

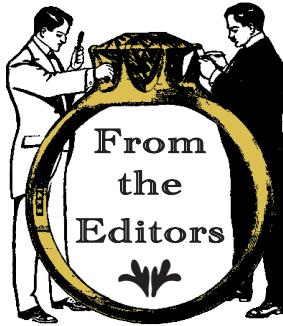
THE
SEARCH
LIGHT

GOLD BEAM

TREASURES OF AVI KWA AME
SEARCHLIGHT, NEVADA
APRIL, 2023

FIRST INAUGURAL
**TREASURES OF
AVI KWA AME**

ISSUE



WELCOME ONE AND ALL *to the* SEARCHLIGHT GOLD BEAM

We're thrilled to be bringing you this new, yearly publication, where we plan to investigate the cultural, ecological and historical treasures of the Searchlight area and beyond, to orient visitors and keep them safe and respectful while exploring the tip of Southern Nevada, and to build new connections within and between our local rural, tribal and urban communities.

Some of you reading this are new to the area, and some of you know more about this place than we do. It's our intention to make this an interesting and useful publication for everyone, no matter how much experience they have had with it. We hope to share our deep affection for this part of the world with you, through science, art, history, culture, advice and games -- all wrapped up with a double dose of desert humor.

Each year we will offer a free, black and white, newsletter version of the Gold Beam, and a deluxe, full-color, annual magazine with over twice the content -- well worth the price of admission. We also have bonus info and online issues available at www.goldbeam.org.

If you haven't met us yet, we are part of a collective of curious folks who operate the Searchlight Mystery Ranch, a not-for-profit arts and ecology research station with a vague address and an entertaining sense of obscurity. While the ranch is not open to the public, our collaborators have been presenting their investigations around the world, in many forms over the last two decades, and we thought this was the perfect time to share our findings on a much more local scale.

We are also partnering with local Searchlight clubs and non-profits (The Searchlight Betterment Organization, Museum Guild, and Friends of Walking Box Ranch) and others more far afield (Red Rock Audubon, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the National Parks Conservation Association) to bring you wonderful articles, fun facts and features we hope you will enjoy year after year.

Our first issue is dedicated to the theme Treasures of Avi Kwa Ame, and in it we celebrate, not just the creation of a new national monument, but also the act of seeking, finding, and treasuring the many wonders, big and small, that make up our communities and our East Mojave landscape. Here our storytellers share insight into this area's origins, amazing plants and animals, and local favorites of what to see and do. We hope you enjoy these investigations as much as we have enjoyed putting them together for you.

Cheers!

*Kim Garrison Means
and Steve Radosevich
EDITORS, SEARCHLIGHT GOLD BEAM*



IN OUR TREASURES OF AVI KWA AME ISSUE:

APRIL 2023



Congratulations, Avi Kwa Ame!	
KIM GARRISON MEANS.....	2
The Mojave People's Connection to Avi Kwa Ame	
PAUL JACKSON, FORT MOJAVE TRIBAL ELDER.....	3
Desert Trumpet: Weird Wonder of the Mohave	
SAGE REYNOLDS.....	4
Local Picks: Adventure, Provisions & More	
.....	4
Poetry: A Treasure in Words	
ODE TO DESERT MOTHERS, DR. MICHAEL WEBBER.....	5
Gems of Wisdom	
PATTY MAYNE.....	5
Honoring Avi Kwa Ame: What's in a Name?	
KIM GARRISON MEANS.....	6
What is a National Monument?	
NEAL DESAI, NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOC.	7
Memory of a Day in the Castles	
BEN F. MILLER.....	8
Gold Beam Interview: The Ins and Outs of Searchlight's Volunteer Fire Department	
KIM GARRISON MEANS.....	11
Behind the Spirit of the Land	
KIM GARRISON MEANS.....	13
Spirit of the Land: Exhibition Honors Avi Kwa Ame	
AYA LOUISA MCDONALD, UNLV PROFESSOR.....	16
Community Postcards from the Exhibition	
.....	18
The Trail of the Opal Skull, illustrated	
JOHN LEGALLEE.....	20
Nature's Wisdom: A Desert Horoscope	
THE COSMOS.....	24
The Long-Nosed Leopard Lizard and Other Local Road Menaces	
YOUR GOLD BEAM EDITORS.....	25
Gold Beam Interview with Sandy "Cricket" Bucklew	
STEVE RADOSEVICH.....	26
Cactus Corner	
.....	28
Avi Kwa Ame in the Snow	
ALAN O'NEILL.....	29
Uncle Ivan's Desert VHS Picks	
UNCLE IVAN.....	29
Cyrus Noble Whiskey: A Historic Favorite Available Once Again!	
GOLD BEAM STAFF.....	30
Recipe: Miner's Mocha	
.....	31
Treasured Recipes	
.....	32
Searchlight Treasure Hunt	
ANA GRAHAM.....	33
A Tale of Two Murals: Art Advocacy on Display in Reno and Searchlight	
.....	34
Ask the Professor	
PROFESSOR EMERITUS.....	35
Interview: What's Up With the Rabbits?	
TODD ESQUE, US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.....	36
Haiku	
MARTHA RADOSEVICH.....	36
Mrs. Frugal Suggests	
FANCIE FRUGAL.....	37
The Bird Watcher: Gilded & Golden	
ALEX HARPER, RED ROCK AUDUBON SOCIETY.....	38
Local Gems	
.....	39
Treasures of the Trail	
ALAN O'NEILL.....	39
For Safety's Sake	
GOLD BEAM STAFF.....	40
Map of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, illustrated	
KIM GARRISON MEANS.....	41



CONGRATULATIONS, AVI KWA AME!



Gold Beam staff



NEVADA'S FOURTH NATIONAL MONUMENT



by Kim Garrison Means

The Avi Kwa Ame National Monument has grown from the seed of an idea, to a proposal, to a bill in Congress, and now to a reality for the public through Presidential Proclamation. Over this multi-year process, citizens from the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe (the original stewards of this land) the eleven additional tribes that hold it sacred, the small rural communities here, like Searchlight, and the larger cities of Laughlin, Boulder City, and Henderson, have worked together to honor the ecological, cultural and historical treasures of this area, while safeguarding its integrity for the future.

For all of us who love it here, this process has been largely about trust. We have had to trust each other, trust our community advocates and conservation partners, trust our political representatives, the media, and the legislative process of the United States government. It has been a big ask and a big task, and one that has required much listening, learning, reflection and

discussion.

Remarkably, this process has also been fairly smooth, free of drama, and has resulted in the designation of a national monument that we can all be proud of. I credit this to the power and beauty of this landscape we all feel attached to in different ways. Our heartfelt connections to this place have fueled our conversations during every step of the journey.

We have also had to trust the process of sharing our special place with the outside world.

The natural wonders here at the tip of Southern Nevada have remained largely out of the public eye until now.

Sweeping scenic views, dense Joshua tree forests, Sonoran grasslands, granite spires and mountain junipers -- all have been treasured by local outdoor enthusiasts, but largely overlooked by outsiders.

After the mining and ranching booms of the early 1900s,

many parts of the Avi Kwa Ame public lands were afforded some protections, like the Wee Thump Wilderness and the Piute/El Dorado Area of Critical Environmental Concern for the desert tortoise. As a result, these 506,814 acres have remained relatively unmolested ecologically for millennia.

In 2007, the first large-scale industrial energy project was proposed for the unprotected public lands surrounding Searchlight. Since that time, tribal, rural and city community members have banded together to resist a number of large projects that would have transformed the heart of this landscape. These projects would have been completely surrounded by protected public lands.

The first protections for Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) itself came in 1999, when the eastern portion of the mountain and Grapevine Canyon were declared wilderness areas. The designation of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument completes the protections for the western

side of the mountain, and protects the surrounding landscape, including those areas vulnerable to industrial development. It allows BLM management of the entire area as one entity, with input provided in collaboration with tribal members and local gateway communities.

The goal for all of us has been to keep this landscape the same as it always has been, continuing to honor the native cultural uses of the land, and the recreational enjoyment of it by rural residents and visitors alike, through hiking, trail riding, camping, and hunting.

So, congratulations Avi Kwa Ame, and many thanks to the thousands of people who helped make this happen.



This QR code links to an example of how to pronounce Avi Kwa Ame.

THE MOJAVE PEOPLE'S CONNECTION TO AVI KWA AME

By Paul Jackson, Fort Mojave Tribal Elder, Neolge Clan

Ka-ma-thuu (*how are you?*)? Ka-havk kee-theek ke-nak ka'avk (*Come in, sit down, and listen*).

The world was a little different when I was a boy. In the evening time, after swimming all day and playing in the desert, we would go home, and after everything was done, we didn't have television sets or radios – a lot of us didn't have electricity or running water, so we'd sit outside, and the old people would come and sit in a circle and just talk, and listen to Eech-ka-nav, what we call the storyteller. I remember the old people, the way they talked, their words were very deep and direct and strong, because they spoke from the heart.

In the first times, we were many, free to roam the lands, free to practice our beliefs and traditional ways. When I was young, it was good to feel the earth beneath my bare feet, to swim and drink water straight from the mighty Colorado river. We ate the fruits and plants that grew throughout the land, we prayed and worshiped at our sacred sites. For the southwest tribes, the desert was like a paradise. To us, the desert plants were like a huge medicine cabinet.

To communicate with all living creatures, and protect and respect the earth, was and still is our tradition. Now the land is slowly being destroyed by illegal trash dumping, vandalism, and graffiti. Wind towers and solar panels are all over the place.

When I was young, I would listen to my elders, as the youngsters listen to me today, because I am their elder. If we don't teach kids our traditional ways, we will cease to exist. For the Aha Macav, we were put on this land and charged to protect our sacred sites – the air, mountains, river, desert plants and animals.

When I walk near Spir-

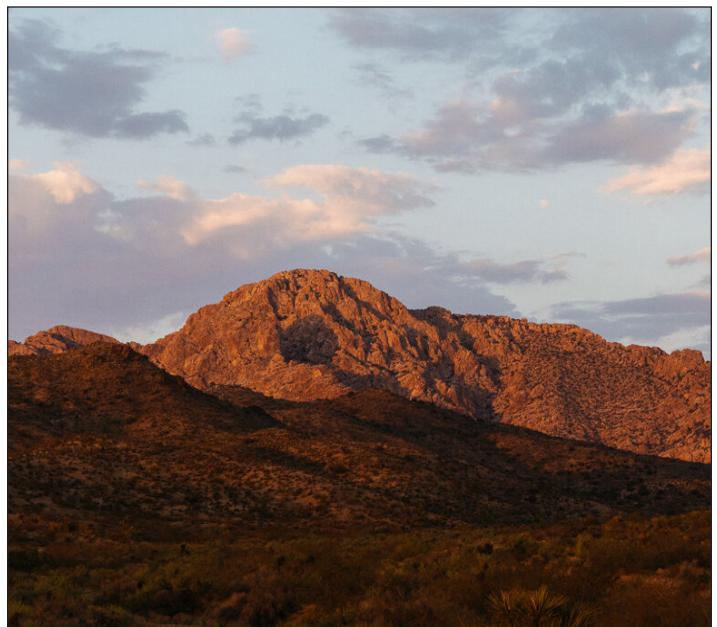
it Mountain, I am not just a person walking towards the mountain, I am part of it. This is the same for the river. Our elders say, if you sit by the river at sunset, the river will talk to you. If you sit by the mountain, it will talk to you, for you are one.

When I was a young boy, I would hear stories about the river. For us the river is spiritual, a living spirit. The river is who we are. When I first saw graffiti and trash dumping at our sacred sites, I had mixed emotions -- sad, angry, confused, but mostly it was that helpless feeling. It was like I had failed to protect the land, and I failed my ancestors. I couldn't understand how any one could do this. This place is our church, our place of worship, our place of creation.

For the Mojave people, every part of this earth is sacred. The wind is precious to us, the wind that gave life to all living animals when they received their first breath, is also there when they receive their last. It is like the trees. They are with us from the time we are born to the day we die. When we are babies, we are put in cradleboards made from the mesquite and willow trees. Going through life, we use the trees for food, clothing, tools, weapons, houses that we lived in, and lastly being cremated when our spirits leave our physical bodies.

In the first times, if a prophet had come to our village and foretold a future that said, in the coming years, we would not be able to swim and drink from the river, that our sacred sites would be blown up and become sand hills, that we would not be able to breathe the clean, fresh air, that we could not hunt and fish at our favorite fishing holes, could not to come and go where we please, and would not be able to communicate with the animals anymore, we would not have believed him.

We believe in animism, that



Avi Kwa Ame

Photo by Mikayla Whitmore

all things are alive and have a spirit. Avi Kwa Ame was and continues to be one of the most, if not the most important landmark in Mojave territory. It is the site of many events in the ancient times. Above the mountains, the stars told stories that we told our children. To us, the big dipper was the fisherman throwing a large net into the water to catch the fish.

The Milky Way, to us, is a large amount of salmon travelling up the river going back to where they were born to reproduce. The stars also told the time and the directions to travel at night.

Avi Kwa Ame is also a place of learning, to this day we take our kids there to learn about our creation stories. They learn about the desert animals that live in the area, and how we use the desert plants for food, clothing and medicine. Avi Kwa Ame is also a place where we would hide our kids when the government came around to take our children away, and force them into boarding schools. One of those schools was the Fort Mojave Boarding School. They would hide the kids way back in the trees of Grapevine Canyon. Avi Kwa

Ame is our place of creation, and Mataviily, our creator. Mataviily made his house out of the Black Mountains near where Hoover Dam is today. I was told that it is still there but now it is underwater.

Avi Kwa Ame is the residence of Mastamho, the son of our creator. He is our version of Jesus. For us, Avi Kwa Ame

is sacred, the land in which we were born is sacred. Our graveyards are sacred, the ashes and dust of our ancestors are sacred. If I'm standing in the water, on the land, or flying through the sky somewhere, I am part of it. We are one. For native people, our sacred sites are very spiritual. That is who we are. That is the connection.

We only want to live and worship our creator, and tell our creation stories to our children, like others all over the world. We want to live as our grandparents did, and all our ancestors before them. All we ask is to love this land as we have, care for it as we have, protect it and respect it as we have. For the whole world is precious.

There is more I can say, but it is very difficult to explain. When our chiefs, our elders would talk, their words were deep, and they came from the heart. I have just one more thing to say, and that is Ahote Ki-su-maak (*Dream good*), My friends, Ni-un-ti-ya, (*we will see each other again*). Sumach ahote (*Thank you and have good dreams*).

Paul Jackson is an artist, teacher, and elder of the Ft. Mojave Indian Tribe. For the past 23 years, he has used his paintings and sculptures to share cultural stories, and to teach the history and language of the Mojave people to the next generations.

DESERT TRUMPET

(Eriogonum inflatum)

WEIRD WONDER OF THE MOHAVE

by Sage Reynolds



Once you start to notice the desert trumpet, you won't soon forget it. Not only does this plant look like it may be from outer space or from a Dr. Suess story, it also boasts some out of this world stories of its own! In fact, the plant has long been associated with everything from pipe smoking to finding hidden gold.

A member of the buckwheat family found throughout the Southwest, desert trumpet's strange, inflated stems rise up to 3 feet from a central point in elongated green clusters, and are crowned with umbrellas of tiny yellow flowers, hanging in the air above the plant like delicate cloud forms. Palm-shaped, scalloped leaves remain close to the ground radiating from the plant base. As the plant closes its life cycle, the inflated stems dry to a beautiful mahogany color and eventually fade.

Its long list of common names gives clues to some uses: pipe-weed, bladderstem, bottle bush, bottlestopper, desert spoon, and umbrella plant. My family always called it vase plant, as we would use the hollow stem as a temporary vase for tiny collections of wildflowers if we found some on walks.*

More traditional uses of desert trumpet include native foodways such as cooking the leaves as a vegetable and pounding the seeds into meal to eat as porridge. The stems are used as drinking tubes or smoking pipes (for desert tobacco and mistletoe), and are said to have a pleasant, sour taste. The plant has also been used traditionally in medicines to treat a variety of conditions, including colds, cuts, diarrhea, and stomach disorders.

