

An Indian Ambush and a Missing Child Shocked the Nation

MAY 2005

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

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Swirled Scenery and Exotic Sandstone

GECKOS

Love to Debug Us

ROAD TRIP

Alpine to Petrified Forest

DEVILS CHASM

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[THIS PAGE] The rising sun warms the misty ponderosa pine forest near Mormon Lake south of Flagstaff. MOREY MILBRADT
[FRONT COVER] Wild patterns of crossbedded sandstone form the foundation for an imposing butte in the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. For more photographs, see the portfolio beginning on page 18. GARY LADD
[BACK COVER] Ash Creek tumbles over moss-covered boulders high in the Pinaleno Mountains of southeast Arizona. RICHARD K. WEBB

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HUMOR BY GENE PERRET

Unlike the male cactus wren, our author is challenged when arranging a room for his mate.

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It's not easy learning fire-making and tool-shaping and other ancient skills for coping in the uncivilized outback.

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Boyce Thompson Arboretum

The renowned site is an oasis for animals and plants, including many species from around the world.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA

A listing of major events in the state is available online.

{ highways on television }

Arizona Highways magazine has inspired an independently produced weekly television series, hosted by Phoenix TV news anchor Robin Sewell. The half-hour program can be seen in several cities in English and Spanish. For channels and show times, log onto arizonahighways.com; click on DISCOVER ARIZONA; then click on the 'Arizona Highways goes to television!' link on the right-hand side.

Photographic Prints Available

Each month, prints of some photographs from *Arizona Highways* will be offered for sale. The selected photos will be designated in the picture captions and will be available in two formats. To order prints by phone, call toll-free (866) 962-1191 or visit www.magazineprints.com. (For other magazine related business: In Phoenix or outside the U.S., call (602) 712-2000, or call toll-free (800) 543-5432.)

Arizona's Perfect Sunsets

When I saw the back cover of the December 2004 *Arizona Highways*, I realized I had told a lady in Texas the truth. We were down in the Texas Hill Country a couple of years ago, out by a lake watching a sunset. It was a beautiful sunset, just as she said. I told her when God was making sunsets, he practiced on Texas, came over to New Mexico and got even better. But when he got to Arizona, they were perfect and he didn't have any improving to do. I have never seen a sunset in Arizona that wasn't perfect.

Janie Brashear, Farmington, NM

A Little Less Hatred

Reading Helen H. Loving's story, "Riding with the 'Enemy' on a Cold Christmas Night" ("Along the Way," December '04), reminded me of a similar experience I encountered in October 2001.

I was waiting for my flight back to Michigan at the Tucson International Airport after visiting my son, a student at the University of Arizona in Tucson. I noticed a young man kneeling on his prayer rug in a secluded part of the boarding area. When he completed his prayers, I approached him out of both a sense of general curiosity, as well as a specific need to try and understand what I perceived as the "enemy."

I learned that this young man was returning home to Saudi Arabia at the direction of his father. He explained that his father feared for his safety. He expressed his sadness in leaving his friends and course studies at the University of Arizona. He feared he would never be able to return to Tucson.

As I returned to my home in Michigan and this young Muslim to his home in Saudi Arabia, I, like Helen Loving, carried a little less hatred in my baggage.

Ron Rinker, Harbor Springs, MI

Holiday Gifts

The staff of *Arizona Highways* has truly outdone itself, once again, with the December 2004 issue. What a memorable Christmas present for years to come!

My husband and I are loyal subscribers and hope to be your steady customers and readers as long as we are able to do so. We look forward to each issue and now know that every December we will feast on pictorial delights galore. Many thanks for the wonderful work that you do.

Bob and Linda Granzow, Mesa

Did you notice the brown spaniel dog peeking out from your December masterpiece cover of Cathedral Rock at Red Rock Crossing? Right on the far right side with large ears, black nose, with some snow above it, and one black eye is showing as well.

What a Christmas double gift from your fantastic magazine.

Robert Brennan, Green Valley

Compass Point

I've been reading *Arizona Highways* cover to cover since 1978 and think it is just fine the way it is. Different sections come and go. Some I like more than others, but I still read everything. I'm not terribly interested in Indian art, but tons of other people are and that's fine. I enjoy historical stories, others find them boring, and that's fine too. Keep up the good work.

I was just enjoying my December 2004 issue and something struck me as odd on page 22 of the portfolio. The text states, ". . . particularly in places like Hart Prairie in the mountains' inner basin." In my mental map of the area around the San Francisco Peaks, Hart Prairie is on the west side of the peaks, and the Inner Basin is, well, in the inner basin of the peaks. A quick check of my Coconino National Forest and topographical maps confirms that.

I know sometimes place names appear in different places on different maps, so I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, but it seems to me the generally accepted location of Hart Prairie is not in the Inner Basin.

We gotta keep you on your toes!

Todd Chesney, Chino Valley

Top Five

This is a great magazine. It has to be one of the top five ever. I read it from cover to cover. The photography is fantastic. *Arizona Highways* stands alone, in my opinion. I read a lot because I am retired. Please keep up the great work.

William McRoyal, Sun City West

Reader Pronouncement

I am very pleased to say that my wife and I are finally moving to Arizona, after reading your outstanding magazine for 10 years and visiting the state annually for 15 years. I can't wait to get my boots on your hiking trails more often than only twice a year.

I have one question regarding your magazine that I have always meant to ask. Has it ever been considered to add pronunciations to the place-names to help us poor out-of-staters not look so silly when we try to mention them in conversation? With the Native American and Spanish heritage, my guesses at how to say these are often quite different than what I hear the locals pronounce. It would serve as a great learning tool every time I read your magazine.

Fred Schaffner, Omaha, NE

Yes, Fred, we'll try to include more pronunciations. Welcome to the neighborhood.

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PRODUCED IN THE USA

Prayers Can Sound Like Sandstone, Feel Like Arrowheads

FLIP THROUGH THE May page proofs.

I study Jeff Snyder's photographs of the graceful sweep of the ruin in Devils Chasm, a heartstopping undulation of hand-fitted stone.

I sense the prayer in Gary Ladd's jazz riff of sandstone—sedimentary, semimystical swirls.

Suddenly a memory seizes me.

Years ago, I took my then-gangly, pinball-frenetic

boys—Noah and Seth—to explore the Sedona red rock extravagance off Schnebly Hill Road, one of our favorite haunts.

With thunderheads bearing down, we stopped to examine a great medicine wheel just off the road repeatedly reconstructed by New Age hopefuls in the heart of a vortex, a hypothetical convergence of magnetic and

geological forces with putative powers.

Maybe it was the storm, but as I approached the circle of stones I suddenly felt as though I were trespassing on some obscurely sacred ground.

A silly notion. Modern shaman wannabes built the medicine wheel, not the people who lived in these canyons for thousands of years. I am not a superstitious man, for I am a modern fellow who flips the light switch to banish the darkness and knows of no prayers to deter lightning.

Still, I felt something. Maybe it was the influence of the kids—brimming with fantasy and myth.

No matter. I strolled and smiled as Seth and Noah scrambled headlong through their fantasies of Indian warriors, lurking grizzly bears and nameless things that hide in caves.

"Think there's any pottery pieces around here?" asked Noah, brightly.

"I doubt it," I said. "Too many people. Someone would have picked it up."

He shrugged and careened off, intoxicated by the wind.

I scanned the encircling rock formations, just as the Sinagua people must have done 800 years ago. They lived all through these canyons and down along the bright, singing waters of Oak Creek. They built great fortresses like Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot. They bartered for shells from California and parrots and copper bells from Mexico.

But sometime in the 1400s, they mostly abandoned this place. No one knows why. Most experts suggest some combination of overpopulation, pressure from incoming



PETER ALESHIRE

Seth and Noah Aleshire make a Sedona discovery.

groups and perhaps exhaustion of the wild foods that supplemented their corn, beans and squash. Various Hopi Indian clans say they are connected to the Sinagua who once lived here.

Some anthropologists support this conclusion by comparing teeth taken from ancient burials with teeth of modern tribes. However, that approach often offends the tribes, who object to any disturbance of the bones of their ancestors.

Suddenly, I realized Noah had vanished. Ambling off in his last known direction, I found him kneeling in the dirt, staring at something in the palm of his hand.

"What do you have there?" I asked.

Wordlessly, he extended his hand. In his palm lay a perfectly shaped arrowhead, its edges worked meticulously by a long-dead artisan.

Taking the sharpened chip of stone, I sat with Noah in the dirt. He beamed with pride. I told him about the Sinagua, even to mentioning the trouble with the anthropologists about the teeth.

The first few heavy raindrops spattered.

"We'd better go," I said, glancing at the glowering sky. Standing, I began to put the arrowhead in my pocket. Noah frowned.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Maybe we shouldn't take it," he said, hesitantly.

"Why?" I asked, surprised.

"You know," he said. "Like the teeth."

I stared at the arrowhead in my palm and pictured its maker. Suddenly, I realized that I had misunderstood its very nature. It was not chipped stone, it was a prayer—a flaked shard of longing and connection.

I saw then that although I was a modern man who could banish the darkness with the flip of a switch, I knew less about essential things than a boy with a head full of wind and dragons.

So I handed the arrowhead back to Noah.

He beamed like the sun breaking through the clouds, and hid the arrowhead in the dirt. Then we scurried back toward the car as rain pelted down in earnest.

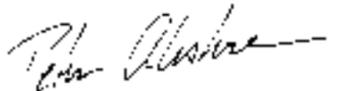
Sometimes prayers linger in a place so that all you need do to learn them is stand silently in the storm, sniffing the incense of juniper and cypress in the rain-heavy air.

This I learned from Noah, many years ago.

The wheel turns; the seasons change. Noah has grown up and is writing stories; I've lucked into running a magazine that loves arrowheads and thunderheads. And by some strange serendipity, Noah and I both have stories in the very magazine that taught us about prayers taking the form of shards of pots and swirls of rock.

Don't take my word for it.

Just study Gary's photos of the Colorado Plateau and Jeff's images of the brooding, sightless windows of Devils Chasm.



THIS MONTH IN ARIZONA

1872
Gunpowder and matches make poor traveling companions in a young Arizona City boy's pocket when the inevitable explosion burns his right thigh and sets his clothes on fire.

1878
Clifton copper mines report that they are turning out 5,000 pounds of unrefined copper daily.

1894
The children of Bisbee attend class in two shifts, due to overcrowding at the schoolhouse.

1897
Arizona's monthly copper output surpasses 11 million pounds.

1898
Benjamin J. Franklin, former Territorial governor, dies in Phoenix of heart failure one year after losing his reelection bid.

1909
A fight among five women in Tucson results in a ruined peach basket, a banged-up hat, five broken hair combs and a \$15 fine each for disturbing the peace.



Zane Grey's Monument Valley

Ever wonder how writers find inspiration? Zane Grey wrote his 1917 novel *Wildfire* after a trip through Monument Valley. The following comes from Grey's description of that trip:
"My first sight of Monument Valley came with a dazzling flash of lightning. It revealed a vast valley, a strange world of colossal shafts and buttes of rock, magnificently sculptured, standing isolated and aloof, dark, weird, and lonely. When the sheet lightning

flared across the sky showing the monuments silhouetted black against that strange horizon, the effect was marvelously beautiful. I watched until the storm died away.
"... I rode down the sweet-scented sage slopes under the shadow of the lofty Mittens and around and across the valley. And when I had completed my ride a story had woven itself into my mind; and the spot where I stood was to be the place where Lin Slone taught Lucy Bostil to ride the great stallion *Wildfire*."

Onyx Quarry

Joseph Mayer, for whom Mayer, Arizona, was named, first dug into it in 1889. Buckey O'Neill, the former Yavapai County sheriff who died by a sniper's bullet in Cuba while fighting with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War, had a financial interest in it. And thousands of motorists traveling on State Route 69



southeast of Prescott pass by it each week on the way to Prescott without ever noticing it. "It" is one of the largest onyx quarries in the United States. Located just northwest of Mayer, the quarry contains onyx, a colorful banded carbonate rock that's used for landscaping and other decorative purposes.

The quarry was first mined by Mayer, O'Neill and their partners, but since has gone through several ownerships. So the next time you travel to Prescott, keep an eye out. Not many people can say they knowingly drove by an onyx quarry. Information: (480) 951-4418.

