

Trek to Navajo White House Ruins Crosses Cultural Divide

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

MAY 2006

10 most scenic trails
take a hike!

The Old Man and the Canyon

Walking the Rim Seeking a Cure

Top Out in the Land of the Ladybugs



take a Hike!

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online arizonahighways.com

Our Web site this month features favorite hikes in every corner of the state. From northern Arizona's Kaibab Plateau to the San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge in the southeastern part of the state, we offer hikes for every season. Go to arizonahighways.com and click on the "Hikes Guide" for:

- A host of healthy hikes
- Hikes for a good cause
- What to see and do in hiking country

HUMOR Our writer explores gender-specific absentmindedness.

ONLINE EXTRA Savor Sierra Anchas solitude.

WEEKEND GETAWAY Mother and daughter camp at the Grand Canyon.

HISTORY Learn about Arizona's bootlegging legacy.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA Plan a trip with our calendar of events.

FRONT COVER Finding a peaceful balance between risk and rest, a hiker cloaks herself in the scenic glory of Cape Royal on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, near one of our 10 most scenic hikes, Nankoweap Trail. See story, page 20. GARY LADD
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.

BACK COVER The waters that wear down the canyon walls of Havasu Creek are the same waters that sustain its fragile ecosystems. Verdant clusters of moss and lichen, leafy boxelders and blooming crimson monkeyflowers thrive in the constant wake of the nutrient-rich stream. LARRY ULRICH
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Hungry, Grateful Winners

Last summer in your trivia contest, we won a week at the Kay El Bar Dude Ranch in Wickenburg. What an experience. From the moment we arrived, we were treated like old family friends. The horses were matched to our experience and temperament. Each time the dinner bell rang, the path we beat to the dining room would put their fastest horse to shame.

Our thanks to *Arizona Highways* and the Kay El Bar staff and wranglers and, not the least, to Pioneer and Nip, our horses.

Walt and Linda Paciorek, Phoenix

Kudos to Pioneer and Nip, and thanks for the kind words. You guys make a handsome foursome!

—Peter Aleshire, Editor

Awe: 1—Hamburger: 0

The last two paragraphs of your February 2006 “All Who Wander” (“The Wild Watches With Golden Eyes the Choices We Make”) summed up succinctly, pragmatically and emotionally the beauty and awe of nature vs. the practicality of today’s life. I’ll take beauty and awe anytime.

Penny Lester, Camden, SC

Of course, a person can’t live on awe alone—gotta eat something. On the other hand, I definitely get more calories than awe in my daily routine. So thanks for the support.—Ed.

Fish Tale

I’m a wretched fisherman, but my friends still talk about “the bass” I caught at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. My buddies all snickered when I pulled out my reel, figuring a fish dinner was about as likely as a Big Mac.

Sure enough, I was trudging back to camp empty-handed when I noticed a faded can lost on a float trip floating near shore. In the twilight gloom, I could just make out the letters: B-A-S-S A-L-E. That night my backpacker friends weren’t laughing as I savored something even better than fresh fish—a cold beer.

Dorman Groat, Cottonwood

My kind of fish story. As river rats can tell you, one of life’s perfect moments is pulling a can of beer out of the bag dangling under a Colorado River raft, perfectly chilled by the 62-degree water off the bottom of Lake Powell. But maybe I’m not supposed to admit that, being the editor and all. —Ed.

What an Insensitive Editor

What is “old”? I ask that you think about the woman you met while “dreaming of

purple hillsides and last year’s poppies” (“All Who Wander,” March ’06).

You wrote, “I go back down the trail to thank the old woman. . . . I hope she reads this.” I hope that she does not. She is NOT old. She has gotten herself to Arizona, alone, to visit her son, traveled our crazy roads and hiked into the mountains, alone. She has reached out to help the BOY who stumbled. He repays her kindness and the gentle story she shared by calling her OLD. Your lovely acquaintance does not sound old to me in any manner at all. I’m sure that you’ve hurt her feelings with your words, whether she would admit that you have or not.

Nancy Henderson, Surprise

Oh, no—I hope I didn’t offend her. That would be awful. Of course, “old” seems like much more of a compliment than it did when I was young and arrogant and ignorant (I’m still ignorant, but definitely not young). Seems to me now that the things I value most are old (except the kids). Still, thank you for the reminder of the power of words and the importance of picking each one carefully. —Ed.

Scat Happens

Page 42 of your February 2006 issue refers to something called “scat.” I never saw this word used in this context, and while it seems to imply excrement, the definition of scat in my *Oxford American Dictionary* is: scat = to depart quickly. Have you invented a new word? I can see the new bumper stickers now: SCAT HAPPENS.

Phil Obenauer, Mary Esther, FL

That’s a real honest-to-goodness field biologist word for animal excrement and one of my favorites — right up there with crepuscular. But if you see that bumper sticker, buy me one. —Ed.

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highways on tv

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Lobo checks out the sunrise on South Mountain in Phoenix. PETER ALESHIRE

My Goofball Dog and Me

WE SET OFF ON OUR DAILY HIKE in the predawn dark, my goofball dog and I.

Lobo nearly yanks me off my feet in his muscular exuberance, before falling into step alongside me. I look east and note the lightening of the soon-to-rise sun as Lobo dances along on his spring-loaded legs, his big wet black nose scanning the darkness with the joy of a heartbeat.

I know he yearns for the ridgeline where I will let him off the leash and he can run free, all stretch and leap and nose and tail. Lobo’s passion for freedom has already upended my once restful routine. Now I must stumble out of bed, rub my eyes raw and shamble off into the darkness so I can finish walking the dog in time to shower, gulp breakfast and make it to work by 8:30.

Mind you, I didn’t want another dog.

I didn’t know he was a wolf.

And I definitely don’t identify with him—no matter what my wife says.

I just had a weak moment, when he trotted all coyotelike toward us. We watched him check out every front door on the street—like he was selling wolf timeshares. Then he got to us, friendly but dignified. So my son’s girlfriend ran into the house and got him water and food.

My fate was sealed.

I have no plausible excuse. Hopi, our loving little 15-year-old pound dog, is on her tottering last legs, after having raised our three sons. Now I have an empty nest and plans to travel every weekend. But here is this mangy, hungry, 65-pound tough guy with “oh-my-what-big-teeth-you-have” mischief in his brown eyes and a tongue the size of a kid’s sleeping bag.

I way knew better.

But the minute we allowed his cold black nose through the tent flap of our affections, we were doomed. He eats couches if left alone, jumps the 6-foot-high back fence, leaps onto the kitchen counter to clean the plates in the sink and steals food out of unattended grocery bags. Moreover, after a month he toppled over in a dead faint. Turns out, he has a thyroid problem—Addison’s disease. So the vet prescribed steroids (for the dog) and billed me \$800.

Oh, by the way, adds the vet—Lobo’s a wolf hybrid.

A wolf? What the heck was I thinking?

So as I tromp on through the darkness up a ridge of South Mountain with my joyful, sickly, steroidal wolf dog, I ponder the pinballness of my life.

Atop the ridge I let Lobo loose. He bounds down the trail, like a falcon in an updraft.

Down in the canyon, an invisible pack of coyotes vocalizes a nervous breakdown. A coyote chorus is a primal yip into the sublime and crazed subconscious of the wild, which invariably triggers a psychedelic flashback in my reptilian brain. Lobo moves to my side and stares down the hill with absolute attention. I can’t tell whether he seeks an ally or intends to protect me.

Abruptly, the brilliant orange sliver of the sun breaks through the Earth at the horizon, immolating the clouds. I stand, stupefied by the sight until Lobo locates some fresh coyote scat. He gobbles, I holler, he drops.

We move on, with Lobo running ahead of me like water in a cataract. A glower of thunderheads rolls towards us, held together by a stitchery of lightning.

I stop on a highpoint, caught between the sunrise and storm. The rain overtakes us, with our hilltop still bathed in light from the rising sun. I look down upon the refracted rain as it falls past me onto the hidden coyotes below. With a mental effort, I freeze the raindrops, which makes me fall upward through a great glitter. I do not think Lobo notices the effect, for he is getting high off some delicious scent on the tip of a creosote bush.

Distantly, I hear the coyotes again. No. Not coyotes. It is the siren of an ambulance, the primal yip of the crazed subconscious of the urban. Lobo pays it no mind and sniffs the breeze while we stand together on this ridged boundary of the wild.

As he leads me back home, my heart prances.

For I know that tomorrow well before dawn my foolish and troublesome dog will come and stand beside my bed in the darkness. If I do not stir, he will put his cold black nose in my hand.

I can hardly wait.

editor@arizonahighways.com

Dream Job

is No Walk in the Park

THE COMMON MISPERCEPTION that working as a landscape photographer amounts to permanent vacation in the world's most beautiful locations in perfect weather leads otherwise sane people to chuck it all to pursue the glamorous life of a landscape photographer.

Sort of like becoming a professional golfer, wandering well-manicured greens in a warm breeze and sinking 50-foot putts.

But every dream job requires a reality check.

Photographers develop a different definition of "perfect weather." While golfers scramble for cover when the weather turns bad, photographers rush into the teeth of the tempest. They stalk a storm front for days, planning their approach. They relish the buildup and break of a storm, and scoff at the hazards to bring back dramatic images of pristine beauty.

Photographs in our special hiking section, beginning on page 8, are all born of long hours and hard work. Landscape photographers know a thing or two about long-distance hiking. Often, only long treks with heavy packs can take them into a remote wilderness.

Contributing photographer George Stocking came to his "dream job" the hard way. He changed careers in his mid-40s to pursue landscape photography after being laid off from the best job he ever had, building rocket systems for Orbital Sciences. He exchanged his 9-to-5 job for freelance freedom and the risks of working outdoors.

"There's an old adage that bad weather equals good photographs," he says. "I tend to seek out adverse conditions that put me in proximity of electrical storms. I'm pretty sure there's a lightning bolt out there with my name on it."

Several incidents have already seared his psyche.

"I was in the Sierra Ancha, on the bluffs overlooking Roosevelt Lake, shooting the approach of a summer monsoon," he recalls. "I had just been blessed with a magnificent rainbow before sunset."

Stocking sought refuge in the back of his truck as the growling storm drew closer. He tried reading a book, but found himself counting the seconds between lightning flash and thunder crash. Soon the flashes and crashes were occurring simultaneously.

"The barrage was terrifying as I laid in the back of my suddenly pathetic shelter. "It seemed like it went on forever."

Finally the lightning storm passed, and he drifted off to

sleep to the soothing sounds of raindrops on his roof.

"The next morning I got up before dawn, and my jaw dropped in amazement as I looked around the bluffs. I felt like Moses. There were burning bushes everywhere," Stocking says. "After surviving the lightning, it had never occurred to me that I might die in the resulting forest fire. The previous night's downpour had probably saved my life."

Another run-in with thunderbolts occurred as Stocking and his wife, Mary, explored the Chiricahua Mountains, photographing the dramatic skies conjured up by summer storms. They hiked the mile-and-a-half trail to Fort Bowie.

"Massive cumulus clouds gathered in the blue sky as soon as we arrived at the fort," he says. "As sunset approached, the gathering clouds had developed into a large black storm."

Mary, the voice of reason, suggested they start hiking back to the truck. Right at that moment, a rainbow formed against the dark, brooding sky over the adobe ruins.

"The opportunity was too good to miss, so I began shooting again. As the storm closed in, the rainbow became more intense," Stocking remembers.

