

Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

DECEMBER 2008

THE 7 Wonders of Arizona

A WINTER PORTFOLIO

Featuring the words of Larry McMurtry, Terry Tempest Williams,
Tony Hillerman, Bill Geist, Clive Cussler, David Roberts & Diana Ossana

Historic Blizzard:
NAVAJO RESERVATION

IRONWOOD FOREST
NATIONAL MONUMENT

Backcountry Skiing:
SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS

Features

14 Winter Wonderland

Spectacular portfolios are pretty typical in this magazine. For this one, which features the seven natural wonders of Arizona, we've included the words of seven writers who are every bit as impressive as the photos. EDITED BY KELLY KRAMER

36 Another Natural Wonder

Ragged Top Mountain is the geological crown jewel of Ironwood Forest National Monument, but the tree for which the park is named tells an even greater story. The ironwoods, which can live to be 800 years old, are survivors, flourishing in wet times and dying back during droughts. They are, as our writer points out, a more honest symbol of the culture of the Sonoran Desert than the saguaros that live on a million postcards. BY CHARLES BOWDEN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID MUENCH

42 It's All Downhill

Like hitting the slopes at Snowbowl or Sunrise, the best thing about backcountry skiing is the ride down — it's all about the race to the bottom. Unlike traditional resorts, however, there aren't any chairlifts in the outback. BY WILL WATERMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN B. STEVENSON

48 Manna From Heaven

In December 1931, Northern Arizona looked more like Siberia than a backdrop in a John Wayne Western — drifts up to 15 feet high blocked roads and left thousands of Navajos and Hopis on the brink of starvation. Many would have died if it weren't for the six Army planes that dropped 32,000 pounds of food and supplies into random snow banks across the reservations. BY LEO BANKS

Departments

2 EDITOR'S LETTER

3 CONTRIBUTORS

4 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

5 THE JOURNAL

People, places and things from around the state, including a cozy place to spend the holidays, one of Arizona's most important sculptors, and the 50th anniversary of Scottsdale's iconic ice cream parlor.

52 BACK ROAD ADVENTURE

Rock Springs to Cordes: Looking for a Sunday drive? This quiet road is slow-going, scenic and not far from a delicious piece of apple pie.

54 HIKE OF THE MONTH

Lost Dog Wash: There aren't a lot of places in Metro Phoenix where you can disconnect from the city. This trail in the McDowell Mountains is one of the few.

56 WHERE IS THIS?



GRAYING GRACEFULLY Every juniper has a silver lining of hoarfrost after snow settles in Monument Valley. Photograph by Jack Dykinga
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see information below.

FRONT COVER The sunrise gleams through ponderosa pines in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Photograph by Morey K. Milbradt
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see information below.

BACK COVER Skiers trudge up the San Francisco Peaks with their telemark skis. Photograph by Ryan B. Stevenson

Photographic Prints Available

■ Prints of some photographs in this issue are available for purchase, as designated in captions. To order, call 866-962-1191 or visit arizonahighwaysprints.com.



JEFF KIDA

If you think it's tough skiing downhill, try going uphill — through the woods. See page 42.



RYAN B. STEVENSON

WE HAD A HARD TIME GETTING IN touch with Larry McMurtry. Writers with Oscars, Pulitzers and Golden Globes on their mantels aren't usually hanging out at Starbucks or Einstein's. Our plan was to get his thoughts on Arizona: What inspires him? How has the state influenced his writing? Those kinds of things. Kelly Kramer was our writer, and she did everything

she could, but it wasn't happening. So, she put him on hold and called Diana Ossana, who, coincidentally, co-wrote the screenplay for *Brokeback Mountain* with Larry McMurtry, the movie for which they won their Oscars.

Diana Ossana is another gifted writer — she lives in Tucson — and we wanted Kelly to ask her the same questions. During their conversation, Larry's name kept coming up, and Kelly finally mentioned that she'd been having a hard time connecting with him. "Hang on a second," Diana said. "He's in the other room. Let me see if he'll talk to you right now." That's when Kelly overheard: "Lar, I'm talking to a young lady from *Arizona Highways*. Can she ask you a few questions?" It took some sweet-talking, but Kelly got the interview, and then finished her chat with Diana. After that, she talked to Tony Hillerman, Clive Cussler, David Roberts, Terry Tempest Williams and Bill Geist.

All seven writers are featured in this month's cover story. We figured that if we were going to showcase the seven natural wonders of Arizona, we needed commentary from seven writers who are equally impressive, and these are some of the very best. Of course, words are only half of the story. Along with the writers' insights, we feature 22 pages of stunning photography. That's not unusual for us, but when the portfolio is zeroed in on the state's most beautiful places... well, this piece is something special.

As you'll see, most of the photos feature snow. There's even a rare shot of the white stuff at Havasu Falls, which, despite last summer's flood, is still one of the state's seven natural wonders. The other six were easy picks, too. Narrowing it down was the hard part, and no doubt some of you will be asking: Where's Canyon de Chelly? What about Kartchner Caverns? Where are

the Chiricahuas? Good questions, but we had to draw the line somewhere, and this is our version of the magnificent seven. If you'd like to plead your case for those that didn't make the cut, we've cleared out plenty of space in our e-mail inbox.

Perhaps some of you will argue for Ironwood Forest National Monument. It's not as familiar as the Grand Canyon or Sedona, but its namesake is the elder statesman of the Sonoran Desert. As Charles Bowden writes in *Another Natural Wonder*, "There are ironwood trees in the monument that first bloomed when the Magna Carta was being signed and Genghis Khan was exploding out of the grasses of Mongolia into the nightmares of Asia and Europe."

The trees are more than just old, though. They're also considered a keystone species. Chuck, who ranks with the writers in our cover story, explains it much better than I, but essentially, it means that more than 500 life forms benefit from the ironwoods' existence. The trees are the lifeline of the ecosystem, and because of their own ability to survive — flourishing in wet times and dying back during droughts — life goes on in this natural wonder. On the surface, an essay about gnarly old trees might seem a little cerebral, but this is one of the best stories you'll ever read. It's a survival story. The first of two in this issue. The second takes place in Northern Arizona.

Like the ironwoods, Native Americans have learned to survive the extremes of Mother Nature, and the winter of 1931 was one of the biggest tests. That year, it snowed for months. Drifts up to 15 feet high blocked roads and left many Navajos, Hopis, Utes and Zunis without food. At the time, Superintendent John Hunter of the Fort Defiance Indian Agency estimated that 16,000 Navajos were at risk. "It's hell, that's all," he told reporters.

In *Manna From Heaven*, you'll learn about the storm and the six Army planes that dropped 32,000 pounds of food and supplies into random snowbanks across the reservations. It reads like a scene from McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*, or maybe a Hillerman novel. Either way, it's a story with a happy ending, which seems appropriate this time of year. Happy holidays, and thanks for spending another year with *Arizona Highways*.

— Robert Stieve
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CONTRIBUTORS



CHARLES BOWDEN

Although he's been writing for about 30 years, longtime Tucsonan Charles Bowden says that's not the profession he thought he'd end up in. "I was down to 50 bucks in my pocket and needed money," he says. "I never knew I'd fall in love with it." When Bowden visited Ironwood Forest National Monument (see *Another Natural Wonder*, page 36), he says he gained his inspiration from the tree's ability to survive in such a harsh environment. "In an inarticulate organism like this one, I had to imagine what it was like being them in order to truly understand them." In addition to *Arizona Highways*, Bowden also writes for *GQ*, *Esquire* and *National Geographic*.



RYAN B. STEVENSON

While shooting *It's All Downhill* (page 42), Ryan Stevenson flew solo for the first time. That is, he worked without the accompaniment of his photographer father. And it wasn't always easy. "There was a fresh blanket of snow, and when the skiers started coming down the hill, I sank about waist-deep, so that I could hardly move," Stevenson says. "It took me a couple of minutes to get free and keep my camera equipment up. I had the same problem the whole day." In addition to *Arizona Highways*, Stevenson's work has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic*, the *Arizona Daily Sun* and *The Arizona Republic*.



LEAH DURAN

A native of Connecticut, Leah Duran had never been to the Sugar Bowl before writing this month's dining piece (page 7). "I was struck most by its inherent simplicity, the great food, prices and service," she says. "It was a wonderful slice of local history and a nice change of pace from the hectic nature of day-to-day life." She was also impressed with the staff's effort to create a family-friendly atmosphere. "The owner was very helpful, and I got the impression he really cared about what he was doing," Duran says. In addition to *Arizona Highways*, Duran has also written for *SPIN* magazine and the Cronkite News Service.



MOREY K. MILBRADT

Morey Milbradt was raised on a dairy farm in Minnesota. He's been a photographer for almost two decades, but until six years ago, he also worked as a crane operator on construction sites. "I guess I sort of stumbled into photography," he says, "and I've been self-taught ever since. While shooting the Sugar Bowl for *The Journal* (page 7), he faced some real challenges. "Capturing the ambience of the restaurant was easy," he says. "I got stuck when it came to choosing which flavor of ice cream I wanted." In addition to *Arizona Highways*, Milbradt's work has appeared in *National Geographic* and *Reader's Digest*.



Reality Check

I want to thank you for the *Endangered Arizona* article in your August 2008 issue. It's obvious that people from all over the world love and appreciate the glorious places revealed in your magazine. Although reality sometimes hurts, knowledge of how these places are threatened can inspire us to find ways to protect them. Good work!

Diana Minton, Arcata, California

Mad Scientist

Of the 12 areas mentioned in your piece [*Endangered Arizona*, August 2008], I'd like to comment on one: uranium exploration in areas outside of Grand Canyon National Park. I'm aware of at least one public meeting in Flagstaff (there have probably been many) where there wasn't a balanced discussion of the impact of uranium exploration/development. The geologists at that meeting, those who support exploration, were trivialized by the opposition. The point that's never brought up is that the environmental impact of this mining (extremely rich ore concentrated in very small areas) is controllable. Economic "pipes" associated with this ore are few and far between. In terms of threats to

wildlife, there's no comparison to the wildlife devastation that accompanies windmill and solar farms. Windmill farms are known for the destruction of the larger birds of prey. It's thought that windmill farms in Northern California kill several thousand raptors per year (golden eagles and red-tailed hawks are high on the list of casualties). I guess those deaths are for a good cause, so we don't hear about the downside of that green energy source. As long as uranium mining is conducted in a responsible manner outside of the park area, I have to disagree with the message of death and destruction associated with uranium mining that's implied in your article.

E.V. Reed, geophysicist, Tucson

Singing Her Praises

Thank you, and kudos to Ms. Lisa Schnebly Heidinger and Joel Grimes for their outstanding article [*One for the Books*] in your August [2008] issue. It brought back memories of several visits to the bookstore, and of Winn Bundy herself. The story had just the right touch. It even took note of the nonsaging mesquite bookshelves. Singing Wind Bookshop is one of Arizona's many treasures.

Ken Berge, Rochester, Minnesota

Thanks Again and Again

I've been getting your magazine for 15 years. We live in California and give a gift subscription to our son who lives in Litchfield Park. Ironically, we get your magazine as a Christmas present from an aunt who lives in Prescott. Go figure. We're also birders who visit your state every spring, if not more. Anyway, so much for our background. Thanks for

putting the little Arizona map back in the front showing where your articles are located. Thanks for the "Photography" page in *The Journal* — I love the hints, especially about the waterfalls. Thanks for showing photos and giving some background on the contributing authors and photographers. I find this very informative, and it makes the articles/photos more interesting knowing who wrote/photographed them. And thanks for such a great magazine with such awesome pictures. We keep some, and give others to friends and relatives when we're done.

Patricia Shoupe, Frazier Park, California

Old Favorites in the Old Pueblo

Ah, the restaurant memories. While I'm sure you've heard from readers protesting your exclusion of their favorite restaurant, for me, the April [2008] issue featuring your 25 favorite restaurants created a much different response. As a freshman at the University of Arizona in 1960, I lived with my 82-year-old great aunt. Every week we'd dine out at her two favorite Tucson restaurants, The Lariat and Buffem's Family Restaurant. Unfortunately, these personal old favorites have been consigned to Tucson's restaurant history but will forever remain in the fond "pigment" of my imagination.

Ron Rincker, Harbor Springs, Michigan

contact us

If you have thoughts or comments about anything in Arizona Highways, we'd love to hear from you. We can be reached at editor@arizonahighways.com, or by mail at 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85009. For more information, visit arizonahighways.com.