Go Western

"When in doubt, make a Western."
— John Ford, film director, 1895-1973, who made many movies starring spectacular Arizona scenery



Dillinger's Stick 'em Up Tucson Legacy

Do you know what happened to John Dillinger's gum? No, not his gun, his gum. Apparently, the notorious bank robber of the 1930s had a preference for Black Jack chewing gum. He also had the bad habit of sticking said gum under tabletops when he finished his chaw. In 1933, Dillinger displayed this lack of couth while taking his meals at the Owl Drug Store in Tucson. He and his gang enjoyed a brief stay in the city before their arrest and shipment back to the Midwest. When the identity of his frequent diner and gum chewer became known, the pharmacist scraped off the deposits Dillinger left under his counter.

Today, that collection of used Black Jack sits in a glass jar at the University of Arizona's History of Pharmacy Museum. For a look, if you must, call (520) 626-1427.



Snake Poison—a Well-advertised Ploy

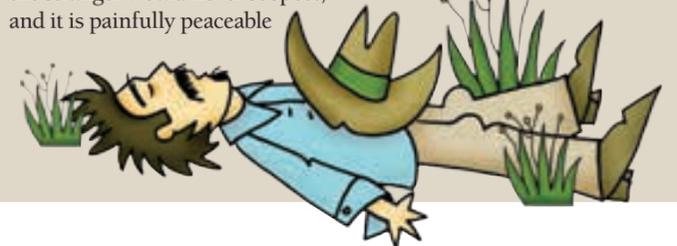
If you're going to go to all the biological bother of using poison to deter your enemies, then it makes sense not to keep it a secret—which explains why the poisonous coral snake has bands of black, red and yellow. Moreover, it also makes sense for nonpoisonous snakes to imitate their venomous brethren and so discourage predators. But there's more to imitating a poisonous snake than meets the eye. When cornered, the coral snake tucks its head into its coils and waves its tail about. If a predator takes a chomp at the tail—which is

colored just like the head—it will get a surprise bite from the business end of the snake. So predators learn to avoid the tail-waving coral snake. To test the theory, Fred Gehlbach tempted enclosed coatimundis and javelinas with two snake models, one greenish-gray and the other a coral snake look-alike—using strings to make the fake snakes wave their tails. Sure enough, the javelinas and coatis avoided the tail-waving "coral snake" but were curious about the crawling greenish-gray model. When this fake snake waved its tail, the critters steered clear.

LIFE IN ARIZONA 1899

A VIRTUOUS, PEACEABLE JEROME

The mining town of Jerome might not have been as rough as its reputation. Consider this from the *Arizona Graphic*, October 21, 1899:
"Jerome has many virtues that the stranger would never suspect, and it is painfully peaceable when the number and kind of its male population is considered. I only saw one drunk man, and he lay on the sidewalk all afternoon and nobody kicked him nor stole his hat."



Question of the Month

Which city in Arizona was "free from drink and sin" when founded in 1892?

Glendale was founded by the German Reformed Church as a temperance colony.



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EXPLORERS GO IN QUEST OF A HIDDEN PAST

THE RUIN OF DEVILS CHASM

TEXT BY NICK BEREZENKO PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF SNYDER





The name alone—Devils Chasm—was forbidding enough. And where had it come from? Was it a canyon hellishly difficult to enter and impossible to traverse? Or was it the remnant of some long-ago event—an echo of some fire-lit deed of terror and excess forever branded on the collective psyche?

The mystery only deepened when we arrived at the canyon's base late one evening. All we saw in the fading light was the black jagged outline of towering ramparts outlined against a blood-red sky. And then the blood, too, faded from the sky and was replaced by pitch-blackness, as if a match extinguished.

The next morning, we saw the mountains revealed. We were at a canyon in the Sierra Ancha Wilderness northeast of Phoenix. From our sleeping bags, we watched the rich syrupy color of a near-solstice sun-

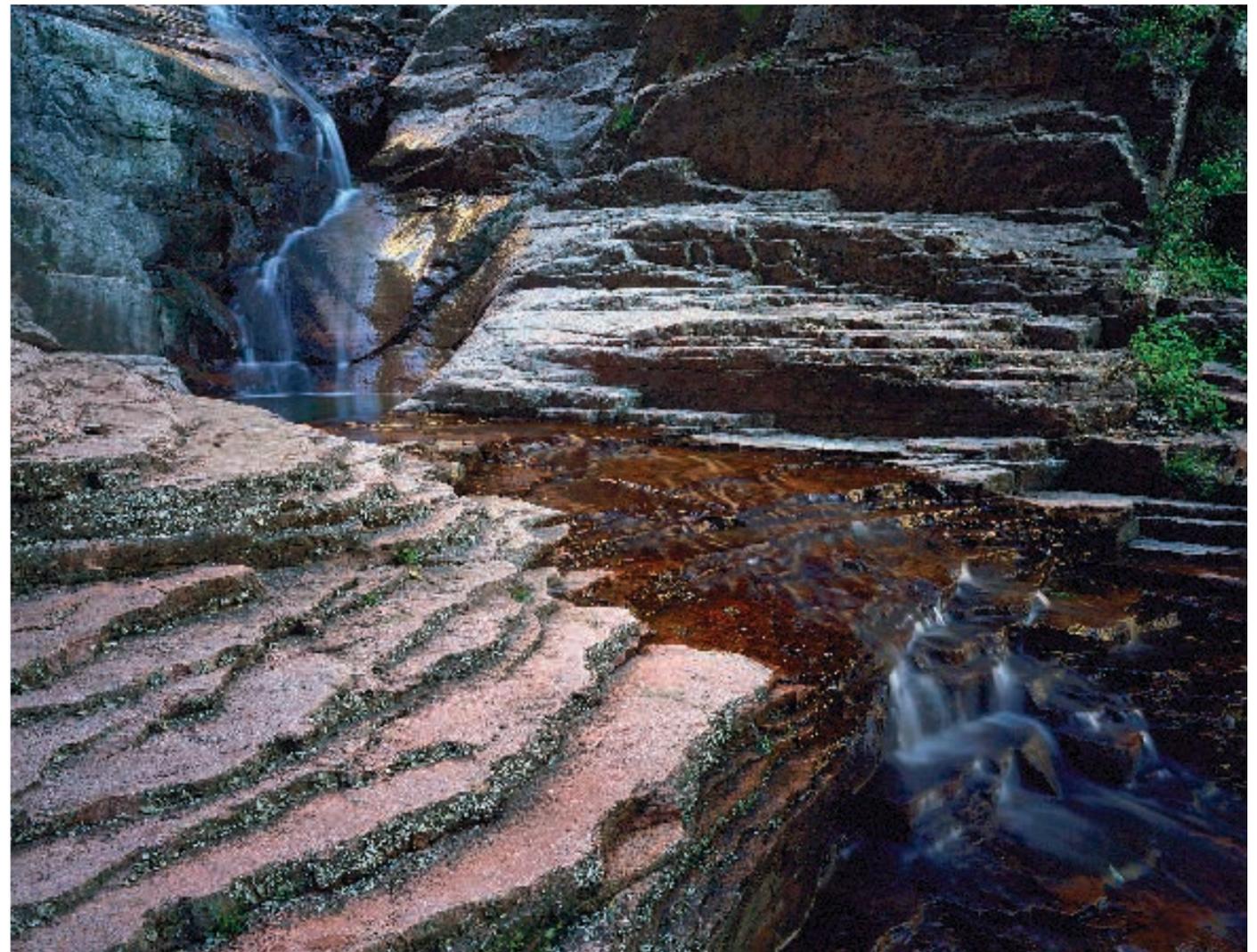
rise sweep down the flat cliff faces, painting them with burnished gold. Like blazing shields, the rectangular cliffs were stacked one upon the other, rising in tiers for 2,500 feet.

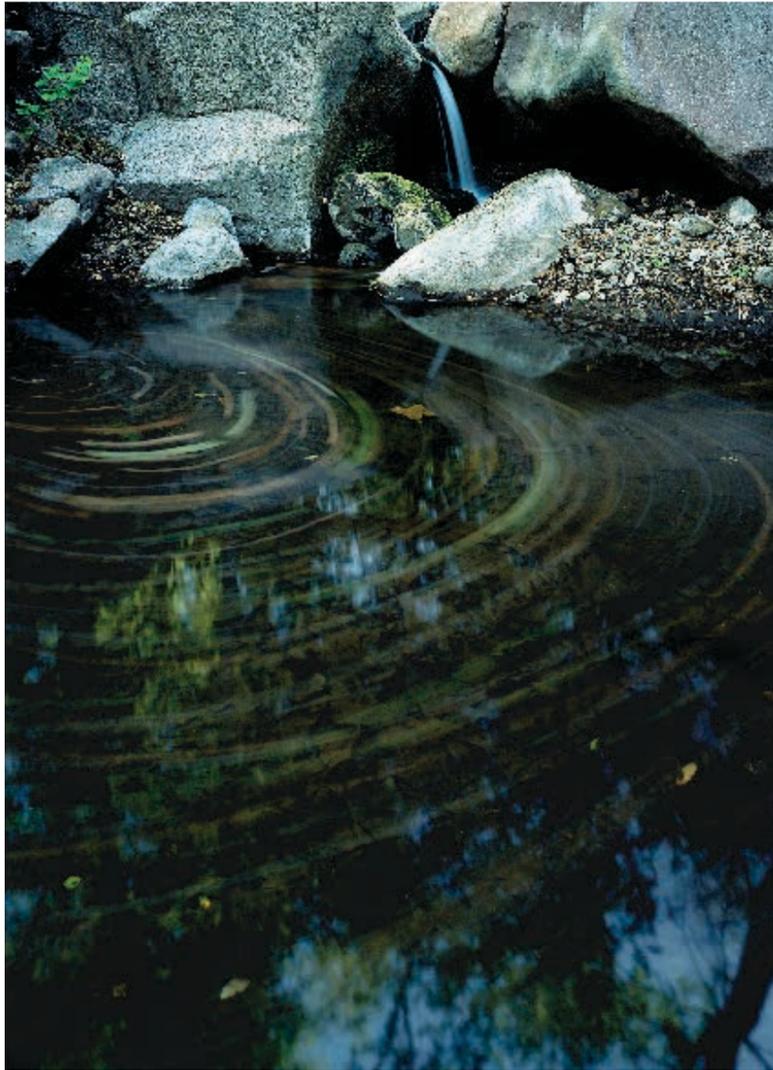
We exchanged surreptitious glances, thinking, "What have we got ourselves into?"

There were three of us. Three outcasts from the world of cities and machines. Each of us felt comfortable in his skin only when in wilderness. Felt centered only in the outdoors. We were here on a quest not only for the special object we'd heard about. We were here to touch the earth and recapture its hidden past, to find meaning in relics of history.

The trail ran beside a free-flowing stream sheltered beneath a canopy of walnut, cottonwood and sycamore trees. When we topped out on a knob above where the two forks of the canyon split, we had a decision to make. We had heard that the spectacular ruin we sought was

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 6 AND 7] Neatly configured along the contours of a cliff face in the Sierra Ancha Wilderness northeast of Phoenix, a cliff dwelling long-abandoned by its Salado Indian inhabitants blends in with the surrounding rock. [OPPOSITE PAGE] An imposing rock tower looms over a slickrock creekbed in Devils Chasm. [BELOW] Cascading over a cliff into a pool, a creek follows its downhill course through the chasm.





[ABOVE] Leaves float on a cascade-fed pool's swirling surface before joining a mass of others that have settled below. [OPPOSITE PAGE] Located on a high, narrow ledge accessible only by a difficult climb, the three-story Salado cliff dwelling was probably used as a defensive structure.

high up on the cliffs, but in which arm of the canyon? Each fork was buttressed with similar ramparts, severe cliff faces alternating with small sloping ledges. Perfect hiding places for fortified dwellings. With binoculars, we searched the ledges for evidence of trails or rock walls, and found nothing. Finally we decided to take the steeper fork.

The canyon pinched in. The trail steepened. We were all huffing and puffing now.

We were going straight up the gut, being taken into the maw of Devils Chasm. Still climbing, the thicket of trees dropped behind us, and we were swallowed up within a narrows. Sheer scalloped rock walls rose up facing each other 50 feet apart. Water skimmed down the stairsteps of the dark quartzite that now made up the streambed. The walls shut out the sun, clamping us in deep shade.

"Neat," said Marie Fritz, smiling her perpetual Mona Lisa smile. "What a cool blue world."

"Yeah," said photographer Jeff Snyder, "and it looks like we got a stopper in front of us."

Ahead stood an imposing 15-foot-high waterfall ledge running from wall to wall of the narrow canyon.

Made of the same hard quartzite, its nearly vertical bevel, impossible to climb, was polished smooth as glass by eons of running water.