Ignoring his own better judgment, he kept working as



A rainbow's appearance over Fort Bowie ruins almost proved deadly for an intrepid photographer and his wife. GEORGE STOCKING

lightning bolts pierced the air less than a mile away.

"Finally, Mary grabbed me and insisted it was time to depart. We had made only 200 yards on the trail when it started pouring. Barely able to see, we streaked onward," he says. "Just then, lightning struck right behind me. A cataclysmic crash split the sky. I remember seeing my shadow silhouette on the ground in front of me from the flash, and thinking I was probably going to die."

Under a corollary to Murphy's Law, the lightning ceased just as they reached the safety of their truck. Soaked to the skin, their senses on high alert, they laughed away their fright.

Stocking admits that people wonder why he takes such risks.

"I'd say that it's my job as a photographer, and that outstanding images are born out of commitment. There is a direct correlation to the quality of your images and exactly what you do to get them."

When risk pays off, it's as sweet as sinking a 50-foot putt. **▲**

taking the off-ramp



JOHN VAN VELZER

Drought Makes City Slickers of Wildlife

ON THEIR WAY to get the mail or pick up the paper, urban Arizonans stroll past sagebrush and saguaro, greet neighbors—and run into mule deer. It might become more common as the weather heats up and animals cope with this year's dry winter.

A mule deer, above, was spotted grabbing a snack outside a home in Carefree.

"They typically occupy desert ranges at densities of about three to four per square mile, but around housing areas with food and water, that density may be 10 times greater during drought periods," said Brian Wakeling, big game supervisor for the

Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Deer aren't the only ones taking advantage of the spoils of human development. "In outlying areas, animals are attracted by artificial water within areas like swimming pools, water for dogs, watered lawns," Wakeling said. "Javelina get into flower gardens, cactus gardens and lawns and wreak havoc." Suburbs see rabbits, elk, coyotes, bobcats and even mountain lions.

As summer approaches, animals venture into populated areas, he said. "It's not as pronounced during the cooler months, but it's certainly something we expect to see as spring

warms up and especially as we get into summer, if the drought continues." The expectation applies to "pretty much all animals, to varying extents," he said.

The animals are just looking for a place to make a living, and when you have higher densities of animals, conflict issues arise," Wakeling said. He advises people not to feed wildlife, which can make many species less wary of humans, putting them into situations they might deem threatening. "They're not seeking to inflict bodily damage, but if they feel cornered, they'll try to escape; they may knock someone down, bite someone." — Kimberly Hosey



The Exclusively Royal Pistachio

WHAT DO ARIZONA, the Queen of Sheba and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon have in common? The answer: pistachios. Legend has it that the ancient king of Babylon grew pistachios in his famous hanging gardens, and the Queen of Sheba declared that the nuts were an exclusively royal food, forbidding commoners to grow them. Although Arizona isn't located anywhere near Babylon or Sheba, it does share a

similarly perfect climate for growing the popular snack. In the high desert of Cochise County, 70 miles east of Tucson, Fistiki Farms has grown and sold organic pistachios since 1978. Fistiki is the Greek word meaning pistachio. Flavors like Cajun citrus, lemon-lime, jalapeño and garlic are available, as well as roasted and salted. Fistiki Farms sells its pistachio products online. Information: www.pistachios.com. — *Sally Benford*

Phoenix's Not-So-Secret Blooming Garden

NAMED ONE OF the Herb Society of America's 10 not-to-miss herb gardens, the Desert Botanical Garden proves that Arizona's landscape is full of life and mystery.

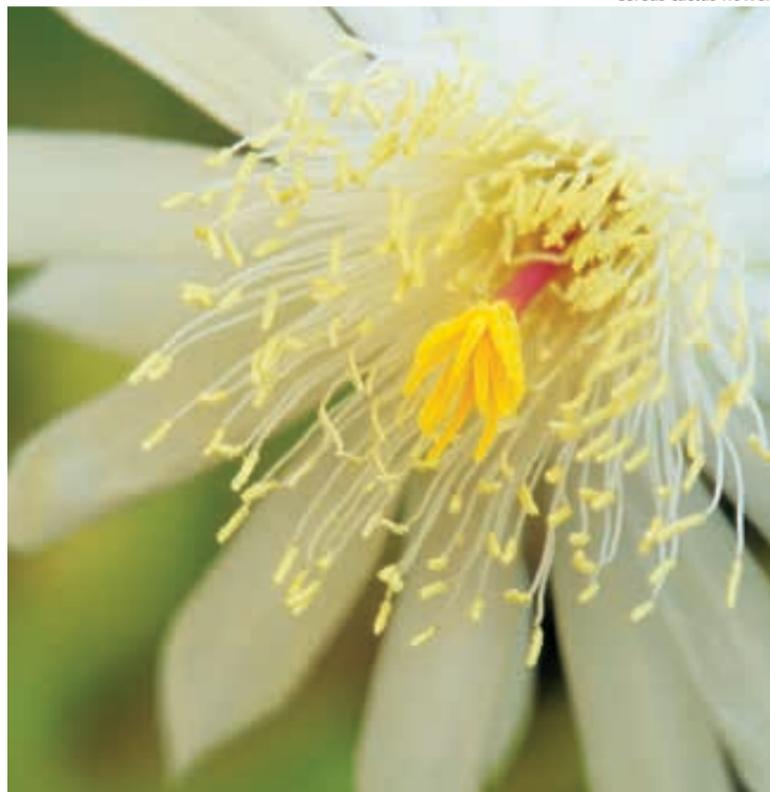
The garden, located in the red buttes of Phoenix's Papago Park, was created in 1939 by a group of Valley residents interested in creating a place that would promote an understanding and appreciation of the Sonoran Desert. This goal became especially important as Phoenix began to grow and the landscape was radically altered.

Spread out over 50 acres of beautiful

terrain, the Desert Botanical Garden ranks as one of only 44 botanical gardens accredited by the American Association of Museums. With such a distinguished reputation, it is no surprise that the garden houses 139 threatened, endangered and rare species of plants from Arizona and distant and exotic locales. The garden maintains many scenic trails that guide visitors past blooming wildflowers, distinctive saguaros and informative exhibits.

Information: (480) 941-1225, www.dbg.org. — *Josh Ivanov*

Cereus cactus flower



Need Brain Surgery? Call a Cowboy

IN HIS BOOK *Around Western Campfires*, Joseph "Mack" Axford tells of arriving in Bisbee in 1894, as a 14-year-old boy, homeless and looking for work. He found it—irrigating an alfalfa field. Later he was a miner, jail warden and cowboy—working at the same ranch as Butch Cassidy (who was using another name at the time).

By 1900, the 20-year-old had a job as a hospital steward at the Cochise County Hospital and Poor Farm in Tombstone.

During that time Dr. Bacon, who was in charge, showed Mack how to remove bone fragments from a patient's brain using a trepan saw. Later, when Dr. Bacon was away in New York for a post-grad course, a miner with a bad head injury was brought in. However, the surgeons on call were not available and Dr. Kelly, who was a pharmacist and licensed physician, was the only one available to take charge. Because he wasn't a surgeon, he wasn't much help. While Mack was giving the man chloroform, he saw that the doctor didn't know what he was doing with the saw and was about to kill the patient. He pushed the doctor away, and they traded places. The doctor gave the anesthesia and Mack placed the saw properly, removed the bone fragments from the brain; the patient lived.

When Dr. Bacon returned and heard the story, he urged Mack to go to medical school and become a surgeon, but he said he didn't have the money. So he worked as a hospital steward a little longer, until an increasing number of tuberculosis patients gave him the idea that some of the germs might come his way. Then he quit the hospital and became a blacksmith at a mine. — *Ruth Burke*



Museum Takes a (Moon)shine to Arizona

THE SCENIC SANTA Rita Mountains south of Tucson are well known for their breathless beauty and native wildlife. Less well known are the secret rendezvous spots hidden in their rugged canyons that were popular with moonshiners during Prohibition.

The locations of the stills and the pickup spots are just a faded memory today, but you can view one of the original stills used there, along with other interesting artifacts, at George Proctor's Frontier Museum in Patagonia. The still was handmade by Proctor's father, who pressed his then-6-year-old son into service delivering mescal to his customers via horseback.

The museum's collection runs from Western tack to pioneer household items, and includes an engraved silver bit used by Theodore Roosevelt when he hunted bear in the Kaibab National Forest. The family operated frontier museum is



just a few blocks west of State Route 82 in Patagonia, between Nogales and Tombstone. Proctor's Frontier Museum is open by appointment, and there is no admission charge.

Information: (520) 394-2063. Call for directions. — *Betty Barr*

Odd Sheep Has Woolly History

WHEN THE SPANISH conquistadores came to Arizona in the 16th century, they brought with them an ancient Iberian sheep breed prized for its hardiness, adaptability and lustrous fleece. Navajo raiders acquired the breed known as churra or churro and switched from cotton to wool for weaving textiles.

In the 1860s, the U.S. Army decimated the Navajos' sheep flocks during Kit Carson's Navajo Campaign. And when the Navajos returned to their homelands, the prized breeding stock had all but disappeared.

It wasn't until the 1970s that a few select ranchers staged a united attempt to revitalize the rare breed. Even so, fewer than 3,000 of these odd-looking, four-horned sheep are registered with the Navajo-Churro Sheep Association. In an attempt to curry favor with traditional Navajo weavers, the Navajo Sheep Project monitors churro flocks, hoping to keep the silky, unique wool from disappearing forever. — *Carrie M. Miner*



The Old Man and the Canyon

Pioneering route-finder George Steck and his acolytes sought the solace of the Grand Canyon one last time

by Craig Childs Photographs by Gary Ladd

Wrinkle in Time
Dedicated canyoneer George Steck, who died in 2004, spent more than 45 years hiking and mapping routes in the Grand Canyon. Asked if he would change anything about his time there, he answered, "I would do it just as I did."

The old man sat in the bottom of the Grand Canyon, relaxed among sheaves of bedrock. He posed like a lanky Buddha, his body resting on bands of red stone as if he had been born here. We had a camp down by the river where we lounged in the afternoon after dipping naked in frigid water.

George Steck was 73 years old at the time, a pioneer route-finder from the Grand Canyon, a master of long journeys through an untrailed, cliffbound wilderness. He looked at me with wry, intent eyes frayed with gray, professorial eyebrows.



Beer or Bust
Steck and writer Craig Childs try to persuade river runners to give up the goods.

He was always looking at me this way, as if a question waited constantly on his tongue.

With a gravelly, slow and thoughtful voice, he asked if I would rather lose my eyesight or my hearing. I studied his face, unshaven and bristled. He was slowly losing sight in his left eye, his hearing peppered with hums and pops. That must be what old men think about, I mused. I told him I would rather not go blind.

I imagined he would agree. With a Ph.D. out of Berkeley, he was a theoretical mathematician who had spent most of his career inventing equations at the Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico. I thought, of course he would choose to keep his eyesight. He would need to see the numbers and symbols of his profession. He also needed his eyes to feast on the slender ledges and boulder choked slopes of the Grand Canyon. Otherwise, how would he ever find his way through?

He did not answer as quickly as I had. He licked his lips and looked around the Canyon. "I would rather not go deaf," he said wistfully.

He told me he likes particularly melodic music: Brahms, Chopin, piano, wind, water. The rustle of a breeze through reeds. After that, we were quiet, listening to the hollow gulping of the Colorado River below us, the whisper of gusts across cliffs thousands of feet over our heads.

