SOLSTICE

[LEFT] In Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, the lengthening shadows from the last waning rays of the sun form a backdrop for saguaro cacti that appear almost stagelike.



THE LEGEND OF A HERO HORSE

A
wounded
cavalry mount
gave his own life
to save a dying
soldier

OF ALL THE STIRRING STORIES OF
bravery to come out of Arizona's

Indian wars, few can match that of the hero horse named Two Bits. But the tale of this remarkable animal has fallen into legend, giving doubters license to air their skepticism. And why not?

Who'd believe that an old racehorse, rescued from destruction at Prescott's Fort Whipple, could find new life, thanks to a kindly soldier, then return the favor by saving that soldier's life after an Indian ambush?

But Sharlot Hall, a respected writer, poet and early Arizona historian, insisted that accounts of Two Bits' heroism — which even played to national audiences on the famous "Death Valley Days" radio and television programs of the 1930s, '40s and '50s — were absolutely true.

The horse belonged to Charles A. Curtis, a lieutenant of the 5th Infantry who arrived in Prescott in August 1864. Born in Hallowell, Maine, the blue-eyed, genial Curtis went on to graduate from Bowdoin College, then volunteered to fight in the Civil War.

Near Falls Church, Virginia, in September 1861, while on reconnaissance with troops under Yankee Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, Curtis suffered a Confederate gunshot through his left knee, leaving him with a pronounced limp for the remainder of his life.

As assistant quartermaster at Fort Whipple, Lieutenant Curtis oversaw

by LEO W. BANKS illustrations by KEVIN KIBSEY

‘... Like a stern commander
the old horse turned,
As the troop filed out,
and straight at the head,
He guided them back on that
weary trail,
Till he fell by his fallen
rider, dead.’

construction of the fort, a log stockade on Granite Creek about a mile east of downtown Prescott.

The town in those years was a lonely outpost. With the Southern rebellion raging, most Army units had been pulled out of Arizona and sent east to fight. But the government needed to keep some military presence in the capital of its new Territory, set in the homeland of the Yavapai Indians. Members of the tribe roamed freely in the nearby hills, often harassing the settlement's inhabitants and soldiers. The "Death Valley Days" TV shows made Apaches the villains, a practice also common in Territorial times when even military reports failed to distinguish between tribes.

The show's scripts said that the Apaches went on the warpath, forcing Whipple's commander to send a rider east to New Mexico's Fort Wingate to sound the alarm. The soldier who volunteered to undertake the dangerous 250-mile ride—Curtis' orderly, identified only as Sam—did so with faith in the speed of Two Bits.

The horse had arrived at Fort Whipple months before, one of a string of packhorses from Texas. They were in decrepit condition, and the post commander, a captain unnamed in the script, ordered six of them destroyed.

But Sam recognized one of the mounts as a former racehorse that had once belonged to an officer of the 7th Cavalry, and had served in various Indian campaigns.

He begged Curtis to intercede with the captain, and Curtis did so. He paid the captain the insulting sum of 25 cents for the horse and promptly turned its care over to Sam. The captain cracked, "He'll make a mighty nice hat rack for you, Sam."

But the horse responded to food and rest, according to Sharlot Hall, who gave the

story national airing in a poem published in *Out West* magazine in June 1902. She reprinted it in her 1910 book *Cactus and Pine*, accompanied by a brief essay in which she credited Curtis with first telling the Two Bits story "expanded into considerable length in prose many years ago."

Hall wrote in her essay, "As his sores healed and his gaunt sides filled out, his legs showed all their old-time speed." She added that Curtis once wrote to her saying that he rode Two Bits in informal Prescott races and "cleaned up a hat-full of Mexican dollars" with the animal's renewed swiftness.

"But it was as a scouting horse that old Two Bits—named in derision when he was a skeleton from abuse and starvation—showed his remarkable intelligence," Hall explained.

The "Death Valley Days" radio broadcast aired nationally on January 22, 1942. *The Prescott Evening Courier* reported that Arizonans awaited the story "with keen interest," and quoted Ruth Woodman of Rye, New York, the scriptwriter, as predicting the spot "will make an exceptionally beautiful story."

It began with an announcer extolling the virtues of its sponsor, the household cleaning products of the Pacific Coast Borax Co., including 20 Mule Team Borax. Then the narrator, the Old Ranger, introduced this "famous story of early Arizona... I've heard it scores of times, an' it still never fails to send a tingle up an' down my spine."

According to the script, Sam rode three days and four nights before encountering an Indian ambush outside Wingate. Shot through the shoulder, he struggled to hang on as the blood loss sapped his strength. Nearing unconsciousness, he leaned forward and spoke into his beloved horse's ear:

"Listen, Two Bits! . . . No matter what happens . . . Keep going! . . . You savvy? . . . Keep goin'!"

Sam collapsed and hid in the brush. Two Bits did as instructed and galloped on to Wingate, arriving just after reveille. But the horse had been shot, too, its breast torn open by the slug. Blood covered Sam's saddle, which the troopers recognized as Army-issue.

"Poor fellow!" said Wingate's colonel as he examined Two Bits. "Take him and do what you can for him, corporal." But the badly injured horse trotted to the gate and began whinnying wildly. Stunned, the colonel said, "Look! At the gate! The old horse! He's waiting to guide us back along the trail!"

At this point in the broadcast, the Old

Ranger broke in to say that Two Bits then followed the trail of his own blood to lead the rescue party back to the wounded orderly. The dialogue concluded:

SAM: "They got us both . . . a few miles back . . . I . . . hung on, as long as I could . . . an' then . . . I fainted, I guess."

COLONEL: "The horse came on alone."

SAM: "I knowed he would. Good old Two Bits!"

COLONEL: "It was him who led us back here to you."

SAM: (murmurs) "The greatest horse in Arizona!"

COLONEL: "Bind this man's wounds up, captain, and get him to the fort as quickly as possible."

CAPTAIN: "Yes, sir."

COLONEL: "Make a stretcher, if necessary."

SAM: (speaks up) "I can ride. Just put me on Two Bits, and I'll be all right."

The men are silent. . . . One soldier clears his throat.

SAM: ". . . Where is Two Bits?"

COLONEL: (gently) "Two Bits has carried his last rider, my friend. He's run his last race. Two Bits . . . is dead."

Hall's poem in *Out West* ended this way:

. . . Like a stern commander the
old horse turned,
As the troop filed out, and straight
at the head,
He guided them back on that
weary trail,
Till he fell by his fallen rider, dead.

But the man and the message saved!
And he,
Whose brave heart carried the
double load,
With his last trust kept and his last
race won,
They buried him there on the
Wingate Road.

