

BOOTPRINTS

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"Erving Castle"

By Heather Wyman

On September 23rd, what may have been the most beautiful day of the year; four hikers set out on what was to become the most beautiful hike of the year-or something close to it! I added the John Smith Hermit Cave, a.k.a., Erving Castle, on section 16 of the M&M trail as a last-minute addition to the hiking schedule, and was pleased that four friends were able to join me- Two from the AMC. This was a favorite hike of mine that Richard Harris (I believe) lead many years ago and I have wanted to revisit it ever since. As I anticipated, finding the trailhead, which was off of an unmarked road off of Rte. 2, proved to be the trickiest part of the hike. After good luck found us parking at the top of the steep side-street, and entrance to



the M-M trail, we crossed into a mossy and ferny wood, with a somewhat dry brook to cross over several times that must make a spectacular waterfall in the spring. We headed down to the Hermit Cave, with a side trip to another large rocky area with lots of crevices and nooks to hide in- or sleep in as a found sleeping pad might indicate. After
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Africa – Part 1

(South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia)

By Marcia Kelly

I set the meeting in October for planning the next trip which I announced would be Africa I had a house full for the meeting but in the end three of us went. I collected deposits and then was left to organize this trip. I had several safaris picked out but in the end decided what the Cardboard Box was offering gave us a variety of areas to see. After all those months of planning we flew out from Hartford on August 9 to Johannesburg via Amsterdam.

Our adventures began in the airport in Johannesburg. Jeanne and Norm were changing money and I had to call our hostel to pick us up after 10 PM on Friday night.

I had several African men helping me until Norm brought over a Virginian living in SA who worked very hard at impressing us with the fact that this was a dangerous airport. He did not leave us until our transportation came. By then it was well

after midnight and so to bed at the Purple Palms.

The next day we had to go out for breakfast and were out in the suburbs with not much around. The manager arranged for a taxi he knew to take us out. I asked how much and the reply was that he would have his meter on. Well we watched it go up and up and up... I asked when we would be there as the price was quite high. He asked



if we didn't realize and said he would not charge us on the way back. Thank goodness we were leaving the next day.

Sunday morning flight to Namibia and we were told to take a shuttle to our pension there, which was easy to do. We drove through bush with no urban landscape to be seen. 45 minutes later we arrived in Windhoek, which
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Summit of Split Mountain (14,058 ft) – Sierra High Route Story on Page 3

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exploring what remained of John Smith's rock walls and garden areas, we continued steeply upwards and backtracked on the M&M for a lovely cliff outlook with the Miller River in the backdrop.



All in all, a great 6-mile or so hike. It was also interesting to find out that hermits were quite popular in John Smith's day. In some locations, the hermit, who would encamp on someone's estate, was welcomed, as they would entertain the guests with folktales and woodcraft. After our Hermit was found in Erving by land developers, he too, became unintentionally popular, and was said to have hosted 15,000 people at one point. This seemed to be favorable, as those folks brought supplies for him, and food for his cats. For more information on John Smith, or how to get to his "Castle" visit: www.nentc.com/johnsmith.htm.

~Heather Wyman

{Africa - Continued from page 1}

was a city on hills and offers a blend of European and African influence. Our pension for the night was German friendly and charming. It was summer and I had to go in the pool, which was the coldest water I have ever been in except for the St Lawrence River in early June. Our dining experience that night was at Joe's Bar which offered game you never knew existed. I tried springbok, which was tender and delicious.

Namibia gained its independence in 1990 and has a multiparty system. Its main sources of revenue are mining, fishing and tourism. It is about the size of Louisiana and Texas combined and is mostly desert. Namibia is the only country in the world to specifically address conservation and protection of natural resources in their constitution.[14] Article 95 states, "The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting international policies aimed at the following: maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity of Namibia, and utilization of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the

benefit of all Namibians, both present and future." [14]. 97% are black Africans. The Germans and English both attempted to settle here and evidence of the Germans is prevalent in both Windhoek and Swakopmund. Most speak English, Africans and Osiwambo. AIDS is a huge problem. The life expectancy in this area is 40.

We met our guides and the rest of the group Monday morning and headed south toward the Namib Desert. We had lunch near the Gamsberg Mountain and soon after crossed the Tropic of Capricorn.



We were struck with the dryness. Riverbeds with not even a trickle of water. In the rainy season the areas would be flooded. We stopped in Solitaire, which consisted a gas station, a convenience store that is known for its apple crisp and fresh bread. It was the first settlement we had seen in hours. We began to see some game –ostrich, springbok and élan. But what we were really here for was the desert. The Namib Desert in addition to its beauty has the largest cache of diamonds of anywhere in the world We dove in to our campsite and let out of the "box" to set up camp. We hurried and then back in the box to rush to the dune well before sunset.