George spoke in mathematic riddles, always testing me, asking impossible questions, finding the Golden

Mean in the growth patterns of an agave, borrowing my journal to scribble out geometric calculations. It was our great debate, what math has to do with route-finding. The two of us argued to no end, sitting at his coffee table or wandering through canyons, me saying that it is no coincidence that he was both a

Rock Steady
Steck straddles a narrow ledge, below, near the mouth of Hundred and Fifty Mile Canyon, just past the Grand Canyon's midway point between Lee's Ferry and the Grand Wash Cliffs.



mathematician and a famed route-finder. It is the same process, I told him, scouting through wells of logic and numbers or picking your way across a terrain of palisades. His response to me hardly ever changed: a long, concerned glance, a smack of his lips and a flat denial. Math is math. Landscape is landscape. He said he could see my point, but it seemed esoteric, unproven.

I gathered his personal equations—pages upon pages of theorems, postulations, symbols, numbers and hardly a single word of English—in an attempt to understand the vast mechanism of his mind. Meanwhile, I traveled into the wilderness of the Grand Canyon with him, following his steps as year by year he slowed, staggering around the boulders, his eyes tinkering intently with small moves.

He had walked hundreds of days in the Grand Canyon. At the age of 57, he made his first 80-day trek from the beginning to the end, plumbing the stone for routes, clutching ledges with his fingertips. Of any land I have ever traveled, this place requires the most delicate of calculations. The Grand Canyon is an enormous and subtle riddle.

George chose a small number of inheritors. We were the lucky ones. He shared knowledge of routes, of certain places and ways inside the Grand Canyon, of stories, recollections of flash floods and massive boulders calving off their cliffs, exploding into clouds of dust and debris. These stories

Off the Beaten Path
A towering rock cliff near Havasu Canyon dwarfs hikers in the amphitheater below. Many of Steck's hikes traversed seldom-visited chambers such as this.



and routes were conveyed to us not at a kitchen table with maps unfolded, but in the field.

George was 75 when we dropped off the edge of Marble Canyon in the upper reaches of the Grand Canyon. We carried our gear between pale and enormous pillars of Kaibab limestone, skittering down rockslide slopes—no trail anywhere in sight. He wanted us to know about a route deep inside—a cave that cuts through a cliff.

Half a day down inside the first layers of cliffs and slopes,



Trailblazer
Steck leads the way ascending a rocky slope above South Canyon. Beginning in 1957, Steck blazed hundreds of trails in the Canyon's remote wilderness, making his last trek at age 77.

George sat down and decided he could go no farther. Too old, too tired, too far, too steep. He insisted that the rest of us continue without him. He explained that his presence was no longer needed. By now we should have known well enough how to navigate, how to take the clues he had given us and find our way to the cave. From there we could figure it out.

We left him on a ledge, a solitary figure watching over the depths of the Grand Canyon. Like weaned children, we moved with an awkward sense of confidence into the Canyon, movements full of timid boast, hand over hand, passing packs down. We each glanced up now and then, George long gone miles above us.

I once told George that I had been studying the geological framework of the Grand Canyon. I explained to him that the entire place had been built upon a pre-existing blueprint, an underpinning of faults and fractures. I had synthesized vol-

umes of data about erosion and flash floods, running statistical equations through a computer. I determined that the shape we call Grand Canyon is as formed as the wings of a butterfly. It is a carefully balanced relationship between weather patterns, river meanders and geology. These vaults of side canyons that we traveled through, the deeply shadowed holes down in the Redwall and the massive platforms of Bright Angel shale could be defined numerically.

He inspected me with a sideways glance. "You keep trying," he said with all seriousness, and then a smile.

The last great trek. George was 77 when several of us took a week to tumble into the western Grand Canyon, carrying pitches of rope to haul our packs up and down the gray-red cliffs. His movement between boulders was ticking and slow. Crossing back and forth over a clear stream on the Canyon floor, I saw a rhythmic tremor to George's step, to his speech, to his hands reaching out and planting on cool bedrock. His lips stuttered with tiredness, eyes blinking.

Shadows gathered around us in the pearl-blue narrows of this limestone canyon. When we walked into a band of sunlight, he ordered that we rest. He laid his body over the rocks like a limp piece of fabric. Even in exhaustion his eyes tracked methodically across the terrain.

A side canyon streaked up the wall across from us, its bends quickly vanishing.

"You ever think about places like that?" I asked him, gesturing up the side canyon.

"No," he said. "It doesn't go anywhere."

"But aren't you curious? Even if it's a dead end? There are springs and pools up there, different shades of light."

"That's your job," he reminded me. "It's a dead end."

George had this trip timed, exactly where we were to fetch water, where we would set our camps, how many hours it would take to get from one place to the next. He had turned himself into a straight line piercing the labyrinth of the Grand Canyon. This journey was turning him into an old and rickety man. He could not afford a single step in the wrong direction. With no paths to follow other than his memory, we had been running packs down boulder stacks and sheer walls, climbing waterfalls, descending long smooth chutes of stone. He grew older with every step.

Time to move again. I helped him up, our hands meeting. His skin felt old, but smooth, like suede, his finger bones loose and relaxed beneath leopard spots of age. I stayed back as he walked ahead. As soon as he was out of sight, I shot up the side canyon, tearing like a monkey between its high walls. Indeed, it was a dead end.

When I found George at the end of the day, he was again sprawled across the ground, his body poured into the rocks. He frowned at me. I was the last to arrive. "Where have you been?" he asked.

I was sheepish. I said that I had been checking out some routes. It was a lie; I was merely playing up in the canyons. He knew it. He excused me anyway.

Days of toil, stumbling through landslide boulders along the Colorado River, pierced by the sun, then swallowed by stinging shade. A kayaker backpaddled to talk with us, an excuse for George to wither back into the shade. We sat on a balcony ledge above the river. The kayaker was curious, saying that our

walking with packs through this terrain looked tedious and exhausting. We assured him that he was right.

The kayaker finally swept away from us like a bird. I got George up and we continued, earth-bound, plodding slowly downstream.

Days later we were far from the river, climbing up through tiers of green desert lagoons and lapidary palisades. Moving slowly, we climbed into a hallway of cliffs, George coming up below me where his hand swept dust away from a hold where



A Cakewalk
Silhouetted against the South Rim near Zoroaster Canyon, above, hikers pause in June's early morning light to survey the "cake layers" of rock. The Grand Canyon's geologic strata ranges in age from 250 million to 1.7 billion years old.

I had just stepped. Up here, the limestone breaks away in fist chunks. Debris clattered down, rattling and cracking, plunking finally into a plunge pool far below.

These high cliffs were busy with shouts back and forth, rocks snapping free, ropes anchored, and tested with strong tugs. We climbed for hours. George spilled the last of his energy again and again until there was nothing left, his movements creaking like wood. He finally cleared his way to the top, where he collapsed onto the ground. One of the inheritors, a young man, poured water into his own hand, and pulled off George's hat to run his wet fingers through the remnants of fine white hair.

"That should cool you down," he said.

George conjured a deep smile, his eyes becoming sharp again. "Yes, yes. That helps."

The last time I saw George, I stopped at his house to pick up some climbing rope. He was on his way to the Grand

Canyon, a short trip, just to give a talk. I was heading into a wilderness in southern Arizona. Half joking, I reminded him of a promise I had made. When he felt he was ready, we would go into the Grand Canyon where I would pick up a rock and clock him in the back of the head. He laughed. Not just yet. But his laugh was only half-joking.

He died in his bed after returning from that Grand Canyon trip. When I heard, when someone quietly took me aside and told me the news, the world collapsed around me. The byzan-

tine framework of lines and webs that holds the Grand Canyon together for me dissolved.

When a few days later I stood at his funeral, I heard stories pouring out of all who knew him, the sweet, rippling sounds of voices, vowels swinging open like soft winds. It was not in the numbers, I realized. It was in the rivers of senses pouring into me as I stood in the back of the funeral.

I walked out to the watermelon light of late afternoon and shook the hands of mourners. I could feel the sweat of their palms, the bones of their fingers. Traffic nearby sounded like a swarm. My senses were suddenly sharpened. I could not help remembering the sound of the river mumbling its way through the Grand Canyon. I heard the far away rattle of reeds in a canyon breeze.

George got his wish. Never will these senses cease. ■■

Craig Childs is an Arizona native. More of his writing about George Steck can be found in his recent book, Soul of Nowhere.

Photographer Gary Ladd of Page thought he knew the Grand Canyon very well until he met George Steck; it was then that his real Canyon education began. Both Steck, in 1999, and Ladd, in 2004, received the Grand Canyon Historical Society's Pioneer Award for their contributions to the understanding of and knowledge about the Canyon.



Dawn's Gleam
Frost sheathes branches
and rocks at sunrise
atop 5,998-foot Pine
Mountain in the
Mazatzal Wilderness.

Topping Out

in the Land of the Ladybugs

Lightning, blisters and empty
canteens complicate the long toil
on Pine Mountain's long view

by Peter Aleshire Photographs by David H. Smith

TOILING UP THE INTERMINABLE TRAIL, I quietly congratulated myself between grunts.

Granted I was struggling to keep pace with Bruce Bilbrey, the veteran elk hunter and enthusiastic outdoorsman who'd offered to take me to the top of Pine Mountain in central Arizona. Further granted, I felt like I'd mistakenly stuffed a set of barbells into my 30-year-old pack for my return to the backpack adventures of my youth. But I had marched right along on the 5-mile incline from the trailhead. I'd stayed ahead of Ellen Bilbrey, Bruce's wife, who shares my love of out-of-the-way places. I'd even managed to outwalk photographer David Smith, a taller, stronger, younger man. True, he was carrying camera equipment, recovering from a broken rib and popping pain pills. But I have learned that it's best in life to seize what advantages you can muster.

So I felt good.

Besides, it was gorgeous, albeit dangerously overcast. We had almost postponed the trip, but then decided the predicted

we reached the top, a rounded, grassy flat space about 40 yards across and dominated by a single, lightning-scarred alligator juniper. We dropped our packs and staggered toward the edge. We could see the whole world—or at least the whole of central Arizona. We turned in a circle, gazing 100 miles in every direction, from the Superstition Mountains to Flagstaff, from the White Mountains out beyond Prescott. The Verde River Valley wound around the base of the plateau.

What is it in us that loves the view to the horizon? I only know that the vista fascinated and soothed me, like the flickering of a campfire or the sound of a stream.

Suddenly a great dark form swept into my field of view as a golden eagle flew past so close I could hear the wind rushing through her outspread feathered fingertips. A moment later, her mate glided past.

David came to the edge and peered out across the rugged terrain. "This doesn't look good," he said.

"What?" I asked.

COMMENTS IN AMMO CAN AT TOP OF PINE MOUNTAIN:

"Holy uphill Batman, we've got to get in shape." Bob 3/27/97 **"Great view. Very peaceful. I love life."** Mark **"We peaked out and pooped out at the same time."** Mike **"In the middle of nowhere without a phone, without a toilet, without TV, without my boyfriend, just a teenager having fun and being miserable at the same time."** Val 6/17/97 **"I hiked up with a beautiful woman. We both enjoyed the top."** Joe 7/2/96



Comfort in Numbers

Ladybugs congregate atop Pine Mountain every year, perhaps to facilitate mating and deter predators with a mass of orange that warns birds they taste terrible. The orange and black insects often play dead when threatened, which can deter predators like dragonflies.

high clouds were more likely to cut the heat than to spoil the light. We'd take our chances on getting caught in a storm. So we rose at dawn and drove an hour north of Phoenix on Interstate 17 to the Dugas Road turnoff and headed southeast down the 19-mile dirt road back to the trailhead guarding the entrance to the Pine Mountain Wilderness Area.