The public reacted overwhelmingly to the broadcast. In a letter to Woodman, Grace Sparkes of Yavapai Associates, a Prescott civic group, said they'd "heard so many favorable comments we don't know where to begin to tell you."

Wrote Sparkes, "We heard of one Britisher who served during World War I, now living in Arizona, who broke down and cried. Another group from Chino Valley reported that during the ambush scene, 'You'd have thought the Indians were right up on you.'"

Thirteen years later, in 1955, Woodman dusted off the Two Bits story and told it again

on the TV version of "Death Valley Days," with some changes.

This time Sam had a last name—Loomis—and Two Bits did not accompany the rescue party back to the wounded man, staying at Wingate instead.

But if the incident actually happened, and the details were commonly known, why change them in a subsequent broadcast, unless for some narrative purpose known only to the producers? And who was Sam Loomis?

Muster rolls for Fort Whipple do not show a Loomis serving there in 1864 or 1865. The name might well have been invented simply to fill out the character.

The script's reference to the 7th Cavalry proves more troubling. It has the whiff of fiction. No unit better evokes the sound of bugles and dreams of glory—but the 7th didn't achieve its heavenly status until Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and his men died at the Battle of Little Big Horn, in 1876.

The best argument for the truth of the story might be Lieutenant Curtis' character. He retired from a distinguished military career in 1870. Prior to his death in 1907, and burial at Arlington National Cemetery, he taught military science at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, commanding the largest corps of cadets in the country.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Curtis enjoyed a second career as a novelist and magazine writer. For material, he relied heavily on his Arizona adventures, including the heroism of Two Bits.

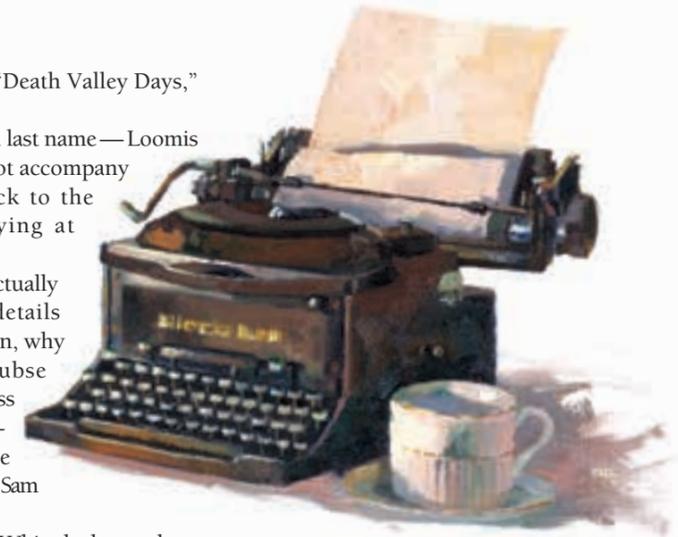
Interestingly, Curtis' service records show that he fought Indians in several engagements during his time at Fort Whipple, which ended in the fall of 1865. One of these fights might well have been the uprising that triggered the Two Bits incident.

As for Sharlot Hall, she never wavered in believing Curtis' story.

"The episode is true, even to the old horse leading the soldiers back to his fallen rider," she wrote. "The man lived, but Two Bits died of his wounds, and is buried under a heap of stones beside the overland road, a few miles west of Fort Wingate." ■

Tucson-based Leo W. Banks discovered the story of Two Bits while reading Sharlot Hall's poems in the archives of the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott.

Kevin Kibsey has spent years ranching and jumping horses, which has allowed him to experience equine companionship like Sam Loomis and Two Bits. He lives in Black Canyon City.



WILD REFUGES

North of Yuma, two ecosystems strive to maintain their natural vigor BY LORI K. BAKER

AS THE SUN SLIPPED BEHIND the Chocolate Mountains to the west, I felt full of anticipation. Early evening marks the hours of enchantment at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge.

I stood on a nature trail at the heart of this 17,000-acre wildlife playground along the banks of the Colorado River, where mountain ranges distinguish the horizon in every direction and migratory birds, mule deer and coyotes flock in the cool evening hours. On this January day, sunset flooded the watercolor sky in deep azure and painted thin wisps of clouds violet and pink. The sweet, earthy fragrance of alfalfa hung in the air, abuzz with mosquitoes that lit on my skin. As if on cue, nature sprung to life with the setting sun.

A vermilion flycatcher, a diminutive scarlet bird, flitted out from the lowest branches of a cottonwood tree, nabbed an insect in midair and darted back. Hidden deep in a thicket of willows, mesquite trees and cottonwoods, dozens of Canada geese and sandhill cranes performed an enchanting concerto.

Sandhill cranes rattled *kar-r-r-r-o-o-o*, accompanied by Canada geese honking

[LEFT] One of a string of grassy backwater lakes created by Imperial Dam on the Colorado River, Island Lake serves as a haven for native birds and migratory waterfowl. ADRIEL HEISEY



Canada geese



Sandhill cranes

'YOU KNOW WHY
THEY FLY IN V-FORMATION,
DON'T YOU?'
ALEXANDER ASKED.
'IT SAVES ENERGY.'



of miles of irrigation channels transformed the untamed Colorado into one of the world's most intensely managed rivers.

Today, the river supplies electricity or water to nearly 30 million people in seven states.

That gives wildlife refuge managers like Alexander the tough task of conserving and protecting the tattered remnants of this delicate ecosystem. He has spent 25 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restoring riparian habitats from Mississippi to Hawaii.

Alexander pointed to a thicket of

onk, onk. In the distance, a coyote howled a haunting sound like a woeful baby's cry.

I forged ahead on this melodious trail feeling like an adventurous Huck Finn with refuge manager Tom Alexander and assistant manager John Earle as my trusty guides. I'd come to Cibola and neighboring Imperial National Wildlife Refuge north of Yuma to experience the last vestiges of this so-called "American Nile." Before dams shackled the Southwest's mightiest river, it spun a green ribbon of lush cottonwood-willow forests, cattail wetlands and lagoons that laced through arid desert mountains.

Pioneer conservationist Aldo Leopold unveiled the beauty and splendor of the unfettered Colorado in his *A Sand County Almanac*, published in 1949, in which he described a 1922 canoe trip south of here with his brother:

"A verdant wall of mesquite and willow separated the channel from the thorny desert beyond," he wrote. "At each bend we saw egrets standing in the pools ahead, each white statue matched by its white reflection. Fleets of cormorants drove their black prows in quest of skittering mullets. Avocets, willets, and yellow-legs dozed one-legged on the bars. Mallards, widgeons, and teal sprang skyward in alarm. As the birds took the air, they accumulated in a small cloud ahead, there to settle, or to break back to our rear. When a troop of egrets settled on a far green willow, they looked like a premature snowstorm."