As promised there came our box (a Land Rover with our 2 guides with the back retrofitted to fit 8 with a trailer hooked up to carry all our supplies and gear). We were glad to see them as the temperature was dropping. Back at our campsite Franz had prepared a wonderful dinner pork chops and game sausage. It was so cold we were all in our tent pretty early. It was just as well as wakey- wakey was 5AM. We raced to drive 70 km to Sossusvlei where we climbed in the dark in this spectacular area to watch the light slowly come over the dunes. We had till 7:30 and then came down to have breakfast prepared by Franz. After breakfast we continued on through the desert through soft sand to the Dead Vlei with its large expanse of bleached cracked clay and skeletal camel thorn trees scattered around, contrasting with a backdrop of huge orange red dunes. A little excitement on the way! A couple in an ordinary truck did not know to let air out of the tires were stuck deeply. Martin stopped to help, as did other Land Rovers. Several also became stuck. In the end we manually pushed them out as we had tried several different ways if getting them out.

In the afternoon we hiked along the Sesrium Canyon, which actually had a mud puddle in it. As the write-up of the day says" we enjoyed another spectacular sunset surrounded by this colorful orange golden desert. We again slept under the stars of the southern hemisphere. With no artificial



Martin let us out and told us to climb Elim's Dune and they would be back after dark to get us. We rushed up the dune only to realize the top could be where you wanted. These dunes go on for well over 100km to the sea. Each us found our own spot to view the incredible changing light. It was a mystical experience to be sitting up on a dune in the Namib Desert seeing this encroaching magnificent sunset.

lights the night sky is intense. Cads knew the Southern Cross having lived in New Zealand.

Another predawn departure but first packing up the tents that were stiff with ice. We drive to Walvis Bay and as we neared the coast were in a very intense sandstorm with high winds. They took us to the salt factory where we could see how it is harvested from



the sea. As we drove along the coast we saw so many Greater and Lesser Flamingoes and other shore birds. As we would walk closer to them they would wander away. For lunch on the windy beach Martin had gotten us the apple crisp from Solitaire. The strong wind made it seem really cold and we had no desire to touch the Atlantic here. We continued up the coast to Swakopmund. This is where Brad and Angelina came for their childbirth. It is also where you can try dune riding, boarding. It is known as home to extreme sports. The others in our group tried some of it but let it be known they were all younger than us. Here we stayed in a guesthouse and went out for dinner. I tried the kingslip. It was so large I shared it with both my guides. We had some time to see the town and look for tourmaline. Martin stopped on the way back to Windhoek at a market and here amidst all kinds of rough, unpolished stones I bought some tourmaline.

As we got to know our guides we soon realized they had some incredible skills to be guiding. Martin was the head guide and did all the driving. I sat behind him and never saw him yawning. We ended up with a Black African owned company called Thimbi Thimbi that was started by one of the former guides of an Australian owned tour company. We met Lucky in Swakopmund and most of the guides along the way. They were all friendly and helpful but not as fantastic as Martin and Franz. They took good care of us for 12 days never losing patience no matter how petulant we were. They prepared 3 meals a day, set up camp except for those tents. They could out spot game better than all 8 of us. They taught us the history of the area as well of their customs. The music on their I-Pods was fantastic so on those long drives we always had music. Franz was quieter but always looking out for us. He did the most of the cooking as well as waking us up so early in the morning. Both of them had a sense of

humor so they were always upbeat and fun to be with.

After a night in Windhoek we were headed to Etosha to see the GAME. All the travel once outside of Windhoek was on dirt roads it was amazing to us that Martin knew where to go. As soon as we entered the park and opened the top we saw our first herd of elephants. They were on both sides of the road. {To be continued in Part 2}

~Marcia Kelly

Sierra High Route

By Rick Briggs

The Sierra High Route is a trail-less route in the Sierra Nevada, which runs from Kings Canyon to Yosemite National Park. The route was first pioneered by Steve Roper. It basically parallels the John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails for most of it's route but stays high above these trails utilizing high glacial cirques, lake basins, and mountain passes at elevations above 10,000 feet. Once I read Ropers' book about the route, I was hooked. This past September, John Klebes, Ed Laroche and I hiked most of the first section in Kings Canyon and added an exciting trip through the wild and scenic Muro Blanco Canyon - an 8-day backpack loop trip. Our trip starts in lovely Bakersfield CA.

Once we arrived in Bakersfield, gathered our luggage and rented our car, we headed north to Fresno driving by pistachio

orchards, citrus groves, corn, sorghum etc. Everything kept alive by water from the Sierras. They were to the east but we could barely see them through the dirty air. In Fresno we found a camp store to buy fuel canisters for our stoves, grabbed a bite to eat and began the 2 hr. drive east to Sequoia/Kings Canyon.

It is quite a climb out of the valley to the 7 to 8,000' elevation where you enter the park and much cooler than the valley. We drove around a bit gawking at the big trees and found a dirt road heading into the National Forest where you can legally camp just about anywhere. We found our spot and I set up my tent even though it was a beautiful night. Ed and John chose to sleep under the stars. Sometime during the night a thunderstorm blew in rather quickly and they had to spend the rest of the night in the car.