Throughout our three-hour plod toward the 5,998-foot peak, we passed from one ecosystem to another—desert scrub to piñon juniper, to cottonwood-sycamore, to chaparral, to oak, to ponderosa pine. Rising from the surrounding high-desert plateau, Pine Mountain is a biologic "sky island," offering a glimpse of varied habitats for the price of a hard day's hike.

The clouds had begun to pile up over the peak by the time

He gestured toward the gathering clouds just as a deep rumble of thunder broke against the peak, roiling on and on.

"It's just thunder," I said. "Way up in the clouds."

Lightning flashed an instant later, followed immediately by a terrifying crack.

"We'd better get off the peak," said Ellen calmly.

We scrambled down the mountain, taking only a moment to cover our packs with tarps. Raindrops spattered in the dry dust. We had anticipated different water problems, since we knew of no springs within miles of the summit. We'd lugged about a gallon each and planned to refill 5 miles down the hill at Bishop Springs.

We slipped, stumbled and slid a few hundred yards off the peak into the oak and pine forest and hid under a bent-over pine. We started a small fire to drive off the unexpected chill, and watched the benediction of rain on the dry forest. Remarkably, the rain passed within a half-hour and we trudged back to the peak.

We found the mountaintop alive with ladybugs, an orange coating on bushes, sticks and rocks. Millions of ladybugs winter beneath the snow on certain peaks, emerging in spring to mate before taking flight for the valleys below, where they dine on aphids to the delight of farmers and plant-lovers. They're

Charred Comeback

Lichen mottles the boulders in the foreground of this view north into the Cedar Bench Wilderness in the Prescott National Forest. Strange, composite organisms worthy of a sci-fi novel, lichens combine the efforts of a fungus, an algae and sometimes a cyanobacteria. This remarkable alliance enables them to survive in harsh conditions and yields clues to the evolution of complex creatures from simple beginnings.





Skeletal Supplicants

Dead trees frame the 100-mile view south across the Verde River Valley all the way to Horseshoe Reservoir. Lightning strikes on the exposed summit take a toll on the gnarled pines, oaks and junipers, but the dead snags are actually crucial habitat for insects and birds

programmed to seek high points, perhaps so their mass will generate enough extra heat to get them through the winter. The mass of orange-red and black also discourages predators, warned by the coloration that ladybugs taste terrible. After the ladybugs disperse to the valleys below, their offspring begin an epic journey back up the mountain. The grandchildren or great-grandchildren of the ladybugs that flew from the peak return one or two years later to complete the great cycle.

The gathering of ladybugs makes Pine Mountain a magical place, as though you could pick the lock of some great secret by shifting your gaze from the harlequin-headed bugs to the soul-stirring sweep of the horizon and back again.

Hikers' comments left in an ammo can bolted to a rock outcrop at the top testified to the wonder of the place.

"Sitting on a warm boulder with this vastness and this breeze. I am still. How rich the journey," wrote Timberley.

"Great to be alive," wrote Kendra. "Good grief, all those ladybugs."

"I hope heaven is this good, because I could do this for all eternity," wrote Bruce.

We wandered, marveling, across the tiny mountaintop for hours. As darkness gathered, lights came on far out across the great sweep of mountains. Prescott blazed, Payson glittered, Cordes Junction glimmered and far to the south, Phoenix glowed. As the storm cleared, the dusty river of the Milky Way took shape overhead.

We woke at dawn as David scrambled to snatch the only good light of the trip for photography. Bruce, Ellen and I huddled with the map, planning the day's hike. We had nearly exhausted our water supply, but knew we could refill at Bishop Springs. We could camp at the springs and hike out the next day.

I repacked to add some camera gear, although the previous day's hike had produced a couple of protoblister and a whole constellation of muscles I'd long taken for granted. *No matter, you're as young as you think*, I told myself.

The first 5 miles slipped past, despite the downhill strain on my blisters and an ankle I'd sprained two months earlier. Twice, the treacherous ankle turned to dump me on my knees.

The scenery offered solace as we hiked along a ridge through already recovering burns. The burned snags house a wide variety of birds, which in turn help keep forest-munching insects under control. The fires also open up clearings, which inspire a flourish of grass that sustains bears, elk and deer. We also found tracks

and other signs of mountain lions and bears, also plentiful in this rich wilderness.

We gulped our way down to our last canteen by lunch, just shy of Bishop Springs. We snacked atop a rocky outcrop overlooking Bishop Creek, dubiously eyeing the steep, trailless, 800-foot scramble down to where the stream lay concealed at the canyon bottom. So we pulled the straws off our juice cartons and lay on our stomachs to sip rainwater out of the hollows of the rock.

But I didn't actually start to worry until we got to Bishop Springs and found it dry.

We pondered our options, as I shifted back and forth from one blistered foot to the other.

We could hike down to Bishop Creek, in hopes of finding water. I faintly favored this option, but Bruce regarded me dubiously. He'd been the soul of discretion all day, overlooking my falls, stumbles and slackening pace.

"We might get down there," he said, turning to study the drop-off into the canyon. "But then we've got to get back out."

"And suppose there isn't any water?" said David, who also had developed blisters and exhausted the power of ibuprofen against broken ribs.



Ignorance is Bliss

Editor Peter Aleshire, left, ponders the campfire alongside Bruce and Ellen Bilbrey, in happy ignorance of the oozing blisters and dried up springs that await on the hike down.

"Maybe we should just head out today," I said, with a show of reluctance.

"That sounds prudent," observed Bruce. "Besides, I left a cooler of drinks in the car."

The drinks proved decisive. So we turned and limped back toward the 5-mile distant car, lurching finally through a spattering of raindrops. We dropped our malignant packs, unlaced our overheated boots and guzzled the blissful brew.

I vowed to burn my pack as soon as I got home. Yet, two days later, my bruises had faded and I couldn't stop picturing the ladybugs, the view from the top and the splayed fingertips of a golden eagle. ■■■

Peter Aleshire, editor of Arizona Highways, insists that Pine Mountain offers the best view in Arizona.

Despite almost being blown off the mountain by a lightning storm, photographer David H. Smith of Phoenix was amazed at the thousands of ladybugs on the summit of Pine Mountain.

when you go

Location: 60 miles north of Phoenix.

Getting There: From Phoenix, drive north on Interstate 17 and exit at Exit 268 for Dugas/Orme Road. Drive southeast on unpaved Forest Service Road 68 for 18 miles to the trailhead for Nelson Trail 159. Take trail 159 approximately 3.25 miles to the trailhead for Pine Mountain Trail 14.

Travel Advisory: Six maintained trails, including the Pine Mountain Summit Trail, cross the 20,100-acre Pine Mountain Wilderness Area. Spring, summer and fall are the best seasons to hike in the area.

Warning: Carry plenty of water.

Additional Information: Prescott National Forest, Verde Ranger District, (928) 567-4121; www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott.



10 most scenic hikes

Our hiking expert reveals the state's most spectacular jaunts by Christine Maxa

Oak Creek Canyon

West Fork Trail

- > Easy
- > 3 miles one-way with several creek crossings
- > 5,400-5,500 feet elevation
- > Red Rock Ranger District, (928) 282-4119
- > Trailhead is between Mileposts 384 and 385, on State Route 89A, 10 miles north of Sedona

Like some people born with good looks, personality and a pedigree, this trail has an overload of assets—exquisite beauty, unique atmosphere, colorful history and special wildlife. The Sedona area's most popular hike, the trail along the West Fork of Oak Creek, threads through orange- and cream-colored sandstone cliffs, earning it a reputation as one of the most beautiful walks in the Southwest. Go during the week to miss the mass of weekend admirers.

Two words explain why Arizona is one of the world's best places to hike: open space.

Public lands account for 80 percent of the state, with mountains steeped in legends, rock formations memorialized in movies and a mélange of canyons jigsawed with physical challenges. But one of the best lures for hardy hikers remains the chance of spending the day amid the sort of scenery *Arizona Highways* photographers have made famous. After writing four Arizona hiking guides, hiking thousands of miles on hundreds of trails in the past dozen years, I still discover hidden jewels. But some trails linger in my mind's eye and keep me coming back. So here's a selection of the 10 most scenic trails I've ever hiked. —Christine Maxa



Aravaipa Canyon at its confluence with Virgus Canyon, Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. JACK DYKINGA
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.

2 Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness

Aravaipa canyon

- > Easy, but adventurous
- > 11 miles one-way
- > 2,700-3,000 feet elevation
- > Bureau of Land Management Safford Field Office, (928) 348-4400
- > Trailhead is on Aravaipa Road, 12 miles east of State Route 77

Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, the darling of desert hikes, combines the sear of the Sonoran Desert and the verdure of a lush oasis thanks to the perennial flow of Aravaipa Creek between claret-colored cliffs. One of the most biologically diverse environments in the state cocoons visitors with a mingling of wildlife and wilderness. Beaten paths thread in and out of the creek to comprise the trail in this natural gem, so water-friendly footgear is de rigueur.



3 Chiricahua National Monument

Echo canyon loop

- Moderate
- 3.3-mile loop
- > 6,780-6,330 feet elevation
- > Chiricahua National Monument, (520) 824-3560
- > Trailhead is in the Chiricahua National Monument on Bonita Canyon Drive

The balanced rocks, totems and hoodoos along Heart of Rocks Trail may be the heart of Chiricahua National Monument, but the Echo Canyon Loop is surely its soul. Located in one of the state's most intriguing landscapes, the trail offers the monument's trademark scenery of light-colored lava ash welded into fantastic shapes, but then adds a spirit so contemplative and peaceful that it's no wonder the Apaches considered it sacred.

Sunset, Echo Canyon, Chiricahua National Monument. JACK DYKINGA
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.



4

Havasu Canyon

havasu trail

- > Moderate
- > 8 miles one-way
- > 5,200-2,600 feet elevation
- > Havasupai Tribe, (928) 448-2121
- > Trailhead is at the north end of Indian Route 18 off U.S. Route 66

The Supai Nation's world-renowned trail in western Grand Canyon leads to Arizona's Shangri-la, where Havasu Creek's blue-green waters cascade in free-verse poetry down red-walled cliffs at Havasu, Navajo and Mooney falls. But things only get better below the falls. Follow the creek's gemstone flow 2 more miles to Beaver Falls to experience the true character of this wild and wonderful world.

Navajo Falls, Havasu Canyon, Havasupai Indian Reservation. CHUCK LAWSEN
To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.



Kachina Peaks Wilderness, Coconino National Forest. TOM DANIELSEN
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com

Coconino National Forest

5

kachina trail

- > Moderate
- > 5 miles one-way
- > 9,800-8,900 feet elevation
- > Peaks Ranger District, (928) 526-0866
- > Trailhead is on Snow Bowl Road, off U.S. Route 180

Hiking up Humphreys Peak isn't the only way to experience Arizona's highest mountain. Hikers not ready for the challenging climb to the top can stick to Humphreys' midsection. The Kachina Trail, especially popular in autumn for aspen golds, shows off the many facets of the mountain—shadowed fir forests, wildflowered meadows and quivering aspen groves. This all comes, for most hikers, without the threat of altitude sickness imposed by climbing up the mountain's citadel.