But this Eden paradise couldn't last forever. By the 1930s, the population had boomed along with the demand for Colorado River water to sustain farms and cities.

As Mark Twain remarked, "Out West, God made plenty of whiskey to drink, but only enough water to fight over." Colossal water-control projects harnessing the river's power for humans posed the solution. The monolithic Hoover Dam, built

on the Arizona-Nevada border in 1935, was the first.

Afterward, 10 major dams and thousands

cottonwood, willow and mesquite trees along the 1-mile nature trail. These trees provide a glimpse of the 90,000-acre riparian forest that once covered a massive Colorado River floodplain stretching from the Grand Canyon to the U.S.-Mexico border. "This is what we want to do in restoration, go back to the native habitat," he said. "This river is an important corridor for migratory birds."

Just then, we paused to watch as a V-formation of Canada geese—with black-stocking heads and white-banded throats and cheeks—pierced the sky, filling the air with their hoarse calls.

"You know why they fly in V-formation, don't you?" Alexander asked. "It saves energy." This pattern reduces air resistance,

he explained, and allows geese to fly farther in formation than they could individually. The birds traverse thousands of miles of sky—at altitudes of 1,000 to 3,000 feet—between their summer and winter homes, somehow never losing their way. About 8,300 had taken up boisterous residence at Cibola refuge since December. They come here each year from Wyoming, Utah and Alberta, Canada.

About 1,500 of Arizona's other "snowbirds," sandhill cranes, also had recently arrived from northern Nevada. As I drove along the 3-mile Canada Goose Drive, I spotted hundreds of the 4-foot ash-gray birds with bright-red foreheads and long black legs dining on the bounty of the refuge's 1,600 acres of alfalfa, corn, milo or millet

crops. Suddenly, a half-dozen sandhill cranes took flight, ascending in great circling columns, riding thermal currents of rising air, and then emerging high into the sky.

I slowly inched the car forward while spotting mourning doves, red-winged blackbirds and mallards. On the flooded fields lining this drive, pintails, shovelers and teal can also be seen, just a few of the more than 240 species using this birder's paradise throughout the year.

The refuge also shelters endangered birds, including the Yuma clapper rail, Southwestern willow flycatcher, desert

[OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE] Mallards
[BELOW] Snowy egret
BOTH BY TOM VEZO





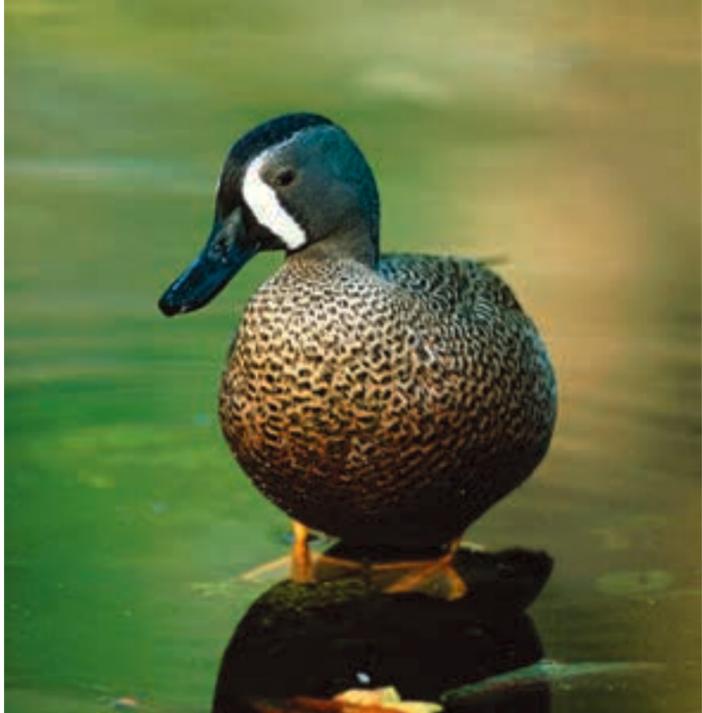
Northern pintail

TOM VEZO



Northern shoveler

TOM VEZO



Blue-winged teal

LARRY DECH



MICHAEL COLLIER



PAUL AND JOYCE BERQUIST



pupfish, razorback sucker and bonytail chub. Occasionally a brown pelican will find its way to the refuge. “When a species must be listed as endangered, we know we’re losing a segment of the habitat,” said Alexander. “And if you lose one, there will be another, and then another. We’re all connected, and it gets to us in the end.”

South of Cibola, the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge stretches along 30 miles of the Colorado River in Arizona and

California, including the last unchanneled section before it pours into Mexico. Here, the river and its backwater lakes shimmer like sequins in the brilliant desert sun, framed by green bamboolike phragmites, feathery salt cedar shrubs and the last of the few towering cottonwoods and willows. The lush green contrasts with the Trigo Mountains, where the fierce sun has varnished the craggy cliffs a deep brown patina. Petroglyphs, figures inscribed by ancient Indians, pepper the cliffs, over which bighorn sheep, coyotes and wild burros roam. Overhead, cormorants, osprey and great blue herons skim the sky, while an occasional white egret stands like a statue near the shore.

Wildlife biologist Jackie Ferrier provided me a behind-the-scenes tour of this 25,125-acre refuge, where the staff faces the daunting task of restoring nature to its original splendor. During the roughshod days of frontier expansion, pioneers felled the original cottonwood and willow groves to clear cropland and fuel steamboats ferrying freight and passengers along the Colorado. For erosion control, early settlers also imported from Asia salt cedar, which has spread throughout the Colorado River system like a weed, choking out native cottonwoods and willows. The plight of these native trees worsened with dams, which halted the river’s natural flooding, and drought cycles that the trees depend on for survival.

“The biggest problem the refuge has is that the natural flow of the

river isn’t here anymore,” Ferrier said.

As we drove, she pointed out patches of restored cottonwood and willow forest with parental pride. “It takes a lot of nurturing to grow these trees now that their habitat has changed so much,” she said. “It is really an accomplishment. And what’s best is seeing the wildlife that uses them.” For birds, the native trees provide a perfect spot to build a nest and forage for insects. Underneath their shady branches, mule deer gather for shelter and to graze on buds, new shoots and leaves.

Along the road ahead we spotted a buck whose tan coat glistened in the sun and rack of antlers towered above mulelike ears, which he flicked forward and sideways to catch our sound. Lacking the silky stride of many deer, he intermittently ran and bounced stiff-legged in a gawky gait. Then he leaped over a canal like a graceful ballerina and dove into a thicket of cottonwood and willows, where Ferrier pulled the vehicle to a stop.