The next morning was dry but cloudy and it looked like it might rain some more. Ed knew of a place that served breakfast in the park (he had been here earlier in the summer) so we drove there and had a huge all you can eat meal for a great price. They even had Starbucks Coffee.

The rest of the day we toured the giant sequoias doing rather easy hikes through Muir Grove and a longer hike near General Sherman Tree. All the while we were slowly acclimating to the altitude to prepare us for 10,000 and above.

We camped the next night in nearly the same spot with thunder and lightning rather close by. We learned that this was the first rain since April.

The next morning we drove out to Roads End in Kings Canyon, the official starting point of our hike. We checked in at the backcountry office where we picked up our permit and we were ready to go-uphill. We started



out on the Copper Creek Trail at an elevation of 5,000' and after hiking steadily uphill for most of the day we arrived at viewpoint overlooking Granite Lake.

This was where we step off the trail and head cross-country with map, compass, and a description of the route from our guidebook. We traversed around a ridge until we hit a dry creek, which we followed uphill to Grouse Lake at over 10,400 ft. We had gained 5,400' from the trailhead but it was a gentle grade with lots of switchbacks. It was a great first day and our first night was at a beautiful alpine lake. We set up camp and prepared dinner. I chose my heaviest meal out of the bear canister and ate the rest of my lunch food as well. Just before we turned in for the night, everything even toothbrush and paste went in the canister. It was so full I could barely get the lid on.

We awoke to a beautiful clear day and after breakfast we loaded the packs again and set out around the lake for what we thought was Grouse Pass. After about an hour of picking our way through the rocks and boulders we arrived at the top. Right away I knew something was wrong, as there was a large lake below where there shouldn't have been one. After studying the map again we headed slightly downhill to the next pass where we wanted to be. From there we could see goat crest saddle, which we were standing on about an hour later. The views from here were splendid and we could now see the higher peaks of the Sierra to the east. A thousand feet below us was Glacier Lake with a nice sandy beach on one side. It was a beautiful day for a swim. The lake was cold and the swim was brief but we didn't mind it with such a nice lake. Our



campsite that night was State Lake. We ate another tasty dinner and watched the Alpenglow on the 12,000 ft peaks rising from the lake.

The next morning we started hiking on a trail to Horseshoe Lakes, about a mile away. From here we were on our own again

heading for Windy Ridge. As we climbed higher the views once again opened up and we decided we would drop our packs for a quick hike out to the scenic point where Ansel Adams took a famous photograph in 1935. As you reach the point the view opens up all around you with the middle fork of the Kings River almost 5,000' below. Just reaching this point we thought

made the trip worthwhile but we knew there was more ahead. We went over White Pass and then Red Pass that afternoon where the tip of my hiking pole came off. We backtracked hoping to find it but it was a needle in a haystack type search in all the boulders. We descended steeply to Marion Lake arriving just in time for the Alpenglow show to begin.

Our 4th day we knew would be one of our more difficult ones as the route winds up and over 12,350' Frozen Lake Pass. Not only is the route a treacherous boulder crossing but if you make a mistake and climb the wrong pass you are going nowhere as the other side is a precipice. Fortunately Ropers book gives a good description of the route. Even so we studied the map and the description at length before we all felt we were heading in the right direction. The rest was an uphill chug-our packs were getting lighter and we were acclimating well to the thin air. There

was a small can at the pass, which was packed with many years of hiker notes that had passed through. One of the notes caught our eye "HIKED UP MURO BLANCO BAD IDEA, DON'T DO IT". That was our destination and even though we chuckled at the note we were beginning to wonder if it really was a bad idea.

We carefully wound our way down the other side of the pass hopping from boulder to boulder-most of them the size of a car. It was like this for several miles until we reached the bottom of the Upper Lakes Basin and some small but nice lakes. I could see no reason to go any further and we quickly found a place to set up our tents. 14,000 Split Mountain rose 4 miles to the east and with



any luck we would be standing on it's summit the next morning.

The next morning we ate a quick breakfast and set out for Split Mtn. with just a light pack, snacks, extra clothes for the summit, and not much water since we knew there was plenty on the way. For much of the trip we were able to get by carrying little water since we were always near streams and lakes and with Johns' magic UV water bottle, we could purify water whenever we needed.

About a mile after leaving camp we crossed the John Muir Trail and headed uphill for a large lake. To our surprise there was a tent set up on the shore, our first sign of humans in 4 days. As we left the lake and headed up towards the pass, we spotted someone hiking downhill but they were too far off to talk to. At the pass it was windy and we took shelter at a large rock outcropping. From here we could see the Owens Valley far below to the east. The sierras rise abruptly out of this valley and we were sitting near the edge of what must have been a 3,000' cliff. From the pass we had about 1,500 ft of elevation to go but it was only a 30-degree slope over small boulders and loose rocks. There was even a defined path near the top that made it easier and soon we were standing on the 14,058 ft. summit. It was windy and chilly but the sun was shining and the views were incredible in every direction. We could even see the profile of Mt Whitney to the south and to the north the mountains seemed to go on forever. We stayed on the summit for at least an hour before heading back down and quickly descended down to the lake at 12,000'. We spotted a marmot in a beautiful meadow by the lake and laid down on the soft grass for a nap. The marmot didn't seem to mind us and went about his business while we snoozed.