Santa Catalina Mountains

6

romero trail

- > Difficult
- > 6.6 miles one-way
- > 2,800-6,000 feet elevation
- > Santa Catalina Ranger District, (520) 749-8700
- > Trailhead is located in Catalina State Park, 18 miles north of Tucson on State Route 77

Situated in the sky island Santa Catalina Mountains, this trail climbs from the desert floor at the edge of Tucson up to isolated Romero Pass in the pine-covered high country. The hike presents an incredible diversity of nature from its start among saguaro cacti to its ending among ponderosa pines. The sights include a flourish of more than a hundred different wildflower species after a wet winter, and a string of pools 3 miles in.

Romero Canyon, Santa Catalina Mountains, Coronado National Forest. RANDY PRENTICE
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com



Grand Canyon National Park

7 nankoweap trail

- > Difficult
- > 4 miles one-way
- > 6,500-8,800 feet elevation
- > North Kaibab Ranger District, (928) 643-7395
- > Trailhead is at the end of Forest Service Road 610

The views on this North Rim trail, off Forest Service Road 610 in the Saddle Mountain Wilderness, begin as soon as it starts its dicey tumble down the Kaibab Plateau. The path also reveals panoramas of some of the local geological wonders: Marble Canyon, Kaiparowits Plateau and dome-shaped Navajo Mountain. The grand finale comes at a sweeping overlook of the Grand Canyon at mile 2. From there, the trail loses its big-visuals impact but charms its way through an ancient ponderosa forest as it continues down a side canyon to its end at Forest Service Road 445.



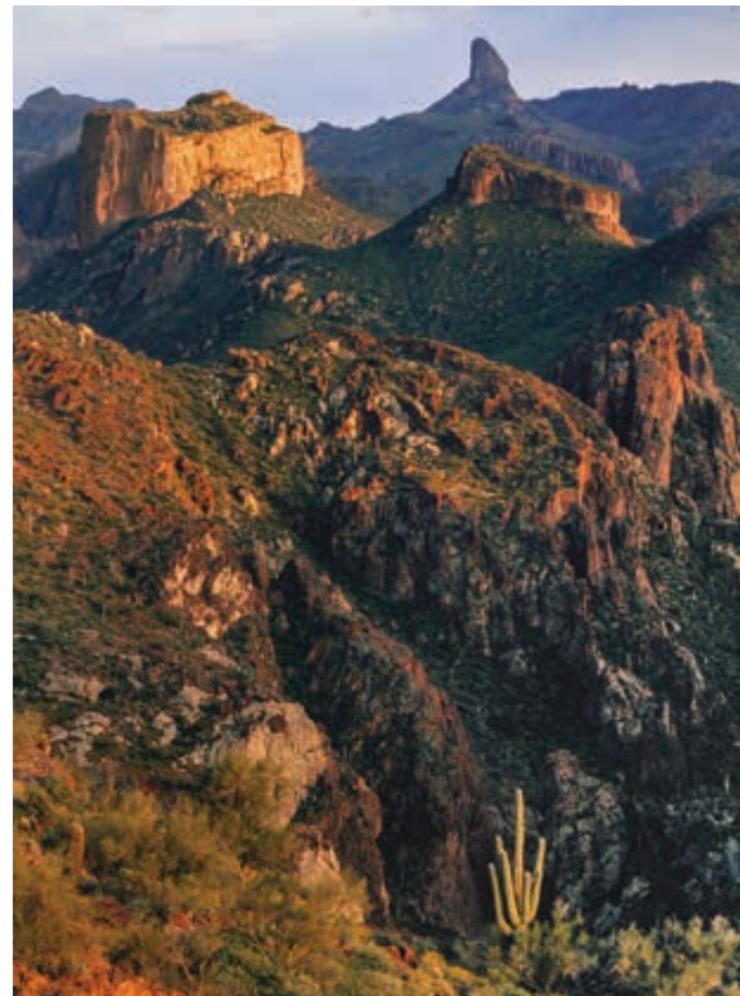
White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation

8 west baldy trail

- > Difficult
- > 7 miles one way
- > 9,000-11,200 feet elevation
- > Springerville Ranger District, (928) 333-4372
- > Trailhead is 9 miles south of State Route 260 on State Route 273

This trail starts in a picture-perfect meadow along the West Fork of the Little Colorado River near the serene base of the state's second-highest peak. After a couple miles' climb up Mount Baldy's steep slopes, the trail enters a fresh evergreen forest with wistful views of distant meadows. At the rocky top where the harsh elements shape the landscape, austerity mixes with sanctity. The very top of this peak remains off limits since it is a sacred spot to the White Mountain Apache Indians.

West Fork of the Little Colorado River, Mount Baldy Wilderness, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
ROBERT McDONALD
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.



Weavers Needle viewed from Labarge Creek Canyon along the Boulder Canyon Trail, in the Superstition Wilderness, Tonto National Forest. LARRY ULRICH
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.

Superstition Wilderness

9 boulder canyon trail

- > Moderate
- > 7.3 miles one-way
- > 1,680-2,300 feet elevation
- > Mesa Ranger District, (480) 610-3300
- > Trailhead begins at the parking lot of Canyon Lake Marina on State Route 88, 15 miles north of U.S. Route 60

The trail does not have the folkloric allure of the Peralta Trail, but what it lacks in legend it makes up for with an abundance of the Superstition Mountains' breathtaking geology, history and solitude. The path showcases striking scenes of Weavers Needle and other curious volcanic formations. Better yet, the trail drops into a gorgeous canyon containing old mines and, after a wet winter, the best diversity of wildflowers the Superstition Wilderness has to offer.



Volcanic peaks, teddy bear cholla cacti and ocotillos, in the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. GEORGE STOCKING
■ To order a print, call (866) 962-1191 or visit arizonahighways.com.

10

Kofa Mountains
kofa queen road

- > Easy
- > 3.75 miles one-way
- > 2,270 feet elevation
- > Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, (928) 783-7861
- > Trailhead is located on Kofa Queen Canyon Road, approximately 65 miles north of Yuma off U.S. Route 95

The Kofa Mountains, with their quirky ridgeline reeling with jagged peaks, provide a continuous show of scenery during this canyon hike named for the gold mine near the canyon's head. The multiuse road passes under imposing cliffs filled with needle-sharp spires, arches and small clefts. Deep in the canyon, quiescence settles around a curious monolith. As one of the dwindling number of places to hike cross-country, a trip inside the rough-hewn mountains doesn't necessarily have to end when the road does; just bring a map and a GPS. **AH**

Christine Maxa, who has written four Arizona hiking guides and revised the Arizona State Trails Guide, may be biased, but she thinks these 10 trails are the best ones in the world. She lives in Peeples Valley.

online Before you go on these hikes, find more places to see and things to do in our online archive at arizonahighways.com (Click on "Hikes Guide").

Hike the Rim of hope

by LEO W. BANKS

A terrible day leads to
a beautiful place
to fight leukemia

THE WORST DAY OF HIS LIFE led Alex Vargas Sr. to the most beautiful place on Earth. How he got to the Grand Canyon is a story of love and hope that has helped bring the entire Vargas family back to the eternal value of doing for others.

On that terrible day, October 30, 2004, doctors informed Alex and wife, Glorimary, that their then 13-year-old son, Alex Jr., had leukemia. For four months, he'd suffered pain in his hips that a string of doctors couldn't explain. At the end of her patience, Glorimary took Alex to the hospital where a doctor admitted the boy, and said he wouldn't release him until the problem had been diagnosed.

So Glorimary drove home to pack a suitcase, and while there, the doctor called with the results of Alex's blood tests.

"He started talking about white blood cell

photographs by DON B. and RYAN STEVENSON



counts and red blood cell counts, and I knew," says Glorimary, whose father had died of cancer in 1990, at the age of 45. "I just collapsed on the kitchen floor and started crying."

The news hit Alex Sr. hard, too. "It's like you're standing in the middle of the railroad tracks, and you see this train coming, and you can't move," says the 36-year-old father of three, a regional accounts manager for the Qwest phone company.

After briefly wondering why it had to happen to their son, the Vargases, of Chandler, got down to business. They began working the phones, doing research and educating themselves about chronic myelogenous leukemia, a form of the disease so rare in children that it occurs in only 2 to 4 percent of all childhood leukemia cases.

They even organized large bone marrow drives in Florida and Puerto Rico, where Glorimary grew up.

Those efforts, in turn, led them to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's innovative new fundraising program called Hike for Discovery, and that led Alex to the Rim of the Grand Canyon on a brilliant morning in May.

"Glorimary and I decided that the guy upstairs gave us this bump in the road for a reason, and it was to show us that we should help others, not just our son," says Alex, gazing into the great gorge from Mather Point. "That's why I'm here, and it feels really good to me. It feels like a mission accomplished."

The Hike for Discovery got its start in the winter of 2003. The idea's creators, Gene Taylor and his wife, Jo Ann, were walking out of the Canyon along Hermit Trail late one afternoon when they began talking about finding a way to use their knowledge, and the Canyon, to raise money for cancer research.

The Taylors operate a company called The Walking Connection, which organizes hiking adventures around the world.

The couple reached Hermit's Rest and looked back at where they'd been, admiring the sunset, the color and the majesty, and the idea quickly took shape in their minds.

"We decided to utilize our walking program and the magnificence of Arizona to raise money in a way that had never been done before," says Taylor. "The Canyon provided the inspiration, and we basically put together the whole program while sitting there."

Within six months, they were in partnership with the society, which began organizing last year's inaugural hike. The event drew 237 par-

Heartfelt Hike

Alex Vargas, second in line, hits the trail at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon along with other Hike for Discovery participants, who each raised a minimum of \$2,500. Proceeds from the hike support The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's cancer research.



Brotherly Love
Alex Vargas Jr., 14, front, hugged by his brother Sal, who never leaves his side, takes a new leukemia drug, which was tested thanks to a grant from The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

...the hike's benefits go beyond money raised. It brings together people who've lived with struggle, heartbreak and in some cases, painful loss.

ticipants from five of the society's chapters nationwide.

Each person raised at least \$2,500—or \$3,500 for those from chapters outside Arizona—by whatever means they chose. Their methods included fund-raising letters, phone-call appeals or putting on varied events such as charity softball games.

Those who raised the requisite amount, and engaged in a society-sponsored 15-week physical fitness training in preparation, were rewarded with the adventure of a lifetime, a hike into the Canyon or along its Rim, organized and guided by The Walking Connection.

Last year's hike grossed \$975,000. This year, the society expects to raise \$1.5 million with 700 to 800 hikers taking to the Canyon trail during four weekends in April and May.

"The 'Discovery' part of the title means that we're donating all the money to help discover cures for leukemia, lymphoma and other blood-related cancers," says Kate Giblin, the society's national campaign director. A grant from the society helped fund the research for a new leukemia drug called Gleevec. Alex Vargas Jr. takes Gleevec.

But the hike's benefits go beyond money raised. It brings together people who've lived with struggle, heartbreak and in some cases, painful loss. Yet each still finds the time and the will to press on toward a cure.

Javier Zuluaga got involved in the Hike for Discovery in the name of Michael Drake, his former football coach at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

Zuluaga and his wife, Gina, raised \$10,200 in Drake's name, the highest amount for the society's Desert Mountain Chapter, based in Phoenix.