I was thrilled to spot five does and yearlings amid the trees, nearly camouflaged by the branches. They stood as still as statues, staring back at us as long as we watched them — a glorious moment frozen in time. “They feel safe now,” said Ferrier. “They’ve grown accustomed to us being here. But if we stepped out of the car, they’d run away.”

We traveled on to Red Cloud Mine Road, a scenic drive linking lookout points offering beautiful views of the Colorado River valley. Here, bighorn sheep can be spotted grazing on the mountainsides in early morning or evening, and black-tailed jackrabbits, cottontails and Gambel’s quail

[TOP] Ancestral Indian inhabitants of the area have left their mark, like these petroglyphs in the Trigo Mountains. **[ABOVE]** Bighorn sheep **[ABOVE RIGHT]** Martinez Lake offers camping and easy boat access for anglers and wildlife watchers. **MICHAEL COLLIER**

scurry underneath mesquite and paloverde thickets throughout the day.

At the end of the road, accessible only with four-wheel-drive, is the active Red Cloud Mine.

“It’s the only place in the world where you can get red wulfenite,” Ferrier said. Wulfenite is normally yellow-orange.

The first lookout, Mesquite Point, peeks over the backwater McAllister Lake. The next overlook, Ironwood Point, offers the highest vantage point with views of another backwater, Butler Lake, and the river meandering through desert terrain.

From Smoke Tree Point, nearby mounds — actually ash flows from volcanoes that erupted here nearly 30 million years ago — look like scoops of purple, green, white and red ice cream. Minerals create the

rainbow effect. For example, iron creates a rusty red while copper shows as green.

For a closer look at the rainbow desert hues, I hiked the 1.3-mile Painted Desert Trail off Red Cloud Mine Road. Along the trail, I encountered unique desert plants — beavertail cactus bearing fruit, spiny evergreen ironwood trees with twisted gray trunks and fragrant creosote bushes as well as volcanic formations and panoramic views of the Colorado River valley.

I ended my journey through the refuge at Meers Point, lingering under a shady ramada overlooking Martinez Lake. Words from Leopold’s famous essay on conserving nature, “The Land Ethic,” danced through my mind: “Do we not already sing our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave?” he wrote. “Yes, but just what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil, which we are sending helter-skelter downriver. Certainly not the waters, which we assume have no function except to turn turbines, float barges, and carry off sewage. Certainly not the plants, of which we exterminate

whole communities without batting an eye. Certainly not the animals, of which we have already extirpated many of the largest and most beautiful species.”

If Leopold were alive today, I wondered if he’d even recognize the banks of the once mighty Colorado River, where its riverside forests, green lagoons, cattail wetlands and abundant wildlife have nearly vanished. As I drove away, I felt deeply grateful for even a glimpse of this natural grandeur. **AH**

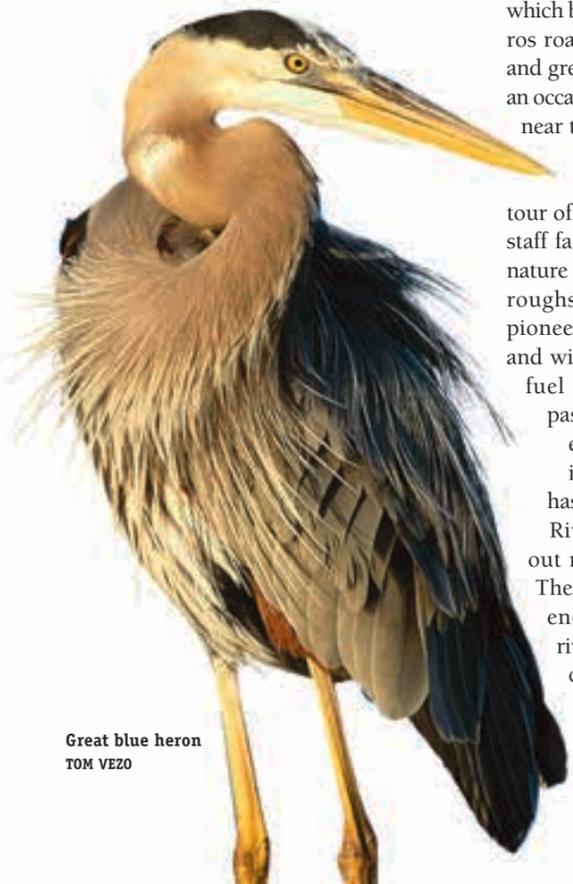
Lori K. Baker of Mesa so enjoyed exploring the wildlife refuges that she had to return three months later for the Yuma Birding and Nature Festival held in April.



ADDITIONAL READING: *Arizona Wild and Free*, published by Arizona Highways Books, characterizes the state’s cache of places like the Cibola and Imperial refuges.

The book’s more than

100 color photographs depict grasslands, deserts, forests and wetlands, in addition to their animal residents. Accounts by former U.S. Congressman and Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall describe the natural treasures preserved in Arizona’s wild lands. The 144-page hardcover book is on sale for readers of this issue at a special price of \$10, while supplies last, plus shipping and handling. Just mention the product code WFBK-MKT3. To order, call toll-free (800) 543-5432. In the Phoenix area or outside the U.S., call (602) 712-2000, or visit arizonahighways.com.



Great blue heron
TOM VEZO

A MOVING EXPERIENCE

I was nervous enough accepting a new teaching position on an Apache Indian reservation four hours north of my hometown. Moving into teacher housing, I knew I had my work cut out for me because the yard had knee-high grass and weeds, and the previous residents had left mouse and rat traps inside and out. Seeing my look of concern, my Apache guide said, "You don't have to worry about mice or rats." With my sigh of relief she continued, "The snakes'll get 'em."

DAVID MEMBRILA, Tucson

in the head and we'll have a lame horse on our hands."
HERM ALBRIGHT, Indianapolis, IN

INDOOR CACTUS

When we moved from New York to Phoenix some years ago, our son gave us a small cactus, which we placed on a table. Several of our great-grandchildren visited us recently and the youngest girl began to play with the cactus. I told her, "Be careful it doesn't prick you." Our son who was there said, "Don't worry, Dad, it won't hurt her. It's rubber."