Plants like the desert trumpet can also offer clues for understanding the type of rock that lies

beneath, and sometimes, even for finding precious resources. Geobotany, the scientific study of the distribution of plants in relation to the geology of the landscape, teaches us that different plants enjoy different types of rock to live in: agaves like limestone, yuccas crave quartz, and desert trumpets prefer the highly mineralized soil where you might also find metals. For this reason, desert trumpet is sometimes utilized as an indicator plant by prospectors to find gold.

The beautiful desert metalmark butterfly (*Apodemia morrisoni deserti*) uses desert trumpet as a food source, and the plant also attracts a variety of butterflies and insects, some of whom lay their eggs inside the trumpet stems. For years, scientists have noticed these insects interacting with the plant, and thought the inflation of the trumpets to be a result of their presence in the stems. However, since the plants seem to inflate even without the presence of insects, researchers have more recently theorized that the stems have evolved to help the plant photosynthesize light into energy.

According to Chris Clarke from the Mojave National Preserve Conservancy, "the desert trumpet's hollow stem serves as a reservoir for carbon dioxide. Plants breathe CO₂ when they're engaging in photosynthesis, and higher concentrations mean more efficient turning of sunlight and water into plant tissue. What's more, the stems don't lose water to the outside air as readily as the plant's leaves do, which makes those swollen stems very efficient little photosynthesis engines indeed."

So, the next time you spot the desert trumpet plant out in the landscape, know that you have found a unique and wonderous

treasure. Long may it grace us with its weirdness!

Sage Reynolds is an amateur naturalist with an emphasis on studying native plants from the Mohave desert. A resident of Southern Nevada, she also enjoys bird-watching, jeeping, and plant illustration.

*Editor's Note: picking wildflowers is not recommended these days – grow your own in

the garden if you'd like to pick some of these beauties. It's also probably not the best idea to randomly experiment with your own medicines (we have pharmacies for that) or go digging up all of our local plants looking for gold. And if you haven't already noticed, there is a beautiful little mural on the wall of the BV Motel in Searchlight that features a desert trumpet plant design.



ADVENTURE, PROVISIONS, AND MORE!

NELSON:

(no services)
El Dorado Mine Tour, Access to Lake Mohave, Historic Mining Village
(please be respectful of residents)

CALNEVARI:

Blue Sky Motel, Market and RV Park

PALM GARDENS:

Chevron Gas and Convenience Market

COTTONWOOD COVE:

Resort Motel and Marina, Boat Rentals, General Store
Cafe (open on weekends, check hours)
Access to Lake Mohave and nice beaches

SEARCHLIGHT:

Searchlight Museum
Terrible's Roadhouse Bar and Casino (live music most Friday nights!)
Denny's Restaurant (in Terrible's Roadhouse)
El Rey Motel
McDonalds (great iced Tea!)
Terrible's Chevron and Convenience Store
Rebel Gas and Convenience Market
Terrible's Casino and Bar (great pizza!)
Gus' Really Good Jerky (and nuts, honey and snacks!)
Searchlight Senior Center (dinner every Thursday, 4:30pm,
BV Motel
Searchlight Treasures Thrift Store (amazing finds!)
Clark County Library, US Post Office, and Laundermat

Editors picks for LAUGHLIN:

Don Laughlin's Classic Car Museum (and antique slot machines!)
Casa Serrano Mexican Restaurant (in the Riverside Casino, Great Views)
Bubba Gump Shrimp Company

Editors picks for BOULDER CITY:

Milo's Wine Bar and Cafe, Southwest Diner
Nevada State Railway Museum, Hoover Dam Tour

Editors picks for FORT MOJAVE:

Pipa Aha Macav Cultural Center
Avi Resort and Casino (great cafe!)



Poetry: A TREASURE IN WORDS

As a biologist based in Searchlight, NV, and the mother of twins, Dr. Michael Webber is intimately familiar with the experience of desert moms. One of her areas of research is scorpion reproduction, and she is particularly interested in how hard these moms work: molting their outer skins, carrying their children on their backs, and making themselves more vulnerable to predation through the process. In this poem, Webber describes the pregnancy and chid-rearing practices of these usually-feared creatures as something to be admired -- beautiful, dignified, and sacred – and comparable to all other mothers.

ODE TO DESERT MOTHERS

Dr. Michael Webber

She eagerly awaits her night's beginning,
Her moment, to traverse the inhospitable world
from which she was formed.
Close to the earth, indistinguishable from its inanimate forms,
Shedding the armor of her past, she is renewed,
soft and vulnerable... but she will become tough and resilient --
Her radiance, unseen, except by those who seek her.

Star-filled nights give way to stately promenades,
enchanted by the dance.
Her future responsibility looms with obligation, sacrifice,
ever-growing burdens and constraints,
choices predetermined by past tribulations.
It could consume her --or she could consume it.
With all-seeing eyes, she forges ahead.

She is creator, provider, protector...
but only for a moment.
She sees herself in abundance, repeated in miniature,
unaware of the forces that control her.
She survives, endures, in perpetuity --
until she has given all, purpose fulfilled,
released to those who continue to dance.

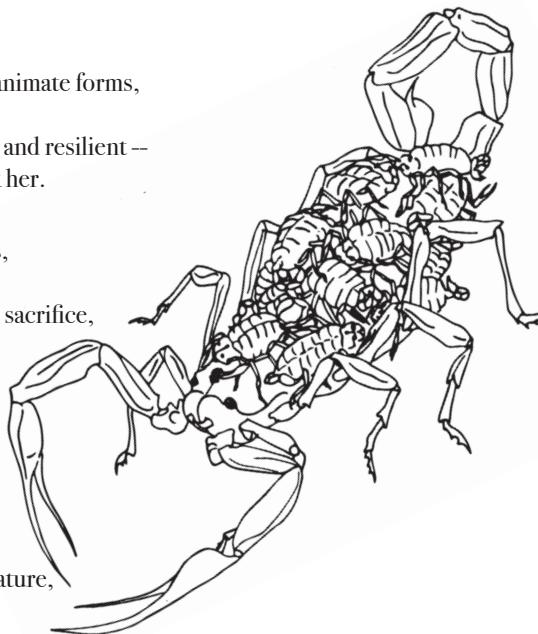
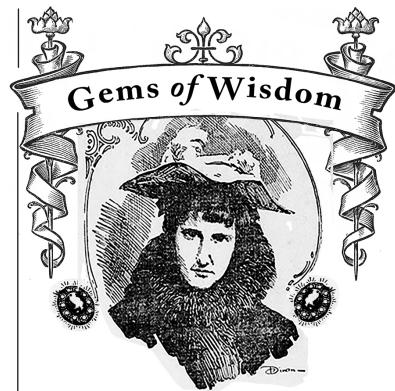


Illustration by Rachel Hillberg



by Patty Mayne

Forethought spares afterthought.
— Amelia E. Barr

The world is the work of a single thought, expressed in a thousand different ways.

— Madame de Staël

*I've dreamt in my life dreams
that have stayed with me ever
after... and altered the color of
my mind.*

— Emily Brontë

*When I let go of what I am, I
become what I might be.*
— Lao Tzu

We reason deeply when we forcibly feel.
— Mary Wollstonecraft

*Our deeds determine us, as
much as we determine our
deeds.*

— George Eliot

*You are only sure of today: do
not let yourself be cheated out
of it.*
— Henry Ward Beecher

SEARCHLIGHT TREASURES

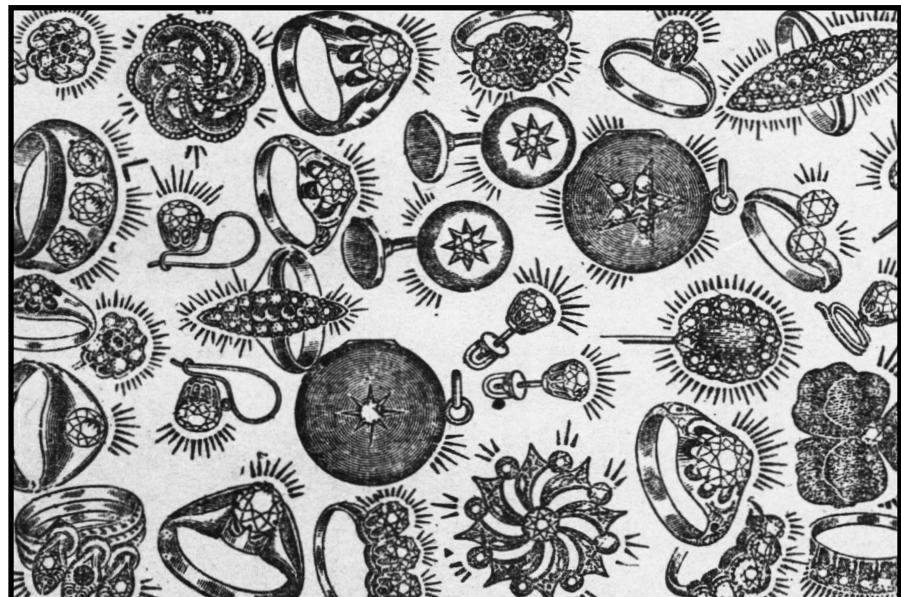


Let Your
Spring Suit
Be A Stylish
Check
Or a Neat,
Gray
Diagonal

We want to clothe you
this spring. You may
be sure

Our Styles Are
Correct

Conveniently located at:
101 E Hobson Street, Searchlight, Nevada



HONORING AVI KWA AME: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Kim Garrison Means

To most non-Native Americans, the majestic mountain peak at the tip of Southern Nevada is known as Spirit Mountain, or Newberry Peak. But the Mojave-language name for it is Avi Kwa Ame (pronounced Ah-Vee-Kwah-May). The Mojave place name is tied to the reverence the 10 Yuman-speaking tribes have for this site. It is the setting of their creation story, retold down countless generations as an important cultural teaching on how to live, how to die, and how to care for one another.

There are many other historical place names within the monument landscape. Christmas Tree Pass and Timber Mountain were mining era nicknames for local sites where trees could be

claims; some said the name referred to a popular brand of matches, while others claim that a prospector, after not finding any evidence of gold, stated that one would need a searchlight to find anything of value there.

The northern valley in the monument is the El Dorado, named after the famed meso-American legend of the golden man, while the southern, Piute Valley, is named for the Nuwu (Southern Paiute) tribes, for whom this is an important area of ritual migration, part of the Salt Song Trail. The Wee Thump Wilderness in the western portion of the monument means Ancient Ones in Paiute, and refers to the majestic Joshua Trees and Yucca



Rock Wren & Barrel Cactus

Alex Harper

felled for buildings and mine supports. Knob hill, a small mining settlement, was probably named for the shape of the rock formation, and the miners' hopeful reference to an affluent neighborhood in San Francisco. Other fanciful and optimistic mining claim names include Copperopolis, the Majestic Goldfrog, the Good Hope, and yes, the Gold Beam.

Searchlight has a name shrouded in mystery. The town was named around 1898 after one of the area's first gold

found there that can live for up to a thousand years. Other forms of life, such as the colorful desert lichens and the fragrant creosote bushes can live even longer – some of the oldest specimens are estimated to have lived for tens of thousands of years.

This region has endured other, less kind names and word associations over the years: wasteland, dumping ground, ghost town -- to name a few. These names have perpetuated the myth that this landscape is bar-



El Dorado Valley looking West

Gold Beam staff

ren and devoid of value, and that there isn't anything here worth treasuring.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. This landscape reveals its treasures to all who look for them, through an abundance of biodiversity, history, cul-

ture and natural beauty. The Mojave tribe has given a gift to this landscape, and to all who come here, by sharing their sacred name, with everyone, Avi Kwa Ame, and inviting us all to share in its stewardship for future generations.

W W W . 9 0 M I L E S F R O M N E E D L E S . C O M

**90 Miles
from Needles**

the desert protection podcast

W W W . 9 0 M I L E S F R O M N E E D L E S . C O M

WHAT IS A NATIONAL MONUMENT?

by Neal Desai, National Parks Conservation Association

Our federal public lands have so many names, it can get confusing very quickly! We have national parks, national recreation areas, wilderness areas, nation-

National Monuments can be established by either Congress or the President of the United States, and Avi Kwa Ame was established by President Biden on March 21, 2023. This pres-



Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland visiting with community representatives and organizers at Walking Box Ranch

Courtesy of Avi Kwa Ame Coalition

al historic sites, and national monuments – just to name a few. Some places are managed by the National Park Service, some by the Forest Service and others by the Bureau of Land Management – all of which are federal agencies that steward our public lands. A national monument could be a historic house, or a landscape of hundreds of thousands of acres. So what is Avi Kwa Ame??

Avi Kwa Ame is a National Monument made up of existing federal public lands, 506,814 acres in size. These permanently protected lands will continue to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

idential action continues a long bi-partisan tradition of Presidents creating national monuments, including our past three Presidents (Trump, Obama and Bush).

When local communities and advocates were wondering what type of land protection designation was best for Avi Kwa Ame, it was clear that a national monument designation under the BLM would best protect the lands while ensuring recreational activities enjoyed by the public could continue. Unlike a national park, a BLM national monument allows the continued use of designated backcountry roads for off-high-



Joshua Trees and grasslands looking towards Avi Kwa Ame

Gold Beam Staff

way vehicle driving, and also allows for continuation of recreational rockhounding and hunting. Most importantly, it protects the lands from industrial development, ensuring the spectacular views remain unobstructed, the recreation retains its world-class values, and we honor this landscape that is considered sacred for a dozen Native American Tribes.

One look at a map of the national monument makes it clear that Avi Kwa Ame was the missing link to finally complete connecting the California desert to the Colorado Plateau. This completion of landscape protection means that our desert – and all its inhabitants – can be more resilient to a changing climate where the dries are getting drier and hots are getting hotter. For example, Joshua trees and wildlife like bighorn sheep and desert tortoise will have room to adapt to higher, wetter elevations.

The establishment of a national monument also allows our local communities to have a more formal voice in shap-

ing the future. For example, a stakeholders committee will be formed soon, including representatives from Searchlight, Laughlin and Boulder City, as well as nearby tribal nations, with the important goal of shaping a future management plan for Avi Kwa Ame. It's an opportunity to protect what we love, like our dark night skies and recreational activities, and together improve the outlook for generations of future visitors.



View of Castle Peaks.

Alan O'Neill

WALKING BOX RANCH

FOR OUR FAMOUS NIGHT SKY VIEWINGS
AND MORE, GO TO:

friendsofwbr.org

MEMORY OF A DAY IN THE CASTLES

by Ben F.
Miller



A view of Castle Peaks

Ben Miller

CHANCE MEETING IN NIPTON

There's this pond in Nipton, California. It's not a big pond, and I don't think that its draw lies in the fact the pond and town reside next to the National Mojave Preserve, the only standing open water for miles, like a desert oasis. Could be it's the way the seasons are reflected in the water and foliage, like the magical light and colors of an autumn afternoon. I don't know why, but I find myself pulled there sometimes, burning through batteries and filling memory cards, photographing every possible angle in an attempt to capture the mood of a given season.

On this day, it may have been the challenge of knowing I had turned fifty over six months ago, and now found myself unemployed and over qualified. I may have been seeking some sense of accomplishment by displaying the ability to hang around a little, isolated town in the middle of nowhere, networking with no one at all and making it look good. How's that for a wishful attempt to get as far away from the panic and desperation that I was feeling at home?

It was early March, and because of the recent rainfall, a beautiful spring bloom was on its way. I was in the Nipton Trading Post buying an unlucky lottery ticket and talking with Doug Berlin, one of the clerks there, about this huge juniper I had found hidden in the Castle Peaks.

Beyond the cluttered front counter and through the open office door, I noticed someone unfamiliar listening in on our conversation. Working on one of the computers, she turned, smiled and came out the doorway. Introducing herself as Rosie Davidson, she said her husband Donald, was a traveling artist with the National Park Service Volunteer Program, and one of the first artists in residence for the National Mojave Reserve. Rosie had overheard me rambling on about all the years I've been photographing the area and suggested that I meet Donald. Before I knew it, we were walking by the rustic Nipton Hotel and toward the main house.

When we came through the front door, Donald was comfortably stretched out on the couch, with a blanket over him. With the intensity of anyone just touching R.E.M. and then

being snapped back by reality, Donald rose and said, "Hey."