"He was there so much for me at the academy, and I wanted to be there for him when he was going through a tough time," says Zuluaga, 34, who works at Security Title in Phoenix. "I was proud to have him as a coach then, and I'm proud to have him as a friend now."

Even though battling non-Hodgkins lymphoma, Drake, still in his 40s, planned to attend last year's hike with his wife and daughters. But the cancer attacked his brain and he couldn't travel, leaving his doctors no option but to treat symptoms.

Anticipating his good friend's death pained Zuluaga. But coming to the Grand Canyon helped fill his heart with gladness, too.

"I'm going to contemplate some of the good things Coach Drake did in people's lives," says Zuluaga. "Coach would want that. He was such a positive person, so low-

key and humble. It really touched him that so many people came together for him."

Virtually all the hikers tell similar stories—how the terror of cancer, either theirs or a loved one's, brought clarity to their lives, helping them understand what's most important.

Eileen Bobrow, a 63-year-old teacher and family therapist from the society's Palo Alto, California, chapter, stood at the Canyon Rim as a Hike Hero, so called by organizers because she has cancer and decided to hike in spite of it.

In fact, she underwent chemotherapy a few days before suiting up with her walking sticks, sun hat and sunscreen. Cat Hicks, 29, also from Silicon Valley, called Bobrow an inspiration to everyone.

"Can you imagine coming out here to hike after chemotherapy?" asks Hicks, who joined the Grand Canyon adventure for her goddaughter, suffering from acute lymphocytic leukemia. "It makes you realize that what you're going through in your own life isn't as drastic as you think."

Lives changed.

Lessons learned.

For Alex Vargas Jr., a handsome, shaggy-haired teen, there have been many lessons. He learned, for example, that his little brother, Sal, loves him a whole bunch.

When the diagnosis came, Sal, then 9, thought he might lose his brother, and didn't want to leave him behind in the hospital. And when Alex Jr. came home, Sal slept in the same bed with his big brother to keep him close.

Throughout his month-long stay at Phoenix Children's Hospital, during which he celebrated his 14th birthday, Alex Jr.'s Bible study group moved their meetings to his room. And his friends, frequent visitors, said that if he lost his hair, they'd all shave their heads, too.

These displays of love and support affected Alex Jr. deeply, sparking a change in his life-long plans. He said he always wanted to design cars for Ford or General Motors when he grew up. But his battle with leukemia changed his mind.

Now Alex wants to become an oncologist. As the brave youngster told his mom, "Who better to care for these patients than me." ■

Tucson-based Leo W. Banks used his time hiking at the Canyon with Alex Vargas Sr. to rediscover life's eternal verities.

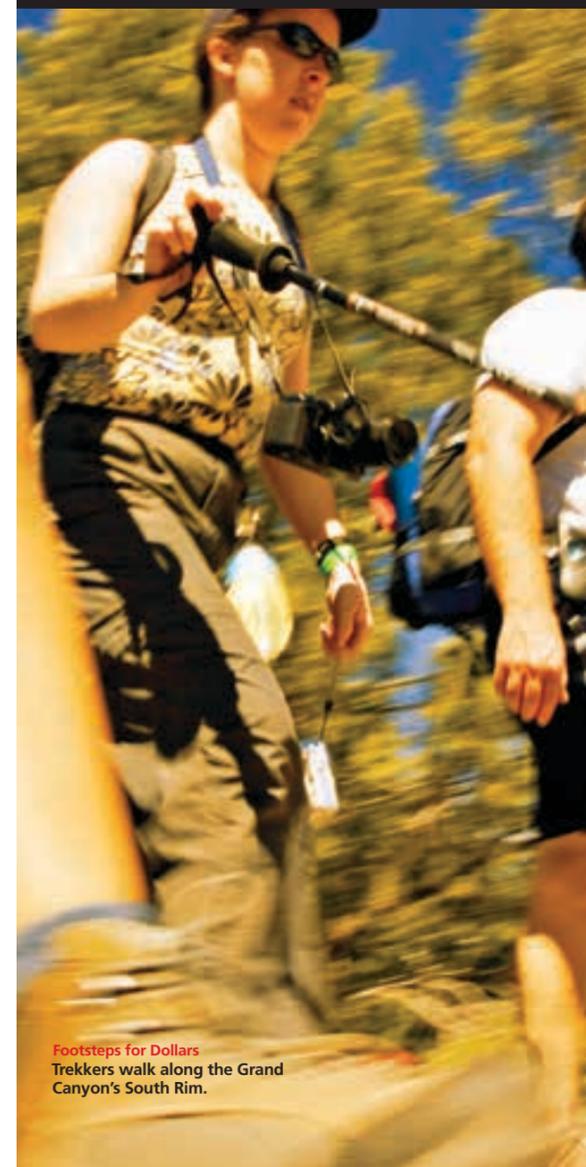
Father-and-son team Don B. and Ryan Stevenson of Tempe worked together on this intensely moving project. Both came away with a profound sense of love and deep respect for the patients and the hiker-supporters.

Hike for Discovery at the Grand Canyon

An adventure-style fund-raising program that actually trains participants to hike the famed chasm raised \$975,000 last year for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. This year's spring hike is scheduled for May 5-7, and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has opened the

program to 23 chapters nationwide in addition to the Phoenix chapter. Preparations for a fall hike gear up this August.

Hikers or sponsors should contact hike coordinator Lisa Bisciglia, (602) 788-8622, extension 13, or bisciglia@lls.org for details. To support Hike For Discovery online, go to www.hikefordiscovery.org/dm. You can select a hiker to sponsor from the Desert Mountain States Chapter and make an online donation.



Footsteps for Dollars
Trekking along the Grand Canyon's South Rim.



R.G. Harris' Illustrations Have Gone From Wildly Popular to Trash to Fine Art Find by Amy Abrams

When Robert G. Harris was 12, he had one of those moments of wildly impractical ambition and passion that would make most parents despair.

He was staring enraptured at the steely-eyed gunfighter and the busty endangered damsel in the pulp fiction magazine *Ace High*, when he said out loud, "Somebody has to do these illustrations, why not me?"

Little did he know that his adolescent moment of clarity would lead him to an improvised career as a starving artist, pulp icon, commercial illustrator, portrait painter and finally an abstract painter living in the altered West of his dreams.

And he owes it all to the pulp magazine art that once caused parental eyerolls, but now fuels a booming business among collectors and people seeking to understand the deep connection between art and our view of ourselves.

"Pulps," as they were often called, reigned in the 1930s and '40s as the most popular form of entertainment in the country. Long before television, these adventurous stories on cheap pulp paper captured the hearts of millions of Americans during the Great Depression. The Western pulps ruled the colorful genre.

Sold on newsstands, the pulps' cover art had to halt potential buyers in their tracks. "Competition was fierce among publications, so the cover needed to feature a stop-action image at a moment of crisis in the story, like a movie-still," explains Harris, still sharp and fit at 94 seated in his sunny home in Carefree.

Success required 20-by-30-inch canvases, brilliant colors squeezed straight from the tube, expert realist technique and a dramatic imagination. "You had to be a dreamer and a ham to paint these pictures," says Harris.

To snare the dime of a potential reader, illustrators depicted sultry distressed damsels,

PULP FICTION Dreams



Realizing a Boyhood Dream

Westerns became the most popular form of "pulp" literature. In 1934, Robert G. Harris created his first cover, opposite page, for *Thrilling Ranch Stories*. It fulfilled a childhood fantasy. Though not a cowboy, Harris, above in his studio, modeled for several paintings. The Kansas City native, now 94, has been listed in *Who's Who in the West*, and moved to Arizona to paint portraits and later retire.

Tough Guy
Harris painted from photographs, including ones of himself in highly dramatic poses, right.



courageous cowboy heroes, hissing rattlesnakes, growling mountain lions and gruff gunslingers. Each canvas needed space for titles like *Outlaws of the West* and intriguing headlines like “Trigger Man from Texas.”

Harris and his fellow pulp illustrators and writers helped define the Wild West by romanticizing rugged cowboy individualism and the inevitable triumph of good over evil. The pulps of the 1930s and 1940s followed in the hoof marks of railroad promoters and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows and prepared the ground for radio serials, television shows, Hollywood Westerns, country-and-western crooners and glamorous rodeo stars.

“We all love the idea of the cowboy,” says Kent Whipple, director of Meyer-Munson Gallery in Santa Fe, and an expert in the field. “But most of our images of the West are actually myth. The life of the cowboy was hard and dirty, often not at all glamorous.”

Ironically, only about 1,000 of the estimated 50,000 paintings commissioned for the pulps have survived.

The rest were burned, lost or stashed in garages decades before they were rediscovered and treasured as cultural icons. Prices of pulp cover paintings have soared in recent years. Going for as much as \$70,000, pulp art has made its way from newsstands to museums.

“Pulp paintings were spicy and saucy and often filled with sex and violence,” explains Robert Lesser, of New York, who owns the largest private collection of pulp paintings. “Not

the sort of images you wanted hanging in your living room like paintings of flowers or bowls of fruit. So, collectors veered away.”

The paintings Harris discarded or sold for a trifle would be worth a small fortune today. “Very few artists kept their paintings. I sure wish I had kept more of mine,” says Harris. “We’d give the completed canvases to the magazine’s art director. They’d pile up at the publishing house and you’d get a call: ‘If you don’t come for ‘em, we’ll burn ‘em.’ Most of the artists just didn’t have room for them. A lot of stuff burned.”

When Condé Nast bought pulp publisher Street & Smith in 1959, every artist was asked to retrieve his paintings from the largest collection of pulps ever saved. No takers. A small auction was held. No

Romantic Inspiration
After their marriage in 1935, Harris used his wife, Marjorie, right, as a model for the stories’ damsels—swooning in distress or toting her own shotgun. Harris became known for his depictions of beautiful women and romantic scenes.



buyers. Condé Nast finally offered the paintings to their employees, for free; no, thanks. So, the publishing house put the canvases in the garbage.

Over the past 15 years, collectors have clamored for these campy canvases as well as vintage pulp magazines by scouring flea markets, bargaining with book, art and antique dealers and attending pulp magazine and comic book conventions. The market for pulp magazines is strongest for famous authors, like Ray Bradbury, Raymond Chandler, Zane Grey, Dashiell Hammett, Louis L’Amour and Tennessee Williams.

After some success in the pulps, Harris shifted his efforts to the “slicks,” the larger circulation, slicker paper, higher paying publications.

“I landed my first ‘slicks’ commission from the *Saturday Evening Post*,” recalls Harris. “With the *Post* exposure, the door was instantly thrown wide open. Commissions came in from *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *McCall’s*. Advertising accounts followed. “It’s hard to believe,” continues Harris with sentimental tears in his eyes. “I was just a kid out of Kansas City.”

Born in 1911 in Kansas City, Missouri, to a modest and loving family, Harris never wanted to be a cowboy, but he always wanted to paint them. He graduated from high school and headed for New York where he was mentored by Kansas City Art Institute illustration teacher Monte Crews, who taught the techniques of Norman Rockwell and Walter Biggs.

When he graduated from art school, the young Harris played the part of “cowboy” to get commissions.

“My first time interviewing with a Western pulp art director, at *Thrilling Ranch*, was not a meeting I left to chance. I needed all the ammunition that was available. I thought if I looked like a cowboy it might carry some weight. I had a Western hat, a Tommy Grimes rodeo model, all black, and a 10-gallon size. The art director accepted my Western attire as authentic and the sketches pleased him to the point of buying two.”