I said, "My gosh, we've been watering it for years."
LOUIS C. SMITH, Phoenix

CLOWNING AROUND

Running late for his next performance, a rodeo clown was pulled over while speeding from Tucson to Phoenix. Suspicious of the costume, the officer demanded to inspect the contents of the trunk that, to his amazement, was filled with razor-sharp stainless-steel Bowie knives. Asking why so many "lethal weapons" were concealed in the trunk, the officer was unimpressed with the explanation that the clown's specialty was "daredevil juggling," and, that "these Bowie knives are simply the

tools of my trade. Now, can I just have my ticket and be on my way?" "Not until you prove your story," quipped the cop. "I want to see you juggle a dozen of these knives at the same time." The clown soon had a dozen blades flashing in the sun as they sailed in precision above his head. About that time, on the other side of the road, heading in the opposite direction, Clem and Slim were returning from Phoenix to Tucson. Noticing the strange spectacle, Clem said, "Did you see what I just saw?" "Yeah," said Slim, "that darn DUI test is gettin' tougher and tougher all the time."
ROGER RABALAIS, Charleston, WV

UNUSUAL PERSPECTIVE
The gopher snake found in Arizona is not poisonous, but when frightened it may hiss loudly and vibrate its tail like a rattlesnake. It's the Rich Little of the reptile world. —Linda Perret

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PICNIC IN THE SHADE

Several years back, it was very hot as we were driving across Arizona, and everyone was grateful for the air conditioner in the car. We felt sorry for the linesmen stringing wires from pole to pole. They looked so hot and uncomfortable. We were amused, however, as we passed one linesman standing as stiff and straight as he could while eating a sandwich in the little bit of shade one utility pole could offer.
THOMAS LAMANCE, Prewitt, NM

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ROGER RABALAIS, Charleston, WV

RIVER-RAFTING
We asked readers for river-rafting jokes. Here's what we got:

The last time I went white-water rafting in the Grand Canyon, I didn't drink enough and got extremely thirsty. All I

wanted was a nice drink with ice. However, the only thing that I ended up getting on the rocks was the raft.
BEN BLACKSHEAR, Ponte Vedra, FL

Some people go river-rafting on a regular basis. I went once. I wouldn't want to go overboard.
JOHN KRIWIEL, Oak Lawn, IL

Our office staff went on a river-rafting trip. You've never seen so much employee turnover.
GREGG SIEGEL, Gaithersburg, MD

As a volunteer reader in an elementary school, I often interrupt stories to make sure the students understand unusual vocabulary. On one occasion I was reading *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe*, and stopped to ask if they knew what is meant by "rapids."
"Oh, yeah," one second grader answered excitedly, "they eat carrots."
STEVE SCARANO, Vista, CA

A true white-water raft trip scares the color out of your face and into your vocabulary.
GUY BELLERANTI, Oro Valley

{ reader's corner }

For our vacation, my husband took me camping, and I spent the whole time hiking. I didn't intend to, but I was on vacation and I was determined to find a gift shop. This month's topic is **camping**. Send us your camping jokes, and we'll pay you \$50 for each one we publish.

TO SUBMIT HUMOR: Send your jokes and humorous Arizona anecdotes to Humor, *Arizona Highways*, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009 or e-mail us at editor@arizonahighways.com. Please include your name, address and telephone number with each submission.

There's Fine Art in Nothing If You Look in the Right Place

ABOUT HALFWAY BETWEEN PHOENIX and Laughlin, Nevada, along scenic U.S. Route 93, Mare and I pulled the bike into the parking lot of the only gas station and store for miles. She spotted a nearby trailer filled with artwork, and we wandered inside. A woman followed us, saying, "He ain't here, and I don't know how much he wants for that junk."

"This stuff is neat," Mare said. "Where is the artist?"

"Probably out at his shack, about 2 miles off the highway on a rough road."

"What is this place?" I asked.

"This is Nothing, Arizona, and only four of us live here," she said.

Curious to meet the artist, we rode the twisted, rutted dirt road that crossed dry, sandy washes, and finally reached a square concrete structure standing next to a rusted camper. Our approach roused two mutts that started to bark before a slightly bearded old man with scraggly gray hair appeared. George Brucha was short and thin and wore a pair of glasses with only one lens, for his one eye. After a few uncomfortable moments, he said, "Nice bike. What do you want?"

Mare said, "We saw your art at the store. I might want to buy a gift for a friend." "Well, come on. I'll give you a tour since you came all the way out here." Brucha showed us several outdoor sculptures. One was a piece of weathered wood that stood upright and resembled a dolphin. Another was a robot made from discarded hubcaps, license plates, rusted wire and springs. He explained, "I use whatever object I find and make something beautiful out of it. I live my art seven days a week, 24 hours a day."

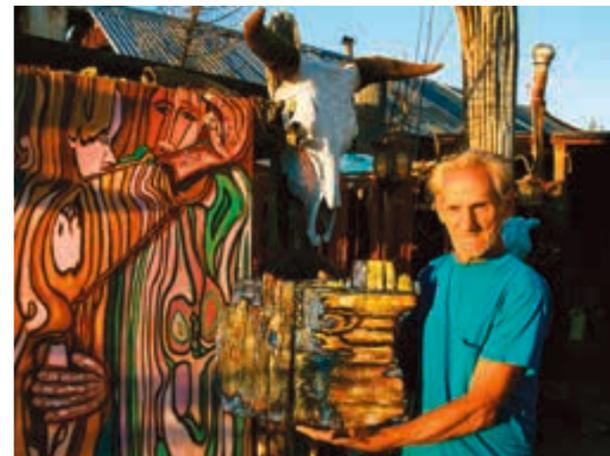
For some reason we were overcome with emotion when we stepped inside the concrete shack of this hermit artist. A blanket served as a door, and it was relatively cool inside

the small room. Paintings covered the walls. In his tiny home, Brucha explained that living simply and at his own pace allowed him to use all his time and talent toward art. "I've lived in this old power company line-shack for 20 years," he said. "I thought you were a friend bringing water when I heard you coming. I ain't got no electricity or running water. Sit down and I'll show you my paintings." Brucha lit a candle. He showed us many paintings on canvas, some on pieces of wood and others on old car parts. He grew more animated as he shared the meaning of each. He said his artwork was therapeutic, and told us he is a recovering alcoholic originally from Pittsburgh, where he grew up in an orphanage. He lost one eye at the age of 2 from an acid spill, speculating that it was an intentional act by his stepmother. He became a ward of the state after his recovery. He learned to drink alcohol while working as a gravedigger for the county when he was 12. "I was so poor," he said, "that whenever I got a piece of paper, I drew all over it, front and back, because I never knew when I'd get another one. I almost killed myself with alcohol. Then I left and traveled the back roads of this country and haven't been back since."