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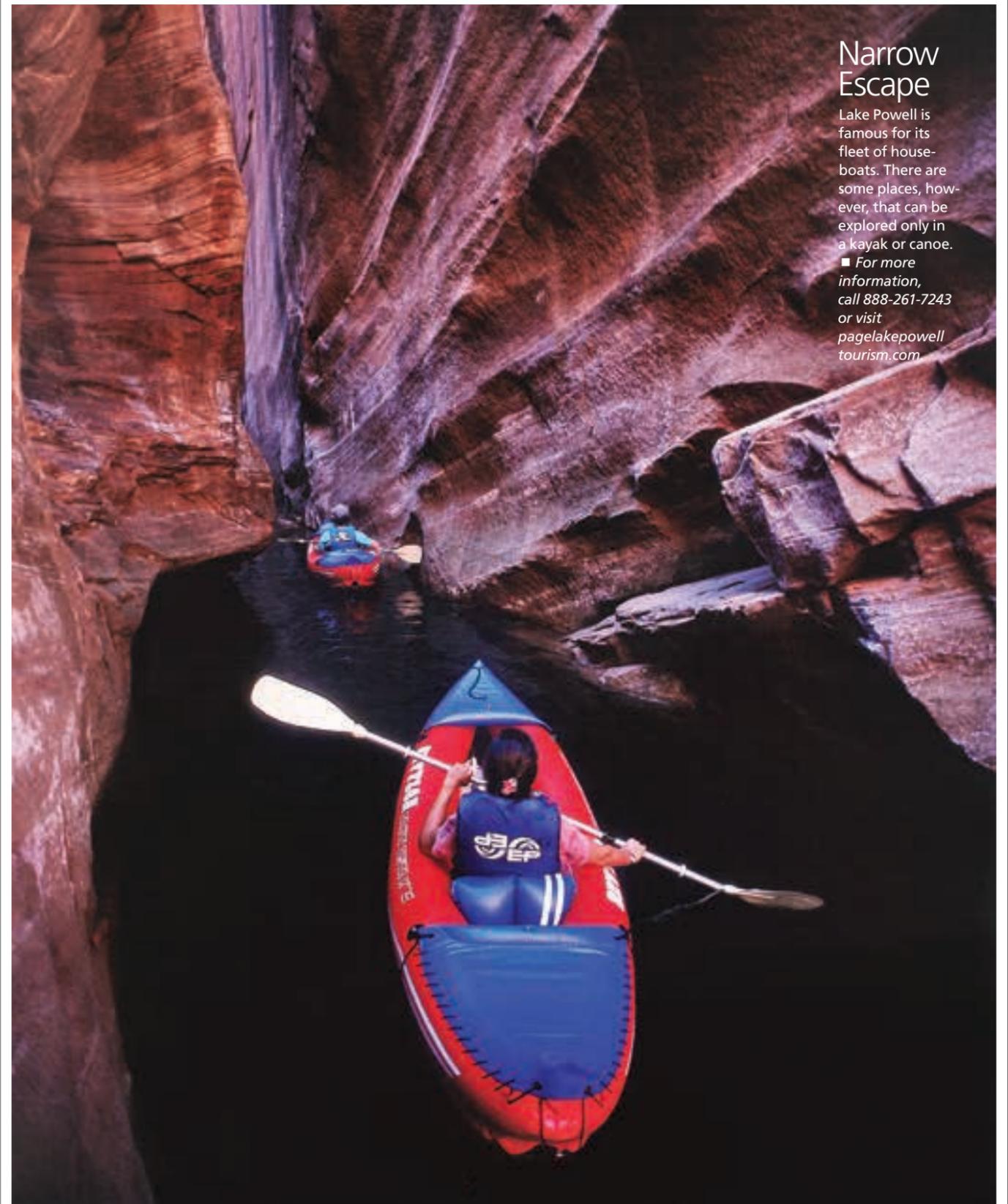
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GARY LADD



PEOPLE

Au Naturel

He'll sculpt your nude body, but don't ask for his e-mail address — world-renowned artist John Waddell is old-school with some amazing new projects in the works.

JOHN WADDELL LOVES NAKED PEOPLE. But not in a vulgar way. When he says, "Take off your clothes and dance," as he did to a group of college students in the '70s, he's probably going to immortalize you in bronze.

Those students who were willing to pose for Waddell became one of downtown Phoenix's most prominent pieces of art: a series of statues outside the Herberger Theatre named *Dance*.

Then, and now, Waddell aimed for one goal: to show people beyond a superficial appearance.

"In our culture, we have so many stereotypes of how a person should look that we overlook the beauty of how a person really does look," Waddell says. "In my philosophy, I honor the uniqueness of each person."

A decade before *Dance*, Waddell made a name for himself with a monument paying tribute to four young girls who died in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama. *That Which Might Have Been, Birmingham, 1963* is Waddell's rendition of how those girls would have looked as women.

What's so striking about Waddell's sculptures isn't the physical attractiveness of the people — bronze has a way of putting everyone on an even playing field — it's how they make you *feel* their beauty through movement. And after devoting most of his life to art, Waddell still hasn't lost his passion for the portrayal of what is truly beautiful.

"I'm 87. I work 12 hours a day, every day, and I love it," he says.

Today, Waddell and his equally artistic wife, Ruth, find inspiration in Cornville, a small town outside of Sedona. The area is a sacred place for Waddell, whose backyard and sculpture garden are surrounded by mountains and hushed by the sound of nearby Oak Creek.

"I believe it's a channel, an opening, for artists that have lived before to

come back," Waddell explains. "And so, in my own work, I feel that I'm supported by artists of the past. You no longer can say, 'I did this. This is my work.' You just have to say, 'It came through me.'"

For the past 10 years, Waddell has been working on a 40-foot relief of people in various forms of ascension into the heavens titled *The Rising*. The more than three-dozen figures have yet to find a home outside of Waddell's studio, and like some of his other works, will most likely be placed outside of Arizona.

In the end, John Waddell believes the secret to maximizing any talent is to always be refining it appropriately through diligent practice.

"I feel that as an artist, or a writer, or a dancer, or even a physicist, you have to keep your tools as finely developed as possible."

■ For more information, visit artbywaddell.com.

— Lauren Proper

CELEBRITY Q & A



Alice Cooper

by Dave Pratt

AH: If you were trying to convince the Rolling Stones that Arizona is one of the most beautiful places in America, where would you take them?

AC: Sedona, Oak Creek Canyon, Flagstaff, the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert, Meteor Crater and Monument Valley. On the second day ...

AH: Tell us about "Christmas Pudding."

AC: Our annual Christmas Pudding is the best. The variety show rocks every year and benefits the Solid Rock Organization. This year, we will be at the Dodge Theater on Saturday, December 13.

AH: Which is creepiest: scorpion, rattlesnake or Gila monster?

AC: Scorpions. Rattlesnakes are polite enough to let you know they're around. Gila monsters are notoriously slow. Scorpions are troublemakers. They have no boundaries. Let's not even bring up black widows.

AH: What are some of your favorite places to rock 'n' roll in Arizona?

AC: We've played every major venue, from Jobing.Com Arena to the patio at Cooper's town. You put up the stage, sell the tickets, and I'll be there. My band will play anywhere ... but it's gonna cost you.

AH: Sunrise or sunset?

AC: Sunrise. I'm an early riser. There's nothing prettier than the desert at 6 a.m., with the golf ball teed up high and the rabbits and coyotes running all over the golf course.

— Dave Pratt is the host of the Dave Pratt in the Morning show on KMLE 107.9 FM in Phoenix.

DINING

How Sweet It Is

If fruitcake isn't your thing, grab a sundae at the Sugar Bowl in Scottsdale, which celebrates its 50th anniversary on Christmas Eve.

FIFTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, Jack Huntress and his family sat around the breakfast table and developed a menu for an ice cream parlor they planned to open in Old Town Scottsdale. They called it the Sugar Bowl, and on Christmas Eve 1958, it officially opened to the public.

A few things have changed since then. For example, you won't find penny candy or the restaurant's original spun-wire chairs, but you will find the same menu and the same overall feel — it's the kind of place where Richie, Potsie and Ralph Malph might have hung out.

Caroll B. Huntress III, who bought the restaurant from his uncle Jack in 1985, says people want connecting points to the past. Something recognizable. "We're part of the fabric of old Scottsdale, and everything is changing around us. All these new condos and fancy restaurants and expensive retail stores are going in, but we've been able to survive, and the community has certainly helped support us."

Huntress attributes part of the Sugar Bowl's success to its nostalgic atmosphere, which includes metal Coca-Cola signs, antique teacup displays and pastel pink walls.

Although the interior echoes a slower era, the service is fast and friendly. And even though a scoop of ice cream no longer costs 50 cents, almost every item is priced under \$10. Among the favorites are tea sandwiches paired with homemade soup. There's also a meatloaf sandwich, a classic peanut butter and jelly, and — for those with a taste for adventure — a cream cheese sandwich with sliced green olives.

"That's an oldie," Huntress says. "We've kept it on there because that's part of our history."

In another effort to stick with tradition, the Sugar Bowl's original 13 ice cream flavors are the only options, with the

exception of a rotating "Treat of the Month" flavor. It's popular, but the restaurant's signature dessert is the Top Hat Sundae, which consists of a fresh-baked cream puff filled with vanilla ice cream and drizzled with hot fudge.

"I think people get a real kick out of our Gosh-Awful-Gooley Banana Split, too," Huntress says. Keep a napkin handy for this one — it combines Turkish coffee ice cream with caramel sauce and red raspberry sorbet with marshmallow sauce, all topped with whipped cream and a maraschino cherry.

The menu isn't the only piece of history at the Sugar Bowl. In 1963, Bil Keane, the creator of *The Family Circus*, began featuring the restaurant in several of his comic strips. Like Keane, who usually orders vegetable soup with tea sandwiches, other long-time customers — even if they haven't visited in more than 20 years — still remember the menu.

"People come in and say, 'Thank goodness the Sugar Bowl



MOREY K. MILLER/ADT

hasn't changed; thank goodness you're still here," Huntress says. It's a link to the past and maybe the future.

With Huntress' son, Caroll B. Huntress IV, interested in managing the restaurant someday, the elder Huntress is optimistic the Sugar Bowl will stick around for "at least another 30 years."

"We plan on being here for a long time," he says.

■ The Sugar Bowl is located at 4005 N. Scottsdale Road in Scottsdale. For more information, visit sugarbowlscottsdale.com or call 480-946-0051.

— Leah Duran



MOREY K. MILBRADT

LODGING

Little Houses

If you're looking for a cozy place to hang your stockings this month, Forest Houses Resort in Oak Creek Canyon features 15 rental "cabins," and they all have fireplaces.

FOR BOB KITTREDGE, FOREST HOUSES RESORT IS MORE than a collection of funky stone and wood rental houses along Oak Creek. It's his childhood home and the repository of his family's history. Walk into the office, and you'll see memorabilia he's unearthed, including his own baby bottles, glass milk containers and a miniature replica of the motorcycle his dad drove in on — one of the first built by Harley Davidson.

Bob's father arrived in 1930 with his brother, a pet monkey, a baby coyote and plans for a "citadel in the woods." The brothers bought the 20-acre property for \$60 an acre and built The Barn, now guest lodging, to house a team of Percheron draft horses that dragged the logs used to build the Log House, the brothers' first house.

Both of Bob's parents were artists. His father, also named Bob, never attended high school but apprenticed himself to a sculptor at age 14. Ambling down what was once the canyon road, Bob Jr. points to the Studio House, a guest house with north-facing

clerestory windows that served as his parents' studio.

Bob Sr.'s preferred medium was stone, and Bob likes to say his father graduated from stone sculptures to larger, livable works of art. He built the Rock House as a rental trial balloon in 1946, and five more houses over the next 10 years. He quit building for good in the 1970s, out of frustration with Coconino County's newly minted building codes. The resort now includes 15 houses, which range from a studio apartment to a rambling, five-bedroom, multistory structure.

When Bob Jr. took over the property in 1982, it was closed as a resort. He reopened the resort in 1987 and has run it ever since. His daughters now sleep in his old room.

"It's been a lot of fun for me to fix it, work on it, improve it," Bob says. "I'm trying to maintain Mom and Dad's style, structure and ambience." That means no streetlights, no televisions and no telephones, except for one public pay phone. Even cell phones don't work. A confirmation letter advises guests: "Here at Forest Houses, we offer you absolutely nothing to do. You must kick back and relax."

Bob has known some of his guests for 30 years. He thinks of them as friends. "People can vacation anywhere," he says. "They will come back to a place that greets them by name."

■ *Forest Houses Resort is located at 9275 N. Highway 89A in Sedona, and is closed in January and February. For more information, call 928-282-2999 or visit foresthousesresort.com.*

— Kathy Montgomery

PHOTOGRAPHY

IN MEMORIAM

Esther Henderson Abbott

1911-2008

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS RECENTLY LOST a good friend. Esther Henderson Abbott, the photographer whose scenic images of Arizona graced the pages of this magazine stretching over seven decades, passed away in August at the age of 97.

An independent woman among the male-dominated ranks of landscape photographers, Esther more than held her own with the likes of Ansel Adams and Josef Muench. During the halcyon days of *Arizona Highways'* rise to prominence as the state's official travel magazine, her images helped create an international following for the high-quality color photography it featured. For 28 years, she lived and worked in Tucson, where she met and married rival photographer Chuck Abbott.

Esther's story is full of twists and turns. She once said, "I was born in Oak Park, Illinois — you know, the flat land — and I always wanted to go where there were mountains." Eventually, she would have mountains, but not until she and her widowed father journeyed across America in search of a suitable career for the 16-year-old high school graduate.

She started out in show business, working as a dancer in nightclubs and speakeasies in New York City during the Depression. But after the repeal of Prohibition, Esther grew weary of city life. "So many people, so much pavement," she said. "I hadn't even seen a green tree outside of Central Park in a long time." Again, the mountains were calling her.

An "over-the-hill" dancer at age 23 with only \$239 to her name, Esther pulled out the New York City phone book to search for a new career. She found a listing for the New York Institute of Photography and enrolled in a three-month course in basic photography. She then set out in search of a job.

In a 2003 interview, Esther recalled the fateful decision that led her to Arizona. "My dad said, 'Let's follow Horace Greeley's advice and go west.' So we did."