There was a 10-foot-high boulder, however, wedged into the corner of the waterfall, and a smaller boulder behind it.

By worming his way into the hole between the boulders and pushing off on the smaller stone, Jeff squirmed onto the larger boulder and from there pulled himself over the ledge. Taking a rope from his pack, he dropped it down to us.

When we all three were up, we saw it was the end of the narrows. Turning around, we noticed a small mountain riding on the horizon. We were high up now, having gained more elevation than we thought.

"That's Sombrero Peak," I said. It would have been a perfect signaling post from which to warn the ruin's inhabitants of attackers.

We continued up the canyon into the stacked cliffs. Sotol, banana yucca and prickly pear grew on the slopes and in the clefts of the rock. In ancient times, the native people who lived in this canyon would have used the yucca and sotol leaves for fiber to make sandals and garments, or would have cooked them and eaten the tender base. And they would have harvested the prickly pear fruit.

The bed of the stream was still solid rock, with ledges and pools. Spikemoss carpeted the ledges in emerald green. Leaves spun in the eddies of the pools, creating whirling sonatas of form.

Marie and I dawdled by the pools, while Jeff, unable to contain his excitement, ran up ahead to scout for the ruin.

This canyon, shut off from the world and a million miles from nowhere, would have had its dispensations as a place to live.

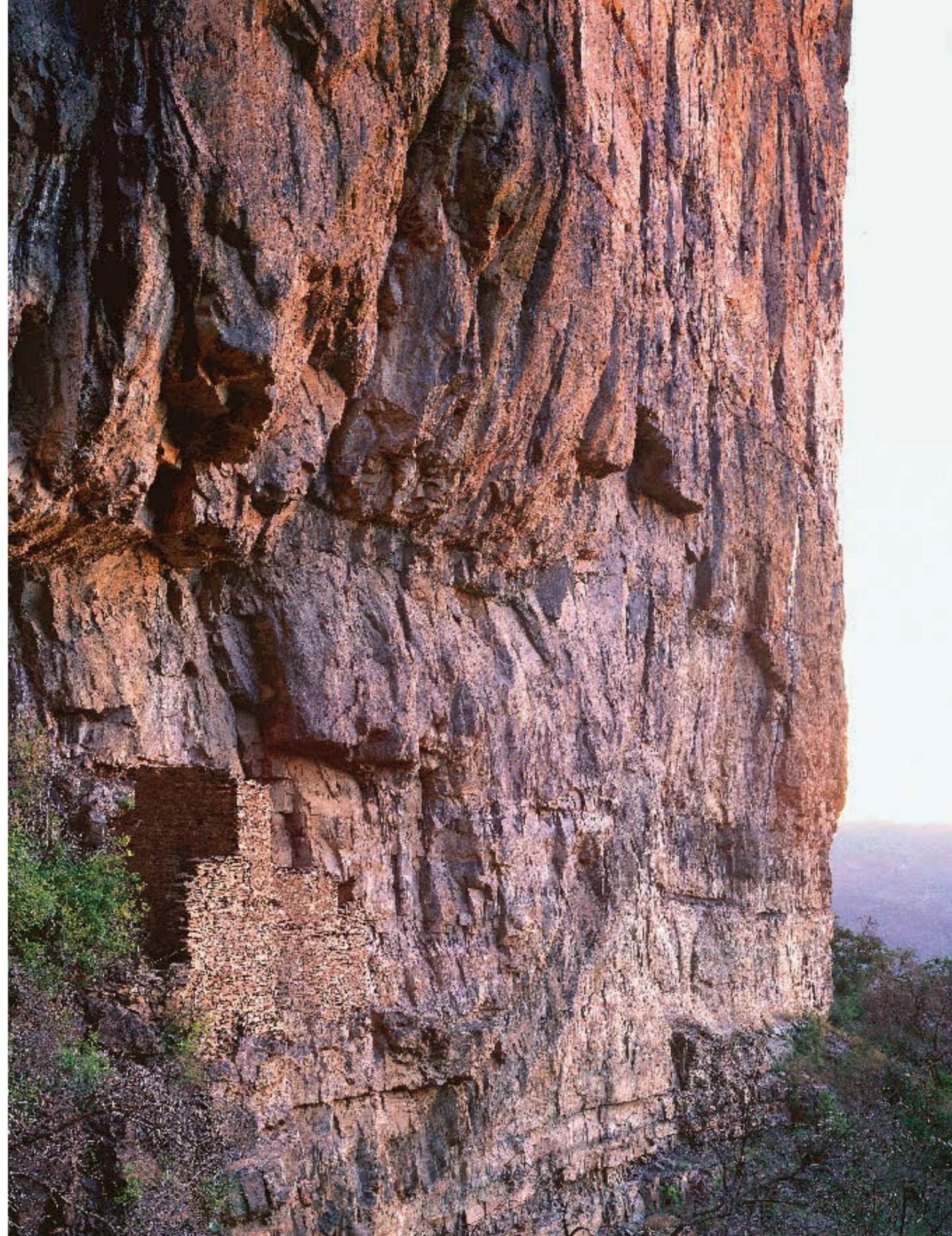
"I found it!" Jeff yelled, returning at a run. "Look up there."

At first it was hard to see, the way it blended with the rock. From the creek, a steep, scrubby slope ran up to the base of a vertical cliff. The cliff was a barren expanse of solid rock flung out into the sky like a gigantic sail.

And then it came into focus for us, the corrugation of rectangular rocks, obviously the work of man, tucked into the intersection of slope and cliff.

It was an impressive ruin. Three stories high and topped by what looked like a square medieval turret. The base of the wall, however, followed the bowed-out contour of the tiny ledge it sat on. By following the curve, its makers had created a harmonious and fluid design, so that the structure became one with the rock. From there it looked bold and compact at the same time—one moment there and then not there.

"Come on," said Jeff. "I think I found a route farther up." He led us to a grove of oak and maple trees at the base of some 200-foot-high freestanding pillars that



YOU DON'T WALL YOURSELF UP THIS HIGH IN A CANYON . . . UNLESS YOU'RE TERRIFIED OF SOMETHING OR SOMEONE.



had eroded away from the cliff rock. The huge, soaring spires twisted up into strange shapes on the opposite side of the canyon to the ruin.

Jeff's "route" was a scramble up a severely angled duff slope of prickly brush. We kept slipping on the soft soil, dislodging whole clumps of earth. We pulled ourselves up by tree roots or by clutching the bases of bushes. Scratched and torn from catclaw and scrub oak, it was an exhausting effort. How would an attacker ever have been able to make it up here with rocks and arrows raining down from the dwelling?

We finally reached it, topping out on a skimpy ledge to its side. After a somewhat hairy traverse, we were at the outer doorway.

Close up it looked smaller. We could now see how neatly the makers had erected a lot of building within a very small space.

Bending down to get into the low doorway, we entered the ruin. The floors and beams of the upper two stories had been burned out, creating a vaulted three-story room. The outer wall was without windows. Unlike the original inhabitants, we could glimpse bits of the canyon below through the holes left by the missing beams.

Another low T-shaped doorway led to a second three-story room, and, beyond it, another one, until we finally exited onto a stamp-sized corner of ledge that dead-ended beneath the soaring cliff.

We retraced our path through the rooms, this time sifting through the fine, centuries-old dust floor for artifacts, although we would not have removed anything from the site. There was a huge mano and metate used for grinding corn, small finger-sized cobs of the corn itself, and a lot of shards of corrugated red plainware from their workaday pots.

While Jeff went exploring below the ruin, Marie and I settled down on some toppled rocks in the demolished outer entryway. With the walls gone, it presented us with a fantastic view of the canyon. We felt like hawks in an aerie.

"How peaceful it is," murmured Marie. "I would have loved living up here."

She ran her hand over the stone wall of the ruin. "Look at how beautiful their rockwork is. Such attention to detail."

It was true. The rock walls were meticulously chinked with tiny flat stones. One could imagine the loving care of the fingers that placed them there more than 700 years ago—and the love of the canyon that anyone living here must have felt.

At the same time, in my own heart of hearts, I knew that the cliff dwelling was a defensive structure. You don't wall yourself up this high in a canyon, 3 miles above the land where you can grow corn, where even the day-to-day routine of fetching water is a backbreaking difficulty, unless you're terrified of something or someone.

Was there violence at Devils Chasm? Archaeologists can't tell for certain. They haven't been able to establish carbon dates for the burning of the ruin. The fire may have been set by pothunters who cleared out the site in the early years of this century.

The community also may have had the same violent end that overtook other cliff dwellings in the Southwest, for which we have plenty of evidence—a spear point in a rib-bone at Walnut Canyon, an arrowhead in a skull at Mesa Verde, chopped off hands and heads at Tonto Basin.

Jeff popped his head up over the rim. "Look what I got," he said, proffering us a potsherd. "Tonto Polychrome. It was in the trash midden below the ruin."

Between A.D. 1150 and 1400, the Salado Indians built a thriving high culture in the river plain on the other side of these mountains. They were known far and wide for the intricate design of their multicolored pottery. Here now was a sample of this exquisite ware.

Scott Wood, an archaeologist for the Tonto National Forest, had told us that sometime before the 1300s, in the throes of a severe and long-lasting drought, warfare and violence changed the cultural landscape of central Arizona. In some places, like the valley below us, people abandoned their ancestral homes along the river to seek refuge in cliff dwellings in the neighboring mountains. These, the ones on the east side of the Sierra Ancha, like Devils Chasm, were among the last occupied cliff dwellings in the Southwest. By 1360, they were either destroyed or deserted, and the people had returned to their old homes, at least for a generation or two before all of the area was abandoned.

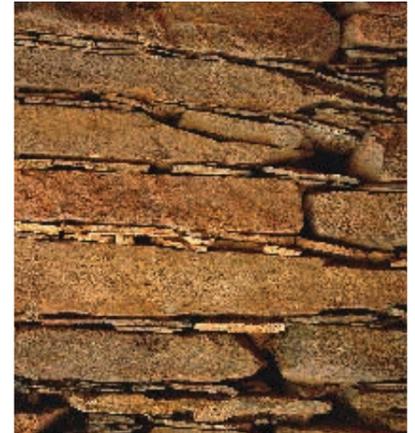
As we passed the potsherd around, we lapsed into awed silence. We knew the hands that fashioned the pot—that gathered the clay, turned it, spent many hours painting an intricate design on it and then fired it—were stilled over seven centuries ago.

And what was the manner of the stilling? Was it a peaceful death after a long, replete life? Or did the end come gruesomely, in sudden violence?

Each of us had a theory. Each of us carried a truth down the mountain. ■■

Nick Berezenko, who studied anthropology at Arizona State University, made sure that the potsherd was returned to the trash midden. He lives in Pine.

Jeff Snyder of Tempe knows well the rigors of Devils Chasm. He had to carry his heavy 4x5 camera gear several times up the steep canyon to photograph this assignment.



[OPPOSITE PAGE] Within the ruin, stone metates (visible in the doorway) once used for grinding grain testify about its former inhabitants. [ABOVE] The ruin's masonry displays great care taken by its builders to seal the spaces between rocks with mud and small flat stones.



LOCATION:
Northeast
of Phoenix
in the Sierra

Ancha Wilderness.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Vehicle requirements: four-wheel drive, high clearance. Refer to the Forest Service map of Tonto National Forest for directions to the site.

WARNING: The Forest Service notes that archaeological sites are protected under the law, and they request that visitors not disturb the Devils Chasm ruin.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Tonto National Forest, Pleasant Valley Ranger District, (928) 462-4300; www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto.



THE FUTILE SEARCH FOR CHARLEY McCOMAS

Did Apaches Raiding From Arizona Kill a 6-year-old Boy?

The Apache conflict in the Southwest had a way of turning life inside out. It made brutality commonplace, made grotesque tragedy as plentiful as grains of sand, and made legends out of 6-year-old boys.

On a lonesome New Mexico stagecoach road on March 28, 1883, Apache Indians from Arizona brutally murdered Judge Hamilton McComas and his wife, Juniata, then snatched their young son, Charley, out of the wagon and rode off with him. No soldier or family member ever saw him again.

But he didn't exactly disappear, according to *Masacre on the Lordsburg Road, A Tragedy of the Apache Wars*, Marc Simmons' 1997 book about the episode from which some of the detail used here originates.

Simmons claims the handsome, yellow-haired boy lived on as a symbol of Apache brutality, a rallying cry for Indian haters and as the subject of countless rumors and newspaper stories in which so-called experts claimed to know his fate.