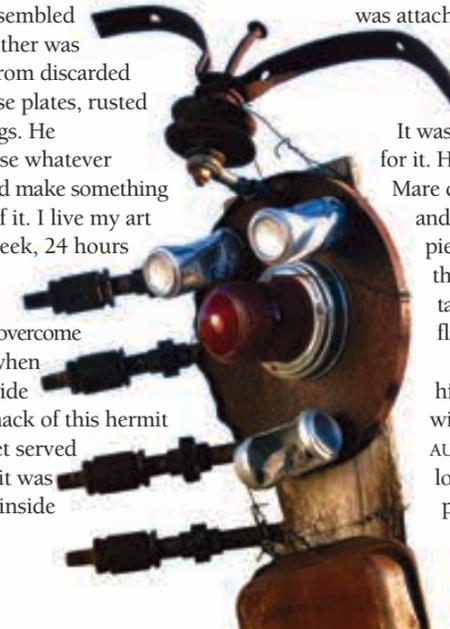
Brucha quit drinking in 1975 and started painting on discarded wine bottles because he could not afford good paper, and painting on canvas intimidated him. "What type of person is the gift for?" he asked. Mare said, "It's for a white woman who, after living several years on an Indian reservation, is getting married."

He retrieved a sculpture of an old, metal brake line painted to look like a peace pipe. It was attached to a cholla cactus skeleton, mounted on an old board painted with Indian designs. Colorful feathers were tied to each end. It was perfect, and Mare gave him 10 bucks for it. He told us each to pick one work of art. Mare chose a painting of an Indian woman, and I chose a skeleton head painted on a piece of barn wood. The art hung out of the bike's saddlebags. Brucha wouldn't take any more money, so I gave him a flare and roll of electrical tape.

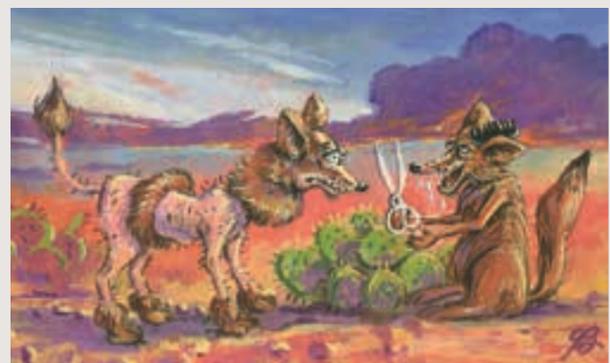
We rode on to Laughlin, but the highlight of our trip was our encounter with the artist of Nothing. **▲**
AUTHOR'S NOTE: George Brucha's art is no longer at the store, but can be viewed or purchased online at www.lngarts.com.



[ABOVE] He may not have running water or indoor plumbing, but George Brucha has artistic inspiration aplenty at his home in the desert near Nothing, Arizona. [BELOW] This fanciful creation resides in Brucha's sculpture garden.



heat strokes BY GARY BENNETT



"Just think, Pomeranians, poodles and even those hyper Chihuahuas won't recognize you."

Historic Butterfield Stage Trail Now an Easy Half-day Outing

I STOOD AMONG THE GHOSTS at the high point of Butterfield Pass running through the billion-year-old rock of the Maricopa Mountains and strained my ears against the silence. Perhaps, if I had listened long enough, I might have heard the stirrings of centuries of stragglers who trekked past this jumble of granite and saguaro cacti years ago.

A high, haunted lament braided the silence of a landscape little changed in 1,000 years of fitful human occupation that included Hohokam Indian hunters, Spanish explorers, trappers, warriors, soldiers, forty-niners, doomed settlers and now a few off-roaders and

history buffs. I heard them cry out, although I knew it was only the yearning of the wind through the saguaro spines—the oldest of which may have watched Juan Bautista de Anza and his army of settlers pass through here in 1775 following a new route from Tubac to California.

“So much history,” said

Elissa, my wife, in a hushed voice.

We had set out from Phoenix that morning for a jaunt on the rutted dirt trail, possible with a high-clearance, two-wheel-drive vehicle. We drove south out of Phoenix on Interstate 10, and turned off on Maricopa Road, or State Route 347, at Exit 164. At the town of Maricopa, we turned right, or west, onto State Route 238. The dirt Butterfield Stage trail veers right (north) off State 238 just short of a mile west of marker 18 into the North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness. Although it is not named at the junction, the Bureau of Land Management marks the road with a sign indicating access into the recently established Sonoran Desert National Monument, which includes the wilderness area.

The road meanders along the base of mountains made of some of the oldest exposed rock in Arizona. The Gila River runs just west of the Maricopas, which accounts for the historic role of Butterfield Pass—the funnel for many centuries of human history.

Hohokam hunters chased bighorn sheep through these mountains until the Indian civilization mysteriously scattered in the 1400s. They regularly traveled the desert highway of the Gila River, which means they journeyed often through this pass to the river some 10 miles west.

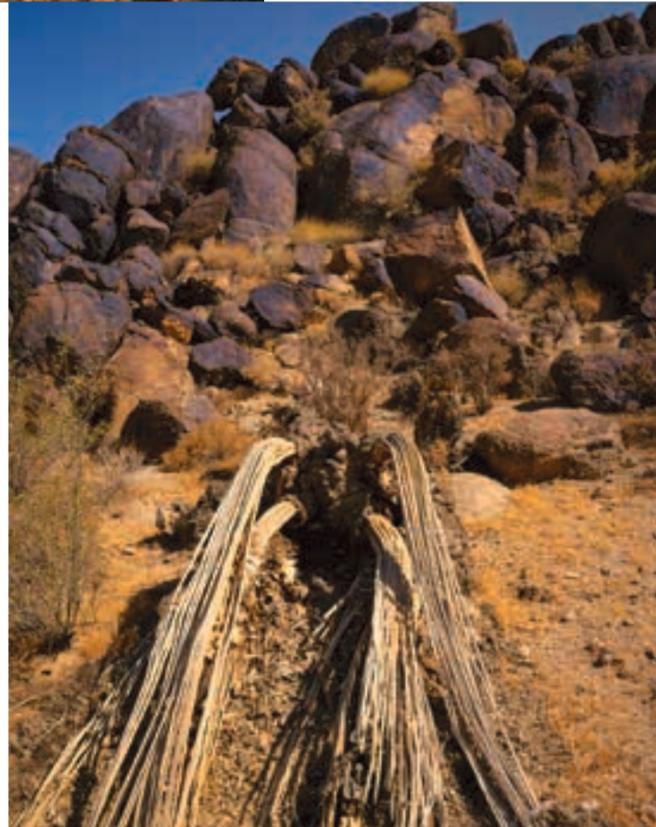
In the mid-1770s, Francisco Tomas Garces, an adventurous Franciscan priest, set out from Mission San Xavier del Bac near Tucson to find a route west to missions in California. He traveled through the pass a few times. After establishing friendly relations with the Yuman Indians along the Colorado River, Garces in 1775 led Anza through the pass along with a large group of settlers intent on colonizing the remote outpost of San Francisco. The route was traveled peacefully until misunderstandings and broken promises of gifts to the Indians provoked a Yuman uprising in 1781, which resulted in the murder or enslavement of every Spaniard living along the Colorado River—including Garces.