He was full of questions about the areas outside of the preserve, mostly where and when certain plant species bloomed and what areas had the most to offer during this time of March. I explained that because of the unpredictable weather of late, it was difficult to pin down the timing, but altitude would be a good start as a defining factor. As the conversation shifted from flora, to types of art media and technique, to the latest digital cameras and software, the late afternoon past quickly into evening. Over a hot cup of tea, we agreed to hike into an area I've always considered special.

A ROCKY ROAD

Two weeks later we meet at the Walking Box Ranch Road. The road is about eight miles west of Searchlight, Nevada and twenty miles east of Nipton in California, off highway 164, also known as the Joshua Tree Highway. We began the eleven-mile trip over a relatively smooth dirt road out to the rocky trail. Four-wheel drive only, it's not too bad as these trails go, but rough enough to make one mile seem like three.

The trail ends where the National Mojave Preserve begins, right on the California–Nevada state line. It's a rough and wild area, all up and down, mystifying and beautiful. Joshua trees give way to hills covered with dark green and twisted junipers, silhouetted against thin

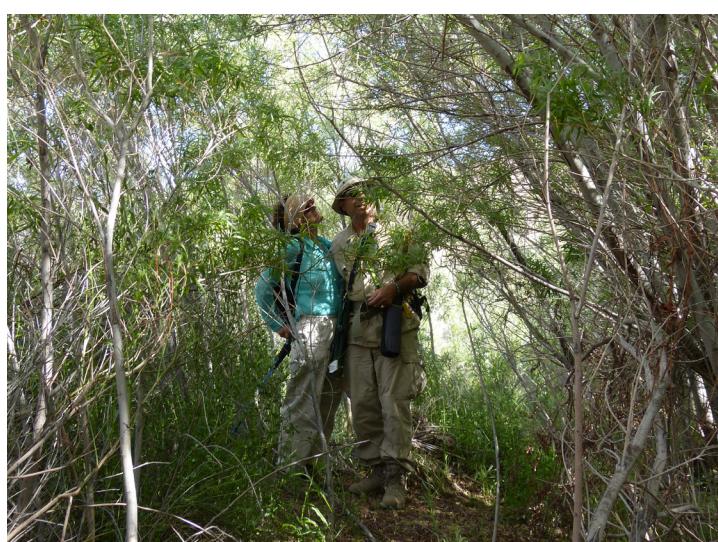
mountain peaks thrusting up six thousand feet. Golden sands cut deep canyons out of black volcanic flows just off the trail. In the main canyon, vibrant green desert willows grow in thick misplaced groves, being fed by an invisible spring that can flow just inches under the dry sand.

While I was adjusting my monopod, Donald asked if they should bring their hiking staffs, I replied that yes, it would be a good idea. I was going through a short list of mountain lion protocols, when I saw Rosie hoisting this colossal backpack on her shoulders. I think it was the sound of the truck shocks hissing as the pack was lifted out that caught me mid-breath.

The bag looked like it had a life raft, three-room tent and dinner for six stuffed into it. I found myself looking for a bumper sticker-sized Sierra Club patch with little skulls and cross bones hidden somewhere, signifying the poor souls that didn't make the cut while hiking with Rosie. Then I had a flash back in time, back to the house in Nipton and Donald saying yes, he liked to hike, but he wasn't into the ten-mile treks and would often stop to paint for a couple of hours. If they had friends along, Rosie and company could hike further while Donald painted.

I questioned the source of Donald's inspiration. This was supposed to be a short trip.

ON THE TRAIL



Rosie and Donald gaze up through the foliage

Ben Miller

One of the more interesting ways to explore the back country in this area is to utilize game trails. They're surprisingly well-defined and provide a simpler method of going to areas of interest, like sources of life-giving water. Apparently, the deer up here like to keep to the high ground as they move, and by doing so maintain a defensive posturing -- and with good reason. The one path we took led us along the edge of the main canyon. Along the way we ran into a patch of well-worn ground used by a mountain lion. Because of a large shrub behind this spot, the cougar could lay there without sky lining itself, almost indiscernible, and look down into the canyon and spring for prey.

Big cat aside, we could not have asked for better weather, and we finally made it to the giant juniper. Almost thirty feet high and growing in a canyon almost the same height. The top rising four feet above the rim of the narrow canyon, camouflaging its true size. Donald said, "It looks like a lot of firewood to me." It was then Rosie pulled out some p.b.j.s from that huge backpack and being very sweet, made one for me too, then came an apple. When I asked them what they really thought of the massive *Juniperus Californica*, it got very quiet. It's not the tree itself that's impressive - that is, if you're from Washington D.C., but for the Mojave Desert, it's an amazing example of nature's ability to survive and overcome extremes.

STRANGE CONNECTIONS

While we sat there in the shade of the tree enjoying our lunch, the conversation went in and out of various topics like the desert breeze blowing around the canyon. I started to tell them about the research I had been doing on junipers and then, thought again. Other than gin recipes and some medicinal uses, the juniper tree has been mostly overlooked by history. But there is one remarkable exception: cannibalism.

We really didn't know each other that well.

It took an ultimate level of trust

to allow me to guide them this far out. Rosie made the point of mentioning when we left the highway, that had she told everyone in Nipton where they were going, who they were with, and that Ben was bringing a gun.

I could just picture myself telling them out in the middle of nowhere, "OK people, it's not just about juniper trees, it's about cannibalism. Now as your guide, and before we move ahead on this subject, let's take a few minutes to talk about shop safety. Always thoroughly read the instructions that came with your chainsaws, axes and knives. And while we're at it, don't forget these -- that's right, your safety glasses."

I let the idea go. But I'll relate

That evening, the step-mom fed the boy's flesh to the father in the form of a stew. ("Honey, can you find the Tabasco sauce? This just seems to be missing something.") Afterward, the half-sister gathered the boy's bones and laid them on the ground under the same juniper tree under which his mother was buried.

All heck broke loose, with mist, sparks and flames, and the boy's bones were transformed into a magical bird who sung of the transgressions committed against him. Then, after the bird dropped a large stone on the evil stepmother and got justice, it turned back into the boy. Almost everyone, given a little indigestion, lived happily ever after.



the connection from Grimm's Fairy Tales to you here:

This ghastly tale involves a pregnant woman eating some juniper berries, becoming ill and living just long enough to give birth to a baby boy. So, her husband buries her beneath a nearby juniper tree and sometime later remarries and conceives a baby girl. As time went by, the new stepmother grew jealous and greedy, to the point that she feared for her daughter's monetary future. To remedy the situation and ensure her daughter's inheritance, the stepmother invited her stepson to pick an apple out of a large chest, and then slamming the lid, beheaded the boy.

ANCIENT WONDER

On the way up the canyon, deep in the shadow of a fallen boulder, Donald had come across one of the plants on his list, a Mojave Spurge, and had decided to go back to that area and paint. I asked Rosie, if while Donald was busy, she would help me measure the base of the big juniper.

The canyon where the tree grows falls subject to intense flash flooding, so the sand that comprises the floor shifts in depth. The actual base of the tree could be as far as three feet down under the sand. I believe having a park ranger walk up while trying to prove this the-

ory wouldn't work out so well, especially in an area where it's stated you can have your vehicle confiscated and fined up to \$100,000.00 just for driving in the wrong area.

("Dig this baby up? No sir! We were just...")

On hands and knees, Rosie and myself crawled around the base of the tree with a tape measure and came up with 126 inches. Now, the trunk of a juniper grows at a rate of 0.04 to 0.2 inches a year in diameter. Given the most favorable conditions, this tree could be 600 years old. To leave room for an unforeseen variable, suppose we pull the reins in on that a little and go with 300 years. That is still an amazing length of time for anything to survive the harsh environment of the Mojave Desert. At that time in history, when this tree was just a seedling, Isaac Newton published Optic. Bach composed his Six Brandenburg Concertos and Peter the Great died at 52.

(Oh great, 52, just a little older than me. Now that's morbid.)

Rosie wanted to hike further up the little canyon, and as we walked it narrowed into a strange geological formation where the sand had cut tight corridors into dark pyroclastic flows. At the end of this rock maze you have to climb up a little chimney. Once you're up and out, the main trail starts back in again, toward the base of the Castle Peaks.

When I hike, my thoughts are also on the geology and I tend to look down a lot of the time. To the untrained eye it might appear that I'm moping or just trudging along. Rosie kept saying, "You don't look so good." And I responded by declaring, "I'm fifty years old, uglier than sin and have severe R.A. – I often know what it's like to feel ninety." She said, "That's not what I meant."

Rosie was referring to the one cigarette I had while photographing to big juniper. Normally when I'm out shooting, I'm alone, and do it in order to acclimate the wildlife in the area to my presence. She was right though, and I realized my breathing was a little labored. I would have never noticed

and I finally understand what is meant when someone asks, "If a tree were to fall in a forest with nobody to hear it, would it make a sound?" Yes, that's right, it has nothing to do with the current subject and I'm not pursuing the cigarette thing any further. New friendships can be an awkward blessing.

surfaces as running water for a few feet and then runs for miles under the sand. Desert willows and their orchid-like flowers signify the water's movement through their placement in the dry canyon floor. I also wanted to show them a rare patch of wild licorice that wasn't supposed to be there in the middle

ald, "That's not what I meant." (Hey, it worked for Rosie.)

Some of the other ingredients of Miller's gin are Cassia, the bark of the Acacia tree and Angelica root. Orris, which is made from the root of the Iris flower, coriander seeds and the finest Seville citrus peel from a



Sunset with the peaks in the distance

Ben Miller

It was getting late and we were headed back to the area where Donald was painting, when I noticed this strange, eerie sound coming from somewhere. We were miles from the nearest help and fear was starting to sneak in, because it was beginning to sound like a distant banjo. These people were my responsibility. I started to use my best stage whisper and tell Rosie to freeze, but she looked kind of stressed, so I calmly stopped in my tracks and turned my head slowly trying to pinpoint the direction of the unnatural sound. Rosie was staring at me. Smiling, she suggested it might be Donald trying to reach us on the GRMS radio I gave him. The other radio was in my back pocket. I thoughtfully grabbed the stupid radio and listened to Donald say he was almost finished painting. I responded by serenely telling him we were on our way back and almost there. "Over and out." I am almost certain there was a lesson somewhere in the moment.

We decided to hike back to the trucks down in the floor of the main canyon. Here the black ancient lava flows form hundred-foot cliffs, and a spring

of the Mojave Desert. When we arrived at the spot it wasn't there, just brown stems. We were too early in the season.

¶ AN OLD STILL? ¶

As we were climbing out of the canyon I was taking a shot of an old stone fireplace, all that was left of a cabin, tucked into a flat spot on the side of the canyon wall. Talking with Donald, I mentioned that three of the nine ingredients for gin were around the old cabin site. Juniper berries, licorice and spring water. Maybe during prohibition, they were making a classy form of bathtub gin. It's a chinch they'd never get caught out here.

Leaving no berry unturned and after writing to the award-winning Martin Miller's distillery in the United Kingdom (no relation), I received an email from Therese Lofberg stating that it takes nine juniper berries per liter to flavor gin. This supported my theory of that one big juniper has the capacity to provide all the berries for a small bootlegging operation. Donald pointed out that there were many other juniper trees as well. Smiling, I said to Don-

citrus tree are included – also ground nutmeg (a large evergreen tree's seed pod) and cinnamon, the bark of yet another evergreen tree. They also mentioned a secret ingredient that I felt very strongly was the water. I was right and wrong. On their website, the water is listed as a secret ingredient. "The secret is in the water and in one, even more secret ingredient." It's also mentioned in the final stages of the distilling process, "It is also here that the final mystery ingredient is added."

But wait, there's more. "The secret is not even known to the master distiller." You have to ask yourself, does anyone really know what "it" is? After considerable research and thought, I now know exactly what it is, the only thing it can be. The only thing that could possibly left standing in the Sherwood Forest -- rocks and oak trees. I've never tasted gin, but all of this sounds positively delicious, and I am certain no one will ever have to explain to me why Robin Hood's merry men were so merry.

Weaving our way around cactus and many other things that can draw blood made the short

distance back to the vehicles seem exaggerated. We were putting our gear away when somebody brought up the subject of camping. Donald and Rosie mentioned they used to go camping in Florida. For me, the last time was a place called Echo Canyon, about four miles south of where we stood. The walls of that canyon climb up almost 800 ft., effectively blocking out what little ambient light there is, magnifying the night sky. With the unaided eye, one can, without difficulty, watch satellites pass by in their predictable orbits, and even those that aren't so conventional. (Did you see that?). The subject of camping evaporated when Rosie reminded everyone that she and Donald had been invited to dinner at a place almost thirty miles out from Nipton, very close to fifty miles away. With the shadows growing, goodbyes and hugs were passed out.

Twenty years ago, I would have been far more guarded about sharing a day with people I hardly knew. It could be the way time seems to pass by so quickly these days that spurs, not necessarily carelessness, but a willingness to share experiences a little more readily.

Watching them drive off and thanking God I had experienced my second childhood earlier in life, I thought to myself, so this is fifty. Somehow the term midlife failed to morph into some form of crisis. On this day, I found the so-called transition beyond fifty really meaningless and transparent. With the smoke and mirrors of various stigmas lifted, the day was about life as a whole: a lesson about finding a way through difficult times by maintaining a willingness to engage discovery and the joy of new friendships.♦

Editors' Note:

This recollection by Ben Miller is from 2005, making some of the descriptions of the places mentioned (like the pond and Trading Post in Nipton) historical, rather than contemporary. Congratulations, Ben, on being even older now.

LAST YEAR, THE SEARCHLIGHT VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT WON THE RURAL STATION OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR CLARK COUNTY. RECENTLY, I SAT DOWN WITH CREW MEMBERS BILL MC COMBS AND JEFF HILL, FOR A CHAT AT STATION NO. 75, NEXT TO THE PUBLIC PARK ON NEVADA ST., BETWEEN HILL AND ENCINITAS.

Kim: As we enter a new era in Searchlight's history, with potentially more visitors coming to our area, I am curious to know more about the people who volunteer to keep us safe, and how the volunteer fire department system works to help us. So, first of all, what happens in our area when someone calls 911 for an emergency?

Bill: When someone calls, a dispatcher will ask the caller questions to find out about their situation, and get their location by GPS or a description. Then, if the call involves us, it will be transferred to a Las Vegas fire alarm, and the cell phones of the volunteers in Searchlight will go off. The responders drop whatever they are doing, even sleeping, and head to the station for equipment, and then we'll drive out to the location of the event, administer help as needed, and transfer patients in an ambulance if required.

Kim: How many volunteers are there in Searchlight?

Jeff: From Searchlight, there are only nine full-time members right now at Station 75. Brian O'Neill is the chief of our Clark County rural division. Most of us volunteers also

GOLD BEAM INTERVIEW: THE INS AND OUTS *of* SEARCHLIGHT'S VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

have other full-time jobs -- and we don't get paid to volunteer. But, we consider ourselves to be always on call, because we are passionate about making a difference for our community. Since we are a rural area with a low population, the calls we go out on are often from our neighbors, friends or family, and we ally

Kim: The nearest hospitals are in Henderson and Boulder City, so how long can it take from a call until a patient gets to an emergency care facility?

Bill: It can vary dramatically based on where you are when you

the city. In emergency services, there is something we call the golden hour. That's the window of time in which a patient needs to receive treatment after a trauma for the best chances of survival and recovery. We stabilize patients, transport them, and most of the time meet the hospital ambulance from the emergency room somewhere along Hwy 95 and transfer the patient to them. This gets help to people faster than if they had to wait for a response to reach them from the Las Vegas metro area.

Our average response time from receiving a call to leaving the station in a vehicle is 7 minutes, so we can usually get to you fairly quickly. If you need help in the Searchlight area itself, and then quickly get you on your way to the hospital, but it can take much longer if you are out on a back road -- it

takes at least 40 minutes for us to get to Nelson, for example. We also answer calls that originate from boaters on Lake Mohave, and we have to drive there and then get in a boat to reach people, which can take a good amount of time. In extreme situations a helicopter transport may be called in.



Bottom left: the Searchlight volunteer fire department is awarded Rural Station of the Year for Clark County

Gold Beam staff

want to help.