More than that, Simmons argues that Charley's poignant story might have done as much to shape events in the last years of the Apache Wars as all of Gen. George Crook's soldiers combined.

The McComas family lived in Silver City in southwest New Mexico. Newspapers said Juniata was a "kind

and Christian-hearted lady and possessed a fine intellect," and Hamilton, a former Yankee officer, had been a member of the Illinois State Bar Association. For a brief time, he was a colleague of Abraham Lincoln, according to a McComas family story. He also served as a county judge, a title he kept the remainder of his life.

But Hamilton's primary business in Silver City was mining, and in March 1883, the judge had arranged a business trip to Lordsburg, New Mexico, about 50 miles southwest. He wanted Juniata and Charley to come along to see the countryside.

They left their daughters Ada and Mary behind. Hamilton, considerably older than his wife, also had two grown sons by a previous marriage.

Riding in a wagon, the family set out along the Lordsburg Road on the afternoon of March 27. After 17 miles they stopped for the night at the Mountain Home, a stage stop and inn set among the pines beneath 8,035-foot Burro Peak in New Mexico.

In this idyllic setting, danger must have seemed far away. It wasn't.

Even before leaving Silver City, newspapers had warned that an Apache raiding party from the Mexican Sierra Madre had swept across the border into Arizona.

Upon arriving at the stage stop, Hamilton and Juniata

{ TEXT BY LEO W. BANKS }

[LEFT] This photograph of 6-year-old Charley McComas, who disappeared after Apache raiders murdered his parents in 1883, was printed on cardboard flyers seeking information on his whereabouts.

LEFT: McCOMAS FAMILY PAPERS, COURTESY OF CAROLYN KINME-SMITH

were confronted with more warnings from the wife of the Mountain Home's owner J.M. Dennis. She pleaded with Hamilton to stay put. But headstrong Hamilton would have none of it.

At 9 A.M. the following day, the family waved goodbye to Mrs. Dennis as Hamilton whipped the horses back onto the Lordsburg Road. The judge's bullheadedness in the face of the Apache threat remains as inexplicable today as it was 120 years ago.

The McComases traveled another 10 miles. Obviously feeling safe, they stopped near the mouth of Thompson Canyon to picnic under a walnut tree. In Simmons' account, pieced together from the testimony of those who retrieved the bodies, they had just spread out their food when the Apaches struck.

When the McComases caught sight of the Apaches, they hurried back into the wagon. But the horses had barely reached a run when a bullet hit Hamilton. He jumped down and told Juniata to whip the horses and get away with Charley.

Simmons wrote, "With blood gushing from his body, [McComas] ran back toward the walnut tree, pumping cartridges and firing at their assailants as fast as he could. It was a noble but futile bid to sell his life dearly and hold the Apaches in check long enough for his wife and child to escape."

Hamilton was found dead at the roadside, surrounded by cartridge casings and an empty ammunition box. He'd been hit as many as seven times.

Juniata might have gotten away, but a bullet killed one of the horses pulling the wagon, stopping her progress after 300 yards. When she leaped to the ground and ran to the other side of the buckboard to grab her son, a warrior rode up behind her and smashed her skull with his rifle. He dismounted his horse and delivered two more blows to guarantee death.

One member of the 26-man raiding party, a light-skinned White Mountain Apache nicknamed "Peaches," later defected to the U.S. Army and told Crook the renegades had one goal in mind in leaving their Mexican hideout—to steal ammunition for their rifles.

That explains the warrior's method of execution—he wanted to save bullets. Peaches also said the raiders, led by the ruthless Chato, intended to kill everyone they encountered. They proved efficient, killing 26 settlers over eight days.

As for Charley, a White Mountain Apache named Bonito pulled him from the buckboard and roped the boy to his belt, effectively making him Bonito's property. The raiders stripped both bodies naked, and for unknown reasons, shredded Hamilton's business papers and scattered the pieces across his back.

Eight months of calm preceding Chato's rampage had lulled the Southwest into believing Apache depredations had ended. With the realization they hadn't, the reaction was that much more intense.

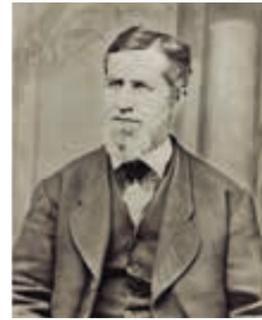
In Silver City, the news drew men into the streets, creating intense excitement. "The indignation of our citizens knew no bounds," reported the *Silver City Enterprise*.

Newspapers on both coasts weighed in, calling Apaches everything from "beasts in human shape" to the "filthiest brutes on the globe." Cries rose to exterminate them, and at least one citizen militia began marching toward the San Carlos Reservation to begin the killing.

Lt. Britton Davis, a soldier and later an author, wrote that one group, the Tombstone Rangers, got liquored up and actually fired on an old Indian gathering mescal, "but fortunately missed."

Wrote Davis, "He fled north and they fled south. That ended the massacre."

In a similarly sarcastic vein, an assistant to Crook—who threatened to arrest citizens heading toward San Carlos—wrote that when



[ABOVE, LEFT] A photo taken at Fort Scott, Kansas, in the early 1870s reveals a youthful Juniata McComas who was 16 years younger than her husband.

[ABOVE, RIGHT] Hamilton C. McComas, nicknamed "The Judge," stood over 6 feet tall and was known as a warm-hearted and faithful friend.

[LEFT] Tzoe, known by whites as Peaches for his fair, rosy complexion, emerged as a key Apache figure in the tragic tale.

the Rangers had finished drinking their whiskey, "the organization expired of thirst."

But 6-year-old Charley drew the most interest. Historian and author of *The Conquest of Apacheria*, Dan L. Thrapp, said the boy became the object of the most prolonged and widespread search in the annals of Apache warfare. John Wright, Hamilton's business partner, led the manhunt, along with Juniata's brother, Eugene Fitch Ware, a well-known poet and a Kansas state senator. Charley's grown stepbrothers, David and William McComas, rushed to the Southwest to help.

Identification cards bearing Charley's picture were distributed along the border and a \$1,000 reward was offered. Two influential publications—Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly*—ran stories along with Charley's picture.

But no one could be certain he was still alive. Reports surfaced that little Charley's terrified wailing so aggravated his captors that they beat his head against rocks to shut him up, killing him.

The Tombstone Republican even reported that his body had been found 6 miles from the massacre scene. "This is a picture for parents to look at, and then imagine he was their darling," the paper raged. But the story, like many others, proved false.

Under some intense public and official pressure, Crook made finding the boy a high priority, and he had reason to believe that Charley was still alive. Early in May 1883, two Apaches surrendered

at San Carlos and reported seeing Charley 11 days before in Chato's camp in the Sierra Madres.

Two weeks later, Crook's men, led into the Mexican mountains by the defector Peaches, attacked the camp, killing nine Indians.

In the battle's aftermath, Bonito's daughter told soldiers her father had the boy, and he was well treated. She said Charley had become frightened at the onset of the shooting and ran off.

A camp search turned up the McComases' jewelry and a family photo album, giving Crook good reason to suspect his informant might be telling the truth. The general also received assurances from Geronimo that he would order a diligent search for Charley.

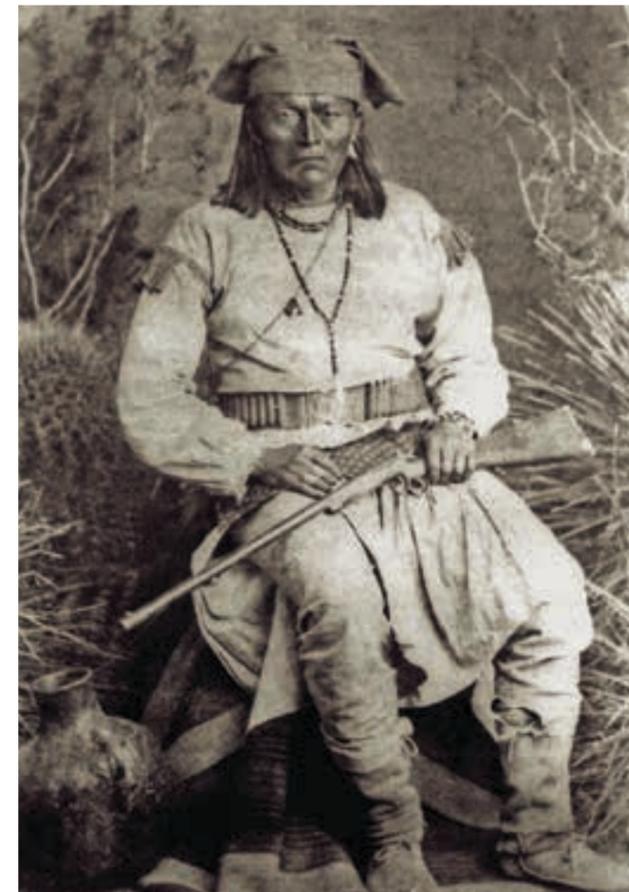
In the following months, groups of Apaches returned to San Carlos to surrender. Each band's arrival brought renewed hope that Charley would be with them. But when Geronimo, the last to come in, reached San Carlos in April 1884, without the boy, most observers, including Crook, concluded he was dead.

Despite that, rumors about Charley's fate became a cottage industry that thrived for decades.

Charles Montgomery, a former courier for Crook writing in the *Arizona Daily Star* in 1899, said that months after the McComas massacre, Chato told him that Charley had been killed less than a mile from the attack site.



[LEFT] Chato and his 26 warriors slipped unnoticed across the border from Mexico on March 21, 1883, and embarked on a violent raid in Arizona and New Mexico, killing settlers and stealing horses in a quest for ammunition. [BELOW] Bonito served as Chato's second-in-command on the ruthless foray.



"He gave me all the details of the murder, but that was too horrible for a white man to repeat," Montgomery wrote.

Chato supposedly told Montgomery where to find the body, and Montgomery claimed he did so, although without saying whether he buried the few bones he found.

In the early 1900s, stories began surfacing that Charley, a blond child, had grown up to become a buckskin-wearing, blue-eyed Apache warrior with red hair known as Red Beard.

Along these same lines, a Norwegian anthropologist, who was hoping to locate a "lost tribe" of fugitive Apaches, claimed that in 1938 he'd met a Mexican who told of finding red hairs, possibly from Charley's head, in a crude comb he'd picked up in one of the Apache camps.

But the most likely explanation of what happened came with the 1959 publication of *I Fought With Geronimo*, the memoirs of Jason Betzinez.

He wrote that the May 1883 attack on Chato's camp left an Apache woman dead and her son, named Speedy, so enraged that, "using rocks, he brutally killed" the white boy.

"The Apaches of this group later told the soldiers that the little boy [Charley] had run off into the brush and was never found," wrote Betzinez, who added that although he wasn't in the camp at the time, Ramona Chihuahua, daughter of Chief Chihuahua, told him of Charley being killed.

"The Indians were protecting one of their own band from possible punishment," Betzinez added, "so they lied [to the soldiers] about what had happened."

Many historians believe this account, although Ramona Chihuahua later said she knew nothing about Charley's killing.

Whatever the actual truth, the McComas episode profoundly affected everyone involved.

Simmons contends that public outrage over the massacre of such a prominent couple, and sympathy for the lost boy, made it palatable for the harsh choice the government made in 1886—shipping the Chiricahua Apaches en masse, including peaceful reservation Indians and former Army scouts, to a prison camp in Florida.

Many Apaches died there. In 1913, the Indians were allowed to return to the Southwest, but only to New Mexico's Mescalero Reservation. Those from Arizona never saw their homeland again.