Only hunting and trading parties of Yumans, Apaches and Yavapais used the pass extensively for most of the next century as the Spanish Empire faltered. American trappers and trailblazers traveled warily through the pass starting in the 1820s; some sought the route to



[ABOVE] The historic Butterfield Trail, part of a 19th-century 2,800-mile stagecoach route from St. Louis to San Francisco, runs through the Sonoran Desert National Monument south of Phoenix.

[RIGHT] A collapsed saguaro cactus skeleton bows before a mound of rocks in the Sonoran monument. [OPPOSITE PAGE] Low-lying clouds meet the Maricopa Mountains, forming a hazy blue backdrop for saguaro and prickly pear cacti, cholla, paloverde trees and creosote bushes typical of the Sonoran Desert.





[ABOVE] Golden sunlight warms boulders strewn on the desert floor as day begins in the North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness.

California and others went to trap beavers on the Gila River.

The 500-man Mormon Battalion labored through the pass in 1846 and camped just outside Butterfield Pass before descending to the Gila River.

The discovery of gold in California set off the flood of prospectors and settlers known as forty-niners — many of whom came through the pass. That included the family of Royce Oatman, who passed this way in 1851. A few miles beyond the pass, the family was ambushed by Yavapai Indians, who killed the adults and most of the children, but held as captives two of the teen-age

girls. One of the girls was ransomed some years later, making national headlines.

In 1857, John Butterfield signed a six-year, \$600,000-per-year contract with the federal government to run a stagecoach route from St. Louis to San Francisco, right through the same pass. His six-horse teams relied on stations every 50 miles and could make the 2,800-mile trip in 25 days, despite the constant threat of Indian raids, especially at Apache Pass in the Chiricahuas and Butterfield Pass in the Maricopas. The stages also had to get past a 40-mile waterless stretch that ended at the Butterfield Pass. Stage tenders built a cistern just

east of the pass and hauled water up from the Gila River.

With the onset of the Civil War, the federal government abandoned the southerly Butterfield Stage route, and the pass lapsed into the silence of the wind in the saguaros.

Now, it offers an easy, half-day journey past ghosts and granite. The dirt road straggles northward along the base of the mountains for some 4.2 miles until it reaches a well-marked road junction, with a turn to the west leading up into the pass.

Today the road into the pass, which would endanger a passenger car, occasioned only two brief incidents of wheel-spinning in my two-wheel-drive, high-clearance vehicle. The road rises to the saddle in the heart of the pass, then drops back down on the other side of the mountains, 6.4 miles of rough travel. The road comes to a T-intersection at that point. A left turn leads past an old corral where another left, heading south for 1.4 miles, meets the paved Maricopa Road.

But for me, the high point of the drive was back in the heart of the pass, where I decided to park and scramble up the steep, granite-ribbed peak for an overview. A vigorous half-hour labor brought me to the top, with an expansive view in every direction. The peak's view would have given any raider a good half-day advance warning to prepare for an approaching stagecoach.

I sat for a long time, staring out into the misty distance and listening to the secrets of the wind. Then I made my way carefully down through the rattle of ancient stones to my own time. ■■



[ABOVE] The well-marked entrance to the Sonoran Desert National Monument points toward an eastern horizon gilded with the dawning day.



WARNING: Back road travel can be hazardous if you are not prepared for the unexpected. Whether traveling in the desert or in the high country, be aware of weather and road conditions, and make sure you and your vehicle are in top shape. Carry plenty of water, and let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return. Odometer readings in the story may vary by vehicle. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix Field Office, (623) 580-5500.

Petroglyphs at Deer Valley Rock Art Center Send Messages From the Past

[BELOW] The contemporary design of Will Bruder's architecture gracefully melds modern and ancient sensibilities at the Deer Valley Rock Art Center. [BOTTOM] The meaning of many of the petroglyphs incised into the basaltic rocks at the center's Hedgpeeth Hills site remains shrouded in mystery.

LONG AGO ON THE FRINGE of what would become a great desert metropolis, someone picked up a sharp rock and chipped away at a dark basalt boulder, creating a spiral design. Nearby, a bizarre image depicts face-to-face deer that appear to be "kissing." Then there's a human figure holding something, perhaps a child. Perhaps not. What were those ancient

finding them sometimes involves bushwhacking canyons and rappelling cliffs. Then there's the Deer Valley Rock Art Center in northwest Phoenix.

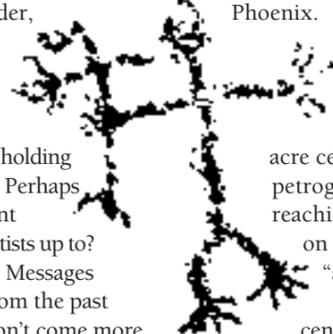
A museum, research facility and nature preserve operated by Arizona State University's anthropology department, the 47-acre center protects the largest grouping of petroglyphs in the Phoenix area, and reaching them requires only an easy stroll on a quarter-mile trail—plus, having "a good eye."

Each year 16,000 people visit the center, and most want to know the same things: Who made the petroglyphs? How old are they? What do they mean?

When hitting the trail to answer those questions, avoid midday because glaring sunlight washes out the petroglyphs, making them hard to see. The winter morning I went was cloudy but not wet—perfect for viewing. "There are more than 1,500 petroglyphs here, some created as long ago as 5,000 years,"

artists up to?

Messages from the past don't come more intriguing than rock art left by Arizona's ancient Indians. Though petroglyphs, drawings pecked into rocks, and pictographs, drawings painted onto rocks, abound in the state,



said Marilyn Sklar, the center's assistant director. "They were left by the Archaic, Hohokam and Patayan peoples."

Sklar explained the lack of pictographs at the site by surmising that the Indians did what made sense at that open location below a mountainside. Pecking the designs with stone tools was easier than making paint and trying to place more fragile colored pictures in spots protected from the weather.

"Not all rock-art makers in the Southwest were men," Sklar said, a deduction that surprises visitors.

"Some was done by women—the result of such things as shamanistic activity and clay gathering—and some by children—relating to puberty rites. Did women make petroglyphs at our site? Perhaps. There may have been women shamans who made rock art here."

Making petroglyphs wasn't difficult. Sklar recalled an ASU graduate student who produced creditable results in about 40 minutes. Mimicking the ancients, he chipped through a boulder's dark layer of desert varnish, a thin coating (patina) of manganese, iron and clay, to reveal the lighter-colored rock beneath it. Voila, perfect rock art.