Bill: We also have a handful of out-of-district volunteers who are on rotation in our area, and who volunteer to get experience as fire-fighters. All of our volunteers pass through a rigorous initial training, and then additional trainings each year to keep up their knowledge, skills and reaction times.

vice area goes from south of Boulder City and Nelson in the north, down to Hwy 163 (Laughlin Road) in the south, Cottonwood Cove in the east and the California border near Nipton to the west. That's a lot of distance to cover.

Jeff: Our ultimate goal is to shave down the response time for the emergency crews from

call. Our s e r - There are also places we can't go in the ambulance because the roads aren't good enough, or someone is lost and away from a road. Then we call in the search and rescue, which is a different volunteer group that originates in the Vegas area, and takes more time to activate. Wherever you are, it is important that you can give the 911 operator a good and detailed description of your location. For instance, there are two different Terrible's casinos in Searchlight, so make sure you

give us more specific clues to where you are.

Kim: What usual kinds of calls do you receive throughout the year, and how often do you receive them?

Jeff: On average, we get calls anywhere from once a week to three times a day. The number of calls varies with the seasons, based on how many people are out here and what they are up to, and obviously during the Covid19 pandemic we had more calls overall. In 2021, we had over 300 calls for service, the highest number in rural Clark County, which was why we were chosen as station of the year for that year.

The types of calls vary with the seasons too. Boating and lake accidents, heat exhaustion and dehydration happen in the summer, off-highway vehicle and hiking accidents at other times. Highway vehicle accidents happen year-round, and we get called for trash fires, RV fires, and medical emergencies, including drug and alcohol overdoses.

Kim: Do you get rattlesnake snakebite calls often?

Jeff: The Mojave green is the deadliest snake we have here, and time is of the essence in treatment, so a medivac helicopter is usually called in – but rattlesnake calls are rare. We also have wild Africanized bee colonies, and some people have allergic reactions to stings and insect bites, so we occasionally get those calls too.

Kim: The work you both are doing is heroic. How long have you been doing it?

Jeff: I've been on board since 2017.

Bill: I went through the rural division academy in 2013, and I've been here in Searchlight since 2012. Searchlight has had a volunteer fire department since the late 1990s, when Verlie Doing, owner of the Searchlight Nugget Casino (now Terrible's Roadhouse), first got it going. There were no cell phones or reception out here then, so calls used to come in through the Nugget. The cashier was the dispatcher, and

the phone number was 1225 (Christmas), so everyone could remember it. We've come a long way since then.

Kim: For our residents, what can we do to help minimize situations in which we need to call you for help?

Jeff: Well, first of all, do call us when you need us. We are not worried about how your situation happened, or if it could have been prevented. We don't judge, and are here to help anyone, regardless of who they are or what kind of fix they are in.

As far as prevention goes, there are things you can do to be as careful as possible. Not indulging too much in drinking or drugs is obvious, and a lot of people don't realize that our dry, high-elevation climate can amplify the effects of substances on the body. A lot of the motor vehicle and boating accidents we see involve substances too.

Everyone should practice situational awareness. Road conditions can change rapidly, so be prepared for emergencies, and check the weather. Keep a fire extinguisher in your car, and twice the water you think you need. If you have chronic conditions you are dealing with, don't leave the house without back-up medications, just in case you get waylaid somewhere. On the lake, make sure you have life jackets within easy reach, not stashed away where you might be wasting precious time digging stuff out when you actually need it. And watch out around your woodpiles and in the landscape – if you can't see it, don't step there.

Kim: That's great advice. What about for visitors, are there also tips they should know to keep safe?

Bill: Some activities, like driving, boating, and hiking in remote areas are inherently dangerous. For exploring the surrounding area or on the lake, avoid going out alone if possible, and try to include an experienced person with you in your group – for example, one who is seasoned in off-highway travel or boating. Make your plans in advance, and tell

IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO REMEMBER:

911

311

988



CALL IN ANY IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY.
THEY WILL TRANSFER YOU TO THE
CORRECT AGENCY FOR HELP.

CALL FOR NON-EMERGENCY
QUESTIONS.

CALL FOR MENTAL HEALTH
EMERGENCIES AND SUICIDE
PREVENTION.

You can also use your cellphone to find the non-emergency numbers for our area.

For questions on burn permits or joining the VFD, scan the code to the right to visit the Clark County Fire website.



someone where you are going and when you will return.

port Station 75 and the Volunteer Fire Department?

We don't have cell coverage everywhere around here, so download the maps and info you will need beforehand, and be prepared to put your phone on airplane mode to save the battery. Get to know the mile markers along the highways in case you need to tell us where you are. Searchlight is at mile marker 20 on Hwy 95.

Kim: Many, many thanks to you both, and to the entire Searchlight team, for your personal sacrifice and amazing community service. I know it's greatly appreciated by all of us residents in the Searchlight area. How can people best sup-

port us is to join us if you can! Serving on the fire department is meaningful work, and it's great for emerging professionals and recent retirees. We have been seeing a decline in volunteers in recent years, and would like to include more area locals at our station. You can find out more information about how to get involved at www.clarkcountynv.gov. From the department directory tab, choose Fire Department, then Join Our Team, then Become A Volunteer for details. Or talk to any of us around town if you are interested. We'd be happy to answer your questions about getting involved. ♦

BEHIND THE SPIRIT OF THE LAND

by Kim Garrison Means

The Spirit of the Land exhibition has received attention for its role in bringing awareness to the issues surrounding the Avi Kwa Ame landscape at the southern tip of Nevada, and its need for further protections in order for this environment to survive for future generations.

The dialogue provided by this exhibition has come in the form of visual stories that local and visiting artists have chosen to investigate, and is the result of extensive collaborations between neighbors, communities, scientists, educators, and the public.



Julian Kilker. *Actors of Avi Kwa Ame, Actor 1*, 2021. Photographic print.

Throughout 2021, myself and co-curators Checko Salgado and Mikayla Whitmore gathered artists in small groups to tour the Avi Kwa Ame landscape (Avi Kwa Ame is the Mojave word for Spirit Mountain), learn about its treasures and

its struggles, and meet other people who were invested in its protection. From the beginning, sharing stories and pooling knowledge and experiences about this area have been a source of strength that has enabled the works in this exhibition to collectively give

a deep reading of this place.

A major asset and home base to this endeavor has been the Searchlight Mystery Ranch, an art and science research station located in the heart of Avi Kwa Ame, outside of the town of Searchlight. Artists were invited to take advantage of the ranch as a place to stay while exploring the area and developing their ideas, and a number of more extended projects have come out of their experiences.

All of the artists in this exhibition serve as storytellers, and themes emerged as we explored the space together. Starting with a celebration of the area's beauty and attractiveness as a vibrant ecosystem, Avi Kwa Ame revealed itself as a place of many uses and connections, some of them conflicting – such as its role as a sacred native landscape versus a potential industrial project site (the site is revered by a dozen local tribes), or as a rural ranching and mining community compared to crucial environmental habitat, or a focal point for outdoor tourism. Spirit of the Land's artists have treated these subjects with care and sensitivity, and the diversity of the backgrounds of the

artists themselves has served to provide context and a multitude of perspectives within their subjects.

First and foremost, this exhibition is a love letter to the unique Avi Kwa Ame environment. Fred Bell's sound recording, *Wee Thump at Dawn*, invites us to bear witness to the raucous celebration of birds in spring, while Alan O'Neill illuminates a collection of the area's cut stones, quartz crystals, and historic glass fragments in a tiffany-style lamp.

The paintings of Nancy Good and Bertha Gutierrez depict the color bursts of thousand-year old lichens and fleeting wildflowers, and Sharon Schaefer's hyper-realistic depictions of animals and birds are portrayed with the rigor of a trained scientific illustrator. Plein air artists Kyle Larson and Sofie Restrepo, and photographer Mike Hill give us the textures and rhythms of the terrain, and *Mojave Fugue*, by Leland Means, and *Desert Glow*, by Sierra Slentz are also inspired by rhythm. Both use repeating textures and patterns from the landscape in their abstracted sculptural forms.



Sharon Schaefer. *Eyes of Night*, 2021. Acrylic on Clayboard.

Artists also describe their extended time in Avi Kwa Ame's wild expanses and isolated nooks as inspiring, hopeful and healing. Adriana Chavez chose to create a series of digital collages depicting symbolic plants, animals, and scenes reminiscent of Tarot and Wisdom Cards. Checko Salgado was inspired by taking musicians to the area, and recorded a number of videos of them performing original works with the desert as backdrop.

René West, a photographer from Lubbock Texas who stayed at the Mystery Ranch for a couple of weeks, spent the rest of the year creating desert-inspired mandalas, and Jym Davis' extended stay resulted in an investigation of the trickster story of the coyote through photography, collage and mask-making. Natalie Delgado's hopeful image, *Sacred Repose*, a drawing realized in graphite and desert soil, is an idealized portrayal of coexistence between humanity and the ecosystem.

Photographers Naida Oslin and Sam Davis chose radically different approaches to depict the power of the vast, Nevada sky. Oslin's *What Is Above Is Below* documents a rapidly changing cloudscape over the McCollough and Highland Ranges throughout a single day, using colored filters and then layering them in a final image that creates a transitory vision of the illusion of time. Sam Davis gives us a glimpse of a desert mystery: a mythical sky-space of spaceships and distant travelers longing for faraway homes, offering to be seen if we would just look a little longer or a little closer.

The role of Avi Kwa Ame as a sacred space is represented by Mojave elder Paul Jackson, whose paintings convey parts of their Creation story, when the Earth and first peoples were formed at Spirit Mountain and the Colorado River. The First Times are also represented by works from a dozen artists of the Pipa Aha Macav Culture Society, including traditional beaded jewelry, ceramics, rattles, weapons and ribbon dresses that are rarely displayed in public. Of special note are two ceramic figures related to their origin story: one depicts Mas-

taho, the son of the Creator, whose home is Avi Kwa Ame, and the other his sister, Frog, who brought about Mastamho's death, and carried fire back to the people to light his funeral pyre.

These items tie contemporary Mojave culture to thousands of years of history and tradition that is grounded in their mission to reside in and protect this landscape. Much sharing and listening had to be done as the Mojave artists worked together with the curators and the Barrick Museum staff, in order to display these items properly and respectfully. Historically, much Mojave artwork has been removed from their homeland without permission by outsiders, to be stored in far-away museum vaults, or sold to the highest bidder. During the early reservation period of the mid 1800s to early 1900s, tribal members, no longer having access to their hunting and gathering lands, were also forced to make and sell beadwork to tourists passing through the railroad station in Needles, CA, and most tribal members today prefer not to make art work to sell because of this.

Fawn Douglas' *Gifts from the Land*, is a mixed media piece that honors the landscape of her grandfather, a Moapa Paiute tribal member. Ms. Douglas (a member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, with roots in the Cheyenne, Pawnee and Creek Nations) sewed wide, turquoise-blue satin ribbons into the edges of thick, copper-toned paper and let them cascade into rivulets on the floor, evoking the colors of the mighty Colorado river cutting through the granite mountains. The ribbons, used to decorate traditional dresses in tribal communities throughout the region, are also a trade item from the colonial period. Like many historical materials, they impart both a fierce pride, and a cautionary reference about cultural oppression.

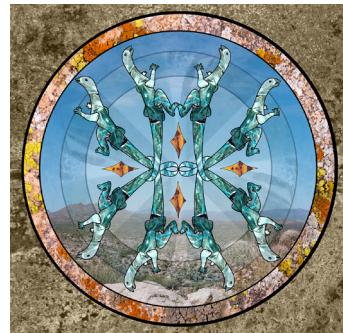
Other contemporary perceptions of this space are provided by artists whose material-use largely conveys their messages. Sculptor Christopher Reitmaier presents a found object assemblage representing land use of the recent past – from reliques of the mining era to the

discards of public recreation. Justin Favela subverts the tradition of landscape painting as a tool for colonial ownership by using the surprising material of piñata paper, a symbol of his Latinx heritage, while Lance L. Smith's *Turtle Dove (Ajapá)*, made with natural pigments, honors the desert tortoise of the Mojave by relating it to the tortoise stories of the Saharan desert and the African Diaspora.

Douglas McCulloh's offering explores what the digital world thinks it knows about Avi Kwa Ame. In his photo collage, taken from a collection of Google image searches, where most, but not all, the images are accurately related to this space, he bombards us with publicly-shared image documents of sites, people and activities. As the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument campaign gains momentum, it is interesting to think about people far away from Southern Nevada looking to their technology for a digital description of the land and its assets, or as McCulloh describes, where "supplicants anywhere, anytime, can summon visions of Avi Kwa Ame into flickering existence at the altar of our screens."

Other artists chose to illustrate the potential for ecosystem disruption in the form of a proposal to use a part of the Avi Kwa Ame area as the site of a large industrial windfarm. Maria Volborth paints a forced perspective panorama of the East/West mountain ranges to show the connectivity that would be interrupted, with Spirit Mountain on the left facing Crescent Peak and the proposed wind project site on the right – a culturally sacred site facing a proposed industrial site in the same landscape.

By contrast, Chelsea Mosher zooms in on the landscape to show a close-up of a single threatened Joshua Tree from the potential project site, vibrating as if the ground was shaking. Her gelatin silver print photograph, *Industrial Frequency*, serves as a warning against placing turbines and service roads amidst the eastern edge of the densest Joshua tree forest in the world. Mosher's Joshua tree visually connects with the work of another photographer



Rene West. *Lizard*, 2020. Digital composite of pin-hole and digital photography.



Jym Davis. *Coyote Mask*, 2022. Paper mache.



Naida Oslin. *What is Above is Below*, 2022. Dye sublimation print on aluminum.



Christopher Reitmaier. *Fools Gold*, 2022. Mixed media assemblage.

in the exhibition, Julian Kilkner, whose series, *Actors of Avi Kwa Ame*, depicts a shadowy human figure holding up a lightbox to illuminate parts of specific Joshua Trees in the adjacent protected area of the Wee Thump Wilderness (Ancient Ones in the Paiute language).

Joshua trees are not the only life forms that would be affected by a huge industrial project in their midst. Raptors, songbirds, bats, tortoises and big-horn sheep are just some of the animals that would be imperiled, and the connective artery between the California Mojave and the Colorado River that this landscape provides would be severed. Quindo Miller's kinetic sculptural diorama, *A Wild in the Stillness*, uses a blower and timer to periodically disturb a tiny tumbleweed trapped within a glass at the center of the scene, spinning it wildly out of control, and representing industrial wind turbines and their potential detriment to the entire Mojave ecosystem.

Industrial projects threaten the harmony and continuity within this extensive sacred landscape, but some of the most powerful work in the exhibition tackles a disconnect within a recent cultural tradition, centered at the heart of Spirit Mountain itself, in an area known as Christmas Tree Pass. The area got its name during the mining era of the early 1900s, when it was the place to go for timber, but in more recent decades, the festive name prompted a practice of holiday visitors to decorate the juniper trees with tinsel, ornaments, and garland. This tradition grew beyond the holiday season, and has resulted in colorful and shiny foreign objects being left in the environment throughout the year, where drought-stricken animals and birds mistake them for food, often with deadly consequences.

Spirit of the Land artists tackled this story together over the course of a year. Photographer Mikayla Whitmore photographed a single, decorated tree shining in the sunset, then captured the cleaned-up version the next morning, displaying the images as large-scale prints one above the other, surrounded by the blood red garland collected from the tree itself. The

flanking of this piece by two paintings of Avi Kwa Ame's creation story by Mojave elder Paul Jackson is a purposeful juxtaposition of two opposing cultural overlays. Paul tells of Mojave tribal members being threatened by visitors while trying to remove holiday trash from one of their most sacred landscapes, or as he puts it, "our Garden of Eden."

Working throughout the year on tree clean ups with tribal members, conservation groups, and OHV clubs, artists from Spirit of the Land used some of this festive detritus to create a large, found object installation: *Spirit Mountain Depicted in Holiday Trash*. This piece impresses visitors to the gallery with its grand scale, but is in fact only using a small portion of the trash left in the environment each year. A work statement for the piece does not call for an end to this cultural tradition, but rather urges visitors to practice the same "leave no trace" policy they would use anywhere else in nature.