After sojourns with studios in Norfolk, Virginia, and San Antonio, Texas, the Hendersons finally arrived in Arizona in 1934. Driving through small, dusty towns along their route,



MARC MUENCH

they'd stop to look in the windows of photo studios to size up the competition and see if there was room in town for a good photographer. "When we got to Tucson, I looked at the work in the window and I figured, well, here's the place for me," Esther said.

Shortly thereafter she met Abbott, who also had recently moved to Tucson. He was a handsome guy — 15 years her senior — making a living photographing important Easterners who visited Tucson's dude ranches and resorts. Chuck and Esther married three months after they met, and together became one of the most prolific husband-wife photographer teams in the annals of this magazine.

In 1963, with two sons, Carl and Mark, they uprooted and moved to Santa Cruz, California. For most of the past 45 years, Esther had been a volunteer for the Salvation Army, working tirelessly, packing food bags for the homebound, helping families in times of crisis, and teaching Bible history and music to children. Even into her last years, Esther played the piano at her church and entertained in rest homes, despite being older than many of the residents.

In her final hours, Esther was at home, surrounded by her family. At her request, they sang *So Long, It's Been Good to Know You*. She admitted to having lived a full and wonderful life. She was in no pain and wasn't dependent on any medications. She was resolute, saying she was ready to go "home." She died peacefully on August 22, 2008.

— Peter Ensenberger, director of photography

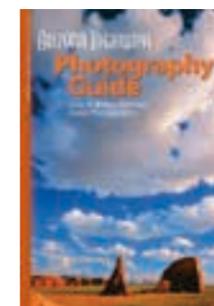


PHOTO TIP

EXPOSE YOURSELF

When photographing sunsets, the incorrect exposure is sometimes the best exposure. By bracketing exposures in 1/3- to 1/2-stop increments above and below the light meter's recommended "correct" exposure settings, you can create very evoca-

tive images. Besides conveying an interesting mood, bracketing also ensures a successful shoot and provides editing options later. Digital photographers, who can see the results immediately, also should bracket exposures to ensure the future option

of "stitching" two slightly varied exposures together, combining the best shadow details and highlights. It's good insurance that costs nothing.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for *Arizona Highways Photography Guide*, available at bookstores and arizonahighways.com.

online For more photography tips and information, visit arizonahighways.com and click on "Photography."



ARIZONA HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

HISTORY

Flying High

Kitty Hawk might be the birthplace of aviation, but in the early 1900s, Tucson embraced the fledgling industry and etched its own place in history.

IT TAKES AN INGENUOUS CITY TO GET DEEMED AN OFFICIAL landing site for military aircraft and heralded by the *Saturday Evening Post* as “an ideal place for aviators” before it actually has an airport. But such was Tucson in the early 1900s, when it pushed Arizona to the forefront of the fledgling aviation industry.

In 1910 — two years before Arizona became a state — Charles “The Bird Man” Hamilton dazzled crowds when he flew the first plane over Tucson. The next year, the Old Pueblo made headlines when it became the meeting point for two pilots competing to be the first to fly across the United States in 30 days or less. Such an ambitious feat proved impossible, but the fanfare

again put Tucson in the limelight.

Soon after, the Tucson Chamber of Commerce started an Aviation Committee — a bold move considering the city had no airfield, nor any residents with planes. In 1916, O.C. Parker, an undertaker with considerably loftier goals, became mayor and was determined to construct an airport in his city.

Meanwhile, World War I Army fliers stationed in California and Texas were praising Tucson’s flight-friendly climate. In the spring of 1919, Army General Billy Mitchell sent a letter to Mayor Parker announcing that Tucson had been named one of 32 official domestic landing sites for military aircraft. So (hint, hint) it might be a good idea to actually build said landing site.

The whole thing was thrown together quickly. All it took was \$5,000, a plot of land on 6th Avenue (where the Rodeo Grounds now stand), a few mules to lay the unpaved runway and a World War I hangar transported from Nogales.

On November 20, 1919, Tucson’s New Macauley Field became the first municipally owned airport in the country. A plaque at the Rodeo Grounds still commemorates the occasion when “Swede” Myerhoff piloted the inaugural flight.

The airfield soon outgrew itself. Military and civilian flights were increasingly in demand, and famed aviator Charles Mayse attracted pilots by launching the city’s first flying school.

So the nation’s first municipal airport was moved southeast of the city, becoming the nation’s largest. (It would later become the first airport in the country to offer regular night flights.) It was rechristened Davis-Monthan Field, after Lieutenants Samuel Davis and Oscar Monthan — two Tucson WWI-era pilots killed in plane crashes.

On September 23, 1927, Charles Lindbergh arrived in his *Spirit of St. Louis* to dedicate the new airfield. To honor the occasion, local florist Hal Burns presented Lindbergh with a life-sized monoplane, dubbed the *Spirit of Tucson*, constructed entirely of cactuses and ocotillos. Now that’s ingenious.

— Keridwen Cornelius

NATURE

For Deer Life

Coues whitetails are rare, but their elusive nature allows them to survive in Southeastern Arizona, despite being in the crosshairs.

WHEN COUES WHITETAIL DEER ARE ALARMED, they flip up their brown-topped tails like a stop sign at a school crosswalk, revealing the underside’s warning white. From a distance, this is often all that people see of the deer — a shock of white hair retreating at 40 mph like a toupee in the wind.

Among hunters, the Coues is known as one of the most elusive, camouflaged and hyper-vigilant quarry. Given how inextricably its name is linked to the words “prey” and “game,” it’s no surprise. Call it survival of the skittish.

Unfortunately, this means most of us know nothing about the secret lives of Coues — their complex pheromonal language, their handwriting of scratches and scrapes.

Whitetail deer are ubiquitous in America, but Coues (named after Arizona ornithologist Elliott Coues, properly pronounced “cows,” but popularly pronounced “coos”) are smaller and confined to Southeastern Arizona, Mexico and New Mexico.

Coues communicate through an olfactory Morse

Code, secreting pheromone-scented oils from various glands. Their forehead glands release an oil they rub on branches to announce “I am here.” Tarsal glands on the hind legs emit a strong odor that indicates age and gender. And with each step, interdigital glands emanate a personal perfume that helps them track each other.

Coues also make handwriting-like markings, with bucks

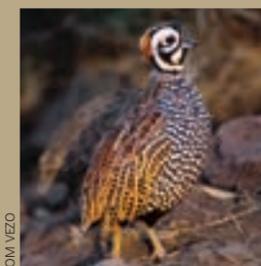


TOM VEZO

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

- On December 14, 1928, the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly passed the Swing-Johnson bill, which authorized the construction of Boulder Dam (now called Hoover Dam) in Northwestern Arizona.
- On December 25, 1881, the Bird Cage Theatre in Tombstone opened its doors, and by 1882, *The New York Times* reported that “the Bird Cage Theatre is the wildest, wickedest night spot between Basin Street and the Barbary Coast.”
- On December 30, 1857, Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives and his crew headed north from Fort Yuma in the Arizona Territory aboard the steamship *Explorer* for a study of the Colorado River. During the expedition, Ives led the first party of European settlers to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

nature factoid



TOM VEZO

MONTEZUMA QUAIL

The Montezuma quail just might be the Michael Jordan of the bird world. When threatened with danger, a Montezuma quail freezes to blend into its surroundings. But when something comes too close for comfort, the bird leaps with great force and explodes into flight. Some Montezuma quails have been measured jumping more than 6 feet straight up.

being the primary authors. To mark their territory, bucks strip bark off trees with their antlers, a process called “making a rub.” They also scrape the ground to expose the earth, then urinate on the scrapes and surround them with twigs anointed with forehead oil. This is Coues shorthand for: “I am a dominant male. If you are a buck, get out of my territory. If you are a doe, I can be reached at the tall sycamore scented with light musk and the tang of urine.”

Coues do have an auditory language, too. Fawns and their mothers bleat to each other, and adults grunt and snort to warn their compatriots of danger. Only bucks, however, display a sound pattern priceless called the “grunt-snort-wheeze.” Them’s fightin’ words.

— Keridwen Cornelius

50 years ago in arizona highways



A Navajo prayer affirms, “In beauty, I walk, with beauty before me, I walk, with beauty behind me, I walk, with beauty above me.” In our December 1958 issue, we set out to prove that sentiment with a collection of large color photographs that illustrated the magnificent beauty of Arizona.



THINGS TO DO

Pinecone Drop in Flagstaff

December 31: Celebrate New Year's Eve by joining the countdown to 2009 at the Weatherford Hotel's traditional pinecone drop. Beginning at 10 seconds to midnight, the giant pinecone descends from the top of the hotel to street level. Afterward, the party continues as revelers ring in the New Year.

■ Information: 928-779-1919 or weatherfordhotel.com



DAVID H. SMITH

PRESCOTT HOLIDAY

December 6: Visit Prescott, Arizona's Christmas City, as it dresses for the part during the 54th Annual Courthouse Lighting Ceremony. This longtime tradition features a student choir and Christmas caroling. After the ceremony, experience a Frontier Christmas at Sharlot Hall Museum.

■ Information: 928-445-3122 or sharlot.org



EDWARD MCCAIN

FIESTA IN TUMACÁCORI

December 6-7: The traditions and cultures of the Tohono O'odham, Apache and Mexican people are on display at the 38th Annual Fiesta de la Tumacácori, which features more than 50 crafts and food vendor booths. Entertainment includes ballet folklórico and Apache Crown dancers, basket weaving, tortilla-making demonstrations and the music of the region.

■ Information: 520-398-2341 or nps.gov/tuma

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

If taking great photos of Arizona's "Seven Wonders" interests you, be sure to check out the new listing of Arizona Highways Photo Workshops for 2009. We're traveling to Sedona, Grand Canyon, Monument Valley and Saguaro National Park, as well as other beautiful places in Arizona and around the West.

■ Information: 888-790-7042 or friendsofhighways.com



TOM BEAN



EDWARD MCCAIN

TUCSON STREET FAIR

December 12-14: This month Tucson celebrates its 38th Annual Fourth Avenue Winter Street Fair, one of the premier street fairs in the country. Sponsored by the Fourth Avenue Merchants Association, the fair offers more than 400 arts-and-crafts booths, 35 gourmet food vendors, entertainment and a special kids area.

■ Information: 520-624-5004 or fourthavenue.org



All Aboard the Polar Express

November 6-December 22: The Polar Express comes to life this month on the Grand Canyon Railway as the train travels from Williams to the "North Pole," where Santa and his reindeer await. Enjoy hot chocolate and cookies on the evening ride to the Canyon while listening to Chris Van Allsburg's magical tale.

■ Information: 800-843-8724 or thetrain.com/polarexpress



Western Handbag WBAG8 \$195.00



Serving bowl, triple condiment server, chile pepper mug

FEBW8 \$26.99

FEMG8 \$6.95

FESR8 \$30.00



Images Book AGVH8 \$39.95



Coasters COAH8 \$18.00



Southwestern Pendant and Liquid Silver necklace JPEN8 \$248.00

What's in Store

Holiday cards, books, jewelry, clothing, calendars ... shop now and save **25% OFF** our most popular gift items. Shop online at arizonahighways.com or call 800-543-5432.

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

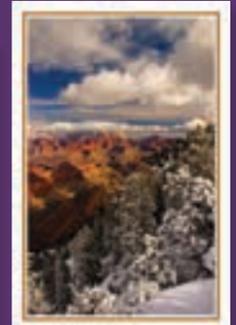


Pinecone Jacket \$89.99

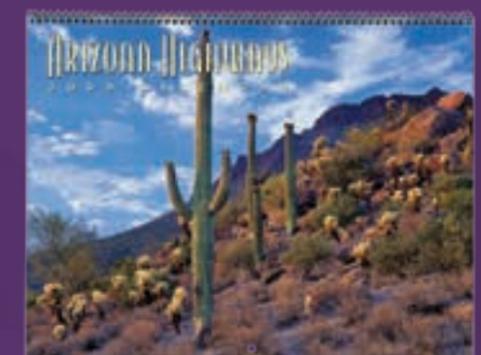
Holiday Cards



CCCN8 \$17.95



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Classic Wall Calendar CAL09 \$9.99

Offer expires December 31, 2008. Use promo code #5812. Shipping and handling not included. You can also visit our retail location at 2039 W. Lewis Ave. in Phoenix.



WINTER WONDERLAND

Cheops Pyramid and Isis Temple
at Grand Canyon National Park.
Photograph by Randy Prentice

SPECTACULAR PORTFOLIOS ARE PRETTY TYPICAL IN THIS MAGAZINE. FOR THIS ONE, WHICH FEATURES THE SEVEN NATURAL WONDERS OF ARIZONA, WE'VE INCLUDED THE WORDS OF SEVEN WRITERS WHO ARE EVERY BIT AS IMPRESSIVE AS THE PHOTOS. Edited by Kelly Kramer

Before you pick up the phone or plan a march on our offices, let us say right upfront that we know what you're thinking: *Where's Canyon de Chelly?*

What about Kartchner Caverns? Where are the Chiricahuas? We understand the questions, but trying to pick just seven natural wonders in a place like Arizona is like asking Ma and Pa Walton to pick their favorite kids. Well, in that case, John Boy, like the Grand Canyon, might be obvious, but what about the rest? It isn't easy, and there are certainly other natural wonders that could have made our final cut. Nonetheless, we've come up with seven places that are unique to Arizona. Although you've seen them all before, there are plenty of photos in this piece that'll take your breath away — the snow shot of Havasu Falls is an absolute rarity. Of course, we could have stopped there. Instead, we interviewed some of the most talented writers in America, all of whom have an affection for Arizona, and added their words to the mix. No doubt you'll get some beautiful cards this holiday season, but few, if any, will measure up to ours. — Robert Stieve, editor

NICK PEREZENKO





{ GRAND CANYON }

It's one of the seven natural wonders of the world. And no wonder: Scientists recently discovered it might have taken 17 million years to carve those mile-deep, labyrinthine gorges. The result was well worth the wait.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 928-638-7888 OR VISIT NPS.GOV/GRCA.