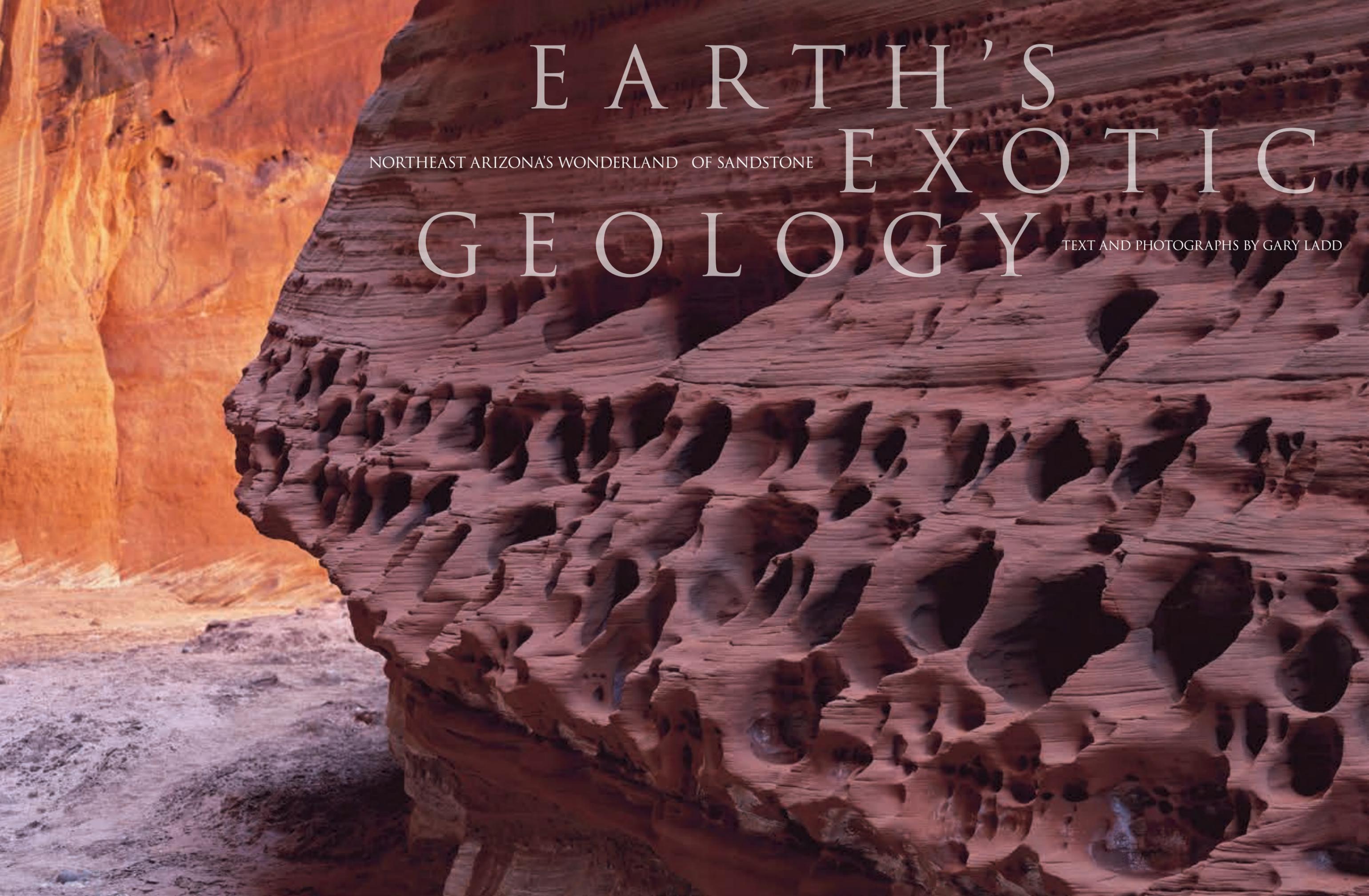
The massacre also caused great personal trauma for the McComas children—including David, a probable suicide at 25. Even New Mexico teen-ager Julius Caesar Brock, unrelated to the family, felt its repercussions. He was hunting on the Lordsburg Road that day and shot a hawk out of the same walnut tree moments before the family stopped to picnic. Brock lived into the 1950s haunted by the belief that his rifle drew the renegades to that place, and to the McComases.

Chato eventually became one of Crook's most valuable scouts, and like every other member of the raiding party, never stood trial for the murders. In his negotiations with the renegades in Mexico, Crook had promised that if they reported to the reservation, he wouldn't hold them accountable for past crimes.

Chato lived his final years on the Mescalero Reservation, where he was shunned by other Apaches as unpleasant and arrogant. He died in 1934 when, perhaps drunk, he drove his Model T Ford over a cliff.

History has no way to determine whether, in the moments before the crash, the mind of the old killer flashed back with remorse to the family he helped destroy, and the innocent boy he made into a legend. ■

Tucson-based Leo W. Banks authored *Double Cross*, about the Apache Wars, published in 2001 by Arizona Highways Books. He also wrote the profile on Harrison Yocum in this issue.



EARTH'S

NORTHEAST ARIZONA'S WONDERLAND OF SANDSTONE

EXOTIC

GEOLOGY

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY LADD

Nearly all of the Earth's landscapes—as if in modesty—are clothed in soil, trees, shrubs and grasses. Hidden beneath this layer of life, however, are the planet's foundations: bones of solid stone.

In much of northern Arizona and southern Utah, the land wears only the sheerest negligees of living matter.

In the labyrinth of canyons surrounding Lake Powell, upon and below the highlands of Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, within the Grand Canyon and across the plateaus of the Navajo Indian Reservation, rocks of diverse histories lie naked and exposed. Some of these were ejected from volcanic cinder cones, some are embedded with fossils, some are inscribed with subtle stories hidden within their chemistries and others were fractured by ancient tectonic collisions.

All belong to one of three basic rock types—sedimentary, deposited particle by particle; igneous, solidified molten rock; and metamorphic, subjected to intense heat and pressure. In the canyons and plateaus, each one of these types lies open to inspection by any curious and observant creature.

Among the varieties of undisguised rock, one possesses, even to the untrained eye, universal appeal: the Eolian sandstones, sand transported and deposited by wind—rather than water—then fused into stone.

Ancient weather patterns released the sand from mountains. Shifting winds piled the sand high into towering dunes. Over time, the dunes hardened into stone. Then, far more recently, erosion uncovered, sculpted and elaborated on the patterns locked within: curves and convolutions, sweeps of bedding planes and spiraling whorls, pockets and domes, hollows and fins—visual symphonies of swirling stone.

Welcome to the land of wind-borne and wind-sculpted sandstone. Welcome to a wonderland of stone.



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 18 AND 19] Floodwaters charging through the confines of Paria Canyon helped to create sculpted carvings in the sandstone walls of the narrow gorge west of Page. [LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM] Laid bare, sculpted and polished by the Colorado River, the Vishnu Schist is some of the oldest rock on the planet. Midday sun highlights the colorful design of a layered sandstone wall. Barrel cacti find rugged purchase along a columnar basalt cliff on the Colorado River at Mile 187. [RIGHT] Fractured sandstone forms a rocky concourse below Dominguez Butte near Lake Powell's Padre Bay. To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.





E X O T I C

[LEFT] Delicate sandstone fins protrude from a wind-sculpted cliff face above a mountain mahogany bush in the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.
[ABOVE] Weathering produces wild patterns of polygonal jointing in a sandstone dome towering above a lone piñon pine tree.







[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 24 AND 25] Exposed by the elements, intricate sandstone crossbedding sweeps across a northern Arizona landscape.

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 26 AND 27] In the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, dunes swirl at the base of an up-tilted sandstone shelf.

[LEFT] Hikers provide human scale at the notched summit of a striated cliff along the Arizona-Utah border.

[ABOVE] The Paria River rushes through the Paria Canyon narrows upstream from the mouth of Buckskin Gulch.

**ARIZONA HIGHWAYS
PHOTO WORKSHOPS**

Gary Ladd's photography of Lake Powell and other northern Arizona landmarks is without peer. In November, he will lead a five-day photo workshop on the lake and to the surrounding "unbelievably beautiful" geology of slick rocks and slot canyons. For details and prices, call toll-free (888) 790-7042, or see friendsofhighways.com.

Solid as a Rock

Harrison Yocum, founder of Tucson Botanical Gardens, is a master of minerals and plants



text by Leo W. Banks photographs by Edward McCain

Walk into Harrison Yocum's back yard and you enter an eccentric's playground. You half expect to see Johnny Weissmuller swinging from a vine, with a film director nearby, pith helmet at a rakish angle, shooting a jungle epic.

But don't mistake this location for a movie set. Instead of Hollywood you get Harrison, silver-haired, slightly built, always smiling, his words jumping and colliding in an excited avalanche of details about his half-acre kingdom in midtown Tucson.

"Over here is my petrified forest," says the 82-year-old horticulturist and founder of Tucson Botanical Gardens, which is about 2 miles west of his house. "And over here is my mountain range. Let me show you the mountain range I built."

There it is, an honest-to-goodness miniature mountain range, constructed of rocks and minerals of all kinds, from quartz and calcite to marble and turquoise, colorful as all get out, collected from a mine or mineral field in Arizona.

White quartz decorates several of the 20-foot-high peaks, including one he dubbed "hernia mountain" because, well, it gave him one. He hauled each of these rocks to his back yard in buckets, and stacked them to their current height. He began in 1962 and didn't finish until the late 1970s.

This gets better. He did it after having a dream in which voices told him to build a mountain. It sounds strange, except when Yocum tells it. He puts so much charm and sincerity into it you nod at how downright logical it seems.

"I did it so people could see the beauty of Arizona and its minerals," says the botanist, horticulturist and longtime teacher. "Ever since I came here, I've tried to educate people about Arizona. But you have to get off the highways. You have to go onto dirt roads."

Yocum grew up in Pennsylvania, the son of German parents. After getting degrees from The Pennsylvania State and Rutgers universities, and a stop in El Paso, where he caught the rockhounding bug, he moved to Tucson in 1960.

Four years later, he founded the Botanical Gardens, which made its first headquarters at his home. The organization moved to a midtown park in 1971.

For more than 40 years, he has hoofed over every corner of Arizona to find interesting mineral specimens. He has 900 of them cataloged and stored on shelves and in glass cases.

Also he has collected—and planted in his yard—a horticulturist's dream of exotic plants and trees from around the world.

Walk with him along twisting dirt paths outside his back door and lose yourself amid exotic trees and plants, such as boojum trees from Baja, California, and a pachypodium tree from Madagascar.

Stacks of colorful rocks, such as green malachite and blue azurite from the Morenci copper mines, decorate the edge of the pathway.

Samples of petrified rock collected from Holbrook form ornamental temples piled one on top of another.

"We had a field trip out there, and the enormity of it is what strikes people," says Lynn Kaufman, education director at Tucson Botanical Gardens. "It's really mind-boggling that one person did all this."



[OPPOSITE PAGE] Malachite (copper ore) held aloft, Harrison Yocum delights in the eclectic piles of rocks comprising his home's "mountain range."

[ABOVE] A frequent host to tour groups and friends, Yocum guides Diane Braswell (center) and Donna Pugh along his garden paths.

[LEFT] In his spacious library containing more than 4,000 volumes of botanical illustration, horticulture and gardening, Yocum leafs through *The Herball, or General Historie of Plantes* by John Gerarde, printed in 1636.



LOCATION:

1628 N. Jefferson Ave., Tucson.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

(520) 298-0930.

Yocum can't say how many plants and trees he has, but guesses at between 300 and 500. This includes a 200-square-foot greenhouse, where he plays classical music to keep his plants healthy.

They seem to like Johann Strauss. "Good for my soul, too," says Yocum. His botanical library numbers more than 4,000 volumes, some going back to the 1600s.

And the public is welcome. Yocum figures—between retirees, school groups and tourists—he has 100 or more guests a month.

He doesn't charge for tours, and every visitor gets a free geode—a hollowed out volcanic rock with sparkling calcite inside.

"I love to meet people," says the lifelong bachelor who has taught rockhounding at Pima Community College for 28 years.

You can bet students get their money's worth in his classes. Yocum encourages them to buy a big bag of marbles, and each time they pick up a rock in the field, leave a marble behind.

He says "When you've lost all your marbles, you're a rock hound."

Oh, and he speaks German, plays the piano and has written 194 waltzes and polkas, has every *National Geographic* magazine back to 1950, and before he retired as superintendent of landscaping at the Tucson International Airport, he ate an ice-cream sundae and a banana at precisely 3 P.M. every day.

But he quit the sundaes. And he hasn't written a polka in more than a year. Managing his kingdom takes too much time.

A sign hangs on the shed behind Yocum's house: "Old rock hounds never die, they just slowly petrify."

Not likely. ■■

Leo W. Banks also wrote the Charley McComas story in this issue. Edward McCain of Tucson enjoyed exploring Yocum's gardens and library.

The Voracious Mediterranean

This helpful little bug-lover
feasts on roaches, crickets
and black widows

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIM WISMANN



conserve heat; Arizona's climate provides enough of that.

Hatching in about six weeks, the baby lizards seem impossibly fragile, but they have an ace up their sleeve. They can survive without food or water for up to 30 days after hatching—a talent that serves them well when adapting to new environments. The eggs may travel around the world on freight and hatch thousands of miles from where they were laid.

Young Mediterranean geckos are so tiny—barely an inch long—that light shines right through them. If you look closely at a baby Med gecko from the right angle, you can see its heart beating.