The next day when I awoke there was ice in my cooking pot, our coldest morning of the trip but from here we would be heading for lower altitudes and warmer temps. We hiked back to the John Muir Trail and headed downhill towards the South Fork of the Kings River. We arrived at the river after about 5 miles on the trail and took a break. It was our moment to decide whether or not to stay on the trail the rest of the way or head off-trail again down the Muro Blanco. The note we read two days before, "HIKED UP MURO BLANCO BAD IDEA, DON'T DO IT", had me thinking maybe we better take the trail. Even though we were on the scenic John Muir Trail, something didn't feel right to us. The trail idea just didn't fit with the off trail hiking we had already done and even though Muro Blanco may be a rough hike, we knew we had to see it no matter what.

The first several miles hiking the canyon was no problem. There was plenty of flat ground on either side of the river and we passed by several places where people had camped before leaving fire rings as evidence. At one point we came upon a large mound of rocks and soil. We guessed that a horse was buried here. We named it Shorty's grave. After several more hours of following the river downstream, crossing and recrossing the river several times, we made camp in what looked like the last group of trees for many miles. This was also an infrequently used campsite with a fire ring so we made ourselves a fire to sit by for the evening. We were below 10,000 ft. again where campfires were permitted.

The next day as we began hiking down the canyon again, we stumbled on a large pile of rusted tin cans, no doubt left behind from a horse packer. There was the ham can, coffee can, baked bean can etc. "mmmmmm I could sure go for some ham and baked beans right now" said John, even though he had just eaten breakfast.



We hiked on down through the canyon and the walls on either side were closing in. Huge rockslides made it all the way to the river and small aspen trees grew thickly in between creating a barrier tough to move through. We kept crossing the river hoping to find a clear path but soon there was no way down except the riverbed so we began rock hopping right down the river. Then the river became too rugged so we tried going higher up on the canyon wall. This provided limited success but we were now getting into thick chaparral country. We put our zip-on pant legs on and went crashing on down through the brush to the river again which was now flowing faster and wider. Just before the river I tripped over something that seemed to grab my boot and I pitched forward. Just before I hit the ground I could see a large flat rock standing on edge. When I hit the ground, the top of my head just bumped the rock but luckily no damage done.

Later John slipped and fell in the river. This was not easy hiking but we felt lucky to be going down the canyon and not up. We found a nice spot to eat lunch by the river and amused ourselves throwing ants into the river and watching the trout gobble them up. They seemed to be watching us waiting for the next ant. Late in the afternoon we finally made it to where the big trees were growing again but even here there was so much debris from a tremendous spring flood there was no easy way out.

Suddenly we arrived at paradise valley backcountry campsite where other backpackers were camped in numbered sites. We were still 10 miles from a road but it felt like civilization. There were even bear lockers to put your food in if you didn't have a canister.

Our last day hiking was completely on trail but our packs were now 15 or more pounds lighter than the first day and we flew down the trail. We were still fairly high in the canyon and the views on the way down were spectacular. As we drew closer to Roads End where we left our car a week earlier, we passed by many day hikers. Someone saw a bear on the way in but we missed it. After hiking 10 miles in the hot sun we reached the car by early afternoon. We piled into the car, cranked up the AC, and headed for Bakersfield.

~Rick Briggs

Swimming in Colorado River's Lava Falls and other Good Things in the Grand Canyon

By Richard Forrest

The Grand Canyon. Ahhh, magnificent! You never get a sense of the majesty, the beauty, the sense of space until you actually view the Grand Canyon in person.

Carol Vanderheiden did it again. That is, she put together another fabulous trip to the Grand Canyon for members of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club and associated friends and relatives. We started by flying to Las Vegas, staying in a hotel there, and then flying out of North Las Vegas airport to the South Rim. We spent one night on the South Rim, and the next morning got up early to hike 8.5 miles down the Bright Angel Trail to the Colorado River to meet our rafts and start a 9-day, 137-mile rafting trip down the Colorado River.

There were 6 rafts, eighteen feet long, eight feet wide, and about 3 feet off the water. There were 19 passengers and 6 rafting guides, one for each boat. Each boat, except for the one supply boat, would hold a maximum of 4 passengers each and be guided by one rafting guide with oars. The guides did all the work of rowing downriver, with the current, and the passengers did not paddle.

The river guides are literally salt-of-the-earth types of people – modern day cowboys whose primary care is to get you safely down the river. Their boats are their horses. As one of their passengers, you're their precious cargo. They don't get much money for what they do. They bust their butts for their rafters, day in and day out. They row all day, take you through treacherous rapids, prepare all the meals, and setup and take down

the toilets every day. It's very physically demanding work – they are on the river for 15 days straight, 6 days above Phantom Ranch and 9 days below. They have to like what they do; otherwise, they wouldn't do it. I'm sure they'd like more pay if it was offered, but they settle for what they can get.