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.



Terry Tempest Williams ...

"My relationship to the desert is one of erosion and stillness. It's the erosional beauty of the landscape that inspires me. It's the erosional quality of the desert that strips me again and again of all that is not essential."

"Humility is a companion in arid country. The stillness of these wide-open spaces is a reservoir for my spirit. I remember what matters and what does not.

"Within the searing summer heat, one comes alive in the coolness of evening. It's here, under a canopy of stars, I begin to understand why most animals in the desert are nocturnal. Perception deepens. Under the full moon, deep blue shadows give way to a different kind of seeing. Nothing is as it appears.

"In the last three years, my husband, Brooke, and I have been living in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, as far away from the desert as is imaginable, with 602 inches of snow last winter and long stretches of subzero temperatures. The Northern Rockies and the Tetons, specifically, have their own beauty. But I've missed the serenity and starkness of the desert. I return often, and I am struck by what a few days in the red-rock landscape calms in me.

"Again, it's the stillness that I find so restorative and the bare-boned beauty of slickrock and sage. My composure is rooted in the desert. Soul-peace.

"Arizona and Utah are sisters on the Colorado Plateau. My memorable experiences in Arizona are both grounded and fluid in the Grand Canyon. I love the stratigraphy of time — deep time — that exists in the Canyon. I love being on the Colorado River as it bends and twists through red-rock walls that rise upward like praying hands. And I love the sinuous quality of the Vishnu Schist that's reminiscent of Henry Moore's sculptures. Take the memory of being at the confluence of the Little Colorado and the Colorado River, where the Hopi speak of Emergence. The pale turquoise water that merges with the red water of the mighty Colorado is a place of transformation. Again, the word 'humility'

comes to mind. If I could speak to the desert, I would tell it, 'Thank you.' To me, it speaks no words. Only stillness. The desert teaches me again and again how to listen.

"My hope for the desert Southwest is that we might come to understand the meaning of restraint. It's not easy living in the desert. It's a harsh and fragile landscape. Therein lies much of its beauty. But it requires sacrifice. We forget this. I am fearful for the desert because of our excesses: how we use water or, more accurately, how we waste water; our love affair with lawn; how we overbuild.

"My fear for the desert Southwest resides in our collective complacency. If we're going to protect the integrity of the desert, then we must maintain a collective vigilance within our desert communities, honoring the nature of this fragile landscape.

"Who can say what the human spirit will be crying out for 100 years from now? My instinct says we will be crying out for space and time. In the desert, we find both. Wild open space revives the memory of unity. Through its protection, we can find faith in our humanity.

"Who is speaking on the side of time? Deep time. And who is considering the soulful existence of other creatures? I believe we need to extend our notion of community to include all living things, not just our own species.

"Color, form and light. These three components of the desert are always changing. It allows us to do the same — change.

"The minimalism of the landscape differentiates the desert from other places. No trees. Little green. A reconfiguration of everything one is taught about Beauty.

"Time and space. In the red-rock canyons, time creates space — an arch, an eye, this blue eye of sky. We remember why we love the desert. It's our tactile response to light, to silence and to stillness. Hand on stone — patience. Hand on water — music. Hand raised to the wind — the birthplace of inspiration."

— NATURALIST AND AUTHOR TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS IS A UTAH NATIVE AND TRAVELS EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT THE DESERT SOUTHWEST. SHE IS BEST KNOWN FOR HER 1991 BOOK, *REFUGE: AN UNNATURAL HISTORY OF FAMILY AND PLACE*.



MOREY K. MILBRADT

PAUL GILL



{ sedona }

Rust never looked so good. Once voted the most beautiful place in America, this wonderland of red rocks (courtesy of oxidized iron) is at once a spiritual destination, adventure hotspot and art mecca.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 928-282-7722 OR VISIT VISITSEDONA.COM.

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.



RANDY PRENTICE

Clive Cussler ...

"Years ago, a friend of mine and I used to trample out in the desert, looking for lost mines. One day, we were out in the desert and came across 10 or 12 buildings that were still there. We talked to a fellow in a nearby town and found out that half of the town had died. Twenty-five years later, we went back, and the whole place had been swept clean. I took a bottle of bourbon."

"I've always been fascinated by the history of Arizona. You'd be surprised by how many shipwrecks are actually buried in the state. The government once commissioned a tugboat to be assembled at the mouth of the Colorado River. While it was being worked on, it started to sink. I believe it's buried somewhere under

the shore. I've been looking for it with a metal detector.

"The desert looks barren to most people, but part of its beauty is morning — the sunrise — and then, later, the sunsets. Spring and fall are magnificent. My wife and I like to eat outside. She's from Connecticut, and we both find that the only things here that scare the tourists away are the heat and the desert.

"It's easy to say that my favorite place is Sedona. I've taken friends driving around on back roads, to Bisbee and across the state. Visitors used to have a Wild West mentality, but that doesn't exist as much anymore. The people in Arizona have good values — they're good people."

— CLIVE CUSSLER IS A PARADISE VALLEY RESIDENT, UNDERWATER EXPLORER AND THE AUTHOR OF DOZENS OF BEST-SELLING ADVENTURE NOVELS.

PAUL GILL



Red Rock Crossing, Oak Creek, Sedona
Photograph by Bob & Suzanne Clemenz

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.



{ PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK }

This trove of petrified wood and Triassic fossils is a time capsule more than 200 million years old. Set amid the Painted Desert's moonscape, the multicolored crystallized trees are as stunning as they are scientifically significant.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 928-524-6228 OR VISIT NPS.GOV/PEFO.



JACK DYKINGA



TOM DANIELSEN

Larry McMurtry ...

"I first started coming to Tucson in the 1960s. Then I began to visit regularly in the 1980s. My son [James] was a student at the University of Arizona before he drifted off to become a musician. I stayed a lot because of the sun — it's what drew me here."

"I grew up in Texas, where it was very dry and hot. I was a plainsman, not a desert person. But then, when the state introduced irrigation, it became more humid. I like the dry heat—it doesn't bother me at all. After I had heart surgery in 1991, [writer] Diana Ossana and her daughter took me in. I had a long recovery and sat and looked at the mountains. I had a bookshop here for a while, and now I spend more time here than I do anywhere else."

"I'm not one to go too far north of Tucson. It's a Sonoran city and has all the big-city amenities, including good food and a variety of cuisines. It doesn't have enough bookstores. I

like Tucson, though, because of the pace and because of the weather. You don't have to give up very much of your energy fighting the city as you do in Los Angeles, Chicago or New York. It's a city, but it stretches all the way to the Tanque Verde. It feels much more lazy and much less stressful."

"I haven't written about Arizona. I like it here — I enjoy it. But I'm an old man. I'm 72, and I've written 42 books. It would be unusual to write another novel. The desert hasn't much inspired me, but it's been a very comfortable, refreshing place to live."

— LARRY MCMURTRY IS A BEST-SELLING NOVELIST, SCREENWRITER, ESSAYIST AND BOOK LOVER. HE IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING NOVEL, *LONESOME DOVE*.

GEORGE H.H. HUEY

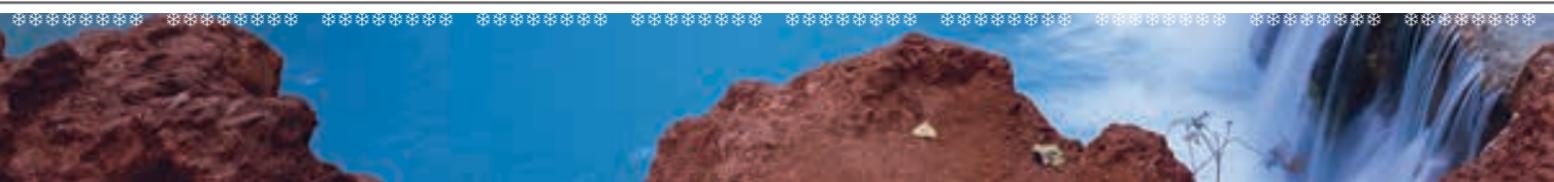


{ HAVASU FALLS }

With its robin's egg blue pools and cascading russet cliffs, this Shangri-La tucked in the Grand Canyon might be the most photogenic waterfall in the world.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 928-448-2121 OR VISIT HAVASUPA.tribe.com.

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.



PAUL GILL



GREG BINION

Bill Geist ...

"I've made about a dozen visits to Arizona, and my first business trip was about 20 years ago. Among my favorite places to visit are the Grand Canyon, Tucson, Bisbee, Sedona and the Cubs' spring training location in Mesa."

"To someone like me who grew up on elm-shaded green lawns in the Midwest, much of the desert landscape looks to me rather like a gravel pit — a very hot gravel pit. But Arizona's not like any other state at all. The desert, the architecture, the furniture, the flora and fauna, the colors, the clothes and boots, all seem quite different and very connected to the Old West. Phoenix, however, all fairly new and congested, is like any other place — like Florida, say, but without the ocean.

"I like the people: free, self-reliant individualists. My favorite is Charlie Chamberlin, mail carrier. The mail comes into the Peach Springs post office, and Charlie delivers it. Leading a mule train packed with mail, food, appliances — you name it — down the sheer cliffs of the Grand Canyon, he delivers the mail five days a week to the Havasupai Indians living 2,500 feet below, at the bottom of the Canyon.

"Oh! And the Scottsdale Community College mascot is the artichoke — the fighting artichoke! Funniest in the land."

— BILL GEIST IS A BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND HAS BEEN A CORRESPONDENT FOR CBS SUNDAY MORNING SINCE 1987, CHRONICLING INTERESTING PEOPLE AND PLACES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.



RANDY PRENTICE



Havasú Falls, at the Grand Canyon
Photograph by Larry Ulrich



{ MOGOLLON RIM }

This 200-mile-long escarpment crests Central Arizona, forming a serene region that's home to the largest ponderosa pine forest on the planet. The views from its sandstone bluffs stretch as far as Four Peaks, near Phoenix.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 928-477-2255 OR VISIT WWW.FS.FED.US/R3/COCONINO/RECREATION/MOG _ RIM/REC _ MOGOLLON.SHTML.



NICK BERZENKO

David Roberts ...

"I've made around 100 trips to canyon country, and dozens of trips to the Navajo Reservation. The country around Navajo Mountain is the most beautiful, but no one goes there, because you need a permit from the Navajo Nation."

"My main focus has been the search for Anasazi ruins and rock art. They fascinate me. I spent a lot of time in Arizona while I was researching my book, *Once They Moved Like the Wind*, which focused on the last 25 years of the Apache Wars, particularly in Southern Arizona and the Sierra Madre. I sought out every single place where significant things in that history happened. Previous historians hadn't bothered going into Mexico — into the Sierra Madre — because if you go during certain times in the marijuana harvest, it's incredibly dangerous. But there are places that are stupendous and pristine — they're vestiges of the Apaches themselves.

"I spent about three years visiting Aravaipa and Fort Bowie, but there's a place just across the border, in Canyon de los Embudos, where Geronimo surrendered to Crook. No one really knew where it was, but we figured it out. There were photographs from a Tucson photographer, who had the nerve to go out with Crook and photograph surrenders. There were mountains in the background, and *embudos*, which means funnels. We were able to triangulate exactly where the surrender took place. A Mexican family in the area had never even heard of Geronimo.

"Earlier this year, I visited Canyon de Chelly for the sixth time. It's one of the most beautiful places in Arizona. The Indians thought they could never be attacked there. When Kit Carson marched through, he broke the back of the resistance, but there are a few little-known stories about how some

300 to 500 Navajos hid out atop Navajo Fortress Rock, which is now completely off-limits to Anglos. I climbed about two-thirds of the way up about 10 years ago. It was a real climb.

"I've spent about 20 years being a serious climber in places like Alaska, which is the place that spoke to me the most. I ignored the Southwest, with the exception of the few obligatory visits to places like Mesa Verde and the Grand Canyon. Those places felt too regulated, too much like museum pieces. In 1987, though, I went into some canyons in Cedar Mesa, then in Bullet Canyon and Grand Gulch. I found ruins that hadn't been restored. I found corncobs and yucca knots lying in the dirt. It was as though a light bulb went off — the preservation was so perfect. These were some of the most pristine ruins in North America.

"I did write a book about Anasazi ruins, *In Search of the Old Ones*. Normally, when I'm done, the landscape goes somewhere else, but in this case, my quest continued. Every spring and fall, I've come to explore canyons that are new to me. With the Anasazi, there were several things that spoke to me. They're great climbers, and I've seen some cliffs that I can't believe they got to without a real aesthetic motive.