Harris soon gave up the cowboy costume for sales calls, but often dressed up to serve as his own model. “The mirror is the most wonderful gadget an artist ever had,” muses Harris. When he married his wife, Marjorie, in 1935, yup—you guessed it: She posed as the notorious damsel in distress. At nearby stables, he snapped photographs of horses and riding equipment for his paintings.

The couple moved to the outskirts of New York City to raise their two children. As Harris’ career accelerated, the constant deadlines took their toll even as photography and television drove the pulps into the sunset.

Harris already loved the West, thanks to a couple of motorcycle trips and jaunts in his own airplane to northern Arizona. So when a friend helped him land portrait commissions in Arizona, the dreams of a 12-year-old came full circle. Harris went West.

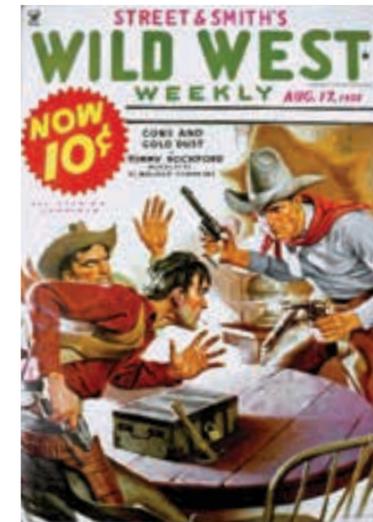
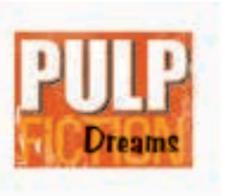
In 1953, the Harris family settled into a home on the slope of Camelback Mountain in Scottsdale. “If I showed you a picture of that view, you’d cry,” says Harris. As the population boomed, they moved north to Carefree.

After a second successful career as a portrait painter, the ever-innovative Harris took another bold leap and turned his talent to abstract painting. “After so many years of painting pictures that were very disciplined and directed, I enjoyed the freer style,” he says.

Although Harris hung up his brush in 1989, his work is still sought out by collectors, art dealers and admirers.

Not bad for a 12-year-old with an unrealistic dream and a taste for pulps. **AH**

Amy Abrams of Tempe can be found rummaging through the dusty shelves of used magazine shops for Western pulp magazines.



The Art of an Era
Pulps are enjoying a resurgence in museums and private collections, including a new paperback line, *Hard Case Crime*. But Harris was a player in the true heyday of the pulps. He created more than 50 covers for *Wild West Weekly*, a publication by Street & Smith, which also put out *Doc Savage*.

Closing a Chasm



I'D WANTED TO hike to the floor of the Grand Canyon since my first walk into the chasm several years ago. Once I'd dropped below the Rim, the Canyon had me hooked. Wrapped in its colorful striped walls, I felt compelled to explore more of that wonderland and see the Colorado River up close. And I wanted to hike with my two daughters.

They'd grown apart, and I was partly to blame. When they argued, I intervened. When they moved hundreds of miles apart—Karen to Phoenix and Becky to Delaware—I became their phone line: "Tell Karen . . ." or "Tell Becky. . ." I'd stood between them for years, and they became unwilling to communicate. I hoped the hike would give us a fresh start.

Becky and I met Karen in Phoenix on April 1 a couple of years ago. "It's snowing in Flagstaff and raining in the Canyon," she said.

"April Fools," I said.

Becky and I were unprepared for rain, and Karen's car was unprepared for snow. We bought rain gear, but searching for tire chains was like looking for the Dutchman's gold. So we rented a four-wheel-drive SUV.

Even so, Flagstaff's snow nearly stopped us. Karen balked, afraid to continue, but she was outvoted. On we went.

The next morning, at the South Kaibab Trailhead, weighted with packs and garbed against the cold, we grouped for a photo. I stood beside, not between, my daughters, an unintentional arrangement, but symbolic of what I had to do.

Wispy clouds drifted over the expanse and cast shadows on temples and terraces. As we descended off the Rim, a sharp wind blasted us and a juniper whose armlike branches clung to a boulder. Though comical, the tree nevertheless survived its uncompromising world, where I wished for compromise.

Each switchback of the red-dust trail unveiled new delights, like ship-shaped O'Neill Butte, the river appearing as a snippet of

green ribbon far below, a spray of yellow prince's plume, and the toilet building at the Tipoff, the inner Canyon's Rim. There, we lunched and rested before the last and hardest section.

During our bone-jarring descent into the Canyon, a sinewy man in tank top and shorts ran by us toward the river. Resentment trampled our astonishment. He nimbly descended the Canyon wall, while our shaky legs screamed "Quit!"

We hobbled across the bridge to the river's north side. As we stood there relishing level ground, too sore and tired to celebrate, the returning runner approached us again. "I think we should trip him," said Karen. Consensus at last!

After a damp night in our tent and waking to a drizzly dawn, we decided to inquire about Phantom Ranch availability. We wanted to be well-rested for the 10-mile Bright Angel Trail the next day. We were in luck. Ice at the Rim forced last-minute cancellations. Becky booked us a cabin, and Karen came within a mule's whisker of hugging her. They agreed to share the expense.

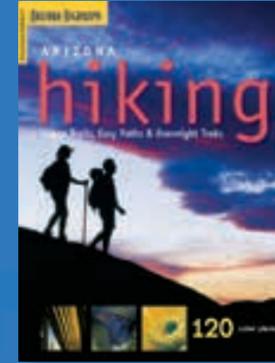
They also cooperated when they gave some Phantom Ranch kids the pound of candy we didn't want in our packs and when they kept me from dumping—a park no-no—our excess gorp. Opposition never felt so good.

And they showed they cared. Becky climbed to her cabin bunk via the windowsill, lost her grip, and fell against the window. It shattered, and Becky landed barefoot in a pool of shards. Karen insisted on checking her for cuts. Hiking out, Becky carried the heaviest pack to spare Karen's painful knees, but I became testy.

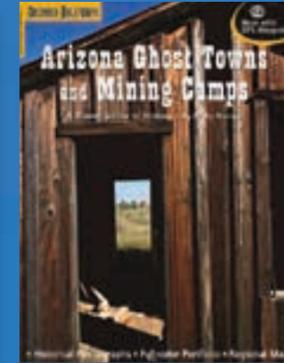
A squirrel crawled onto my hat, while I reclined by the trail. Karen shouted a warning. "Don't let him on me," I sputtered. "I didn't see him coming," she said. The tension vanished as quickly as the squirrel, as we laughed my hat "ornament."

Now my daughters share their lives. They stay in touch and get together. And I stand proudly beside them, for they outdid the Colorado River. They closed a chasm. ■■

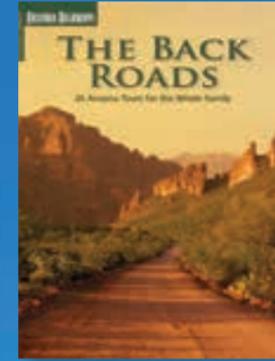
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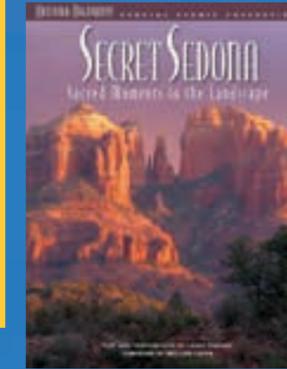
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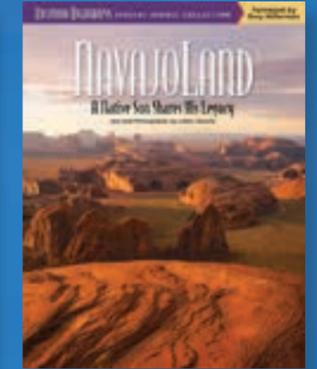
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Tour the White House (Ruins)

THEY SAY WOMEN HAVE a way of knowing. However, they don't say what it is we're supposed to know. My search for knowing took me across the Navajo Nation, where I decided to take the steep 2.5-mile round-trip trail that descends 600 feet into

STONE SANDWICH

With double-sided, flat-stone walls sandwiching rubble filling, White House Ruins mimic a style first seen in New Mexico's Chaco Canyon Great Pueblos.

Canyon de Chelly to the ancient White House Ruins. But it wasn't the cliff dwelling that had captured my imagination. I wanted to walk in the footsteps of the women who had once used this trail to move sheep in and out of the canyon along this pathway, the name of which in Navajo means "Woman's Trail Up."

I started the descent along the slippery sandstone. The rock rippled out like the ancient sea that laid down these layered sandstone beds more

than 200 million years ago.

After a few feet of this slick, shallow descent, I came to the steeper trail into the canyon. Here and there, benches perched along the narrow curves offered a moment's respite from the moderately strenuous walk. Stunted junipers twisted out of the rock. Prickly pear, snakeweed, sumac, sagebrush and narrow-leaf yucca thickened as I approached the canyon bottom. Soaring high on all sides, wide expanses of rippled red reached up to touch the cerulean sky.

Off to the left, a fence protected a hogan surrounded with signs warning against unwanted photographs. The sandy path curved forward, hemmed in with thick brush, where pieces of white fleece from passing sheep dangled in the branches.

I walked across a narrow wooden bridge spanning the water that helped to carve out the canyon and rounded one last curve to find myself faced with the majesty of a long-lost culture. With 60 rooms in the lower section and another 20 tucked away in the cliff, this ancestral Puebloan structure housed as many as 100 people between A.D. 1060 and 1275. I watched

the sun cut deep shadows along the walls and mused at the pictograph fish swimming high overhead in a sandstone sea, before turning to retrace

when you go

Location: 220 miles northeast of Flagstaff.

Getting There: From Flagstaff, take Interstate 40 east to U.S. Route 191. Turn left (north) onto U.S. 191 and drive approximately 80 miles to Chinle. Turn right onto Indian Route 7 and drive 2 miles to the Canyon de Chelly National Monument visitors center. Turn right and follow the South Rim Drive 5.9 miles to the White House Overlook.

Travel Advisory: Spring and fall are the best seasons to hike the trail. Carry plenty of water.

Additional Information: Canyon de Chelly National Monument, (928) 674-5500.



DEFENSIVE DEN

Dwarfed by the patina-streaked walls of Canyon de Chelly, the fortresslike ruins nestle in the security of its defensive position.

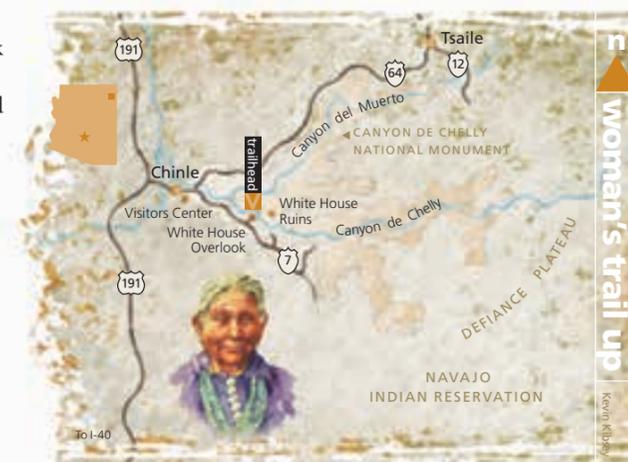
my path back up to the rim.