Lava Falls, the biggest and fastest rapid on the Colorado River, was our one and only mishap on the entire Colorado River rafting journey, and I'm still trying to come to grips with what happened. Our guide, Grant, was a 66-year old man, who was on his 66th trip down the Colorado River. He was by no means inexperienced. Prior to running Lava Falls, as is the custom for all the outfitters on the river, the rafting guides get out and scout Lava Falls from above the rapid on the shore of the river. In high water it's an easy left side run of the rapid. In low to medium water levels it's necessary to run the right side of the rapid.

On our trip the water level was at a medium level, not low and not high, so we had to traverse the right side of the rapid to get through it safely. Well, one-by-one, each raft lined up to run Lava Falls. Two rafts went through the rapid. Then another boat in front of us, the supply boat, with only one guide in it and no passengers – he was the least experienced guide - ran the river by entering the rapid on the far right side of the river. Our boat entered the rapid twenty-five to thirty feet left of where the boat in front of us entered the rapid. At the time, I thought that it was strange that we were entering the rapid so far left. We entered the rapid, and then all hell broke loose. I could feel our boat sliding down to the bottom of a large V-wave, from right to left. (We learned later that all the guides know about this V-wave.) Then it happened in a split second. There was a passenger, Bert McDonald, seated in the front of the boat, our guide, Grant, at the oars in the middle of the boat, and Sue and I were seated in the back of the boat. As if in slow motion, when time seems to slow down in your mind, my wife, Sue, was at the waterline and the raft was coming over on top of her. She let go of the raft. At the same time, I saw Grant holding firmly to his left oar, presumably before he was catapulted out of the raft over his oar. (The oar was later found to be broken.)



Lava Falls

What happened to me was a total blur. I had no memory of the raft coming over on top of me. But seconds later, feeling perfectly calm in total darkness, I realized that I was under the raft, and felt that I was



straight up and down in the water (thanks to my life jacket). I immediately felt above and behind me, and felt a hard object, an oar, which I knew was a spare on the side of the raft. So I backed out, pushed down and under the upside down edge of the raft and popped up to the surface. I remember that I had a big smile on my face when I popped up. (I had solved the underwater puzzle of getting out from under the raft.) After popping up to the surface, I held onto the line on the side of the raft, and watched as the raft cleared one of the two large rocks (fangs) on the right shore by a wide margin. I forgot about the one lower down, but it didn't matter, since we were far away from that one too. Sue popped to the surface about

fifteen feet down river from the raft when I first caught sight of her. She was coughing up water and mildly hyperventilating. I told her to come to me by swimming to the raft and then hanging on, which she did. I discovered that Bert was also hanging onto the raft. (How he also got out from under the boat, I will never know.) I was concerned about our guide, Grant – we didn't know where he was. (Grant had been rescued from the water by Matt, a guide and the trip leader.) Incidentally, the Colorado River water temperature was close to fifty degrees, but our adrenaline was pumping, so we didn't even feel it.

While we were still in the water, Bruce, another guide, heroically came to our rescue. He pulled Bert, then me, then Sue out the water into his boat. I helped get Sue out the water. With both of us bending over and pulling her into the boat, she came into the boat like a limp rag doll. Immediately Bruce had to jump to his oars and prevent the boat from slamming into a rock wall on the side of the river. He did that just in time and told those of us in the back of the raft to hang on to the overturned raft, which we did. Shortly, we beached on a flat rock outcropping on the near shore with the overturned boat beside us. Matt attached one rope to the top side (underwater side) of the overturned

raft and Bruce did the same with his rope. The rest of the rafts beached beside us, and most of our party pulled on the ropes to upright the overturned raft. After some strong heaving, our raft flopped onto an upright position. Matt instructed the guides to prepare lunch.

This incident was a small part of our trip, however. There were many great things about the trip that I should mention. For one, the Grand Canyon is a geologist's paradise. Millions of years of sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rock lay exposed to the naked eye. We had 3,500 to 5,000 foot cliffs on each side of the Colorado River for most of the trip. Sandstones, limestones, shales, schists, lava, each a different color layered in noticeable bands. Beautiful, multicolored rocks were on the ground everywhere. Around every bend in the river was a new rock face, with many side canyons. Here's a list of other things worth mentioning, in no particular order: perfect weather for nine days straight, gorgeous night skies, a great 8.5 mile hike down from the South Rim on the Bright Angel Trail to the Colorado River, great hikes each day during the trip, "great" food prepared by the guides, rapids everyday, Matt's (our trip leader) guitar playing and singing, Mike's (another guide) harmonica playing, guides with interesting personalities, campfires after October 1, camaraderie/friendships developed within the group, desert bighorn rams butting heads, one rattlesnake sighting, side canyons to swim in, waterfalls, the airplane