"The Navajos and Apaches were not an aesthetic people. They were a nomadic people, which is an entirely different thing. I don't go out into canyons and look for old hogans. It's hard to find anything. Archaeologists seldom find any vestiges of Apache existence. The tribe built wickiups that never lasted more

MOREY K. MILBRADT



than a season or two, and they never raised horses — they stole them instead.

"I do find — in places like Tucson, Globe and Bisbee — that the bitterness about the Apache Wars remains. There's still some inherent racism against the Apaches. Geronimo was the last holdout in the war, and the cruelty of the Apache persecution is still felt today. You go to the Navajo Reservation and Monument Valley, and there are people selling jewelry and frybread and rugs at back-to-back stands. There's no equivalent on the Apache reservations. They don't do tourism.

"I spent a lot of time on the San Carlos Reservation in the White Mountains. It took a lot of diplomacy to go hiking where Geronimo had been. There are still a lot of reservations between us — between the Apaches and the white-eyes. There's no monument to Geronimo."

— DAVID ROBERTS IS A MOUNTAINEER AND THE AUTHOR OF 17 BOOKS ON THAT TOPIC AND THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST. HIS WORK HAS ALSO BEEN PUBLISHED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.



{ SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK }

More than a million saguaros spike the landscape of this 143-square-mile park, which boasts the highest concentration of saguaros in the world. There's simply no better place to marvel at this Sonoran Desert icon.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 520-733-5153 (RINCON MOUNTAIN DISTRICT) OR 520-733-5158 (TUCSON MOUNTAIN DISTRICT), OR VISIT [NPS.GOV/SAGU](https://www.nps.gov/sagu).

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.

Diana Ossana ...

"I came to Tucson from St. Louis in 1977. I was 28 and pregnant and looking for a new start. I'd been out once — in January — and I was fascinated that it was the middle of winter and I could wear shorts. There's something very special about Tucson. It's large, but small enough that it has a small-town feel. It's surrounded by mountains and set on a mesa, with views of the lushest desert in the world — full of flowers and greenery, without the dense, thick underbrush. And the sky is so, so blue."



JACK DYKINGA

"The quality of light in Tucson is extraordinary, and it's affected my day-to-day existence drastically. I didn't realize until I moved here how light-sensitive I am. I have so much physical and creative energy, and I've been everywhere in the state — to Flagstaff, to Winslow, the White Mountains, Phoenix, Douglas — and it's hard to pick just one favorite place. I just love the Southwest so much. As soon as I hit the open road, it doesn't matter which way I'm going, it's just a magical place. I lived in Austin for just under a year, but I was drawn back here. It's about light and clarity.

"Once, I rode my bicycle along the rim of the Grand Canyon. I was floored by that. My father was an Italian immigrant who came to the United States at the age of 13. He came to Tucson for the first time when my daughter was 5. He grew up in a little mountain village in Northern Italy, and yet, he was fascinated by the mountains. He said, 'My god. This is beautiful.'

"Larry [McMurtry] drove my dad to Canyon de Chelly on the Navajo Reservation. My father was, essentially, a little mountain-town peasant, but he was fascinated by the way the Navajos live without running water or electricity. He couldn't stop talking about it. He died unexpectedly — about six months after that

trip — but I know he was mesmerized by how hearty and spiritual the Navajos are.

"It's safe to say that this landscape has strongly influenced my work — probably more than anything else. During the various miniseries I've been involved with, along with *Brokeback Mountain*, it's played a big role in location scouting. Visuals in those stories are so critical to the characters and how they're formed.

"I raised my daughter, Sarah, here, and I think the quality of the light and the landscape has influenced her greatly. She's a designer and a very visual person. She owns her own business and remodels existing buildings at all phases — even through to the end, when she chooses colors and decorative elements.

"I was in Rhode Island with her a few months ago, and someone asked her if she could do this or that. She said, 'I feel like I'm capable of designing anything.' I think that's because of Tucson, because she learned to appreciate light here. I'm convinced that this landscape has formed my child and her worldview, especially now when I think of how accomplished she is — now that she's a grown woman."

— DIANA OSSANA IS A WRITER AND FREQUENT COLLABORATOR OF LARRY MCMURTRY. TOGETHER, THEY COLLABORATED WITH AUTHOR ANNIE PROULX ON THE SCREENPLAY FOR *BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN*, FOR WHICH THEY WON AN ACADEMY AWARD.

JACK DYKINGA



{ monument valley }

Wind has played tricks on the rocks in this flatland, whittling them into fantastical shapes such as fortresses and mittens. Stark, cinematic and stunning — it's the classic image of the Wild West.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 435-727-5874 OR VISIT NAVAJONATIONPARKS.ORG/HTM/MONUMENTVALLEY.HTM.

■ TO ORDER A PRINT OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, SEE PAGE 1.



KIRK OWENS

Tony Hillerman ...

"I'm drawn to the desert and to the desert Southwest because of the empty spaces. I like looking out and seeing miles and miles of nothing. And, of course, I like the people. I dearly love the Superstition Mountains and the Arizona landscape. Mostly, I like Navajo Monument.

"I first came to Arizona in 1945. The war was still on, and I came back to the United States on a hospital ship after I was injured. I made my way out to the Navajo Reservation and came upon a healing ceremony. The thing that touched me most, though, was that the ceremony wasn't only focused on wounds. It was focused on restoring the individual to peace and harmony — to encouraging people never to be angry with anyone else. I grew up in Oklahoma, where Seminoles and Potawatomies were my neighbors. When I met

the Navajos, I was delighted and charmed — and I still am.

"Once, during one of my subsequent visits to the reservation, I rode in a Navajo parade. They offered me a horse, and I could tell immediately that it wasn't my kind of horse. It was a bucking horse. So, instead, I rode in a pickup truck, and the Navajos gave me a name: *Haastin*. That loosely translates to 'Old Man Afraid of His Horse.'"

— TONY HILLERMAN LIVES IN ALBUQUERQUE, WHERE HE'S SURROUNDED BY OPEN SPACES. HE'S THE AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS BEST-SELLING NOVELS, ESSAYS, CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND ARTICLES, MANY OF WHICH FOCUS ON NAVAJO LIFE AND CULTURE. **AH**

JACK DYKINGA

Ragged Top Mountain is the geological crown jewel of Ironwood Forest National Monument, but the tree for which the park is named tells an even greater story. The ironwoods, which can live to be 800 years old, are survivors, flourishing in wet times and dying back during droughts. They are, as our writer points out, a more honest symbol of the culture of the Sonoran Desert than the saguaros that live on a million postcards.

Another Natural Wonder



EARLY ONE MORNING, I left town for the future.

The mountains walk across the land, a jagged horizon of peaks — Roskrige, Pan Quemado, Waterman, Silver Bell, Ragged Top, Sawtooth, Samaniego Hills. The air hangs with heat and dust. Desert trees and cactuses huddle in this oven. A 12-foot

ironwood tree stands like a ghost, a few limbs barely in leaf. The battered canopy shelters two young saguaros, one only a foot tall, from the sun. The nearby patch of prickly pear is yellowed and the pads thin and wrinkled. The light breeze seems empty of even a hint of moisture. On the peaks nearby live the last native desert bighorn herd of any real size in the Tucson Basin. The city center itself roars less than an hour away.

This is the place where what we claim to be meets what we are. In 2000, we created a new national monument here, named it Ironwood and then, as if exhausted by that effort, all but abandoned it. There are few signs announcing the monument and scant personnel. Smuggling and illegal immigration have taken a toll in cut fences and litter — which join 5,000 years of Native American marks on the ground, including some big arrays of petroglyphs.

Memories beckon. Decades ago, I hunted snakes on these dirt roads on those velvet summer nights after a rain. Awhile back, I stumbled up a slope with an archaeologist surveying the rock images scratched out by earlier

ANCIENT ART
Ancient Hohokam petroglyphs adorn granite boulders in Southern Arizona's 129,000-acre Ironwood Forest National Monument.

humans. We stared out at the developing valley to the east while surrounded by stone announcements. And then, by instinct, we clambered up to the top of the small knoll and found an ancient camp we sensed would be there. It

boasted a spectacular view, and neither one of us thought this was an accident.

The place is a lesson book, one that, at first, seems slightly dull, and then in time becomes irresistible. The slope before me is dotted with dead paloverdes slain by the drought. The bony limbs dot the *bajada* like skeletons. Saguaros stand mute under the sun, the folds between their ribs tight from years of little rain. The creosote is brown, the ground a mix of rock fragments and beige soil. Here and there are ironwood trees that look more dead than alive. The bases of some are quite large, but the limbs are mainly dead and droop to the ground. At first, these trees barely catch the eye. They seem stunted and strug-



gling. They are both of those things. And ancient, also.

Ironwood Forest National Monument teaches life about life. Its namesake tree is renowned for a meaningless fact: The wood is so dense it cannot float. This seems of little significance in a desert of dry rivers. The tree is so larded with toxins that botanists consider it essentially nonbiodegradable — a stump can linger for 1,600 years. At first, the stands seem beneath notice, the leaves crabbed and small, the limbs drooping and frail-looking. The spring bloom of rose-tinted flowers is passed and now in the June heat the desert bakes and waits for the summer rains that may or may not come. For a decade, they have largely not come. That explains the dead paloverdes and the beaten feel of the land.

I wander the hillside to a large ironwood. The base tells a tale of near death. The scars of two diebacks are evident, times when the tree gave up any hope of leaves and flowers and looked like a corpse. From these scars new limbs race up, like saplings, with smooth gray bark. That is what the hillside teaches: survival.

The ironwood (*Olneya tesota*) is the elder of the Sonoran Desert. It evolved, we think, 8 to 15 million years ago, and an individual can live 700 to 800 years. The words roll so easily off the tongue and yet a life lasting 800 years is beyond our comprehension. There are trees in the monument that first bloomed when the Magna Carta was being signed and Genghis Khan was exploding out of the grasses of Mongolia into the nightmares of Asia and Europe. During such a voyage through life, an individual tree may endure several all but lethal droughts, the dry times that slaughter paloverdes wholesale. But then paloverdes at best manage to live 200 years. They come and flourish and then, in a severe drought, they die. But the ironwood rolls on and on. Flourishing in the wet times, dying back in the dry times, and returning once again to taste the life of this place. I rub my fingers on the trunk, look up into the small clusters of leaves.

I'm being seduced by a landscape that human beings normally pass by, the kind of ground often filed away as a wasteland. Years ago, I made a dry camp west of here and gathered up some dead ironwood limbs to grill a steak. I wince at this memory. But I changed, and so will the rest of my kind. The sense of trackless land, of endless desert, of some kind of void where one act could never really have consequences — all this was a lie the evening I lit that fire and seared a beefsteak on hundreds-of-years-old wood. Now it is very difficult to even entertain this lie. Ironwood Forest National Monument, about 129,000 acres cobbled out of state and federal ground and shaped like a gerrymandered congressional district, is a kind testament to the tick of a lethal clock in this region. The wood I gathered was not merely old, it was a lifeline, and my act cut this line.

Part of the logic behind this monument flows from scientific research on ironwood trees. They are, in the language of science, a keystone species. What this means is that more than 500 life forms in this stand of ironwoods profit from their existence. Seedlings growing beneath



them are buffered from extremes of heat and cold, as are saplings. The temperature beneath an ironwood is at least 6 degrees warmer in winter. As a legume, they put nitrogen into the soil. They provide roosts and nesting sites for birds. And, of course, the seed-eating birds pepper the ground beneath their canopies, and that forms good nurseries. Rodents and other animals come to eat fruits cast aside by the birds, or trapped by the web of roots when violent storms send sheets of water across the land. Seedlings then sprout in this sanctuary.

I stand on the *bajada* that flows west from the Silver Bell Mountains. Behind me are the debris and sounds of a copper mine, an enterprise that squats in the middle of the monument. Off a mile or two on the *bajada* lie the ruins of the old mining camp, a place where scholars found an unseemly number of liquor bottles. None of this disturbs me as I walk through the ironwood forest. Ideally, this place would be pristine, but then it would not be true to us or our times. Still, the monument is two things: beautiful and vital.

The sweep of land before me seems as fresh as that first morning in Eden, an expanse of saguaros and trees and arroyos fingering down into the hot valley below. It

THE JAGGED EDGE

The serrated peak of the monument's crown jewel, Ragged Top Mountain (left), stands like an ancient guard over a forest of mature saguaros.

EXTREME ELEMENTS

The smooth gray bark of an ironwood branch (above) juxtaposed with a single wildflower on the rugged desert pavement offers a Sonoran Desert still life.



when you go

Location: 30 miles northwest of Tucson

Getting There: From Tucson, go west on Interstate 10 to Marana. Take Exit 236 and turn left onto Sandario Road. Drive .1 miles, then turn right onto Marana Road and head west 5.8 miles to Silverbell Road. Continue on Silverbell Road to travel through the national monument. Return to I-10 on Sasco Road.

Travel Advisory: Access roads are rough and conditions vary; a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended. There are no developed facilities in the monument.

Warning: Sasco Road crosses the Santa Cruz River, which at times might be impassable. During summer monsoon storms, some roads are dangerous due to flash floods. Use extreme caution when traveling through the monument.

Information: Bureau of Land Management, 520-258-7200 or blm.gov/az

requires constant work to remember that the office towers of downtown Tucson are an hour away. What I hear and feel are the trees, ancient, humble-looking trees. Ironwood is essentially, to varying degrees, everywhere in the Sonoran Desert, and is a much more honest symbol of its culture than the saguaros that live on city seals and a million postcards. Ironwood is not simply life against death; it is life amid death.