Med geckos like heat, dry weather and plenty of bugs. From the lizard's point of view, the Phoenix area is a posh resort—like a gecko Club Med. Urban environments discourage predators that compete for insects and might include the geckos on their menu. Regularly watered lawns and plenty of fresh leaf litter support strong populations of crickets and other insects that adapt well to urbanization—like roaches.

None of our pest roaches are native to North America. Like Med geckos, they're hitchhikers, traveling with us in our household possessions, and they also like heat, crevices and well-watered yards. In turn, the Phoenix area's roaches and crickets support fat, healthy populations of big, healthy black widow spiders. Collectively, the whole urban bug presence forms a gecko smorgas-

bord that, for most homeowners, ranges from the annoying to the horrible.

To the Med geckos, dinner is served. Few predators will attack a black widow in its web, but the spiders are vulnerable when very young and wandering in search of a place to settle down. The lizards feed voraciously on juvenile roaches and black widows, and on crickets of all ages.

As the geckos colonize neighborhoods, residents often notice declines in the numbers of crickets, roaches and black widows. Lately, I find that I'm unable to locate black widows where they were previously common, and other naturalists report similar observations.

Best of all, Mediterranean geckos don't seem to have an adverse effect on our ecology. Before they arrived, Arizona's cities had no nocturnal climbing lizards. Unlike other introduced species such as starlings and bullfrogs, Med geckos confine themselves to urban areas and don't displace native wildlife.

The geckos do get into houses and sometimes leave small dry droppings stuck to walls, but the tiny critters are kind of cute and they eat things we generally dislike and can't control otherwise. Besides, they can be pretty good company in the shower. **AH**

Kim Wismann of Apache Junction has been fascinated with nature all his life and has always favored those creatures that he admits may be an acquired interest for most people.

During a recent shower, my wife noticed something odd about her loofah sponge. It was looking back at her.

Closer inspection revealed that the tiny eyes on the sponge belonged to a Mediterranean gecko that was resting there, its color and texture blending with its perch. It so happens that she likes wildlife and thought the event was fun. Surprising, but fun.

Native to the Mediterranean region, Med geckos, as they are called, have hitchhiked to all the world's warmer cities among crates, pallets and other freight. It's estimated that they first arrived in Phoenix in the early 1970s and are now reported in Yuma and Tucson as well.

Adult Med geckos are about 3 inches long, covered with very small, soft bumps, and are usually dusky brown in color. While they cannot change color like a chameleon, they can become so pale as to seem pinkish, especially at night. Color shifts like this are thought to relate to the lizard's temperature, rather than an attempt at camouflage.

Med geckos are uniformly colored or lightly mottled, in contrast to our native banded gecko, which has dark bands on a pale yellow background. About the same size as the Med gecko, the banded gecko lacks toe pads and does not climb very well.

Their traveling talents were demonstrated again to my spouse, who seems to attract geckos. Our cat brought one into

the house for a midnight snack, but must have dropped it, distracted when the lizard shed its tail. The shed tail has special nerves and muscles that keep it twitching to divert predators while the gecko makes its escape. We found the tail on the carpet the next morning.

A few days later, while my wife was searching through her shoulder bag at work, a tailless Med gecko jumped out and landed on her. This was another surprise, but somehow less fun than the baby gecko in the shower. The lizard dashed behind a filing cabinet in her office and has now joined the substantial population of Med geckos living protected lives in hiding. Med geckos lucky enough to avoid enemies may live more than five years.

Female Med geckos lay several hard-shelled eggs per year, two at a time, any place that offers concealment and warmth. Before they are laid, the eggs are visible through the translucent skin on the female's underside.

Freshly deposited eggs, about the size of pearls, are sticky and can be glued to a smooth surface, like the underside of a roof tile. One homeowner who found Med gecko eggs thought they might be hummingbird eggs. Soon after being laid, the eggshells harden, and they do resemble tiny bird eggs. Before she leaves them, the mother gecko piles leaf chips, feathers and other items around and over the eggs. Mediterranean geckos are the only geckos known to do this. The "nests" are for concealment, not to

[ABOVE] Almost exclusively nocturnal, the insect-eating Mediterranean gecko will stake out a favored territory around porch lights or other illuminated areas in urban environments.



≡ ALPINE to Petrified Forest ≡

Visitors to east-central Arizona enjoy small-town hospitality

Text by JEB J. ROSEBROOK
Photographs by TERENCE MOORE

THERE'S A WONDERFUL STORY behind that picture," explains Janie Henson, manager of the Rode Inn Lodge in Springerville, pointing to a large photograph of actor John Wayne on the lobby wall. Wayne, who owned a ranch nearby, is pictured riding a beautiful horse in the Springerville Rodeo Parade.

"The horse he's riding was owned by a woman with a lot of kids. He was always after her to sell that horse to him. She would not sell. One day she's out washing clothes for all those kids of hers and, not long after, she asks the Duke if he still wants to buy her horse. He does. You know what she did with the money? That's right, she bought herself a washing machine."

Springerville residents fondly remember

the Duke as their neighbor. As an actor, he fought many silver-screen battles with the Indians. Today the Hopi Indian Tribe owns Wayne's former 26 Bar Ranch, located off State Route 260 in Eagar, and operates the property as a bed and breakfast.

Sometime between the ancient Mogollon Indians and John Wayne came Coronado and the Apaches, then outlaws and pioneers, cowboys and merchants. They settled along the Mogollon Rim, from the New Mexico border across east-central Arizona. Today visitors travel the region along U.S. Route 191 and U.S. Route 180.

The journey of approximately 145 miles from Alpine to the southern entrance of the Petrified Forest National Park is one that transports travelers to the beginning

of time. The trip allows them to walk the ground of ancient native people, sample some of Arizona's finest outdoor recreation and experience a small-town Arizona that is as contemporary as it is hospitable.

Alpine, a town of approximately 600 full-time residents, is situated in lush Bush Valley, at an elevation of 8,010 feet. The surrounding forested countryside, with its lakes and the San Francisco River, offers plentiful year-round recreation, including

[ABOVE] Colorful signage captures the flavor of rural mountain communities along the route from Alpine to the southern entrance of Petrified Forest National Park.
[RIGHT] Polished to perfection, David McQuay's 1928 Ford delivery sedan gleams in front of the American Legion building in St. Johns.





hiking, fishing, hunting and cross-country skiing.

On any sunny day, country-Western music can be heard from the friendly Bear Wallow Cafe. Across the street, Alpine Country Store fills travelers' recreational needs. Appetites are welcomed at the High Country Restaurant and Buffet, and the Lollipop Shoppe awaits anyone with a sweet tooth.

The Alpine Inn is "just like an old farmhouse," says Dick Seehusen, who owns the bed and breakfast with his wife, Sue. The transplanted Coloradoans built the structure four years ago. With three upstairs bedroom suites as well as an eclectic gift shop, the inn attracts visitors from all over the United States and Europe—"especially the British, Germans and Swiss," he says. On some early mornings, elk graze in the inn's back yard.

The Seehusens are typical of those who involve themselves in the spirit of their community. The couple created the popular annual CASI (Chili Appreciation Society International) Alpine Chili Cook-Off, held at the rodeo grounds every third Saturday in August, with proceeds going to the local school and fire department.

"We even have a Spam cook-off," Dick says. "Imagine Spam marinated with a raspberry liquor!" Their enthusiasm for Alpine speaks for many who live in and visit the mountain town. "We love it here. The climate. The ruralness."

On just about any day, as the sun traverses the horizon, the 33-mile drive on U.S. 191 from Alpine to Springerville can be a lonely one. Traffic is often minimal on

the well-maintained two-lane highway.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests rise on either side of the highway, crowned by 10,912-foot Escudilla Mountain. Each fall, Escudilla becomes golden as the aspens turn.

Soon one of the largest contiguous stands of ponderosa pine trees in the world is left behind. Springerville, "Gateway to the White Mountains," an idyllic mountain community of 2,000, comes



into view where 191 meets U.S. Route 60.

Located in an area known as Round Valley, once a notorious safe haven for outlaws and horse thieves, Springerville was



[OPPOSITE PAGE] Built as a grocery store in the 1930s, Nutrioso's post office serves the town's population.

[ABOVE] One of 12 identical statues commissioned by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and placed along the route of the National Old Trails Road, the Madonna of the Trail in Springerville represents the intrepid spirit of pioneer women.

[ABOVE, LEFT] U.S. routes 180 and 191 snake northwestward through the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests on the way from Alpine to Springerville. [LEFT] Purple metal patio chairs invite passersby to "come and set a spell" on a summer day in Alpine.

[BELOW, LEFT] Volcanic rock walls define the perimeter of the Great Kiva at Casa Malpais, a National Historic Landmark Site in Springerville inhabited by ancient Puebloan people from about A.D. 1240 to 1400.



named for enterprising Albuquerque merchant Harry Springer. Arriving in the area in 1875, he made the mistake of trusting outlaws with feed and seed, and promptly went broke.

While Springer became a footnote in history, the town named after him honors the women of the pioneer West. The magnificent 18-foot Madonna of the Trail monument, dedicated in 1928, stands as one of 12 identical monuments erected along the National Old Trails Road from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles. Flowers bloom at the base of the statue of a pioneer mother holding an infant in her arms and a young son at her side. The statue once stood alone facing the highway. Today, in a 21st-century irony, she shares space with

one of America's most popular fast food franchises.

A contemporary Springerville pioneer woman, Barbara Gerres, manages and enthusiastically champions the future of one of America's archaeological treasures, Casa Malpais ("House of the Badlands").

Located in Springerville and owned by the town, the 16-acre pueblo complex was once home to one of the largest and most complex ancient Mogollon communities in the Southwest. While overseeing a museum and gift shop on Main Street, Gerres and her staff offer three guided tours a day, attracting about 5,000 visitors a year.

Alice VanLunen, a retired schoolteacher, is one of Casa Malpais' knowledgeable guides. "You are now standing on a portion of the prehistoric trail," she says, quickly transporting visitors back in time to the years A.D. 1240 to 1450. "It goes down toward the valley and up to the pueblo area." She paints word pictures to reinforce a time and place so long ago. Pointing to a wall, she explains, "This unrestored portion of the wall has stood for about 600 years. Corncocks found on the site were dated at

1380 to 1410. Beams and wood yielded tree rings dated 1260 to 1284."

For the next 90 minutes, VanLunen describes the lives of the 300 to 600 people who once lived here. As she interprets the many petroglyphs and pictographs, she leads the climb up a spiral stone stairway to look out over the valley below where squash, corn and beans were planted, raised and harvested by these early Puebloan people.

And yet, for Casa Malpais as for so many other ancient sites in Arizona, there is the mystery—what happened to these people? Why did they vanish? Drought? Disease? Archaeologists speculate there may be 3 acres of underground rooms and passageways on the site.

A 30-year resident of Springerville, Gerres is very proud of the town and its commitment to Casa Malpais. Above all, she loves "the friendly people, four seasons and a small-town atmosphere."

Outside Springerville, 191, joined by U.S. 180, travels 29 miles northward to St. Johns, passing Lyman Lake State Park. The 1,200-acre park is open 365 days a year, offering camping opportunities from cabins to yurts to RV hookups and nonhookup sites.

The 1,500-acre lake has no size restrictions for boats, and has an area set apart for anglers only. For visitors who find an interest in the

vanished Mogollon people at Casa Malpais, the park offers more evidence of 14th-century dwelling sites as well as two well-marked petroglyph trails.

Busy traffic north on Interstate 40 allows St. Johns, county seat of Apache County, to be much as it always has been—a quiet town with great pride in itself, as evidenced by the Apache County Museum, sponsored by the Apache County Historical Society. The museum has created many exhibits that complete the history of the area from dinosaurs to the influence of native cultures, from the ancient Puebloans, Hopis and Navajos to the area's earliest Anglo settlers. Guided tours are available upon request.

David McQuay, a retired metal worker originally from Ohio, would not live anywhere else. McQuay spends his time restoring vintage automobiles, including a 1928 preproduction Ford sedan delivery truck. "So far as I know," he says with pride, "it's the only one of its kind left in the world." Looking down a quiet, tree-lined street, he sums up life in St. Johns: "I love the four seasons here. Around here, a real traffic tie-up is three cars in the same intersection."

Vintage car and truck enthusiasts will want to stop at Ferris' Automotive, just east on 191. If asked, the owner might allow a visitor to travel back in time across the acres of cars and trucks, in various states of repair, collected for more than a quarter of a century.