Fellow River Rats -

by Don Leis

Some random recollections, in no particular order, from our recently concluded rafting trip:

- Watching as the sunlight gradually lit up the rock formations as we began the trek down the Bright Angel Trail;
- Getting soaked for the first time of many while going through Horn Creek Rapid after first boarding the Moki-Mac rafts;
- Being impressed and fulfilled by the wonderful evening meals prepared by Scotty, our river guide cum chef;
- Awakening each morning to Dave's 6:00 A.M. "Hot coffee" bellow;
- Hiking with our flip flop clad (or sometimes barefooted) river guides on the hikes into the various side canyons;
- Awakening during the night and gazing in awe at constellations in the starlit western sky, framed between the towering canyon walls;
- Successfully making it through the Crystal Rapid (ABC = Alive Below Crystal, according to Bruce) and then through the jewel rapids, Sapphire, Turquoise, and Ruby;
- Relishing the fresh avocados which were offered as part of our usual lunch selections;
- Being entertained and edified by Matt's billion year trek through the various geological eras;
- Listening and seconding John Klebes' recurrent mantra "It's another wonderful day in the Canyon";
- Taking a turn and paddling along with Paul in Moki-Mac's two person Shredder;
- Watching as Karen stood and spread her arms while attempting to act as a sail in the Shredder;
- Watching in rapt fascination as the bighorn rams clashed and vied for the attention of the ewe that they were following;
- Sitting around the campfires as were permitted when the moth of October arrived and being entertained by Matt's guitar repertoire;
- Laurie's offering of a cocktail to Bruce while he was buck naked while bathing in the waters of the Colorado;
- Being duly impressed with the calm professionalism exhibited by our guides when Grant's raft overturned at the top of Lava Falls;
- Stretching our legs out on the rafts and working on our tans while traversing some of the milder rapids toward the end of our rafting excursion;
- Bidding farewell to our guides and riding in the Hualapai school bus on the hour long ride to the incongruously named town of Peach Springs, AZ;
- Observing the herd of wild burros, grazing by the roadside, while on the school bus ride out of the Canyon;
- Wondering when I might again have the opportunity of beholding the magnificent grandeur of this unique natural monument;
- And being forever thankful to Carol for being the primary coordinator of yet another successful rafting trip.

~Don Leis

ride to the South Rim from North Las Vegas, the fact that we were not in Las Vegas, a hot but not extremely hot desert environment for the time of year, time to sleep and rest, cold wine or beer after a long day on the river in the hot sun, joking about the Lava Falls Swim Team, and the book that I enjoyed reading during the trip - Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire.

~Dick Forrest

Seven Sisters



Harry, Jan, Beth, and Norma enjoying a beautiful breezy day while hiking the Seven Sisters on 9/29/07.

"Over every mountain there is a path, although it may not be seen from the valley."
~Theodore Roethke

Contributed by Donna Safford Fleury

Annual PVHC Club Picnic Sunday September 16, 2007

By John Klebes

Another great picnic! This year Marcia Kelly took us to the Northfield Mountain Riverview Picnic Area. Taking advantage of this location Shari Cox hosted a hike up Northfield Mountain before the party. This was the perfect warm up for this fun day. Shari took our small group up past Rose Ledge, a destination in itself for rock climbers, and we spoke with a young couple top roping. Then on to the peak where there is a nice view of the lake from the overlook at the 1,100-foot summit.

After our hike we hurried to start our picnic on the banks of the Connecticut River. With burgers,

fish, hotdogs, and corn roasting on the grill and table of many varieties of homemade food we really lived up the club's reputation



of being a "Hiking & Dinning" club. Food galore and lots of good company; It is always a treat at the picnic to meet all the new and old members.

This year we had an added bonus with Frank Kamowski coordinating a riverboat cruise through the French King Gorge narrated by an onboard naturalist.

The day was cool, but the sun was warm, and after everyone had their fill we enjoyed the warm sunny grass instead of sitting in the pavilions shade. It was nice to relax in the sun reliving and creating new friendships while enjoying the river view.

Many thanks to Marcia, Frank, Shari, and everyone that helped cook, clean, and bring the fantastic dishes of food that made this a fine day with good friends.

~John Klebes



Hiking & Yoga come together in Skinner State Park – July 31st, 2007

(PVHC joins Instructor Aaron Vega for Yoga Practice on the summit)



Riverboat Cruise at Club Picnic



Enjoying the Sunshine

Upcoming Events

November 16, 2007

Informational Meeting – Return to Africa 2008

Planning and informational meeting Friday November 16 @ 6:30PM for another trip to Africa in September of 2008. The experience was so incredible I want to go back. It will be a little different from this year's trip and September might be a little warmer. This is not a luxury trip and the mornings are early in order to see everything. The African sunrises are not to be missed. Come and find out what this trip will be about. Contact Marcia Kelly at mmkelly_29@hotmail.com

~Marcia Kelly

December 1, 2007

Christmas in Vermont

Al Goodhind is putting together a Christmas Trip to Vermont for December 1, 2007. The trip will include a tour of the Bennington Museum, docent-guided tours of local historic buildings, time to visit Manchester and Bennington attractions such as the Candle Mill Village Houses, Village Peddler & Bearatorium, Chocolate Barn, and a number of designer outlets from Adrienne Vittadini to Yankee Candle and everyone in between.