I walk over to a tree 30 feet tall and festooned with bare, dead branches and some faintly green limbs. A mature saguaro races up through it and towers at almost 40 feet. Maybe 200 years ago, this ironwood sheltered the seedling that became this saguaro and by that fact made its existence possible. Sprawled against another part of the ironwood is the skeleton of a saguaro, a mass of ribs bundled and pale against the ancient wood. The scene looks beautiful and

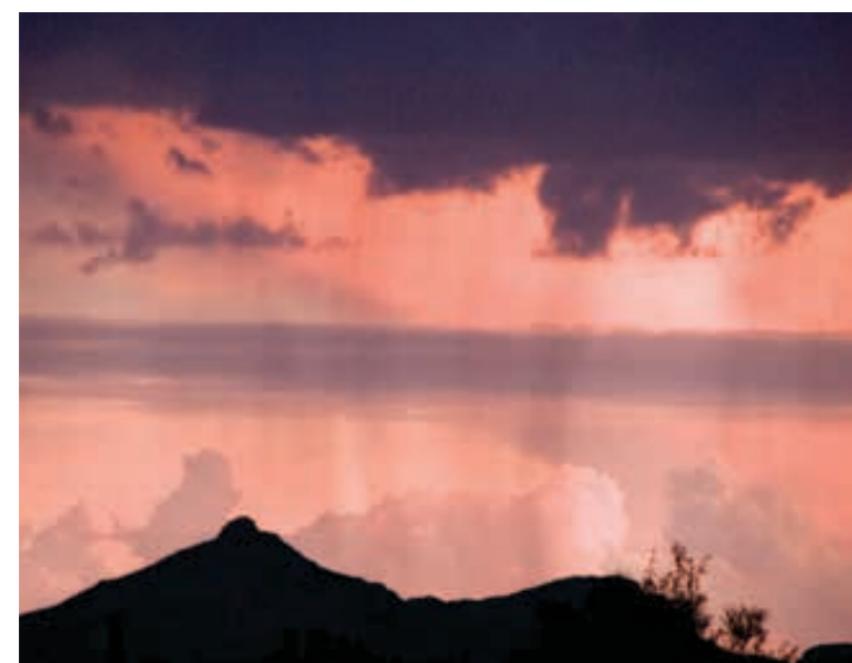
alarming and comforting all at the same moment. I stare out into the huge valley to the west and imagine some kind of serenity. I look at the ironwood wounded by droughts but alive right before my eyes, at the dead saguaro leaning against its limbs, at the towering adult saguaro, and I am snapped back into a war zone.

This sensation persists for hours as I wander the monument. Slowly, I come to believe in the half-dead trees and have doubts about the city where I live. Of all the monuments I have known, I think Ironwood might be the only one in the entire American archipelago of such reserves that actually matters — a place where the things we deny are made evident and a place where the will to face things and persist, that can-do spirit, is the very atmosphere floating over the landscape. A beauty emerges, that low-key but honest beauty, like the kind we see in stark Shaker furniture or hear in the bare, simple chording of old folk songs. I sit down and am struck dumb by the mosaic of small stones in the beige soil. I examine the natural litter under the ancient ironwoods as if I were visiting a kind of desert Library of Congress where all the materials that explain life have been gathered and preserved.

I stumble upon a huge cristate saguaro, a mutant rarity with its normal top distorted into a fan. No one is sure why this happens. The cristate looks to be 40 feet tall and has 15 to 20 arms. A huge ironwood spreads out at its base, the tree that enabled the saguaro to survive when young and eventually become this tower in the desert. The cactus is in full flower, and soon the fruits will become litter under the protecting shade of the ironwood, where birds and rats and other creatures will feast on them and the seeds in the fruit will be scattered, and, if lucky, find shelter under an ironwood, and possibly in 200 years also tower over the landscape. This strange assemblage is that scenic moment, the frame that for years to come will be photographed by my kind as a spectacular visual statement of the desert. I do not object and I linger because there is a weird beauty to the tree and the cactus.

But my eye is drawn off into the desert where smaller ironwoods, ones that look more dead than alive, brood on the desert floor. I walk toward them. They have become my real scenic vista.

Life is an open book here. And now it is time to read this book and finally understand where we really are. ■



NECESSARY NURSEMAID A humble canopy of ironwood trees (above, left) provides shelter for saguaro seedlings, protecting them from the blazing desert sun and cold winter nights. Eventually, mature saguaros tower over their nursemaid plants.

DESERT DENIZENS Barrel cactuses and a chainfruit cholla (above, right) thrive in the harsh desert environment of Southern Arizona's Silver Bell Mountains.

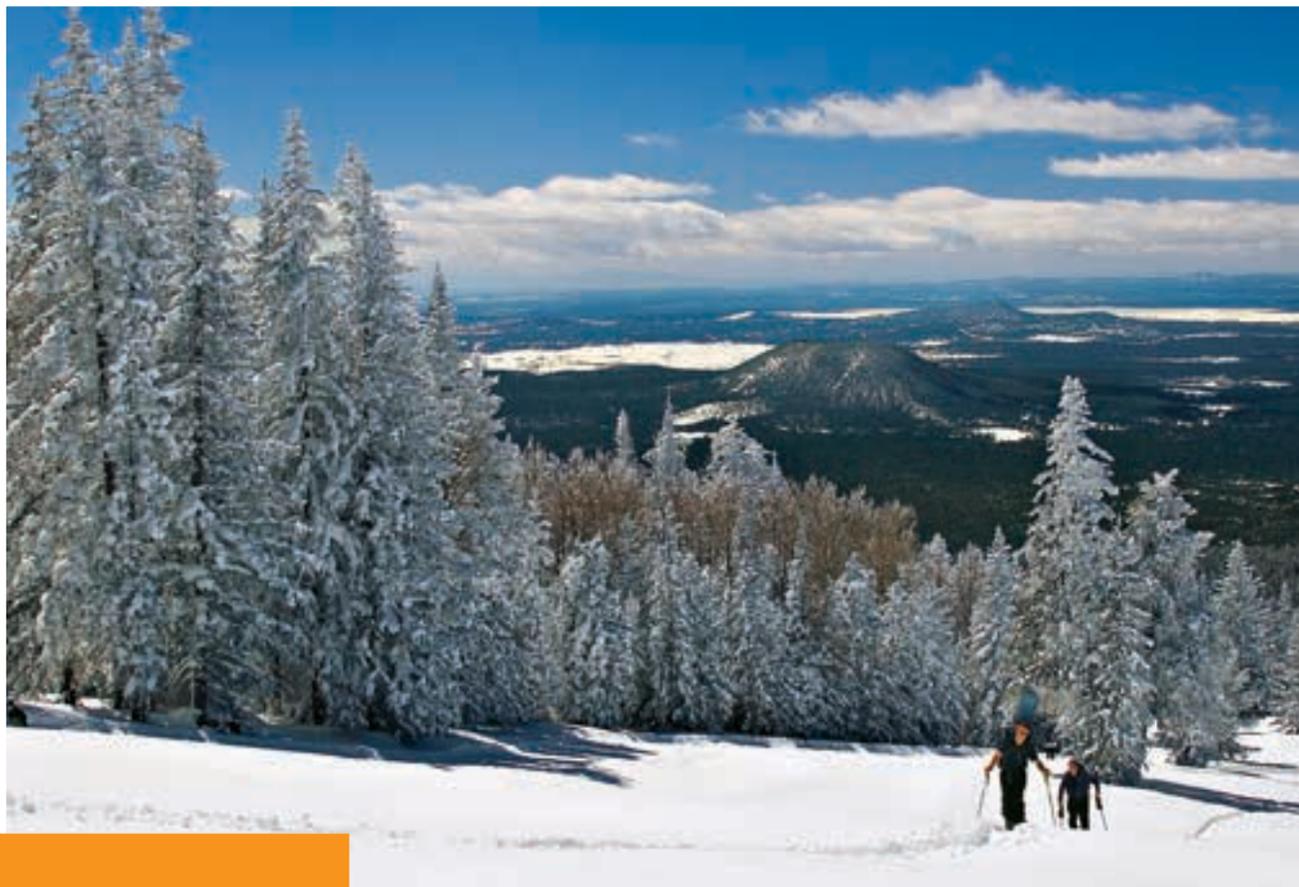
SILVERY SUNSET A silhouette of the Silver Bells (opposite, below) sits below a bank of storm clouds hovering in the blush of day's last light.



IT'S ALL DOWNHILL

LIKE HITTING THE SLOPES AT SNOWBOWL OR SUNRISE, THE BEST THING ABOUT BACKCOUNTRY SKIING IS THE RIDE DOWN — IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM. UNLIKE TRADITIONAL RESORTS, HOWEVER, THERE AREN'T ANY CHAIRLIFTS IN THE OUTBACK, JUST ROCKS AND TREES AND THE OCCASIONAL AVALANCHE.

BY WILL WATERMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN B. STEVENSON



“**T**his is going to be good!”

Ilan, my skiing partner, predicted excitedly. We were staring out a thin motel window at huge, cottony snowflakes falling in downtown Flagstaff. Behind us, the room’s faded carpet could be seen in patches between an array of backcountry ski gear — collapsible shovels,

avalanche probes and beacons, backpacks and GORE-TEX clothing. Early the next morning, we were headed to Lockett Meadow to “trail,” or ski uphill, a few thousand feet, and then, depending on the depth and stability of the snow, ski back down.

We’d come from Prescott through a powerful low-pressure system that blessed Northern Arizona with 3 feet of snow. The back end of my Nissan Pathfinder rattled with the sound of telemark skis. At a glance, telemark skis look a lot like downhill skis. They’re very different, though. Telemark skis flex differently and are fitted with free-heel bindings and adhesive skins that allow radically steep ascents and off-trail “tele” turns. In other words, telemark skis allow adventurers to ski/climb uphill in search of deep snow in remote areas — away from the busy ski lifts.

This kind of skiing can be dangerous, because, in addition to the remote locations, trails aren’t maintained in the backcountry. Nonetheless, we felt safe enough on this trip because there wasn’t much of a snow base when the recent storm deposited its light, low-moisture snow, which means we didn’t expect an avalanche. While we weren’t sure we’d be able to ski a snowpack

that hadn’t had time to compact a base, we couldn’t resist the chance to try.

The next morning we “skinned” 3 miles and 900 feet up Lockett Meadow Road. Skinning means climbing uphill with skins adhered to the bottoms of the skis. Our ski tips nose-dived into the powder as we passed trees slumped under heavy white gowns of snow. Rays of sunshine occasionally darted through the breaks in the storm, but dark clouds dominated the sky. Ilan broke the trail, which can be difficult in deep snow. Over the years, he’s climbed and skied mountains in Alaska, Washington and Northern California, and last year logged about 100 days on his skis. So, it made sense that he ski ahead.

At Lockett Meadow we took a break, resting our legs while sitting on a rubber-covered metal picnic table underneath a snow-drenched ponderosa pine. It was freezing. We wrapped our heavy down jackets around our GORE-TEX parkas and grabbed a snack. While taking sips from nearly frozen water bottles, we studied a topographic map and planned our next move.

Ilan and I had recently spent three weeks backcountry skiing in the Teton Range, on the border of Wyoming and Idaho, so I’d assumed my legs would be able to take this beating. Still, I was glad to be resting. We decided to zigzag our way up the western side of Sugarloaf Mountain — another 900 feet in elevation. We carb-loaded, put on our skis and packs, and took off up the wind-scoured slope.

MOVIN’ ON UP

Before they can ski down, Ilan Harari and author Will Waterman hike up the recently coated slopes (above). Compact, low-moisture snow leaves crisp powder with little chance of avalanches, one of the dangers of telemark skiing. After trekking uphill, Harari (right) strips the skin off his telemark skis in preparation for the descent.





**OUR
SKI TIPS
NOSE-DIVED
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Snow blew in our faces as we crisscrossed Sugarloaf. Like switchbacks on a mountain hike, crisscrossing on skis makes steep grades less demanding. After climbing diagonally across the slope at a 45-degree angle for about 25 feet, we delicately turned our skis to an opposite angle and continued. The wind pummeled the slope, creating shallow snow cover that made our skis slip on brush and fallen trees. Pushing forward, we glanced at the top of the mountain, as well as the views behind us.

When the clouds cleared and we could see Humphreys Peak, we were amazed at how prominent and rugged it looked with fresh snow from a heavy winter storm. Humphreys and its neighboring peaks faded in and out of view because of the low clouds. On the east side of the peak, the clouds were breathtaking — like a snowy staircase leading to the Inner Basin. We stopped again and enjoyed the view before continuing our ascent. My legs were aching from the workout. Sugarloaf proved much harder than we'd anticipated.

After reaching the top, and making a final push up a sparsely covered 35-degree pinnacle, we found ourselves out of the wind and comfortable again. The summit of Sugarloaf was wind-loaded with the snow that blew off the west side. We couldn't wait to see the eastern side.

After skiing across the top of the mountain, we looked down at the deep snow and a dense stand of ponderosas. We knew we could ski between the trees in short bursts, like we'd done many times in the Teton Range, so we tore the skins off our skis and headed downhill.