The silent solitude brought me closer to my own nature as I began the ascent. I walked with my head down, caught in the reflection of the trip and nearly stumbled over a scruffy sheep dog sidestepping my path. I knew dogs weren't allowed on the trail and so looked up to warn the owner.

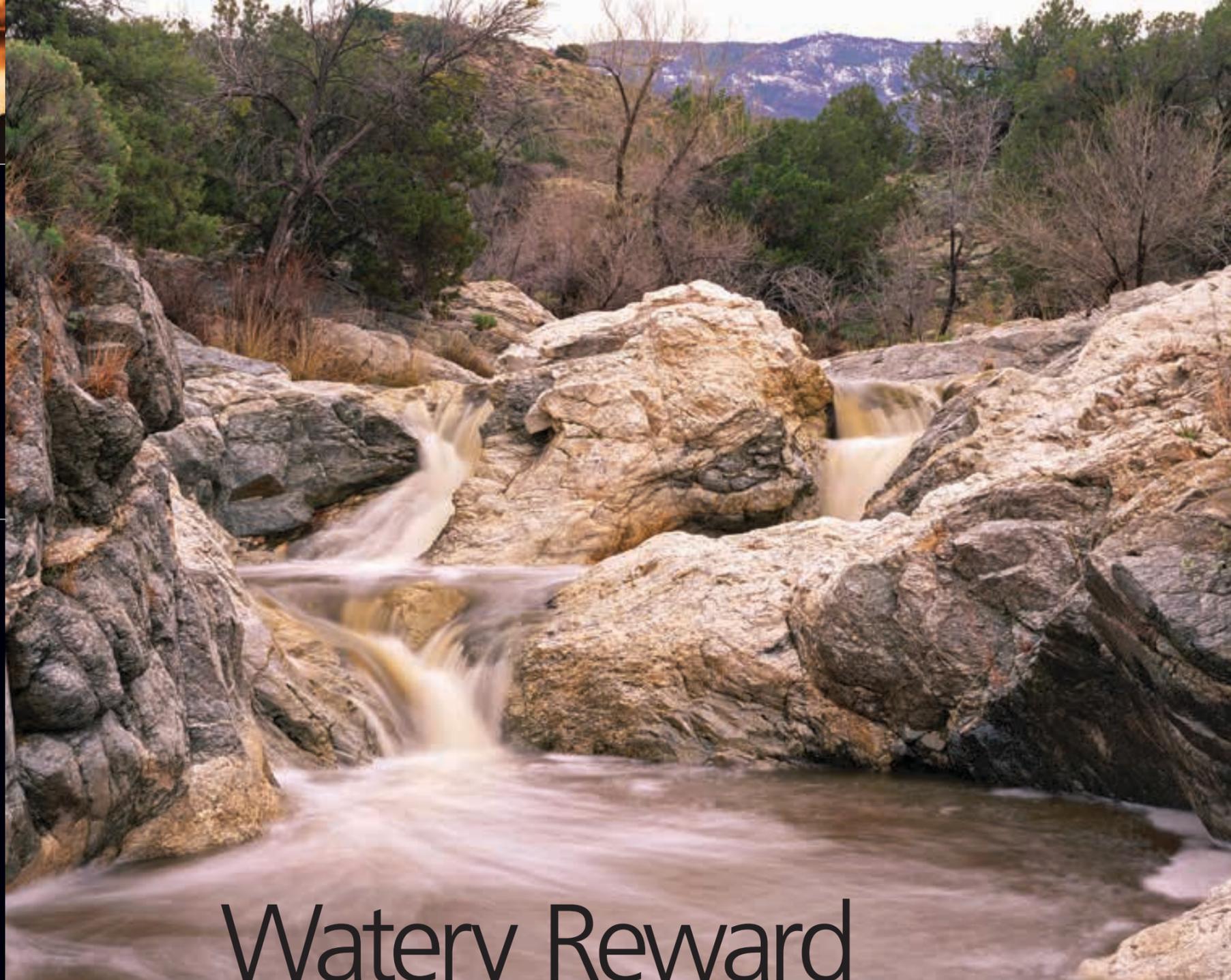
An elderly Navajo woman met my gaze. Her solemn dark brown eyes watched me from her wizened face as she picked her way past me. Red skirts swirled around bent limbs and a blue scarf covered her head from the afternoon sun.

I struggled to say hello in Navajo, but the end result sounded like I was choking on ice chips.

She chuckled, nodded and continued on. She'd already been up. Now it was my turn. **AH**



online Before you go on this hike, visit arizonahighways.com for other things to do and places to see in this area. You'll also find more hikes in our archive.



Watery Reward

In Season, the Jarring Drive to Chivo Falls Pays Off

AS I WATCHED the long, silver ribbons of rain splatter against the wind shield, I remembered my wife's words of wisdom, "Be careful what you ask for." Now, sitting in my truck, listening to the soft rumble of Chivo Falls and knowing we had to cross an ever-deepening stream to make it back to Tucson, I realized what she meant.

For weeks prior to my planned trip to Chivo Falls in spring 2004, I had been hoping for rain and snow. Snow-capped and rain-saturated winter mountains followed by a dramatic spring heat wave causes streams to swell, their usual languid water turning into rushing torrents. This is how I wanted to

capture the essence of hard-to-get-to Chivo Falls.

While exploring the Sonoran Desert for almost 20 years, I have found nothing that kindles my inner spirit like a desert waterfall. They are so infrequent, so seemingly out of place, so beautiful.

This time, I got what I asked for, and more.

Nestled in the shadows of Mica Mountain in the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson, Chivo Falls received a few wonderful storms early in the year. The week prior to the trip, the temperatures rose towards 90 degrees. Perfect. I didn't foresee (neither did the weather forecasters) the storms that rolled in

SWOLLEN STREAM

Enhanced by unusually heavy rainfall, Tanque Verde Creek rushes over and around granite boulders near Chivo Falls.

the morning of our trip.

The sun had yet to rise on an overcast morning when I met photographer Randy Prentice and friends Scott Duecker and Luis Rodriguez at the intersection of Catalina Highway and Tanque Verde Road. We set off toward the thickly shrouded mountains with Luis in Scott's rugged four-wheel-drive vehicle and Randy with me in my new pickup truck.

We drove east on Tanque Verde Road for 8 miles. The smooth pavement becomes a well-graded dirt road as it turns into Redington Road, which meanders through

the pass of the same name between the Catalina and Rincon mountains. The morning light filtered through the ripening clouds as we started our ascent up the winding dirt route. After 1.4 miles, we passed the parking area for Lower Tanque Verde Falls, one of the best hikes for Tucson water-seekers.

We continued up the pass, spellbound at times by the early morning view of Tucson, the predawn lights twinkling like jewels on the desert floor. At 8 miles, we turned onto Forest Service Road 4417. I put my truck into four-wheel drive and

started down the trail.

Immediately, the trail threw its worst at us as we climbed over boulders and dropped over cliffs. Clearly, only a well-equipped four-wheel drive with high clearance and an experienced offroad driver should attempt this road.

We bumped and gnawed along for 2.75 miles until we reached the junction of FR 4417 and FR 4426. A right turn to stay on FR 4417 leads back to Redington Road—an even more treacherous trail than the one we came in on. We continued straight onto Forest Service Road 4426 toward Chivo Falls. After a half-mile, we stopped for a break at the weathered remains of an old structure and corral, allegedly once part of a stagecoach line.

Immediately after the ruin, we turned right onto Forest Service Road 4405 at the fork and came face to face with our first water crossing.

Directly in our path, Tanque Verde Creek and a tributary converged and rushed past, deeper than I had ever seen it.

We dubiously surveyed our intended path, then made the crossing with only inches

SUNBATHING SAGUAROS
Saguaro cacti, bathed in light from the rising sun, claim a hillside south of Redington Pass.



travel tips

Vehicle Requirements: Accessible only by high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Warning: Back-road travel can be hazardous. Be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return.

Additional Information: Coronado National Forest, Santa Catalina Ranger District, (520) 749-8700; www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado.

back road adventure

between the dry truck interior and the icy snowmelt.

The last three-quarters of a mile through Joaquin Canyon to Chivo Falls was brutal, with the boulder-strewn road punishing my kidneys. Then the sky finally let loose its wet contents in buckets. We stopped, less than half a mile from the falls and waited for the rain to end, although the roar of the falls beckoned.

Be careful what you ask for.

The words were coming back to haunt me.

After an hour of waiting, we decided to ignore the sheets of rain and hike the remaining distance to the falls—it was what we had come to see.

Chivo Falls was entrancing. Water, rock and spray mingling in the pool below created the continuous rumble of distant thunder. It was more than I had asked for.

After too short a visit, the thunder overhead encouraged us to race back to the trucks and set off for a series of small falls and pools a mile northeast on Tanque Verde Creek from the ruin. Our concern about making it back

MUD BUGGIES
Four-wheelers take advantage of rain-boosted water levels and slosh through Tanque Verde Creek.



across the creek before the rain made the crossing impassable overpowered our desire to stay.

The rain stopped before we reached the pools, and we ate lunch in the back of my truck under a clearing sky. We retraced our steps back to FR 4417 and were all relieved when we made the last water crossing. We each took a deep breath before we battled the trail again back to Redington Road.

Once back to the relatively smooth surface of Redington Road, we headed west, back toward Tucson and our final stop. Between the upper and lower Tanque Verde Falls parking areas, a short hiking trail leads to a breathtaking overlook of the falls. I could feel my body tense as we came upon the cliff's ledge. Even from a few hundred feet above and a third of a mile away, I could hear the powerful roar of the falls. I could almost feel the spray on my face. Amazingly, atop the rock precipice leaning into the canyon, the view was a more commanding sight than Chivo Falls.

We rode in silence for the remaining few miles back to our starting point, each reflecting on the day's events.

Maybe I should be more specific about what I wish for. But, as we parted ways with friendly handshakes and a little relief at making it back safely, I decided not to take my wife's advice. That would take all the fun out of it. **AH**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many readers in the Tucson area know this location as "Chiva" Falls, not Chivo Falls. The U.S. Geological Survey lists the name Chivo Falls, which is, interestingly enough, next to Chiva Tank (with the "a"), a spelling also listed by the USGS.

DIZZYING DROP
Disregarding the danger of shaky footholds and unpredictable water depth, more than 30 people have lost their lives at triple-tiered Tanque Verde Falls, right, a site to enjoy with caution.

route finder

Note: Mileages and GPS coordinates are approximate.

- > **Begin in Tucson** at Tanque Verde Road and Catalina Highway intersection.
- > **Drive east** on Tanque Verde Road for 8 miles; Tanque Verde becomes Redington Road as it heads into the Rincon Mountains.
- > **After another 4 miles**, drive past the first turnoff to Forest Service Road 4417 (the western terminus) and continue approximately another 4 miles to the northern terminus of FR 4417, which is a rough jeep trail requiring high clearance and four-wheel drive. (32°18.13 N; 110°35.84 W)
- > **Turn right on FR 4417** and drive 2.75 miles to the intersection with Forest Service Road 4426.
- > **Continue on FR 4426** for about a half-mile to an old ruin; after passing the ruin, turn right onto Forest Service Road 4405. Drive across Tanque Verde Creek (in rainy season, can be dangerously flowing); continue about three-quarter miles to Chivo Falls. (32°15.52 N; 110°35.75 W)
- > **To return to Tucson**, retrace this route to Redington Road and then to Tanque Verde Road.