If you plan to stay overnight at the Weathervane Motel call early for reservations and mention you are with the "Goodhind Party." You will pay by credit card at our special discount rates below. We are getting a lower than normal "ski season" rates. Also we do not have the required two-night minimum stay for our group. Reserve early, limited numbers of rooms are available.

Weathervane Motel: 1-800-262-1317, Room Choices: large (King or 2 dbls with frig& large bath) \$119.90, small (queen or 2 dbls) \$98.10. Cancellation policy: 15 days prior! website: www.weathervanemotel.com.

Let's pray for some snow for ambience. Hope you all enjoy Christmas in Vermont.

~Al Goodhind

December 31st, 2007

Northampton First Night with Dinner at Opa Opa

Frank Kamlowski will be coordinating his annual dinner at Opa Opa followed by ringing in the New Year in Northampton. Dinner at Opa Opa Restaurant in Southampton starts promptly at 4.00 pm, Dec 31st, followed by the Northampton First Night festivities.

Get your reservation for dinner and First Night tickets to Frank before the deadline (tbd). Choice of chicken, prime rib, or baked scrod, Includes soup or salad, potato, bread & butter, coffee and desert. Price is \$26.00 and includes tax and tip. Anyone interested in going to Northampton after the meal, Frank will pick up the tickets, about \$18.00, for those who have arranged payment with Frank Kamlowski (413) 568-0859.

~Frank Kamlowski

January 12-13, 2008

Beginner Winter Backpack to Mt Wilcox

In July 2007 the AMC completed the new Mt Wilcox South Lean-to on the Application Trail in Beartown State Forest. Sounds like it would make a good destination for an easy beginner winter backpack. The trail passes Lake Benedict and a scenic vista on the way to the lean-to. An opportunity to climb Mt Wilcox (Elev 2155 ft) will be an option. The lean-to is a typical three-sided open shelter so it should provide a good, but safe, taste of winter backpacking. Contact leader if you are interested. We may be able to help with loaning equipment and suggestions for clothing so you can try out winter backpacking without investing in gear before you know you like it. If you enjoy winter day hikes you may find something very exciting in spending a night out. There should be lots of

opportunities to get tips on how to enjoy all winter holds, and loss that fear of the cold, on this trip. No experience necessary.

~John Klebes

March 1-2nd, 2008

Winter in Vermont's Merck Forest

Join the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club on another visit to the Snowy Wonderland of Vermont's Merck Forest. We will return to Ned's Place, a rustic cabin located at the edge of a high meadow with views of Bear Mt. and Mt. Equinox. This fully enclosed cabin is equipped with a simple wood burning stove and firewood and has bunks and loft space for ten people. The hike has some ups and downs over moderate farmland trails and is 2.25 miles from the Visitor Center. The cost for the cabin (\$60) and a group meal will be split evenly between those camping (about \$10 each). Merck Forest has an extensive network of hiking trails so bring your snowshoes. This one usually fills up very fast so if you are interested sign up early. Check out the website www.merckforest.org for more information.

~John Klebes

"Congratulations to club members Tom Pederson and Bob Morgan on completing climbs of all the 4000-foot mountains in New England!"

Snowshoe Rentals:

The club has snowshoes and backpacking tents available for rent at a nominal cost. The clubs screen house, trail maintenance tools, hand held radios, and in-step crampons are also available to club event leaders without fees. Contact Jack Leary (413) 562-0264, our Quartermaster, for help with rentals.

Important Notice

The following memberships are up for renewal:

November Renewals:

Richard Albano
Ann Bishop Reim
John Paul Boisvert
Norma Casillas
Lynn Gebo
Roz Gwozdz
Richard Harris
Donna Ketschek
Edward Laroche
Georgiana Lea
Stephen McGinty
Joanne Miller
Rebecca Proakis
Chuck Serafin
Juliana Vanderwielen
Edward Welsh

October Renewals:

George Baker
Luam Bianco
Phyllis Dassatti
Deborah Gebo
Sandy Jurczyk
Frank Kamlowski
Malcolm Meltzer
David Pierrepont
Wayne Rodrigues

Please renew early, and renew by mail. (Make checks payable to PVHC) Mail your renewal with your name and any address or phone number changes to:

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
c/o Shari Cox
223 Gifford Street
Springfield, MA 01118

(Dues are \$25 member, \$40 family, and \$15 for students)

Membership Directory / phone book

The Pioneer Valley Hiking Club will be publishing a Membership Directory again this year. Please return this permission form to arrive no later than November 15th to pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com or John Klebes, P.O. Box 51385, Indian Orchard, MA 01151.