The snow was incredible. We dropped our knees into the deep powder, occasionally stopping to figure out how we'd meander around the pines. Fallen trees made for exciting jumps. It was thrilling, incredible ... until, just before the end, we stopped short at the edge of a 30-foot stone cliff. Below loomed a treacherous gravel pit. Hazards like nature's potholes are among the many



CHAIR-FREE
Ilan Harari (left) weaves between trees and rocks while skiing through the forest on the San Francisco Peaks. Staying on your feet is extremely difficult in telemark skiing, which Harari knows all too well as he loses his balance before taking a fall (above).

dangers of backcountry skiing or snowboarding.

We navigated back around the steep impasse to a ridge that separated two more pits. Leaning back on our skis to stay aloft in the deep snow, we dropped off a smaller cliff and skied safely down to the car. We were spent and happy. Our ski tour had lasted an exhilarating six-and-a-half hours, and now the warmth of the car felt good.

The next morning, after spending the night defrosting in Flagstaff, we awoke to blue skies and sunshine. Wearing our still-damp clothing, we eagerly headed up the road to Arizona Snowbowl for another day of skiing — this time on a bluebird day with the sun warming our bodies and a chairlift doing the uphill work. We couldn't have asked for more.

■ For information on backcountry skiing and snowboarding in the San Francisco Peaks, contact the Coconino National Forest, 928-526-0866. Beginners should not attempt off-trail skiing or snowboarding. **AH**

In December 1931, Northern Arizona looked more like Siberia than a backdrop in a John Wayne Western — drifts up to 15 feet high blocked roads and left thousands of Navajos and Hopis on the brink of starvation. Many would have died if it weren't for the six Army planes that dropped 32,000 pounds of food and supplies into random snowbanks across the reservations.

By LEO BANKS



MANNA from HEAVEN

The sight of American bomber planes soaring over the Navajo Indian Reservation would ordinarily conjure images of war and destruction. But desperate Indians saw the six Condor bombers roaring overhead in January 1932 as saving angels.

The planes dropped food and supplies to a population stranded by early season blizzards that had turned the high deserts and canyons of Indian country into what one newspaper reporter at the time likened to “a Siberian tundra.”

The snowstorms began during the third week of November 1931, and by mid-January 1932, Northern Arizona and northern New Mexico had come to a standstill. Drifts up to 15 feet high blocked roads and left many Navajos, Hopis, Utes and Zunis without food.

“Reports filtering in across the snowy wastes have been that even pony trails from most of the trading posts have been blocked,” noted *The Arizona Daily Star*.

The blizzards came so quickly and with such power that many sheep died in their corrals, smothered by the snow mass. Some Navajos reported seeing famished crows fly in among herds and pick out the eyes of living sheep.

Most vegetation had been buried, leaving nothing for

livestock to eat. In a letter dated Christmas Eve 1931, Superintendent John Hunter of the Fort Defiance Indian Agency described “a sight that I shall never forget.”

Hunter came upon a Navajo woman and three little children loading a few sheep and goats onto a wagon, intending to take them where brush could be found. The animals had been subsisting on thistle and coarse brush, which left their mouths cut and bleeding.

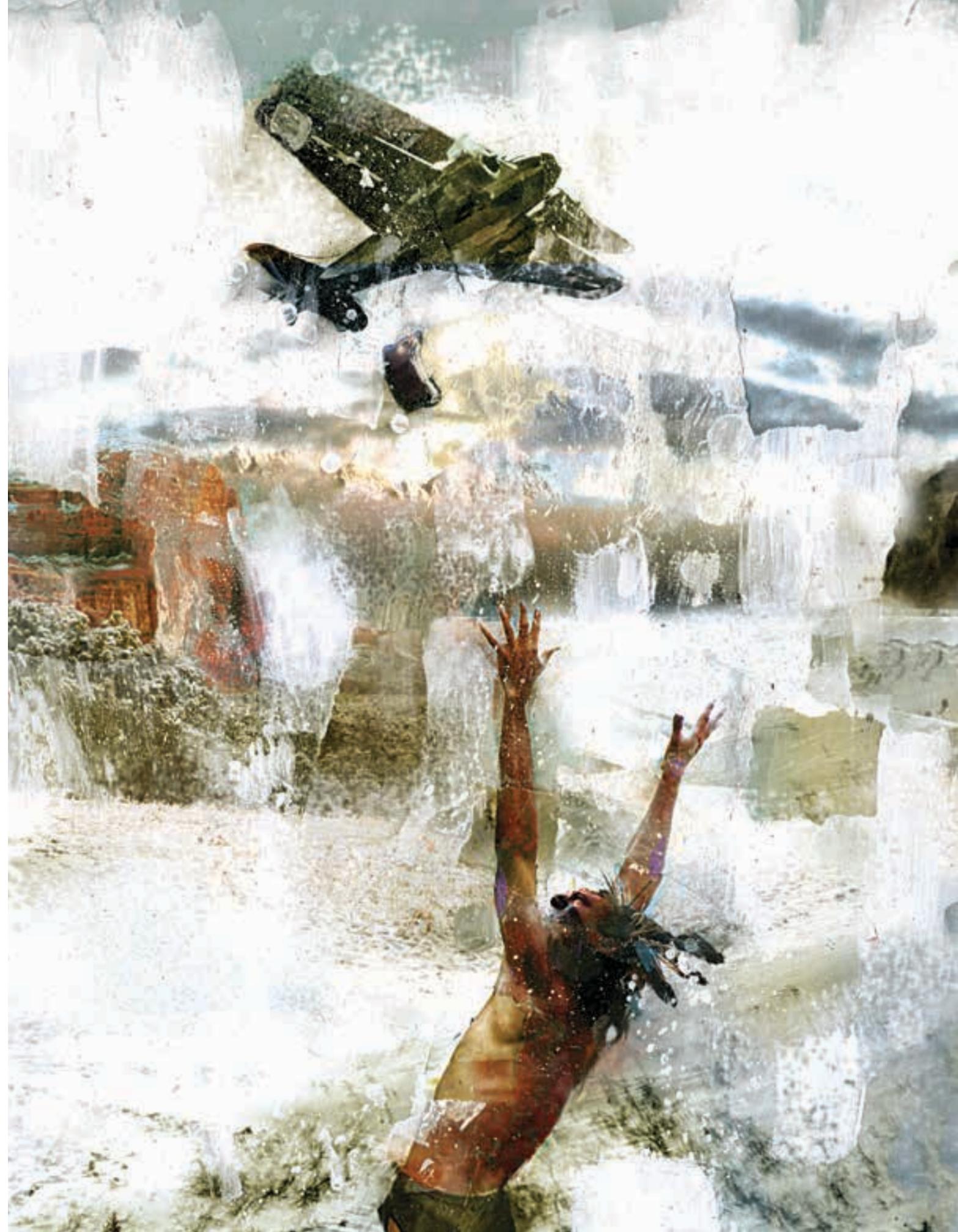
“With what hope this family could further undertake the task of saving these animals I am at a loss to understand,” Hunter wrote. “The only answer could be that these few sheep and goats represented all their possessions, and naturally they were putting forth every effort to save them.”

The *Gallup Independent* reported that the situation “meant inevitable and dreadful starvation, and the Indians were at the edge of starvation themselves.”

Some reservation residents risked their lives to walk through the drifts to the Hopi agency at Keams Canyon for provisions. Then they hoisted supply packs onto their backs and walked 25 miles back to their villages.

Even Navajos at Black Mountain, near the Utah border, who'd escaped capture by Kit Carson's troops in the roundup of 1863-64, sent a runner to Fort Defiance to inform authorities of their suffering. Still living primitively and proudly as resisters, these Indians had never before sought government help.

{ Illustrations by David Hollenbach }





Superintendent Hunter estimated that 16,000 Navajos were at risk, with “some 500,000 sheep entirely snowed in. It’s hell, that’s all,” he told reporters.

The conditions trapped some travelers in the wilds, threatening their lives. On a hunting trip along the Mogollon Rim with a group of Navajos, Philip Johnston, the son of a reservation missionary, recalled lying down on a sheepskin pallet as a blizzard approached. By the time he woke up at dawn, the storm had dumped its payload.

In the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* of October 15, 1933, Johnston, who years later came up with the successful idea of using the Navajo language for secure communications during World War II, described what he saw as he and his Navajo companions awoke:

“Pushing aside their sheltering folds, I was startled by a cascade of white powder, the icy touch of which galvanized my whole body into frenzied action. Springing to my feet, I looked out over an expanse of snow that came to my waist. Here and there tiny mounds were quivering and shaking.

“Then, one by one, they erupted suddenly, and human figures

wreaking havoc on Northern Arizona.

Spotting the oval dome of an abandoned hogan sticking up through the snow, Richardson dug his way inside, lit a fire and went to sleep. A heavy thud awakened him. Opening his eyes, he saw a big, gray wolf that had fallen through the smoke hole.

The animal raced out the door when Richardson jumped up, yelling. But several more furry heads “with eyes that gleamed in the leaping firelight” looked down at him from the smoke hole. He drove them away by feeding the fire until it reached the hole.

The wolves pressed against the hogan’s walls. Richardson saw a nose break through between the boards and “immediately slammed a log against it, and a doglike howl was raised as it scrambled backward. Then the hole behind the door became a fighting pocket of maddened beasts.”

When their pressing weight broke through, the wolves burst inside, all snapping their teeth. “The scene was unimaginable,” he wrote. “An injured wolf going down bleeding was seized by a half-dozen maddened jaws all at once. They piled on each other to get at the fresh meat. The smoke hole was my only route to escape.

“TO THIS day I AM UNABLE TO CONTEMPLATE A JACKRABBIT diet WITHOUT violent QUALMS OF THE PALATE.”

appeared as though summoned by a magician. Some were nude except for the time-honored G-string; others were clad in flowing skirts of bright calico.”

Forty miles of snow lay between the campsite and the hunting party’s homes on the Little Colorado River. They’d packed food for just five days, expecting to supplant that with piñon nuts and venison. But the nuts had disappeared under the snow, and the deer had fled to lower country.

Johnston and 14 Navajos embarked on the long trek. Their food lasted only two days, after which they ate piñon nuts dug from the nests of wood rats. But mostly they survived on jackrabbits, “which our plunging horses could easily overtake in the deep drifts.”

After nine days, the group arrived, footsore and weary. “To this day I am unable to contemplate a jackrabbit diet without violent qualms of the palate,” Johnston wrote.

Gladwell Richardson, from a well-known Northern Arizona trading family, also found himself in a bind when he tried to hike 28 miles from near Redlake to the trading post at Inscription House. After a short distance, weak and exhausted, he knew he was in danger, surrounded by “a grimly cold, bluish white world,” and wolves.

In his 1986 memoir, *Navajo Trader*, Richardson wrote that packs of wolves — which some contend had been eradicated by 1930 — migrated south from Utah in search of food and were

“Three times I leaped, with hands reaching for the log rim, before I managed a hold. Desperately pulling myself upward slowly, I knew if I fell now I would never make it again.” As he held on, Richardson listened to “the crunching of teeth on bone [that] went on for what seemed hours.”

The following morning, Richardson met two Navajos who secured him a horse to ride to safety.

As January progressed, the dangerous weather showed no sign of letting up. Temperatures plunged to 30 degrees below zero, and bitter winds scored the landscape.

New Mexico’s Zuni Indians blamed winter’s anger on a decision by Zuni dancers to attend Hopi rain ceremonies the previous October. “Now some of our Zunis say this was too much of a slam at the inadequacy of Zuni rain gods,” according to *Christian Indian* magazine, “so the latter brought about this storm to teach the Zunis a lesson.”

At the urgent request of C.J. Rhoads, the commissioner of Indian affairs, the Army Air Corps bombers, based out of March Field in Riverside, California, arrived at Barrigan Airport in Winslow on January 16.

The area of operation ranged from the Grand Canyon to 50 miles east of the Arizona-New Mexico boundary, and from Holbrook in the south to the Utah line in the north. Planes carrying 1,000 pounds of supplies and an Indian guide circled hogans

and trading posts with their bomb bay doors open.

Newspaper typewriters ground out overwrought descriptions by the dozens, calling the planes “winged representatives of the redmen’s Great White Father in Washington.”

But not everything went smoothly. The first packages dropped exploded on impact, scattering packets of flour, beans, salt pork, coffee, sugar and salt over wide distances. The airdroppers solved this problem by using heavy paper and double burlap bags secured with heavy cords.

With almost no communication, the drops came unannounced to most Indians — until the roar of the big engines shattered the eerie quiet of the snowbound villages.

Navajos who’d never seen an airplane up close ran terrified back to their hogans. On January 18, the *Winslow Daily Mail* reported that the sacks were usually left alone until one Indian, usually an elder, tiptoed out to inspect them.

“Then he waved one of the bundles wildly toward the hogans, and the Indians made a general rush for the sacks,” the *Daily Mail* reported. They “hailed the provisions through the snow to their hogans.”

Some Indians used smoke signals to attract the pilots’ attention. The *Daily Mail* noted that some villages received the drops with “glad hand receptions,” adding that, “the moment the planes appeared, crowds of Indians poured into the open to wait for the Army’s flying bread line.”

At Cousins, New Mexico, trader Charles Cousins “jumped up and down and danced around like a monkey at the sight of the planes with food for his community.” One pilot reported seeing an Indian, frightened by his passing plane, yet eager to get at the food sack, run smack into the side of his hogan.