Another issue of the area is the Southwest megadrought, the worst in 1,200 years. Paula Jacoby-Garrett's contribution, 55%, references the decline of the screwbean mesquite tree, a useful food source for wildlife, and culturally important to local tribes. Jacoby-Garrett presents six seedpods encased in resinous petri dishes, noting the recent scientific efforts to understand more of what this plant species needs to thrive in a changing climate.

My own contribution (with Steve Radosevich as United Catalysts) is a series of short videos made from photographic stills collected with wildlife cameras. It documents the many animals who rely on the water from the Mystery Ranch wildlife pond, but who are rarely seen by visitors. *Proof of Existence* also reflects the need to categorize and confirm the assets of the Avi Kwa Ame landscape as part of the political process to protect it.

In one way, the Spirit of the Land exhibition as a whole works much like the United Catalysts piece; it declares the existence of many wonders in a fragile and changing land-

scape worthy of our attention. But beyond this, the exhibition invites the communities within and surrounding this landscape to become more involved in its stewardship. A community call for postcard art and descriptions of what people love about Avi Kwa Ame was met with more than 200 entries. Mojave singers sang, dancers danced, workshops were held, and storytellers shared over the course of the show, while members of the public sat down together at tables in the gallery and wrote postcards to their government representatives in charge of caring for the public lands that constitute Avi Kwa Ame.

The works from these artists and community members are beautiful in form, but they also represent acts of devotion and advocacy. The artists here are ambassadors, bringing a place outside of the cityscape into the gallery, creatively representing an ecosystem that cannot speak for itself, and asking all of us to do the same. The sharing, dialogue, and actions that have taken place as a result of this exhibition are not just representing this special and sacred place. They are helping, along

with many others, to shape its future. ♦



Scan the code above to view the full *Spirit of the Land* exhibition catalog and accompanying essays online.



Fawn Douglas. *Gifts from the Land*, 2022.
Mixed media.



Chelsea Mosher. *Industrial Frequency*, 2022. Gelatin silver print.



SPIRIT OF THE LAND

EXHIBITION HONORS AVI KWA AME

*By Aya Louisa McDonald,
UNLV Professor of Art History*

Problem of Desert Mythology

Despite the ever-creeping spread of development and uncontrolled growth, the desert dwarfs and swallows all - residents, tourists, casinos and neighborhoods in its vast immensity.

Deserts have always gotten a bad rap, as the Collins Dictionary demonstrates: "wasteland, dust bowl, barren, dry, waste, wild, empty, bare, lonely, solitary, desolate, arid, unproductive, infertile, uninhabited, uncultivated, unfruitful." Not a single positive word or image; even the verb forms are negative: "to vacate, forsake, abandon, or betray."

The deserts of the American Southwest, the Sonoran, Great Basin and Chihuahuan, and

our Mojave Desert, born in the rain shadow of high mountains, belong to a celebrated "world class" of global deserts including the frigid Katpana Desert in northern Pakistan and the Atacama in the shadow of the Peruvian Andes. Nevertheless, our North American deserts have been shaped by Hollywood as places of violent encounter between cowboys and Indians, or as wastelands of unbearable heat and thirst littered with sun-bleached bones, shimmering mirages, and imminent death. Bob Nolan's (1908-1980) Cool Water (1936), a plaintive ballad about a man and his mule, immortalized by cowboy actor and singer Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers, sealed the image forever:

All day I've faced a barren waste

*Without the taste of water,
cool water
Old Dan and I with throats
burned dry
And souls that cry for water
Cool, clear water*

American myths about the deserts of the Southwest, built on romantic distortions of historical truths and the blatant and racist erasures of indigenous peoples, have obscured an important power long recognized the world over by mystics, poets, dreamers, and artists: that the desert land holds within its vastness a timeless spirit of energy and life, and a beauty both fragile and resilient.

The land remembers. It wears the traces of trauma and bears the scars of the past into the present. It sings of the cycle of life as it makes a home for

the gopher snake, the tortoise, and the tiny pocket mouse, and weeps for the fallen cactus wren and the black-tailed jackrabbit, the feral burro or the child of man. It is a force divine -- if not indestructible, then infinitely renewable.

Art History and Land Activism

The history of art is filled with examples of artists who were deeply moved by the awesome spiritual powers of nature that live in the mountains. The unspoiled wilderness, the vast grandeur and stunning immensity of the purple mountain majesty of North America evoked awe in the eyes and hearts of 19th Century painters like the English-born Thomas Cole (1801-1848) of the Hudson River School, the German-born Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), and photographers like Carleton E. Watkins (1829-1916), who immortalized, not without a touch of romantic nostalgia, the Yosemite Valley, the Rocky Mountains, and the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Already in Cole's time, there was a fear among early environmentalists that these na-

tional treasures, if unprotected, would succumb to the destruction of human encroachment. Cole wrote:

"I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are (sic) quickly passing away. The ravages of the axe are daily increasing. The most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation."

Cole was an activist artist, possibly the first, but he did not act alone. He and other mid-19th-century American artists and photographers paved the way for the United States to declare Yellowstone a National Park in 1872. The idea of nature conservation was born, and since President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Act in 1916, millions of acres of ecologically rich natural beauty, flora, fauna and habitats have been brought under the protection of the Federal Government.

Honoring the Local Landscape

The Spirit of the Land exhibi-

bition argues in equally eloquent tones conveyed through the skill and passion of artists working in word, image, and artefact for the sacredness of the magnificent, hauntingly beautiful Spirit Mountain and surrounding landscape.

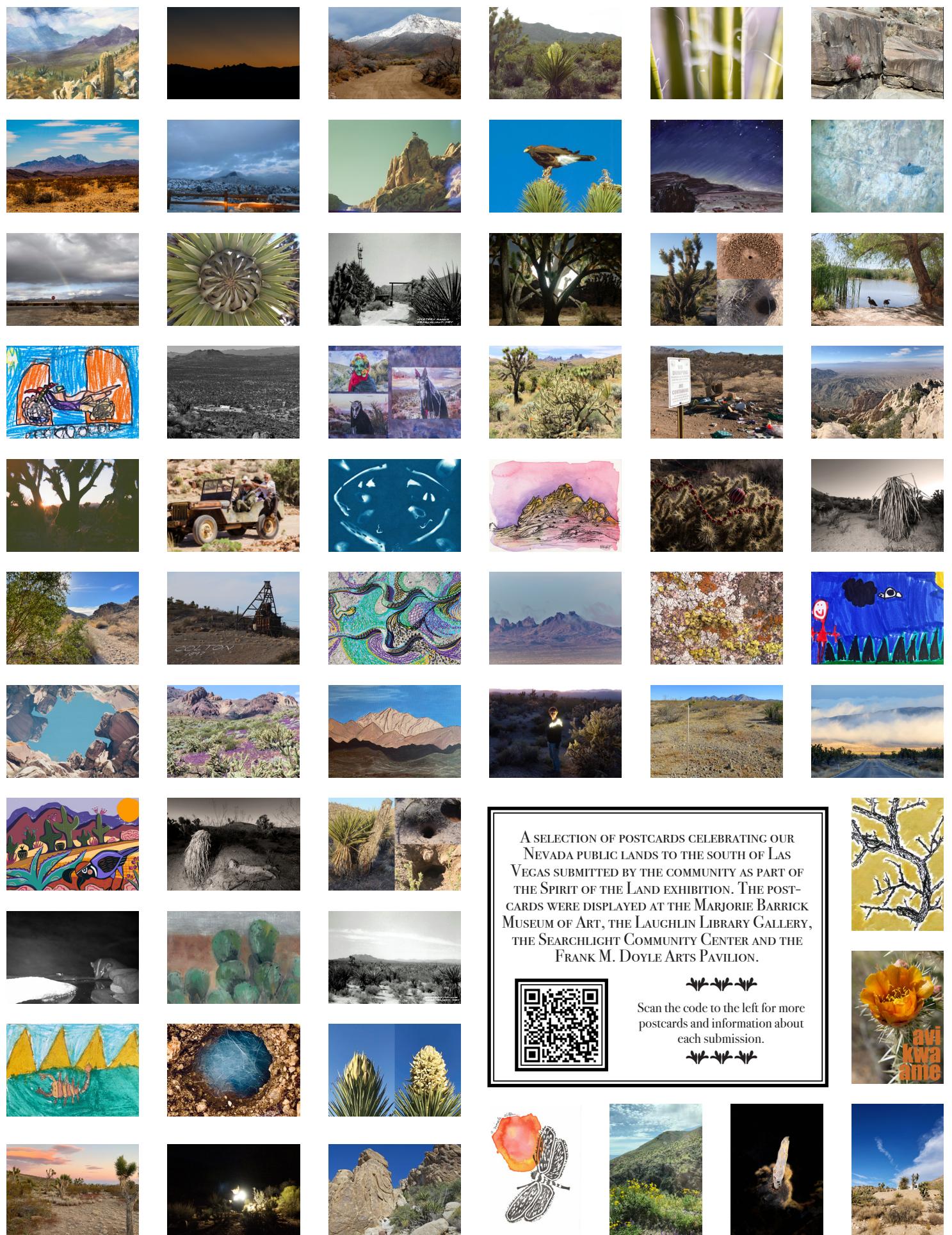
In the Barrick Museum of Art on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus, and its local satellite exhibitions in Searchlight and Laughlin, curators Kim Garrison Means, Checko Salgado, and Mikayla Whitmore, artists too numerous to name here, participating and advising tribal members, beginning with artist and poet Paul Jackson, Fort Mojave Tribal Elder, Marjorie Barrick Art Museum leadership and staff, and members of the larger community, have formed a uniquely subtle, but unapologetically powerful activist collective around the principles of non-discrimination and inclusion, not only to illustrate the unique features of Avi Kwa Ame, but to honor and celebrate the direct, unmediated, individual human responses to this irreplaceable landscape in our own backyard.



COMMUNITY POSTCARDS

from the "SPIRIT OF THE LAND" EXHIBITION





THE TRAIL OF THE OPAL SKULL

Another smashing tale of mystery and intrigue from author John LeGallee, featuring the hard-fisted slugger Jason Terrell and his sturdy crew of adventure-thirsty Time Travelers! Each month, THE GOLD BEAM is pleased to present another chapter of this full-length novel in serial form, completely uncut, with every word contained in the hard cover editions found on bookstands everywhere. Join Jason and his friends on the search for a legendary Opal Jaguar Skull, said to have mysterious psychic powers. This month's chapter is a humdinger, guaranteed to pack as much punch as a shot of Cyrus Noble whiskey over a double espresso!



John LeGallee

CHAPTER III. -A HAND IN THE POCKET

Staining against the cords which bound him tightly, Hick Fenton was slowly becoming aware of his returning consciousness. A loud thrumming drone seemed to pour into his body, reverberating with the throbbing pain in his skull and the sickly feeling in his guts.

As his faculties began to return to him, his cramped surroundings started to come into focus. Hick found himself lying in a crumpled heap on the floor of what appeared to be a steel and fabric airplane jostling through the desert sky!

Two large men sat with their backs to him at the controls of the ship. With a start, memories of earlier in the evening came flooding back. "Of Course!" Hick thought, "Crease Mulraney and Guf Brinkston! -I must be in that Cabin Biplane they use to haul supplies for the Longhammer outfit."

Up to now, the noise of the large motor, and the movement of the craft through the rough air, had concealed from the two henchmen that their captive was coming to. Hick decided to lay still and do some thinking. His scalp wasn't anxious for another kiss from that monkey wrench.

To our readers whom may not yet be well acquainted with the exploits of Jason Terrell and his friends, we will pause, to give Hick some time to do that thinking, while we take the opportunity to introduce our intrepid crew of happy-go-lucky roughnecks, and turn the high beams onto some of their previous adventures.

Jason Terrell (or "Jayce," as his friends call him) is an inventor/mechanic and expert driver, who is employed, along with his friends Snappy Burk, Hick Fenton, and Gilbert Mantree by the Mission Bell Brewing Company in Los Angeles, Calif. All four men work as truck drivers distributing "Frosty Gold" beer throughout the greater metropolitan area.

As outlined in the first book of this series, "*The Orphan's Well*," Jayce had a chance encounter with the mysterious Marcus Dee

while motoring along a coastal highway and stopping for a wreck. Jayce helped Marcus out of quite a nasty jam, and afterwards both men discovered they had been childhood friends.

Pie-faced, and with a shock of whitish-yellow hair, Marcus Dee was a brilliant mathematician and physicist who, because of certain idiosyncrasies, was not well respected in his field, and hence, made his living writing television commercials.

The mysterious past of Marcus Dee was riddled with adventures too numerous and bizarre to be recounted here, but the results played out on his well-lined face, his bearing, the odd color of his skin, and the strange hand-carved crutches he was never without.

As the two men rekindled their friendship, Marcus Dee revealed he had been working on a vast new understanding of physics which had proposed, among other things, the possibility of a "Temporal Shunt." Using Dee's calculations as a starting point, Jason Terrell began work on a project to exploit this unproven theory. Many mis-trials followed, both frightening and comical.

Finally, though, the experiments bore fruit, and the result was "Big Blue," an old Dodge pick-up truck that Jason Terrell (with the help of Marcus Dee and Hick Fenton) successfully adapted and outfitted for use as a time machine.

On its first outing, Jayce and Marcus Dee used Big Blue to unravel a mystery involving red diamonds and strange 4th Dimensional beings. But in the aftermath, Marcus Dee was in the hospital for two months and Jayce lost four days of work.

Addressing the dangerous shortcomings at once, Hick and Jayce devised a special bi-metallic laminate with an organic membrane sandwiched between the layers, which they applied to the floor and firewall of the truck as shielding. This, together with several minor modifications, reduced the potentially deadly side effects of the shunt to nearly acceptable levels.

Then, through trial and error the crew gradually developed the important protocols which when employed, allowed the fellows to conduct the time travel procedure itself in relative safety.

Safety protocols notwithstanding, the adventures they then embarked upon proved very dangerous indeed!

"Man, last time I came up this way, this road was PAVED."
"Oh?" "And when was that, Gilbert?"

Gilbert Mantree sat staring out the windshield as if imagining something 100 miles down the road, his bearlike hulk crammed into a corner of the truck, a serious look in his dark eyes. "Thanksgiving" he said, with an air of finality.

Jason Terrell, with both hands on the steering wheel, turned and looked at Gilbert for a full four seconds. A perfect poker face. Eyes like iron.

Gilbert looked at him and answered slowly, "Nine-teen?..." he said, pausing thoughtfully as his eyes rolled up to his left forehead, "...sixty-nine" he grinned sheepishly. It was a weak time-traveler's joke; presently, 1969 was both two years in the past for them, and forty-five years in the future.

The truck was bouncing down Mountain Pass now, on a fairly smooth, but sandy section of the road down from Coyote Holes. Pin pricks of light were visible off in Nipton.

"They've gotta have cold beer down there." Gilbert mused.

"Prohibition down there" added Jayce, skeptically.

"Warm, then?" Gilbert laughed.

Kaa-BLAM!!

Big Blue struck something, and fairly leapt into the air.

"Jesus Mahoney!" exclaimed Gilbert. "What was that?"

"Don't know." replied Terrell, speed not slackening. "Sometimes weird things happen on a shunt," he added, inwardly shuddering as he recalled 4th -dimensional creatures he and Marcus Dee had encountered. "Whatever it was, it was soft," he thought to himself, "...and invisible!"

Terrell didn't like those things. He had hoped to never deal with them again. They were like the things skid row drunks would see when they had the D.T.s. Maybe they *were* those things. Terrell stifled another shudder; it wasn't a comfortable thought.

King Snedley was standing on the seat now; a look of annoyance across his canine features. Shortly, he began to circumambulate the spot he was occupying, bumping into both men awkwardly, and laid down, shoving both men back into their corners of the truck.

The men were quiet for a few more moments as the truck jolted down the grade. Gilbert Mantree gently rubbed the portion of his head that had slammed into the roof of the truck. "How we gonna find Fenton, J.T.?" he said finally. Gilbert was a Marine and he didn't like spinning his wheels when one of the crew was missing.

Jayce looked at Mantree again. "I don't know how we're gonna find him, Gil," he spoke evenly, "and I don't know where. But I do know we will find him, and we'll find him before these 48 hours are up."