You may have your name, address, phone & email listed. Anyone not returning a form with permission to have your information listed will have only his or her name listed. (Call 413-519-1859 before Nov 15 if you have questions or a last minute change.)

Name: _____

List my name, address, phone & email: _____
(yes or no)

YES - If you would like your information added to the club directory (published yearly in December)

NO - If you DO NOT want your information included in the club directory

If you are not sure our records are up-to-date you may list Change of address, phone, or email below:

Please Note: The membership directory, in printed form, will be distributed to PVHC active members only. It is meant to be used as a means of communication only and must not be distributed outside the club, sold, or otherwise used for commercial purposes. The directory will NOT be available online or distributed to non-members.

Don't forget: Return by November 15, 2007.



(photo from last years Holiday Party!)

Holiday Party – Dec 8th, 2007

This year's holiday party will be held at the Pueblo on the campus of Springfield College on Saturday, December 8, from 5:30 p.m. until 11:30 p.m. The party is free for members, and \$5.00 for each invited guest. Please sign up at the at the November meeting, by email: rbriggs2002@yahoo.com or by phone at (413) 695-4828

Everyone is requested to bring an appetizer, or side, or dessert so be ready to choose one when you sign up. The club will provide the main courses, water, coffee and tea. The success of the party depends on volunteers to help with setting up before the party and clean-up afterwards. Volunteers are also needed to make table decorations and buy raffle prizes and supplies. Last year was a huge success thanks to all of you who donated your time and cooking talents. We expect to have a great time this year with awards, slide show, dancing and entertainment. Dress casual.

~Rick Briggs



DIRECTIONS TO PVHC'S HOLIDAY PARTY

Saturday, December 8, from 5:30 p.m. until 11:30 p.m

The Pueblo - Springfield College, East Campus (701 Wilbraham Rd., Springfield, Ma)

From the East or West

Mass Pike Rt. 90, to Exit 6. Take 291 West for one mile to Exit 5 (East Springfield/Indian Orchard) Turn right onto route 20A, then immediately move into the left lane. Turn left at the first light onto Roosevelt Avenue. Proceed three miles to Alden Street and take a left. Proceed down Alden St. to first light and take a right at the light onto Wilbraham Rd. East Campus is the first driveway on the right. Follow driveway to parking lot.

From the North

Take Interstate 91 South to Interstate 291. Proceed four miles to Exit 5B, East Springfield/ Indian Orchard. Turn right at the end of the exit ramp onto Route 20A, then immediately move into the left lane. Turn left at the first light onto Roosevelt Avenue. Proceed three miles to Alden Street and take a left. Proceed down Alden St. to first light and take a right at the light onto Wilbraham Rd. East Campus is the first driveway on the right. Follow driveway to parking lot.

From the South

From CT take Interstate 91 North to Mass Exit 2, Route 83. Proceed on Route 83 to the second traffic light and turn right onto Sumner Avenue. After two miles, turn left onto Roosevelt Avenue. Continue through two traffic lights, then bear left at the stop sign. Half a mile after the stop sign, cross a bridge and turn right onto Alden Street. Proceed down Alden St. to first light and take a right at the light onto Wilbraham Rd. East Campus is the first driveway on the right. Follow driveway to parking lot.

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Officers & Committees

Ann Marie Visconti, President (413) 547-2729
 Marcia Kelly, Vice President (413) 256-1063
 Gail Carrier, Secretary (413) 331-0338
 Shari Cox, Treasurer (413) 796-1326
 Scott Cook, Wilderness Experiences Unlimited
 Ray Tibbetts, Founder

Standing Committee Chairs

Hike Planning Coordinator: *Sue Forest & AnnMarie Visconti*
 Backpacking Coordinator: *Ed Laroche & Mike Rattelle*
 Trail Maintenance: *Ed Laroche & Rob Schechtman*
 Web Page Editor: *Dick Forrest*
 Email Correspondent: *Rob Schechtman*
 Email List: *John Klebes*
 Quartermaster: *Jack Leary*
 Bootprints Editor: *John Klebes*

Bootprints is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Send your story contributions to the editor at: j.klebes@ieee.org (Email) or by USmail to John Klebes, P.O. Box 51385, Indian Orchard, MA 01151.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

- ❑ Next Club Meetings:
 Dec 4, 2007, 7pm at **FBC**
 Jan 8, 2007, 7pm at **FBC**
- ❑ Deadline for Submissions for next BootPrints is: Dec 26, 2007
- ❑ **PVHC Holiday Party, Dec 9th**
 East Campus of Springfield College
(see inside for directions!)
- ❑ **Please Submit Member Form on Pg 9 by November 15!**

FBC – First Baptist Church, West Springfield

*** Check out our web page at:
<http://www.geocities.com/pvhcweb>

fold here



A publication of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
 c/o Wilderness Experiences Unlimited, Inc.
 P.O. Box 265
 Southwick, MA 01077