In the small village of Piñon, mission commander Lieutenant Charles Howard watched an Indian man bolt from his hogan and trace an arrow in the snow with his foot. The pilot promptly bombarded the marker with a ton of food, but Edgar Miller, head of the Hopi Agency at Keams Canyon, said the drop was premature. The Indian had not finished his message in the snow. He had intended to add the words, “Piñon, 10 miles,” at the point of the arrow. “Our crew are firmly of the opinion that if planes are dropping bombs, we’d feel safe in being the enemy,” Miller wrote to the Interior Department.

He added, however, that the Indians in his care appreciated “the wonderful feeling of hearing the call, ‘Come and get it,’ and being able to relax by a warm fire and absorb all your hide can hold of the palatable food.”

After four days, and drops totaling 32,000 pounds, the *Gallup Independent* declared the 11th Bomber Squadron “victors in their battle to push back the hoary hand of winter.”

But many thousands of sheep and other stock, staples of Navajo life, died from starvation, and the effects rippled through the economy for a long time.

S.F. Stacher, superintendent and disbursing agent of the Eastern Navajo Indian Agency, met with a group of destitute Indians near Fort Wingate in mid-February 1932 to hear woeful tales of hun-



ger, stock loss and deprivation. The Navajos had walked to the meeting through rain, mud and snow.

In a letter to Washington, D.C., Stacher wrote that of the 20 women present, eight had no shoes, stockings or moccasins. They simply wrapped “their feet up in old rags, which were saturated with mud and water, and the others had old shoes on that were hardly worthy of the name. Some of their dresses were in rags.”

Even so, Stacher said, the Navajos displayed cheer, hope and much courage. Throughout their dispatches with Washington, agents across the reservation echoed that sentiment, marveling at the bravery they witnessed in the face of a dire crisis.

As Superintendent John Hunter of Fort Defiance wrote: “The Indians are meeting the emergencies in their usual very wonderful way. I know of no people who can meet adversity, such as has been visited on this country, in a more competent manner than the Navajo Indians.”

■ If you’d like to help feed the hungry this holiday season, please contact the following organizations: Northern Arizona Food Bank, 928-526-2211, nafoodbank.org; St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance, firstfoodbank.org, 602-352-3640; United Food Bank, 480-926-4897, unitedfoodbank.org. ■■



Rock Springs to Cordes

Looking for a Sunday drive? This quiet road is slow-going, scenic and not far from a delicious piece of apple pie.

THE FIRST RULE OF living-to-tell-the-tale back-road travel is to keep a full stomach. You never can tell when you'll be seeing your next meal on some of those remote journeys, and it's hard to negotiate sand traps, lava flows and mountain grades when you're thinking of chow.

So, on a brilliant Arizona morning I took myself to Rock Springs Café for a hearty breakfast topped with a big slab of the house specialty apple pie. Just off traffic-laden Interstate 17, the café is a time warp into a quieter, less hurried time than ours.

The second rule is to ask a local whether a particular stretch of road poses any particular challenges. Thus, I

asked the cheerful woman at the cash register about conditions on the old stagecoach trail to Cordes, a town some 20 miles north.

"The old road? Oh, it's fine," she said. "I came down it in a big snowstorm just last week. No problem."

The third rule is to get a second opinion, since one person's goat track is another's superhighway. I followed the interstate frontage road along the west side of the freeway. It becomes Old Black Canyon Highway at Black Canyon City, where it branches off to join the interstate. At the Black Canyon greyhound race-track, the old road joins the old highway. Here it's called Maggie Mine Road, though

old-timers call it Dog Track Road, joking that once upon a time some engineer must have turned a dog loose and followed it with a road grader as it loped over the hills.

The pavement soon ends, and a sign announces that Maggie Mine Road has officially become "primitive." There I met a local photographer and conservationist who supplied that second opin-

BRADSHAW BONANZA Luminous green Arizona ash trees line Black Canyon Creek, which winds through the foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains.

ion. "You're going to have fun," she said. "But watch out. The first few miles are really rough going. All the ATVs have worn the dirt down to rock, and there are lots of places where the road is washed out. Don't break an axle."

Both of my advisors, it turns out, were right.

For about 5 miles beyond the primitive-road sign, Maggie Mine Road climbs

over three steep hills. Deep grooves, worn by hungry tires and rainfall, run along the road, inconveniently deepest just when the road is narrowest and steepest. None poses any great challenge to high-clearance or 4WD vehicles, but the shallowest are enough to stop most normal cars — or at least normal drivers.

Apart from a pair of ATVs thundering by, I had that first 5-mile stretch to myself. The initial half-mile parallels the interstate, separated from it by a few hundred feet of rocky canyon and thin air. The road bends west at the crest of the first hill, just north of where Black Canyon proper stands and Black Canyon Creek flows. At that point the interstate vanishes behind a wall of rock, and the view is of the rugged foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains. The scene is textbook Sonoran Desert — a dense forest of saguaros, creosotes and paloverdes hugging the hillsides. In a few miles,

with a thousand-odd-foot elevation gain, that ecosystem gives way to another, where junipers dominate.

The road sharply descends into the next drainage, Arrastre Creek. The creek-bed, a jumble of boulders and saguaros bounded by low but steep rock walls, makes for difficult navigation on foot. That geography has not daunted generations of prospectors, who have staked claims throughout the hills. Here and there a jeep trail enters the rough road, but otherwise the landscape is nearly pristine.

The road now bends around another hill, then climbs along the east flank of Black Canyon, bouncy and rutted, amenable to speeds of 10 mph or less, unhappy at any higher velocity. Content to poke along and enjoy the slowly passing scenery, I whiled away three-quarters of an hour climbing and descending that nameless hill, an ancient Indian fortifica-



ROCK SOLID In the old town of Bumble Bee, many of the homes were constructed of granite rocks (above) taken from nearby Black Canyon. In Cordes, the old gas station (right) is a hive of activity on weekends.



tion barely visible on its crest, before joining the Bumble Bee leg of the road, about 5 miles beyond the pavement's end.

Bumble Bee Road allows greater speed. I continued along the shoulder of Black Canyon, now a broad valley where thickets of agaves grow in profusion on the gab-bro and granite hills. Those rocks provide the foundations for the dozen-odd houses that make up Bumble Bee, a ranching center of old that this day showed few signs of activity.

Neither did the rattlesnake stretching across the road near Government Spring, 3 miles up the road. I stopped to encourage it to clear off, but it didn't cooperate. So I nudged my truck to the intersection with Forest Road 259, a mile beyond the spring.

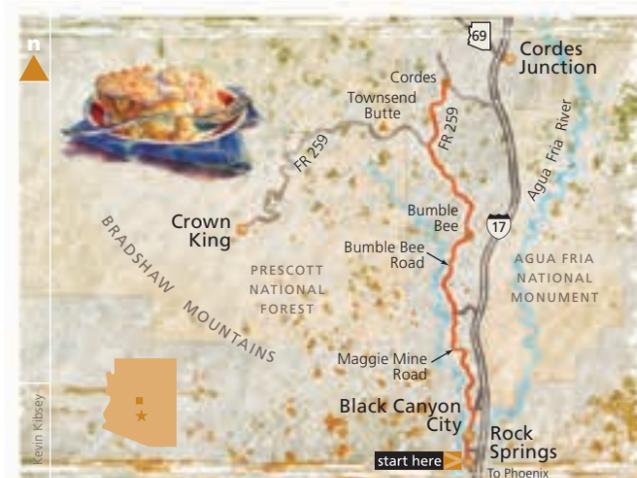
There, on a rolling plateau below Townsend Butte, Black Canyon ends. To the left, FR 259 continues west to Crown King, or to the right, climbs

north to the crossroads hamlet of Cordes. The casual passerby might mistake Cordes for a ghost town on weekdays, but the place comes alive on weekends, when the old gas station does a thriving business in antiques and curious metal flowers.

The back road from Rock Springs to Cordes runs slightly more than 21 miles, passing through a rugged, memorably spectacular and little visited corner of Arizona. It makes for a perfect Sunday drive, as long as you're in no hurry, which is just as it should be.



■ For more back-road adventures, pick up a copy of our book, *The Back Roads*. Now in its fifth edition, the book (\$19.95) features 40 of the state's most scenic drives. To order a copy, call 800-543-5432 or visit arizonahighways.com. **AH**



route finder

Note: Mileages are approximate.

- > **From Phoenix**, follow Interstate 17 north to Rock Springs and take Exit 242 west to Old Black Canyon Highway.
- > **Follow this road north** to the intersection with Maggie Mine Road by the Greyhound Park. Maggie Mine Road intersects with Bumble Bee Road about 5 miles north. The route continues to Forest Road 259. Turn right (north) to go to Cordes.
- > **From Cordes**, continue north to State Route 69 or east to Interstate 17.



Lost Dog Wash

There aren't a lot of places in Metro Phoenix where you can disconnect from the city. This trail in the McDowell Mountains is one of the few.

NO ONE SEEMS TO remember how Lost Dog Wash in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve got its name, although, it's a good bet that at some point, someone lost a dog there. This

much is certain: You'll definitely lose the feeling you're in the city in this vast expanse of Sonoran Desert cradled by the McDowell Mountains.

Lost Dog Wash Access is

part of a growing network of trails on a 16,000-acre preserve within Metropolitan Phoenix. The access area has plenty of parking, ramadas and an up-close look at a rare

BRIGHT AND SPINY On Lost Dog Wash Trail, teddy bear chollas' spiny branches glow in the sunset, giving them a deceptively soft, fuzzy appearance. Photograph by Greg Binon

crested saguaro.

As you head out on the Lost Dog Wash Trail, city noises instantly fade into the desert, replaced by bird song and the soft swish of the wind through



the bushes and trees. If the breeze is strong enough, you'll even hear it moan through the arms of the saguaros. Dawn and late afternoon are the best times to hit the trail. That's when you'll likely encounter wildlife such as deer, javelinas, coyotes, rabbits, snakes, lizards and birds. Don't be surprised if a lone coyote crosses the trail ahead of you and pauses to wonder why you're trespassing on his territory.

"We've seen all types of native animals in the preserve, except mountain lions," says Scott Hamilton, the trails planner for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. "We know the lions are there because we've moved several trails to skirt evidence of their habitation. But they're shy, illusive creatures, and my team and I have never spotted one, although, we've had reports from hikers who say they have."

Lost Dog Wash Trail is a gentle uphill hike that mean-

ders and dips through a beautiful wash. As the path climbs, it reveals majestic views. At the summit (a saddle between Thompson Peak and a southern unnamed peak), be sure to stop at Taliesin Overlook for a 360-degree panorama of the Metro Phoenix area.

From the overlook, there are several options. One is to turn around and hike back down Lost Dog Wash Trail to the trailhead — a round-trip of roughly 4.5 miles. Or, part-way down, you can link up with Ringtail Trail and cross over to Sunrise Trail for a 5.3-mile hike. Another option is to continue from Taliesin Overlook on Quartz Trail to the Quartz/104th Street Access area (5 miles), but you'll need to park cars at both ends or be prepared to trek all the way back.

The current trail system strings together McDowell-Sonoran Preserve, McDowell Mountain Regional Park and the Tonto National Forest.

The goal is to eventually increase the size of the preserve to 36,400 acres. "The idea is to allow a corridor of migration for animals from the river to the preserve and back," Hamilton says, "as well

ART ECO Designed by local architect Philip Weddle, the eco-friendly Lost Dog Trailhead building echoes the slope of the mountains. Photograph by Bill Timmerman

as provide some superb hiking for nature lovers just minutes from the city." **AH**

trail guide

Getting There: From Phoenix, go east on State Route 202 to State Route 101, and go north on SR 101 to the Shea Boulevard Exit. Go east on Shea Boulevard for approximately 4 miles to 124th Street, turn north and drive to the end of the street. Lost Dog Wash Access Area is clearly marked.

Length: 4.5 miles round-trip

Elevation Gain: 380 feet

Travel Advisory: If you're heat tolerant, you can hike this trail year-round, although it's best to hike in early morning or later in the evening during the hot summer months. Be sure to carry plenty of water.

Additional Information: 480-312-7722 or www.scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve



online For more hikes in Arizona, visit our *Hiking Guide* at arizonahighways.com.



Insert Snowman Here

Sleigh bells ring, snow is glistening ... it's a winter wonderland. Yet this park, which shares its locomotive name with a former mayor, is a year-round hub, hosting summer concerts and art fairs. It's located at the intersection of streets named after a tree and a peak — apropos for a mountain burg. In the spirit of giving, here's another hint: It's located across from City Hall, a convenient hop-skip-jump for the incumbent mayor, who usually kicks off the season by lighting the city's tree. Happy holidays.

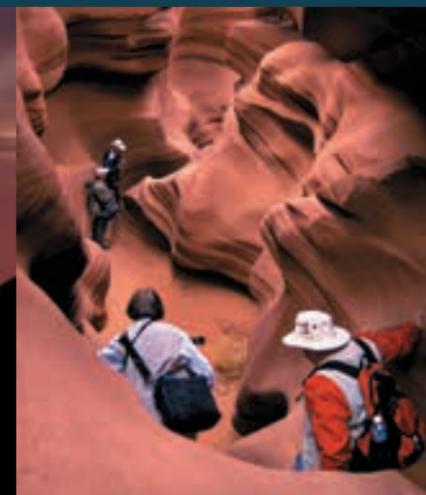
TOM BEAN

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