Terrell stared at the road through the headlights again and continued, "When the *Pull* starts, we'll be drawn to him, or he'll be drawn to us, -or both, or whatever. I don't know how it works, but once you've felt it, you'll never doubt it. We're all going back together."

"If we're all alive" Gilbert observed, resignedly. Terrell shot him a quick glare and went back to staring at the road.

.....

truck turned left, and Jason motioned out the window. "That's the place," he indicated.

They made a wide circle around the joint and parked under a cottonwood tree about a half block south of the place. The men dropped out of the truck, happy to stand up straight after the long ride. King Snedley stood up and stretched on the truck seat, then made his way down to the truck floor, the running board, and finally the side of the road.

The stars outside were as bright as moonlight, and the gentle caress of the desert night breeze carried the smell of creosote and sage. King stood still for a moment, his eyes half closed and nostrils flaring rhythmically. Then, after thoroughly marking the vicinity, he crawled under the truck and took up his station.

The men turned and began hiking back up the street, confident that their truck and valuable apparatus were secure. King would lay silently under the truck now until they returned, his dense black fur concealing him in the shadows; a serious calamity awaiting anyone hoping to monkey with Big Blue!

With gravel crunching under their feet, they approached the bar.

The town was quiet. There was a faint smell of firewood burning. A dog was barking about a half mile off.

As prohibition era high desert saloons go, The Blue Light Café was pretty barebones. A small, rectangular one room building in the middle of an otherwise empty corner lot, it had a tin roof and unfinished plank sides, stained dark from exposure to the elements. The front door was to the right on the south wall; its ramshackle condition bearing testament to continual cycles of destruction and repair.

There were no signs anywhere on the property proclaiming the name of the

establishment, only an old railway lantern hanging on the wall next to the entrance; its dim kerosene flame burning behind blue tinted glass.

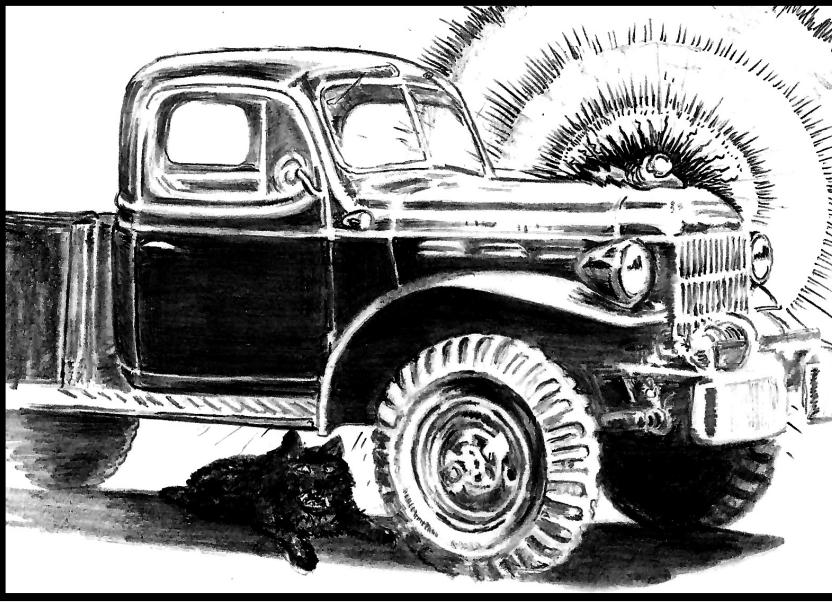
Past the entrance, the interior of the Blue Light was even more stark than its outside. Two roaring gasoline lamps hung on fixed feed pipes from the ceiling at either end of the room. The bright light glaring through frosted glass exposed an atmosphere bordering on desolation. A pot-bellied stove, a table and chairs, and a bar barely long enough to fit four drinkers made up the totality of the furnishings. As for decorations, there were none. No stools. No mirrors. No pictures on the walls. Only a cracked and rusty Dutch oven and a dented chamber pot, both serving as spittoons.

There were four persons in the joint when the boys stepped inside; all of them turned to size up the newcomers. **Deke Nivens** was sitting at the poker table to the left, with his back to the wall. Jason smiled to himself when he saw him. "Just the man I was looking for," he thought. Across the room, near the open back door, a weathered, but handsome young married couple were enjoying some beer and each other's company at the bar. The man, tall and bearded with broad shoulders, bore the stamp of a fellow who likes hard work, and does it on his own terms. His wife, small, pretty, and tough, looked game for anything. Both were wearing dusty boots and work clothes.

Behind the bar, stood a glowering **Ed Troxel**, proprietor of the Blue Light Café. "Welcome," he said to our heroes, without a trace of friendliness.

The boys pushed up to the bar and nodded at the young couple.

The bartender moved in front of them, placed his hands flat on the bar, and just stared. His face conveyed a perplexing mixture of



They were still more than an hour away from Nipton. Heavy with thought, the men rode on in silence, (or, at least what passed for silence in Big Blue.) The dim six-volt beams spread out before them, jostling up and down, illuminating the road ahead in warm tones.

Occasionally, while staring across the prow of the truck, Jason and Gilbert would glimpse a jackrabbit sitting in the road, far ahead, looking their way. The jack would then duck behind a bush and wait until the last second to jump back into the road and dash ahead of the truck, running in the headlight beams until it got tired, and then darting out of the road again. It happened at least five times along this stretch, and the rabbits were enjoying this game far more than Jason, who was usually forced to slow down, to keep from killing the furry little rodeo competitors.

Big Blue was moving through cattle country now, and King's interest was aroused. The 88 had ten thousand head stretched out on over a million acres in those days, and more than enough horses to keep men on the job. King's front paws bore down heavily on Gilbert's lap as he forced his muzzle out the window. Gilbert just smiled and rested a hand on the dog's massive shoulders, and adjusted the window until they were both a little more comfortable.

Toward the bottom of the valley, the road got a little sandy again and made for slow going. Eventually though, the crew found themselves heading uphill again, and approaching the town of Nipton. As they entered the sleepy settlement, Jason made a left turn up a narrow street and the boys began to get a handle on the "lay of the land."

Nipton wasn't exactly "booming" in 1924. The population was hovering around fifteen. Many buildings had been abandoned. Others had been disassembled and carried further up the line leaving only foundations. Scattered about the town were the rusty skeletons of a half dozen or so partially disassembled automobiles resting wheelless in the sand along with an assortment of less identifiable machine age detritus.

"Damn!" exclaimed Gilbert, "I thought all these old cars would be new."

"I know," replied Jason dryly as he turned up another street, "sometimes I think they rolled out of the factory like this." The

apathetic interrogative, and defiant indifference.

"Cold Beer?" queried Gilbert.

Troxel shook his head grimly, "Prohibition on."

The boys peered around at the half empty glasses in front of the couple, and glanced at each other.

"All we gots is near-beer." retorted the bartender. The dusty young bearded man rolled his eyes and made no effort to conceal it.

"How near is it?" asked Gilbert.

"How near do you want it?" the bartender shot back with his head cocked.

"Near enough to get my nose wet!" grinned Gilbert.

Ed Troxel paused, and let out a deep sigh, "Either of you boys law officers of any kind?"

Gilbert and J.T. looked at each other questioningly in mock earnest. "Nope," they both replied, with sparkling eyes.

"You're not Government men?"

"Not no more," Terrell replied. "turned us loose on our own recognition."

"Honorable Discharge," added Gil, holding up his right hand in a solemn Boy Scout salute.

The young bearded man looked up from rolling a cigarette, "C'mon, Ed. You know these guys ain't bulls..."

"Is that what I know? You running this place now, Matt?"

Matt Barnes gave Ed Troxel an uncharacteristically cold stare which instantly softened when his pretty wife looked at him lovingly, and whacked him on the shoulder.

Ed slid a mug of beer in front of a plainly delighted Gilbert Mantree, and looked inquisitorily at Jason.

Terrell held up his fingers in a gesture roughly describing a shot glass.

"Beer's cold, J.T." commented Gilbert.

"Railroad stops here," said the bartender as he ducked below the bar. "We always have ice," he said, straightening up and presenting a bottle about 5/8ths full of a brown liquid.

Jason Terrell looked at the bottle as though it were a dead rat.

"Got any of that good Bob Holliman 'shine?" he asked finally.

The bartender arched an eyebrow. "You know Bob?"

"I know his whiskey," Jason replied. "It's darned good!"

Ed Troxel seemed to be deliberating. While he hesitated, Matt Barnes offered innocently, "If you're getting *that* out, Ed, I'll have a drop."

Troxel gave the bearded man an annoyed look and grudgingly produced another glass and a different bottle, this time one third full of a clear liquid. The bartender filled both glasses and pushed them toward his customers. Eyeing Jayce he said, "It's thirty cents."

Terrell put down three quarters and nodding in the direction of the bearded man said, "I'll go his, too."

Matt Barnes looked at Jayce and held up his glass, "I thank you," he said.

Ed Troxel began to put the bottle away and changing his mind, poured himself a drink as well. His dour features began to relax as he took a sip and acknowledged, "It really is pretty good stuff."

The mood in the Blue Light lightened noticeably and that seemed to suit Matt Barnes just fine. He held his drink aloft, and with his unlit handrolled cigarette dangling from his lips, he began to tell a story.

"You know, Bob Holliman was in town here a couple of weeks ago. There was this Government man from down to San Berdoo in here buying him drinks and cozying up to Bob and trying to get all his secrets.

"And Bob kept acting all innocent as he sat there lapping up this good booze that he'd made himself, while this government man kept buying it for him with government money. They were here all afternoon!"

Matt took another sip, and continued, "And the guy kept saying things like, 'We know you're not a criminal, Bob.' And, 'What you're doing isn't really all *that* wrong... It's the big guys we're after; all those crooked Dagos back east...' and a lot of stuff like that.

"Well, old Bob kept stringing him along, and the guy keeps pestering him about how he moves the stuff, and Bob hasn't admitted to anything..."

Matt took the cigarette out of his mouth again to take another

sip. Then, contemplating the cigarette in his hand with glassy eyes, he considered lighting it. But then, returning his attention to the dangerously flammable contents of the glass he held in his other hand, he thought to himself, "No. I'll just keep it unlit, and finish my story."

Matt resumed, "So, the city dude is saying, 'Y'know Bob, we're pretty stumped. If a smart guy like you would just clue us in to how he moves the stuff it would sure help Uncle Sam to catch these big guys, and incidentally, it probably wouldn't hurt your business either.' And this is going on for a while. And this guy is laying it on pretty thick, and ol' Bob is starting to get pretty wet. So finally, Bob says to him, 'Alright. You seem like a good egg. I'll show you how it's done. I've got a load of it right outside!'"

Matt set his whisky on the bar, took a drink from his beer this time and continued, "So now they're both happy, and they head outside. And I think this Government man is adding up all the things he can buy as soon as he gets his new promotion, and he's thinking maybe he can buy a new couch for the parlor, and maybe he'll rate a good lookin' personal secretary or something and the guys in the office will have to stop making fun of him cause now *he'll* be the boss, and Bob leads him around to where he's got his horse tied up.

"And Bob points at the horse. 'There she is,' he says, 'The whole kit-and-kaboodle!' Now the guy looks confused, but he's still game. 'W-where?' he says. 'Right there!' says Bob. 'You'd never know it to look at him, would you?' And right here I should mention that this City-Boob has been putting away the good stuff right alongside Bob all afternoon. 'W-w-wha?' he says.

"Right here!" says Bob. 'I hollowed him out!' he says, patting the horse's belly. 'Listen to him slosh! Why, there's a hundred and fifty gallons in there!'

Now this guy's world is all coming apart, and he knows it. And Bob says, 'And they can never track me. Because he leaves the same hoofprints as any horse!"

With this, Matt Barnes finished the last of his whisky.

"What did the guy do?" asked Jason.

"What could he do?" stated Carla, laughing. "He went home to lick his wounds."

"I know some cops that would have pushed back pretty hard," observed Gilbert. "No more humor than brains."

"Bob Holliman goes about pretty well-healed all the time," she said. "Even down in Berdoo they know better than to throw down on Bob Holliman."

Matt and Carla seemed pretty satisfied with the story. They gave each other a significant look, and downed the last of their beers. Carla slapped some coins on the bar, and Matt said, "Good-night, everybody," as they both walked out the door.

The man at the table had been espousing them and now called out, "C'mon over and have a seat, lads. No sense wearing out a perfectly good floor."

As the boys picked up their drinks and moved toward the table, the man's eyes regarded Jayce a bit more intently, "You look familiar. Haven't we met before?"

"Don't know." Jayce mused, "I get that feeling from you, too. I'm Jason Terrell," he said, offering his hand, "this is my partner Gilbert Mantree."

"Deke Nivens." The man said, standing up and grasping Terrell's



King Snedley

hand.

"Glad to know you." He said, turning to Gilbert.

"Likewise." countered Mantree, returning the firm handshake. In truth, Terrell had met Nivens before. Several times, in fact. Terrell knew Nivens to be smart, fearless, and reliable. For that matter, he knew Ed Troxel too. But these past events had taken place in different timelines, so Nivens and Troxel could have no memory of them. Still, the strange fact was: the more experiences you had with someone in the past, the more they seemed to know you.

Deke Nivens appeared to be around fifty; fit and sharp. His clothes and his bearing marked him as an expert Desert Man. He had the easy confidence of a man who is both well-known and well-respected. English by birth, he had come west as a young man. Thirty-two years in the East Mohave hadn't flattened out his accent much.

"What brings you to Nipton?" he asked as the boys sat down.

"A job," replied Gilbert.

"We're looking for something," explained Jayce.

"Oh?" said Nivens, his interest aroused. "Anything you can talk about?"

"We're looking for an artifact. Very old."

"Man made, or natural?"

"Not sure," said Jayce, "it's supposed to be an opal jaguar skull, maybe fossilized. Indians^o brought it up here from Mexico, they say. Five hundred, to a thousand years ago or more."

Deke Nivens was thinking as he slowly took a sip from his glass.

"Who says this?" he asked, finally.

"Professor Sloan," answered Jayce, "from Bowdean College, back East."

A flash of recognition darted across Nivens' clear eyes. "Sloan," he repeated, "young skinny fellow? With a little French moustache?"

"Yeah." Agreed Jason.

Gilbert, who had been shaking his head slightly in the negative when Jason spoke, quickly added, "Yep." and stopped moving his head.

Gilbert had been looking down at what was left of his beer. He now pushed his chair back, stood up and announced, "This beer drinks fast!"

"Get you anything?" he said, facing Nivens.

"Thanks. I'm fine." replied the Desert Man.

Jayce shook his head in answer to a similar inquiring look from Gilbert, who then excused himself and ambled back to the bar.

"And Dr. Sloan wants you to retrieve this skull?" Nivens asked, turning back to Jason.

"Not really," J.T. hedged, "I think he wants to find it himself."

Deke Nivens gave him a mildly puzzled look, "Then what're you lads supposed to do?"

Terrell answered carefully, "We're supposed to make sure it's still there when he finds it."

"...there," Nivens repeated; but it was a question.

"Well, -somewhere." Jason admitted.

Deke let out a long sigh. "I see." He paused for a moment, then added, "And he knows where it is now?"

Jason frowned a bit. "He has some old text he's consulting. It's sorta vague, -like it's in code or something." Then, seeking to clarify, he added, "It's high up. There's a cave, big rocks, and a river nearby."

"That's it?" said Deke, looking a little vexed, "That's what you have to go on?"

"...Among other things." Jason stated, rather unsatisfactorily. Then more to the point, "He's convinced it's up in Black Canyon."

"Oh..." Nivens sighed, suddenly understanding. It was an open secret that a consortium composed of certain well known big-name east coast industrialists was invested in planning a massive development project somewhere in that region; a development that would give these industrial giants a near monopoly over the flow of both electrical energy and much needed water into arid Southern California.

A juggernaut like that wouldn't be pausing for any archeological findings.

"But it might be elsewhere?" Nivens asked. He was getting interested now.

Terrell merely shrugged.

Deke Nivens sat quietly for a moment, fingers from both hands lightly tapping the glass on the table before him. He was adding things up.

"High place, cave, river..." he began, "opal jaguar skull... It won't be in an obvious place. An item like that would be important to those Indians^o; they'd not make it easy to find."