The student's creation appeared fresh, but what about the site's petroglyphs? How do we know just how old they are?

"We compare the subjects to other rock art or other media such as basketry or ceramics," Sklar explained. "We refer to Native American stories and oral histories, as well as cultural evidence from archaeological excavations. We radiocarbon-date the rock varnish or lichen."

Ninety percent of the site's petroglyphs appear near the trail's end. Some are eroded and hard to see under the best light; others are obscured by random scratches and spots of orange, green and white lichens.

To acquire that good eye needed to appreciate the petroglyphs, take a guided Saturday tour, or spend at least a half-hour in the museum lobby. A computer station, across from the gift shop, previews the petroglyphs. Videos and exhibits explain rock art and the center's history. People can rent binoculars here, but "viewing tubes" along the path are permanently sighted on some petroglyphs.

The Archaic concentric circles, squiggles or wavy lines, parallel wavy lines and curvilinear



designs I easily spotted are among the site's oldest rock art. The more "recent" are animal and human figures left by the Hohokam and Patayan.

As to what any of them mean, that's the puzzle. Today's scientific approach considers, among other things, features in the surrounding terrain, the role of shamanism (could that inhuman-looking human figure represent a vision from a religious trance?) and whether the subject is gender-related.

"We will never know exactly what the glyphs mean," said Sklar, "but archaeologists can learn some things about them and what they may have been used for. The rock art here could have been associated with the nearby prehistoric quarry, for example. It could also have been the result of ritual or ceremony, or associated with hunting or astronomy."

Sklar offered tips on understanding the art: Generally, the darker the petroglyph, the older it is. If a human figure has details such as fingers or facial features, it probably is Patayan. Stick figures, like the one maybe holding a child, probably are Hohokam. The Archaic people didn't leave human depictions at this site—that spiral and other geometric designs are probably theirs, along with some of the animals.

Sklar advises visitors to look down from the petroglyphs occasionally. I saw rock squirrels, scampering by the dozen, as well as colorful, aromatic flowers and bushes.

Next time maybe I'll see some of the diverse wildlife lured by the year-round water in the canal beneath the visitors center.

But despite the flora and fauna, petroglyphs remain the site's primary attraction—and the most puzzling of prehistoric legacies. ■

[ABOVE] Exhibits in the visitors center help foster an understanding of the rock art and the ancient Americans that created the mysterious symbols.



LOCATION: 3711 W. Deer Valley Road, Phoenix.

GETTING THERE: Take Interstate 17 to Deer Valley Road, Exit 217B; turn west for 2.6

miles (keep right at the fork) to the parking lot.

HOURS: October–April, Tuesday–Saturday, 9 A.M.–5 P.M.; Sunday, noon–5 P.M.; May–September, Tuesday–Friday, 8 A.M.–2 P.M.; Saturday, 7 A.M.–5 P.M.; Sunday, noon–5 P.M.

ADMISSION: \$5, adults; \$3, seniors/students; \$2, ages 6–12; free, 5 and under. Binocular rental, \$1.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Remain on the trail and avoid touching petroglyphs, which are easily damaged by rubbing or contact with oil from human skin. Call about Saturday morning guided tours (free with admission), lectures, workshops, story time, field trips and other events.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: (623) 582-8007; www.asu.edu/clas/anthropology/dvrac.

'Unique Water' of Sycamore Spring Makes a Home for Frogs and Plants

SYCAMORE SPRING SWELLS from a trickle to a stream beginning in a grove of old-growth sycamore trees before slipping into a shadowy slot canyon in the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness area northwest of Wickenburg in central Arizona. The state Department of Water Resources designates the spring as "unique water" because of the colony of plants that thrive there.

Few people know that water bubbles out of this rock-paved, sun-browned stretch of desert where juniper, ocotillo and mesquite trees beg for rain

Tom Danielsen, a biology teacher at Phoenix Community College, and his wife, Barbara, a registered nurse. Danielsen also works as a freelance wildlife photographer.

Rather than chance damaging their vehicle on the remaining 2.5 miles of rough road before reaching the trailhead, they park and walk the rest of the way.

Finding himself with an audience, Sredl explains his survey at a small pool near the springhead, after live-catching two leopard frogs that he later releases. The leopards, he says, are of specific concern because of a worldwide decline in frog populations. Lowland leopards are darker with more subdued spots than those found in the Midwest.

The dependable spring provides the means for survival, but only the fittest make the cut in the desert. The frogs synchronize their egg-laying with hatches of insects whose larvae stir in the microcosm of the pools. All game trails through the dry land lead to the spring, a stopover for migrating wild birds.

The road in and the trail itself are strewn with crumbled granite and boulders, so hikers should wear stout hiking boots to protect their feet. Sycamores mark the spring just downstream from where the trail arrives in Peoples Canyon. The springwater is sweet to drink, but treat it before drinking, because cows use the waterhole as well.

Plan a bird-watching safari in March and early April for sightings of migrating species. Or just enjoy the shade of the big sycamores and the soothing, tinkling music of the spring, in a wilderness place not that far away. **AHH**

Before you go on this hike, visit our Web site at arizonahighways.com for other things to do and places to see in the area.



[ABOVE] Like twin exclamation points, yucca flower stalks punctuate a desert wash leading to the sycamore grove that marks Sycamore Spring in the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness.

[RIGHT] The lowland leopard frog, designated a sensitive species, thrives at Sycamore Spring. [OPPOSITE PAGE] The spring's "unique water" trickles through Peoples Canyon, providing habitat for riparian plants and animals.



year-round and the land writhes in shimmering heat in summer. Yet Michael J. Sredl, a herpetologist for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, regularly hikes to the spring to study the frogs that breed there.

On this trip, he counts lowland leopard frogs that thrive in the pools inside the slot canyon fragrant with the scent of water and green things.

Accompanying him are Susan J. Sferra, a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Dr. Tim J. Flood, a medical doctor and epidemiologist with the Arizona Department of Health. Flood is also a backpacker and wildlife observer. The group has four-wheeled all the way to the trailhead.

Arriving soon after are



LOCATION: 95 miles northwest of Phoenix.

GETTING THERE: Turn west off U.S. Route 93 at Milepost 155, about 44 miles north of Wickenburg and 200 yards north of the intersection with State Route 97 to Bagdad. A high-clearance vehicle is required. At 3.2 miles, turn right and proceed to the second windmill. Park there or continue driving to the trailhead near signs marking the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness boundary. The spring is in Peoples Canyon, 1.3 miles from the trailhead.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Autumn, winter and early spring are the best times for a Sycamore Spring hike. Beware of summer flash floods.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Kingman Field Office, (928) 692-4400; azww.az.blm.gov/rec/arrastra.htm.