To the west, U.S. 180 meets the south entrance to Petrified Forest National Park. Here, where there is no shortage of people or automobiles, one feels a world away from Alpine, Springerville and tiny St. Johns. Visitors to the park number approximately 80,000 annually and come from around the world to view two scenic wonders.

In the Rainbow Forest Museum at the south entrance, a German visitor is asking a ranger where he can find "a place with the best light" for his photography. Families with children study dioramas depicting crocodilelike reptiles that roamed the long-ago flood plain which formed the Petrified Forest, while outside, a 27-mile adventure on the park's two-lane highway reveals a stunning landscape shaped 225 million years ago.

Across the 96,533 acres of the park, most visitors will find among each other what Arizonans take for granted—space when you want it and friendly conversation when stranger meets stranger.

From daybreak until sunset, the park offers many viewing points and trail walks



Visitors to Petrified Forest National Park can enjoy vistas of the Painted Desert (above) and close-up views of petrified logs (far left) from points along 28-mile-long Park Road (left).



[TOP] Born and raised on a ranch in St. Johns, Ferris Jolley collects and refurbishes old cars and trucks such as his 1951 Chevrolet pickup.

[ABOVE] In 1914 Edward Becker acquired a license to sell Ford vehicles in this building, which today houses Fullers' White Mountain Motors, one of the oldest continuously operating Ford dealerships west of the Mississippi River. [ABOVE, RIGHT, AND RIGHT] Built in 1915, the El Rio Theatre, one of 52 stops on a driving tour of Round Valley, still uses its 1950s popcorn machine.



with aptly descriptive names such as the Agate House, Crystal Forest, Agate Bridge, Jasper Forest, Blue Mesa, The Tepees, Newspaper Rock, Puerco Ruin, Lacey, Whipple, Nizhoni, Pintado, Chinde, Kachina and Tiponi Points.

"Solitude," a young couple from Illinois tells others, as they climb out of the Painted Desert after a night camping under the stars, "a lot of solitude."

Combining this solitude with hospitality must have been what entrepreneur Herbert David Lore had in mind when he built his inn between Kachina and Tawa Points.

Completed around 1919, the Stone Tree House opened as a tourist attraction. The

Painted Desert Inn, as it was called after Lore sold it to the National Park Service, is under renovation (and expected to be closed to the public through October) to retain and improve its unique style and design, originated first by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and then, guided by the influence of architect Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter and Hopi artist Fred Kabotie, the Fred Harvey Co. in the 1940s. The building continued as a park fixture until structural damage forced its closure in 1963.

The inn faced demolition in 1975, but the Park Service reopened it for the U.S. bicentennial. In October 2004, it closed for total

renovation, scheduled to take about a year.

A couple from southern California look out upon the brilliant early morning colors of the Painted Desert, colors chased in shadows by the clouds above. "We saved and saved for 24 years to take our trip," the husband tells others sharing the view. "We have traveled the country for 45 days. The whole country is so beautiful, if you have the time."

That holds true for a journey on 191 and 180. Just take your time. ■■

Jeb J. Rosebrook of Scottsdale has written for television and films, and also is a novelist. Terrence Moore of Tucson found the slow drive up U.S. Route 191 a nice break from his big city life.

The 'Flute Bird' Reveals Its True Beauty in the Rincon Mountains

“YOU?” I ASKED, as I stared in disbelief at the plain-looking chubby brown bird perched above my head. Could the mystery be solved after all these years? I felt a surge of joy mixed with a twinge of dismay. Is this the exotic creature I had sought so long—the elusive “flute bird?”

Over the years, I've heard an enchanting sound echoing through the coniferous forests of southeastern Arizona's “sky islands.” Pure, flutelike tones spiraling down the scale, achingly romantic, alluring, lonely, always coming from somewhere just out of sight. How often my husband and I have tiptoed silently among the trees—even crawled on hands and knees through pine needles and ferns—hoping to catch a glimpse.

Being inexperienced birders, we were never able to see or identify the songster and, with time, the flute bird, as we called it, became ever more exotic in my mind.

Like Kokopelli, the mysterious flute player of the ancient Puebloan culture, whose image appears on rocks and canyon walls throughout northern Arizona and southern Utah, this avian Kokopelli was an enigma.

I had long ago given up the hope of ever actually seeing the bird, and I amused myself by fantasizing about what a bird with such a beautiful voice would look like. In my mind's eye, the mysterious singer was an impossibly lovely thing—graceful and fragile, a jewel-like ghost bird with iridescent colors and a long floating tail. Perhaps it would have an elegant plume on the top of its head. Of course, I had searched my field guides and knew that no such creature existed.

It was 1996 and I was in the Rincon Mountains, a wilderness of remote deep canyons and rocky ridges east of Tucson. With horses and a pack mule, some friends and I had just completed a grueling 4,000-foot climb from the Saguaro National Park boundary to Manning Camp, following a segment of the soon-to-be-completed statewide Arizona Trail. We were researching the area in preparation for publishing the first hiking and equestrian trail guide for the Arizona Trail.

The long-distance trail, which is still under

construction in some parts of the state, extends from the U.S. and Mexico border to the Utah border, some 790 miles later. Our trip began in the simmering rocks and cacti of the Sonoran Desert and ended in the cool conifer forest on top of the mountain.

We launched from the Turkey Creek trailhead on the eastern side of the Rincons. The route is very steep, and we rested at Mud Hole Spring, a precipitous 1,500 feet above where we began the trek. The higher we climbed, the cooler it became, as desert chaparral blended into oaks and pines.

We stopped again at Deer Head Spring, 6.2 miles above the trailhead at an elevation of 7,160 feet. Shaded by ponderosa pine trees, the spring was an ideal habitat for higher-elevation bird-watching, but I never thought of the flute bird. My thoughts were with the trail before us—still another 2.5 miles and 900 feet in elevation to our destination. Nearing the top, we rode through the pine forest and aspen-rimmed meadows.

At the end of our climb, the historic log cabin and shady campground at Manning Camp were a welcome sight. The cabin, which dates back to 1905, is still used as headquarters for the campground and as a backcountry fire crew station.

After our camp was set up and the animals had been cared for, I wandered over to the inviting little creek behind Manning Camp to enjoy the sound of water as it bubbled over the rocks and splashed down a series of small waterfalls. And then, unexpectedly in this serene and lovely place, with no fanfare whatsoever, a plain brown, robin-shaped bird with a spotted breast landed within 20 inches of my head, looked me in the eye and sang its thrilling song.

With a birding guide, I easily identified it as a hermit thrush, considered by many birders to have the most beautiful song in America. One guide describes the song as “ethereal and flutelike,” while another describes the eloquence of its song, “Beginning with a long, mellow note, it proceeds with a clear series of flutelike notes that ascend and descend the scale. These phrases are repeated, each time beginning with a different pitch.” It's no wonder that the hermit thrush has been honored by so many with the title of “best songbird.”

Birds, I think, are really not so different from us. A plain outside can hide a gloriously beautiful inside. And when it comes to bird songs, anyone who has ever heard a peacock try to sing can tell you this—you can't judge a bird by its cover. ■



Gary Ladd



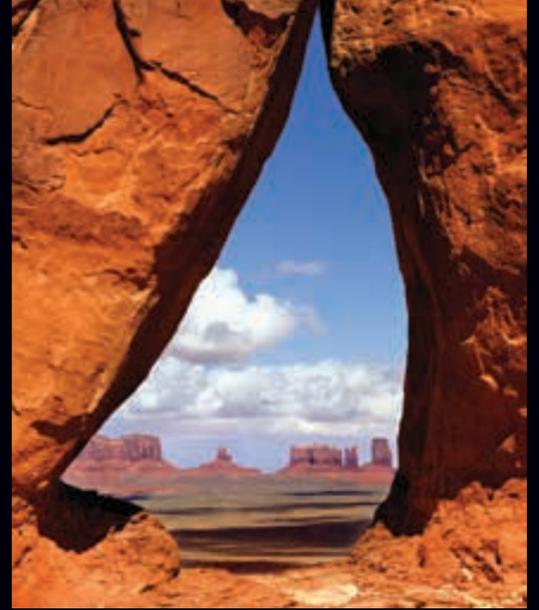
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Drive the Blue Range Primitive Area for Wildlife Sightings

I WAS DETERMINED TO wow my daughter-in-law Karen, a lovely Australian girl new to the Northern Hemisphere. I had been trying to come up with something to impress her ever since my journey to Australia for her wedding to my son, where I had marveled at wombats, kangaroos and parrots.

So I resolved to take her on the far-eastern Arizona journey from Alpine to the fitful Blue

River through country so remote it's the place where biologists have reintroduced the Mexican gray wolf into the wild.

How could I miss? Alpine remains one of Arizona's largely undiscovered treasures, a tiny town nestled in the White Mountains. Graced with pine and fir trees and trout streams, Alpine seems filched from the high peaks of the Rocky Mountains.

I've lulled away summers there, watching elk chomp across meadows every evening. Karen had seen a picture of an elk somewhere and set her heart on seeing one in the wild. Elk are the kangaroos of Arizona—thrilling for a foreigner but not so unusual for a native. At least she didn't have her heart set on something hard to find.

Like a wolf.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been struggling since 1998 to establish wolf packs in the Blue Range Primitive Area. Government trappers and hunters and ranchers exterminated the Mexican gray wolf in the region nearly a century ago, but now several introduced packs have gained a tenuous toehold. Several years ago, I heard the yearning call of a wolf in the dark trees near Alpine. The sound has clung to me ever since, like the memory of first love. But I knew that today we had little chance of hearing that call, much less catching a glimpse of a wolf.

We set off from Alpine on the 35-mile quest for elk and turned right (south) on the Blue River Road (Forest Road 281/Apache County Route 2104) just before the turnoff to Luna Lake on the outskirts of Alpine. The road turned quickly to a good gravel and dirt surface, suitable for any high-clearance vehicle.

We wound through the snow-chilled forest

and started down the steep series of switchbacks toward the river, enjoying the striking vistas into the Blue River canyon.

After about 8 miles, we reached the Blue River, really just an ambitious stream meandering through a multicolored jumble of ancient lava and ash mixed with sandstone and pastel river cobbles. I pulled over on a bend overlooking the river, when I spotted a beaver pond, nearly frozen.

Beavers once dominated riparian areas in the Southwest, among a handful of keystone species whose activities create ecosystems. Beaver ponds control flooding, raise water tables and harbor many fish and insects. But trappers feeding a European passion for beaver skin hats nearly exterminated the animals in the 1800s, triggering long-term changes in many riparian areas.

So the discovery of the beaver pond seemed a blessing, a whiff of wilderness.

But Karen seemed unimpressed. "Where is the beaver?" she asked politely.

"Ah. Well. He's sleeping," I said. "In a hole in the bank."

We trundled on down the road, past jagged rock formations graced by the sound of water.

But no elk.

After 11 miles, we came to the Upper Blue Campground set among piñon pine and juniper trees. It boasted log lean-tos with concrete floors, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression, and recently restored.

Suddenly Karen exclaimed, "Oh, little bubba chickens."

I braked, convinced her yearning for elk had triggered hallucinations. Poor dear.

But right alongside the road stood a small bird with a striking black-and-white face. I stared, mouth agape. It was a Montezuma quail. I have tromped all over Arizona wishing for a glimpse of this quail found only in three states: Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. They live in oak woodlands and eat bulbs they dig up with long, agile claws. Except for the vivid face-paint of the males, they blend in against the grass and duff. They freeze when threatened until you all but step on them. The resulting flurry from beneath the feet of hunters earned them the nickname "fool's quail." However, this strategy makes them fatally vulnerable in areas where cattle have stripped away the grass.

"It's a Montezuma quail," I said, reverently.

Just then, the rest of the covey started to move away from the road—all females who'd been standing perfectly still and invisible.

"They're cute," said Karen.

I drove on, shaking my head as we continued



[ABOVE] Petroglyphs scratched into a cliff face near the Blue River testify to ancient inhabitants of this area rich in natural resources in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in eastern Arizona.

[OPPOSITE PAGE] The tranquil surface of Luna Lake reflects mist rising into dawn's pastel sky.



[BELOW] Viewed from a hilltop within the Blue Crossing Campground, cottonwood and pine trees surround a petroglyph site maintained and protected by the Forest Service. [OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE] Topping 4-foot-tall stems, Rocky Mountain bee plant flowers, which attract bees and hummingbirds, form 2.5-inch-long bananalike seed pods.

deep into the wild splendor of the place.