Gilbert had remained at the bar with his fresh beer, and didn't appear to be coming back. Nivens silently added this fact to his calculations.

"The tribes aren't all the same out here you know, it would help to know who we're dealing with." Deke offered.

"It's all pretty sketchy," said Jason. "Sloan is pretty sure the people who hid it aren't related to anyone living here now."

"Hmm. Well, if they were going to spend any time there, they'd need water and food." Nivens mused, "Look for Mesquite trees nearby."

Then, suddenly, "I don't know about Black Canyon," continued the Desert Man. "I would expect it'd be in a more clever spot."

Terrell was all ears.

"Do you know Kokowee Caverns?" Nivens asked.

Terrell admitted that he did, "Vaguely."

"It's just west of here, high up. A kind of a magical spot. Just the sort of place they might take it."

Terrell frowned. "Is there a river up there?" he asked doubtfully.

"There is!" replied Nivens, his eyes shining, "An under-ground river!"

Terrell considered this, as Nivens watched him closely. There was always merit in what the older man said, but the mission had changed now that Hick had disappeared. Jason's features had settled into a look of steely resolve.

Picking up on this, Nivens said, "But I suppose you'll have to go into Black Canyon anyway..."

Jayce smiled slightly, and nodded.

"Do you know which side?"

"No."

Deke Nivens winced. "That whole area falls under the influence of the Longhammer Company," Nivens stated. "You familiar with them?"

Terrell nodded grimly. "We got separated from a friend of ours earlier this evening after meeting some of them."

Nivens instantly understood the seriousness of the situation, and his tone reflected it. "How much time do you think you'll need to wrap this up?" he asked.

"No more than two days." J.T. answered firmly.

"I don't see how that's going to be possible," Nivens began, "Unless..." Deke leaned back in his chair to gauge Terrell's reaction. He saw none. "...Unless you've got cards you haven't shown me."

Terrell stared back at him intently, then gave only the slightest hint of a shrug.

"In that case," Nivens offered sincerely, "I wish you luck."

Outside, the evening breeze gently rattled the leaves of a Cottonwood tree, and a large owl silently swooped low across the sky like a mysterious black specter.

Gilbert Mantree had gone around back to relieve himself when the truck pulled in. It was an AC Mack 5 ton with solid tires, and you couldn't miss hearing it arrive. A layer of dirt covered every inch of its bright yellow paint and written on the side in blue drop-shadowed letters were the words, "LONGHAMMER MINING & MILLING Co."

The big motor chugged to a stop, and two men hopped out; big, heavyset, -and light on their feet. Wordlessly, and without hesitation, the men tilted their bodies forward and strode toward the front door of the bar. They were dressed like mine roughnecks, and probably that's the way Longhammer carried them on the books, but they were clearly thugs.

Gilbert, who had been observing them from the shadows, waited

until the men entered the bar, then popped a cigarette into his mouth and lit it. "Now we're getting somewhere" he smiled to himself.

Inside the saloon, a silent tension accompanied the arrival of the two Longhammer men. They walked straight up to the bar, expertly sizing the place up as they went, and flashed two fingers at the bartender.

Ed Troxel sighed as he bent around, producing a bottle and two glasses. The men poured their drinks and gave Troxel a look meant to put him in his place. Troxel backed up instinctively a step and a half. He didn't know these men, but he knew their type.

These were big men; well over six feet, and more than five hundred pounds between the two of them. This type of man could not be reasoned with. Two of them together could kill you faster than a loose slab in an unsupported drift. Troxel saw them slowly turn around with their glasses half-lifted, and direct their gaze at the seated men. "Here we go," he thought.

The red haired one appeared to be the leader of the two. "You new around here?" he offered.

Jason Terrell and Deke Nivens turned and appraised the newcomers with blank faces. An uncomfortable pause followed.

"You NEW around here?" the man repeated, in an overbearing tone.

"You talking to him, or to me?" Jayce replied, nodding toward Nivens.

"I know about him. I don't know you." the man said, and slowly repeated, "I asked YOU if you are new around here!"

Deke Nivens shifted slightly in his chair. Terrell sat motionless, and looked at the redhead giant. This wasn't an ordinary look. As hard as these jaded criminals were, the look on Terrell's face chilled the blood in their veins. "Nope," he said finally.

The questioning might have gone on a little longer if it hadn't been for that look. For big men, they moved awfully fast. Terrell was faster. He was on his feet with two fingers hooked around the wooden chair he'd been sitting on before they had taken two steps. The big redhead dodged to the right as the chair flung past him. But it wasn't meant for him. A corner of the chair slammed the dark-haired thug square in the face.

The red-haired man's entire face had become red as he closed the space between them. He was thrusting out to throttle Jayce with his powerful left hand and digging for the large frame revolver in his front pocket with his right.

Terrell stepped in and clipped him with a devastating left hook that would have stopped a truck. The big man fell to his knees with his hand still in his pocket, and a surprised look across his features.

But the big man was tough. In less than a second, he was on his feet again, madder than a badger. He was trying to get his footing, with his right leg out front, when Jayce hit him with a solid roundhouse kick to the inside thigh, and quickly stepped to the side.

Red went down again but it wouldn't be for long. Jayce had other things to deal with, however. The man he'd hit with a chair had recovered and was advancing on him with brass knuckles on his massive right paw.

Jayce was moving in to counter him when his left ankle was pulled out from under him by the huge redhead man he'd left on the floor. Struggling to keep his footing, he saw the other giant grinning savagely through the blood on his face as he prepared to bare down on him with his menacing brass knuckles!

Instantly, the brute froze in pain as Gilbert Mantree boxed his ears from behind, and deftly threw him into a sleeper hold. The furious oaf struggled helplessly as Gilbert encouraged him, "That's right, Baby. Go to sleep," he whispered, in tones that were not at all soothing.

Red had stood up now and still held Terrell by the ankle. He shoved the ankle forward and swept Jason's other leg out from under him. Jayce went down hard, on his back, and Red finally got his gun out. Moving in close he growled, "I'll blow yer



ARIES March 21 to April 19 Gilded Flicker always carves out more nest holes than he needs. Some may scoff at this as an overabundance of work and enthusiasm, but other animal tenants reap the rewards of Flicker's industry. And it's never a bad idea to have a backup plan.

Taurus April 20 to May 20 There may be millions of bright, shining stars in the night sky – but we use only a few of them for navigation. Get to know them well. The other stars are beautiful and useful to us in stories, but they live their own lives, and do not help us find our way.

GEMINI May 21 to June 21 Rattlesnake knows there is a time to hunt, a time to mate, a time to rest in the heat of the day, and a time to give it up and go underground for winter, seeking the warmth of companions for comfort.

CANCER June 22 to July 22 Desert Fox survives on instinct. If something doesn't smell right, Fox leaves it alone. But if a trail smells interesting, she will follow.

LEO July 23 to August 22 Mountains are like icebergs. Much of them is buried under the remnants of ancient seas. Their sands are a warm blanket for what lies beneath, waiting to be revealed.

VIRGO August 23 to September 22 Opportunists rely on the present moment to hunt or scavenge, while gatherers store resources for the future. These two modes rely on different skillsets, but together they are excellent strategies for survival.

LIBRA September 23 to October 23 Some rocks can be heated in the fire, but in some it is their nature to crack in the heat. We are wise to learn each type's potentials and limitations; which rocks with which to build, which to put on display, and which to use to warm our lodges.

SCORPIUS October 24 to November 21 While we can't abide the touch of the cholla cactus, Ground Squirrel can walk upon it, and Pack Rat carries it in her mouth to decorate her doorway and protect her house. Smaller hands and feet make smaller steps than large ones, but their powers are equal.

SAGITTARIUS November 22 to December 21 Who cares if Bobcat thinks the water is too cold? For a Beaver, it's always a good time to dive in and swim.

CAPRICORNUS December 22 to January 19 Coyote is always on the move because he is always hungry. This also keeps him in shape. If he were to get too fat on his successes, he would be disadvantaged to catch his next meal.

AQUARIUS January 20 to February 18 Many precious mineral specimens, like quartz crystals and geodes, form in the long cooling process of a violent, underground volcanic event that never reaches the surface. These treasures reveal themselves long after, sometimes to no one but themselves.

PISCES February 19 to March 20 A stunning sunset may fill you with memories of a loved one who now seems far away from your heart's reach. But each sunset is a portal for reaching back in time or forward into future time, connecting you to all with whom you have shared a sunset, always and forever.

EDITORS' PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

! THE LONG-NOSED LEOPARD LIZARD ! AND OTHER LOCAL ROAD MENACES !

Springtime disruptions have been reported along the back roads near Searchlight, where male Leopard Lizards seem to be challenging motor vehicles to a mating display standoff. These stocky, big-headed reptiles are large by desert lizard standards (sometimes over a foot long), but still minuscule compared to most people's SUVs.

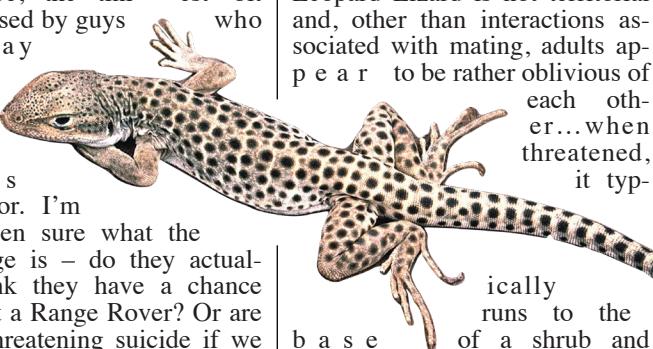
Locals have encountered these bozos in pairs, with one lizard (male) darting out into the road to face off with oncoming traffic, while the other (female) looks on, most-likely in embarrassment. Drivers of stopped vehicles are met with further resistance from these horny fellows, who sometimes refuse to budge from their "special place" for several minutes. Eventually however, these lizards can apparently be made to come to their senses and move aside without further incident.

"That look in their eyes means business", stated one Grandpas Road resident, who prefers to remain anonymous, for fear of future lizard retaliations. "Sometimes after an encounter, I see visions of them glaring at me, with their bumpy skin and their muscular arms tensed for battle, and it reminds me of my ex. I have to take a valium to get a good night's sleep after that." (The editors have met this resident's ex and the description of her is apt.)

Human travelers are not the only ones annoyed by this seemingly pointless transaction. Lady lizards have been quick to chime in on the subject. One local lizard, who we'll call "Sheila" for her own protection (although she offered to use her full and correct name, and was quoted, saying "I'm not afraid of those idiots – they're smaller than I am!") responded to queries about the males' behavior with

this blunt statement: "None of us gals has ever been, or will ever be, the tiniest bit impressed by guys who display this ridiculous

behavior. I'm not even sure what the message is – do they actually think they have a chance against a Range Rover? Or are they threatening suicide if we don't mate with them – who can tell? Not me, and I'd rather my lineage go extinct than produce offspring with any of those knobheads!"


Long-nosed Leopard Lizards (*Gambelia wislizenii*) are fierce predators and have been found choked to death attempting to consume prey that is too large for them to swallow."

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Interestingly, extinction is in fact a possibility for a close relative of the Long-Nose Leopard Lizard. Now found only in the San Joaquin valley and its surroundings, the Blunt-Nosed Leopard has been on the endangered species list since 1967. These lizards are known for their aggressive mating displays, and according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, one of the causes of their decline is "vehicle-related mortality from automobile traffic and off-road vehicles."

The Nevada Department of Wildlife's website had this to say about our Long-noses, who are found throughout the Western US and Northern Mexico,

and are not especially threatened at this time: "The Long-nosed Leopard Lizard is not territorial and, other than interactions associated with mating, adults appear to be rather oblivious of each other...when threatened, it typ-

ically runs to the base of a shrub and remains motionless." When asked for comment, Sheila said simply, "Oh Yeah? Well, some of our boys didn't get that memo."

Speaking of dirt road menaces, the local snakes can also be found at times sunning themselves along our driving routes. Your Gold Beam editors are reminded of a tale told to us by the late, great Gene Lambert, long-time resident and heroic, cowboy-vigilante-style protector of Searchlight's outlying areas. Gene could often be found racing home up the back roads in his Pontiac Firebird at speeds unconducive to the continuation of the local male Long Nose Lizard population.

Gene was a teller of many colorful personal adventures, and from experience, we know most of them to be true. This one involved his car and an innocent Mojave Green rattlesnake, who was attempting to mind his own business (spoiler alert: everyone mercifully survives this transaction). We've heard this story several times from Gene over the years, so we will attempt to tell it here in something akin to his own voice, which we are sure is the way Gene would have wanted it.

Gene usually started off this story saying something like, "I've always heard that Mojave Green rattlesnakes are the meanest, most

aggressive snakes in the Mojave. People say the Greens'll chase you, and I've always wondered if that were true." He would then continue on in this fashion:

"One time I was driving home down Hwy 95, when I saw a Mojave Green lying there stretched out on the shoulder of the road. I thought I'd stop and have a look, so I parked a-ways back and got out and walked over towards it until I got pretty darn close to it, just out of striking distance (editor's note: We're cleaning up Gene's language here. Sorry, Gene.)

That darn snake just kept lying there and not doing anything, not paying any attention to me at all. So I threw a rock towards it – not trying to hit it or like but just to get its attention. And it still lying there, doing nothin'. I threw another one at it, and then that snake started slithering AWAY from me!

Now I was sure that people were full of it about Mojave Greens, but I kept throwing another couple of rocks toward it anyway as it slithered away, and sure enough -- all of a sudden, that snake turns around and starts runnin' right at me to strike, and then chases me, fast! It chased me all the way back to my car, and I barely got the door open and me inside and the door locked before it was right there. I was pretty shocked at that point, and it took me a minute to recover and drive away. And then I thought to myself, 'Yep, the Mojave Greens'll chase ya all right!'"

Your editors would like to note that this is the kind of story that sticks with a person as they are roaming the desert, and not in a way that makes one want to throw rocks at snakes. We suggest keeping to a reasonable speed on backroads for the safety of yourself and the Long Nosed Lizards, and let's hope that all of us animals can all mind our own business out here for the most part.

GOLD BEAM INTERVIEW WITH SANDY "CRICKET" BUCKLEW

◇◇◇ LONG-TIME RESIDENT OF SEARCHLIGHT'S BACK COUNTRY ◇◇◇

By Steve Radosevich. Photography by Mikayla Whitmore.

This is the first of this publication's oral history series, focusing on stories from people who have a special connection to the East Mojave. We start off with Sandy "Cricket" Bucklew, who has been living the life of a true desert pioneer, off-grid in a remote area near Searchlight. As she prepares for a move back to Las Vegas after 20 years of solo desert living, editor Steve Radosevich sat down with Sandy for an interview in honor of her contribution to this land and our community.

You've been out here a long time, Sandy, and have really made a mark on this place, and I know it's changed you too. What made you want to move to the outside of the middle of nowhere?

I just knew, the very first time I ever saw the Lone Ranger, I had to live out here like this. It was in my bones from childhood, seeing those great big beautiful boulders, and desert plants on TV. I traveled around from Las Vegas to all kinds of places for years, looking for the right piece of land, and I knew I couldn't be more than an hour from my job and my friends and the city. And then I found my place near Searchlight, around 2001, and I knew I was home.

Tell us a bit about your childhood. What was it like growing up in the Florida Keys?

Growing up in a motel my parents ran was so much fun, because the guests that came from all over the country had kids and we got to be friends with them, and they'd return year

after year. We'd waterski all the time, and had little sailboats that we'd rent out to guests, and we lived in our bathing suits. The minute you'd get home from school you'd get out of your clothes and into your bathing suit and dive into the Gulf of Mexico.

In the winter we'd have guests who came from the north, snow birds, and they would rent our kitchenettes and stay for a couple of months at a time. My dad built the first grocery store down there, the Trading Post, and we had shuffle board, and a pool, and lots of palm trees.



Our dad made a motorhome out of a city bus he got from Homestead, Florida, and we used to go on epic trips across the country in it. When I was 11 or 12, we made a grand tour all around the Southwest and Mexico. We were near Xochimilco Floating Gardens, and went to the tombs where they have mummies, in the mountains near Mexico City. And we went



down into the Grand Canyon – my mom didn't go, but my dad took us down into the canyon, and then on the way up, my dad was blazing his own trail up the canyon that we had to follow, climbing up the face of the canyon. My mom saw us doing this and just about died.