After approximately 19 miles, we came to the junction between the Blue River Road and the Red Hill Road (Forest Service Road 567). We turned right (northwest) onto FR 567, splashing easily across the modest flow of the Blue River. In flood stage, this river isn't crossable. As we climbed the steep switchbacks out of the valley, the views shifted from stirring to spectacular, with the Blue Range Primitive Area and New Mexico looming to view in the southeast.

"Oh. A peacock," said Karen suddenly.

I slammed on the brakes just in time to see a flock of wild turkeys vanish into the underbrush.

Mind you, I have spent years hoping for a glimpse of wild turkeys, which Benjamin Franklin recommended as the national bird instead of the carrion-eating bald eagle.

"Wild turkeys," I said, humbled.

"They're big."

"I've never seen them in the wild," I added.

"Hmm," she said, deliberately not gloating.

We drove on.

"Elk," cried Karen as we rounded a hairpin.

I hit the brakes. Four bighorn sheep scrambled up the hill, in defiance of at least four laws of physics.

"Bighorn sheep," I said.

"Sheep?" she said, disappointed.

"You can live your whole life in Arizona without seeing wild bighorn sheep," I explained.

"Oh," she said, mollified.

A few miles later, we topped out in the forest.

"Snow!" cried Karen in delight. "I promised my mum I'd send her a picture of the snow."

I hit the brakes.

Karen was perfectly happy. I wandered across the snow, looking for tracks.

"Elk," I yelled.



Karen hit the brakes. "Elk tracks," I said, pointing. "Lovely," she exclaimed. I stooped and triumphantly announced, "Elk poop." I picked up a pellet and examined it closely. Karen eyed me dubiously.

Nearby, I found more tracks—melted and indistinct. Wolves?

I straightened, marveling at the day, the wonderful failure of my plan.

The road led on to the junction with paved U.S. Route 191, which took us through about 15 miles of streams, pines and aspen trees back to Alpine.

As we hummed down the highway, I realized John Lennon was right: Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans. ■■■



VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: High clearance, especially at stream crossings after periods of heavy rainfall or springtime snowmelt.

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. Don't travel alone, and let someone at home know where you're going and when you plan to return. Odometer readings in the story may vary by vehicle.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Alpine Ranger District, (928) 339-4384; www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf.

ADDITIONAL READING: Newly revised, *Arizona's 144 Best Campgrounds* hones in on several sites around the Blue River, Alpine and other White Mountains areas. The softcover book (\$15.95 plus shipping and handling) can be ordered online at arizonahighways.com or by calling (800) 543-5432.



Thanks to Dynamite and an Orchard, We Have Slide Rock State Park

IT WAS 1910, AND FRANK PENDLEY needed some dynamite.

The young Texan had settled on a stunning piece of land straddling Oak Creek Canyon, and needed the dynamite to create an irrigation system so he could become a viable farmer. Up to this point, he'd been hauling water up from the creek in a pair of 5-gallon buckets tied to a shoulder yoke.

On trips to Flagstaff, the former quarryman

and bobcat hunter had become acquainted with a farmer named Milt Ferrel, who told Pendley of an unsecured cache of dynamite owned by the Santa Fe Railway. Wasting no time, he and Ferrel rolled their wagons to the warehouse and loaded them up with the explosives.

It's amazing what a stolen wagonful of dynamite can do. Those pilfered explosives allowed Pendley to craft passages for an irrigation system and to establish the most successful fruit orchard in Oak Creek Canyon.

During the more than 70 years that the Pendley family owned the orchard, they grew deeply attached to the sensuous beauty of Oak Creek, and when they sold the property to the Arizona Parklands Foundation in 1985, they had conservation in mind. Two years later, Slide Rock State Park opened at the site.

Although the gritty and ambitious Frank Pendley probably didn't appreciate it at the time, the creek watering his crops had carved a slick, natural water chute out of the red sandstone below his homestead. It's hard to imagine the stern-faced pioneer scooting on his bottom along the smooth rock, shooting down the slippery creek with his hands in the air and hooting happily as he plunged into a natural pool.

But such a sight now greets visitors to Slide Rock, where on a warm summer day hundreds of people ride the natural waterslides, their faces brimming with wide smiles and their foreheads glistening with suntan lotion.

Slide Rock offers more than just a waterslide. Bruce Babbitt was the governor of Arizona during the state's purchase of the Pendley orchards and described the area, which he

visited often as a young man growing up in nearby Flagstaff, as "quite simply . . . the most beautiful and evocative homestead landscape in Arizona—a combination of the pastoral and sublime."

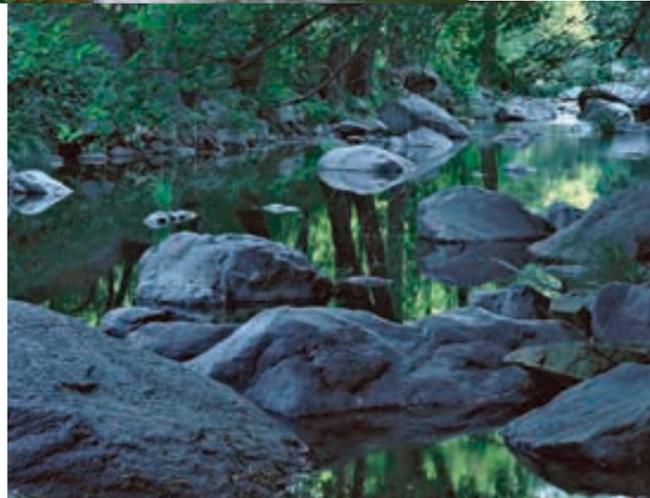
Steep, red canyon walls rise on both sides of the creek. Stands of ponderosa pine trees crowd along their heights, while Douglas firs, Arizona walnuts, sycamores, oaks and ferns join the occasional yucca or hedgehog cactus closer to the creek.

In addition to the trees and



[ABOVE] On a July midday, Slide Rock State Park north of Sedona bustles with visitors attracted by Oak Creek's invigorating water and beautiful surroundings.

[RIGHT] Upstream from Slide Rock, a tranquil pool reflects lush greenery along Oak Creek's banks. [OPPOSITE PAGE] Fed primarily by regional aquifer springs originating in Coconino sandstone below the Colorado Plateau, Oak Creek's perennial flow increases with snowmelt and runoff from storms.



plants native to Oak Creek Canyon, row after row of the Pendley family's apple trees still stand on the 43-acre site. Visitors stroll the orchards, stopping at the Heritage Tree, the last gnarled specimen from Pendley's first orchard in 1912.

Visitors can purchase the sweet, crunchy apples grown in the park at the Slide Rock Market, which also sells sandwiches, ice cream and other necessities for a day at the creek.

Arizona State Parks maintains the Pendley homestead, built in 1927 by Frank to house his rapidly growing family. The pink sandstone home stands opposite a fruit-packing shed built by Pendley in 1932.

The facade of the shed shares a remarkable likeness to the Alamo, a nod to Pendley's Texas roots. Just beyond the house and packing shed, the main trail descends to the creek and Slide

Rock, while the Clifftop Nature Trail breaks off and leads hikers to a satisfying overlook of the creek.

For those more interested in nature than in rock-sliding, Slide Rock State Park rangers lead bird walks and tours of the park by appointment only, October through April. In October, visitors also can follow self-guided tours up a narrow dead-end canyon next to the park to see trees showing off their spectacular fall colors.

It's unlikely Pendley knew that the deserted creek bed where he camped in 1907 would become his family's home for more than seven decades and a recreation spot known throughout the world. All he wanted to know was how to get his hands on some dynamite so he could irrigate his orchards. **AH**



LOCATION: About 20 miles south of Flagstaff, and 7 miles north of Sedona.

GETTING THERE: From Flagstaff, drive 20 miles south on State Route 89A.

HOURS: Call for hours of operation, which change throughout the year. Closed Christmas Day.

FEES: Memorial Day through Labor Day, \$10 per vehicle with up to four adults; free, children 14 and under; for more than four, additional \$2 for each person in vehicle. For the remainder of the year, \$8 per vehicle.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Call ahead, especially during summer months, to check water quality, which is monitored to meet public health standards.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: (928) 282-3034; www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sliderock.html.

Petroglyphs Adorn Keyhole Sink, Where the Ancients Found Water

GRAY-BLACK BASALT CLIFFS surrounding three sides of Keyhole Sink guard a small forest glade in the Kaibab National Forest west of Flagstaff. Tracks in the mud prove animals visited this water source last night, while petroglyphs on the walls show that native

people used this pond at least 1,000 years ago.

My husband, Richard, and I are enjoying a walk to this natural water hole. From the Oak Hill Snow Play Area parking lot, 4 miles west of the tiny town of Parks, we cross Historic Route 66 to the Keyhole Sink trailhead. The trail, a 2-mile round trip, is rated as easy. Rocky in spots, it gently slopes down into a small box canyon. At an elevation of 7,000 feet, the route makes a cool summer hike, and blue triangle markers nailed to trees guide cross-country skiers along the trail in the winter.

The fragrant pines create soft swishing sounds in the wind, and a thick cushion of brown pine needles blankets the ground. The surrounding hills, craters in the Flagstaff Volcanic Field, long ago spewed out the black basalt rocks lying around. Black and yellow butterflies flutter around tiny white fleabane flowers, but distant sounds from Interstate 40

keyhole-shaped canyon. The trail ends at a small pond at the base of the darkest basalt cliffs that stand 30 to 40 feet high. The size of the water hole depends on precipitation and can range from bone-dry to about 4 feet deep.

Ancient people and animals stopped at this usually reliable water source. The cliffs to the left hold two major rock art panels. Ancestors of Arizona's Indian tribes pecked a variety of animal petroglyphs into the dark walls. Some of the glyphs show deer entering the canyon. It isn't hard to imagine ancient hunters concealed in the cliffs above the pond, waiting for deer to come to water.

Deer, elk and coyotes are common to the region, but mountain lions and bears might also visit the pond.

We spend about an hour enjoying the beauty and peace of the area. Looking up at the cliffs, we can easily see two main panels of petroglyphs. Looking more closely, we spot random art figures. Children will enjoy this area exploring the boulders, following tracks and finding the wide variety of plants, but expect them to get muddy shoes.

We retrace our path back to the parking lot. We've enjoyed our afternoon spent by a quiet pool in a tiny box canyon adorned with ancient petroglyphs and wild roses. **AH**

[LEFT] Dawn Kish crouches beside her dog, Monday, atop a basalt cliff overlooking the ancient watering hole of Keyhole Sink in the Kaibab National Forest west of Flagstaff.

[RIGHT] Reflecting the golden glow of late-afternoon sunlight, petroglyphs silently speak of visitors to Keyhole Sink at least 1,000 years ago.

 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.



LOCATION:

Approximately 23 miles west of Flagstaff.

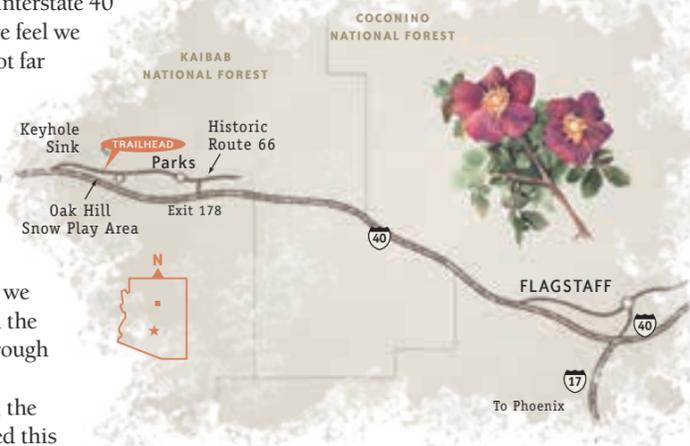
GETTING THERE: From Flagstaff, travel west on Interstate 40 to Exit 178, Parks Road. Leaving I-40, drive north .4 mile on Parks Road to Historic Route 66 and turn left, heading west for 4.2 miles. A brown sign on the right marks the Oak Hill Snow Play Area; the parking lot is on the left just past the sign. The trailhead starts across the highway from the parking lot.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Kaibab National Forest, Williams Ranger District, (928) 635-5600.

remind us that, although we feel we are in a secret spot, we're not far from civilization.

The trail gradually descends to the bottom of a small draw covered with wild rosebushes and irises. Aspen leaves, a vivid green now, will turn golden in the fall. At a wooden fence, we sign the guest register, read the interpretive sign and go through the gate to Keyhole Sink.

Over thousands of years, the erosion of a lava flow created this



KEVIN RIBSEY