So then you moved to Las Vegas. How did that happen? And was that a bit of a culture shock?

My dad took us here in the motorhome on one of our trips, and decided he wanted something new for himself and his family. He'd been in the motel business in the Keys for 30 years, and he brought us all out here. I started the 10th grade here.

Coming from the Florida Keys, my siblings and I thought that the tropics were it. So, when my dad first brought us to this desert, we thought "What is this? And why?" But then we started going places in nature outside, like Valley of Fire and Red Rock and the lake, and then the desert became a part of me.

It was hard to move from there to Las Vegas at first, and I wanted to run away, but eventually this place got under my skin. My sister still lives in Florida, and I've gone back to visit, but I can't leave this area.

Did your trips to the desert start with your family?

No, mostly with my high school friends. We would plan hikes almost every weekend – 6 or 10 of us would go out exploring. But my dad had a sailboat, so we'd go out on Lake Mohave

and Lake Mead.

What did your dad do for work in Vegas? Did he get in the motel business here?

Well, he and a friend had a system for roulette. For real! They had books, and research, and he really thought he was going to make a living with this system. But it took so many hours, that even though he made money, if you banked your hourly wage you were only making five dollars an hour. Once he figured that out he had to get a real job. He became a security guard for a little while, and then became a building inspector for the state, and he actually inspected the buildings for UNLV as it was growing up, starting around 66 or 67.

So, when you decided to buy a piece of land outside of Vegas, what made you want to move off of the grid?

Well that part, I didn't ever think through – I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I bought my property! I always loved camping, and this was an opportunity to land in one place, live in an actual house, but look out the window every morning and see that view, and feel like I'm camping.

I started out with only a generator, once my mobile home was here. I'd get home from work, and have to start up the generator with my flashlight, and I had one extension cord into the house. I had no solar or wind power at that time, just the generator, nothing else. I hauled my water, used jugs by the sink, and had port-a-potties – no running water. A couple of

acres down was a septic pipe and I'd have to take five port-a-potties down there once a week and dump them and clean them. I was roughing it, and I loved it. I did that for four years.

I hired a dear neighbor, Gene Lambert, to trench for my plumbing, put all the PVC in, and get me a water tank, so I could get running water.

Gene was great. Anytime we needed a tool we didn't have, you just knew Gene would have it. He'd have three of them. You couldn't walk through that big building where he had all his tools, and it was in chaos. You'd be walking over tools and machines, and he'd know right where everything was, and loan it to you, and tell you to take your time with it.

He really did so much for everyone over the years. He was a great neighbor.

You have a lot more than just a generator now. How did you get your other systems set up and what are they like?

My old neighbor, Mike Grogan, put in his solar first, and knew how to do it. I started out with two huge lithium batteries, very expensive -- and batteries only last 9-10 years, no matter how you look at it -- so I moved to a bank of 6-volt golf cart batter-

they last. And then I still have a gasoline generator, and when the sun goes down, depending on how much power I want to use at night, I may need to run that generator for an hour or so. And I have the wind generator. That's important. If the wind is blowing, then the wind generator does its job and keeps the batteries charged, and I don't have to run the generator at night.

For my water, I've got a pressure tank from the holding tank, that then feeds the house and I can run taps and flush the toilet and everything. But I do what I can to strategize and conserve water, because I don't have a well, and have to get my tank filled periodically. I try not to waste water or energy with everything I do. When I'm waiting to get hot water out of the tap, I fill a container with the colder water and then use that water to clean with. And I turn the water pressure on low to rinse dishes, and turn the water off in between as much as possible. And you don't have to flush the toilet every single time, you can let it mellow a couple of yellows. People in town don't often conserve water like this, but it saves a lot.

Also, in the summertime, since I have a propane fridge, I have to be in and out of there in seconds. With a propane fridge, if your house is hot, your fridge is hot. I have my fridge memorized, where everything is, and I get in and out of there fast. I can find anything in there with my eyes shut.

What struck you most about Searchlight and this area when you first came here?

It was great, and since I grew up in a small town in the Keys, I felt very comfortable being back to small town living. I loved the library and the cute little museum. My

favorite part was the post office, and the postmaster, and the fact that you could call on the phone and he would check your box for you, and everybody knew everybody.

I became friends with my realtor who sold me the property, Diane, and the different people running the stores. And I loved the birds, the quail, and becoming one with all the different critters and the Joshua Trees. The energy I have felt from standing under these Joshua Trees, there are no words for it. I just stand there and absorb it and appreciate it all.

In my first memory of you, you were having an epic party at your place, and we could hear it from a mile away out where we are. It sounded like an amazing amount of fun – there was music, and you could hear everyone singing along with it. We were having a much smaller party, and we just stopped what we were doing and listened to yours.

The first Land-Warming party, as I called it, was a campout during the Nov. 17th meteor shower, and there were people in tents and motor homes and lying on cots and looking up watching the stars. I had a lady who played the piano there, and I played my drums, and we all sang and danced. The next one had a live band, and I set up a generator behind the fence, and we had karaoke too, and we sang a little Sound of Music and anything else anyone wanted. I usually did two parties a year, and had 50 to 60 people there on average.

I'd rent a couple of port-a-potties each year, except the first year. That year, my neighbor in town built me a three-door shed, and we had port-a-potties in there, and we had a team on port-a-potty duty, to check how heavy they were getting, and then move them in a wheel barrow and dump out when they needed it.

Those sounded like great parties. You were part of the lesbian bar scene in Las Vegas too. What was that like when you first moved there in the 70s?

Everything was about dancing, dancing, dancing, all night long. One club we went to all

the time was Le Café, a disco club, and another was Maxine's Bar, that was a "known bar" on Charleston and Nellis. It was more of a Dive Women's bar, except a lot of drag queens also liked to go there, and they'd do shows, and everybody loved it. It was a safe place to dance and have fun.

At 18, once you were out of high school, you needed a fake ID to do anything in Vegas. And I was the fake ID maker. Driver's Licenses didn't have pictures back then, and I knew a guy who could make them, and I would find the takers to get them made. We sold a lot of fake IDs. Everywhere you wanted to go, to see musicians, dance, go to a lounge show, you needed a fake ID.

How did you get your nickname, 'Cricket'?

A friend in high school gave it to me. I weighed about 98 pounds when I was young and had a pixie hair cut with little spit curls, and she said I looked just like a little cricket, and it stuck forever. But I did grow the long hippy hair later.

What was it like for you in your own self-identity process as a young lesbian woman, before it was common for people to come out in high school and have a strong support group within the LGBTQ community?

There weren't really people coming out as gay in high school at that time, and I'd get crushes on straight girls, because there wasn't anyone else to get a crush on, and on my teachers, and I'd write my teachers love letters, and get sent to the Dean, and got myself in trouble a few times, and I learned not to do that anymore.

I was always comfortable in my own skin, but you still had people looking at you weirdly at that time. I got a job at the post office at 18, and it was a hard job to get, a lot of work to get hired, and you had to have a 6-month probation period when you started. During that time, I told just one person that I sat next to that I was gay, and she decided it was fun to tell everybody else. When I went to sit down to lunch, everyone else got up and left, because I



ies, and that's what I still use. I use 8, six-volt batteries wired in series, to make 4 twelves -- and

must have been contagious, of course!

I really liked that job, and I made a lot of money at the post office back then, and three days before my probation period was over, I got fired, because this situation had caused such a ruckus – they said it was for calling in sick too much – but I never called in sick more than the next person. Back then, you couldn't fight it, there was nothing you could do about it.

Then I got a job working in a hospital as a phlebotomist, and everybody was so accepting there. There were a lot of straight gals there who worked in my department, who had boyfriends who wouldn't go dancing with them. So, I took them out to the lesbian bars, and we'd walk in and I'd say "They're all with me and you can't touch them" and we'd dance the night away. We worked from 3 to 11 at night, so we could take our going-out clothes to work and then go right to the bar.

I have a gay brother also, and he started going out to the bar scene before I did, and he introduced me. I didn't know there were a lot of people out there like me until I went to those bars. I didn't really have role models when I was young or of older gay people I knew or knew of on TV.

As an aside, I also worked for

years as a massage therapist, still do, and one of my clients was Rex Bell Jr's wife, so I used to go to their house to massage her. Rex had an amazing silver show saddle on display in their living room. That room was all leather, and wagon spoke chairs and cowboy everything -- it was wonderful.

How do you think Las Vegas has changed for the LGBTQ community over the decades?

Having a pride parade once a year started making more awareness to people in general. That started in the eighties, and it was really fun to go to the parade back then, because you knew everybody there. Vegas was a lot smaller back then too. And there were a lot of people here who were political and helped pave the way nationally for more equality through politics. I applaud them and thank them very much, but I wasn't that person.

You are heading back to Las Vegas now to start a new chapter in life. What do you think you'll be missing the most?

Where my bed is, when I first open my eyes, I look out over the Joshua trees, and the rolling mountains, and I'll miss all that beauty. And being able to take walks here with my dog.

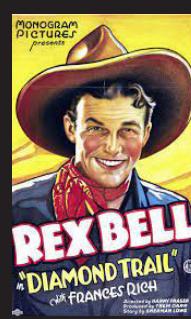
But I'm also looking forward to spending more time in town again. I've been out here for 20



years, and I'm over 70 now, so most of my friends are in their 70s and 80s, and they aren't coming out to play anymore – no more parties or visiting or camping.

Vegas will mean more time to play with my buddies again, and it's time for more conveniences now too.

But, I'll be back out to visit a lot, to commune with the trees and see friends and neighbors. If I hadn't landed here in Searchlight, I don't know what I would have done with myself. I would have missed out on so many great, fun, original people in my life. And I can't imagine not ever having met all my Searchlight friends. ♦



Visit
**Searchlight
Museum**

Monday - Thursday: 8:30 am-2:00 pm

200 Michael Wendell Way, Searchlight, NV 89046

searchlightmuseum.org

OPAL SKULL, cont'd. from page 24

" brains out!" Instantly, the crack of a pistol shot rang out and filled the room with smoke.

His ears ringing, and his face a mask of anguished disbelief, Big Red looked down at his shattered elbow as the heavy New Service revolver fell from his hand. He turned to see Deke Nivens standing, a shiny single action Colt smoking in his left hand.

(In Next Month's issue: CHAPTER IV -Fireball in the sky!)

**On the use of the word "Indian" in this story: Your GOLD BEAM editors recognize that this word is both erroneous and antiquated in the context of describing Native American communities. The characters in this story, however, speaking in the 1920s, would not have been familiar with our more contemporary terminology.*

CACTUS CORNER



BEAVERTAIL CACTUS
(Opuntia basilaris)



The BEAVER.

Compare w. ACTUAL BEAVER
(Castor canadensis)

AVI KWA AME IN THE SNOW

Nevada's newest national monument got a few inches of snow this past winter, and local naturalist and photographer Alan O'Neill ventured out into the cold to enjoy and share the spectacular views.



Want to see more? Visit goldbeam.org for more photos from this series by Alan O'Neill.



MONSTER MOVIES

The desert leads many a visitor to imagine terrors of all kinds, and these are finely represented by classic monster films from the late 1940s and 1950s.

The Beast of Yucca Flats, Tarantula, The Black Scorpion, Giant Gila Monster and Sssssss are some of the many films you can watch from the monster cinema era, if you wish to go deeply down that rabbit hole. But I recommend starting with three that stand out from the crowd, in the order listed below:

THEM! 1954. One of the best known and perhaps the best film of this genre, THEM! revolves around an epic, but somehow sort-of believable battle against giant ants, caused by radiation from nuclear testing. The eerie fields of Joshua trees in this film (set in New Mexico, but shot in Palmdale) are a desert bonus, and I recommend you watch this diamond at least a dozen times or until your VHS cassette tape breaks. Movie tip: “Shoot the antennae – they’re helpless without them!”

Monolith Monsters, 1957. Sure, any filmmaker can make a flick about giant reptiles or poisonous insects, but it takes a genius to expand the monster genre to include the menace of rocks. That’s right, huge, reproducing rocks threaten a small, desert town in the very best way. (Don’t let them get wet.)

Tremors, 1990. This more modern throwback to the monster movie era is fun and entertaining, horrifying, and socially, way ahead of its time. The people in the tiny town of Paradise, Nevada are kind to each other in spite of their differences and backgrounds, and work together to help each other survive against earthquake-inducing, car-swallowing sheep-mutilating, underground and unexplainable multi-headed worm monsters. Best quote: “We decided to leave town just one da*n day too late!”

CYRUS NOBLE WHISKEY

A HISTORIC FAVORITE AVAILABLE ONCE AGAIN!

Your GOLD BEAM editors and staff are thrilled to announce that Cyrus Noble Kentucky straight, 90-proof bourbon whiskey is now available once again to grace the palettes of Searchlight's fine liquor connoisseurs. Beloved by desert dwellers since the mining boom era of 1899 to 1910, the name Cyrus Noble is the stuff of legend in Searchlight.

The Cyrus Noble Mine, which is said in many a newspaper article to have been sold for a bottle of this coveted whiskey in 1901, went on to produce what would amount to many millions of dollars-worth of gold and silver today. The fame of this Searchlight mine was written about in hundreds of articles across the country over the next decade, and helped make our town one of the most well-known mining areas of the American West.

Cyrus Noble Whiskey was introduced in 1871 by the San Francisco mercantile Haas Brothers, who distributed groceries and supplies to miners in California, Nevada and Alaska during the gold rush. It became a favorite of both hard-working miners and upper crust San Francisco socialites for nearly fifty years, but prohibition took its toll from 1920 to 1933, and Cyrus Noble finally disappeared from the market in the 1950s, when whiskeys fell out of fashion as spirits nationally.

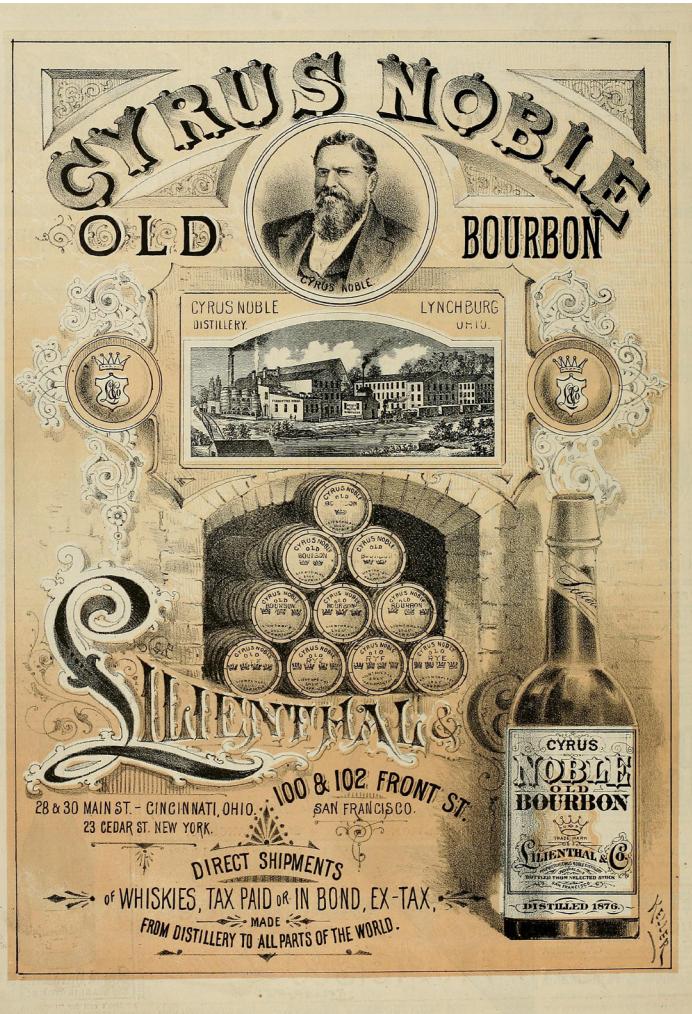
In most cases, this would be the end of the story. However, bourbon has made a dramatic comeback in popularity in the U.S., and there is also recently much more interest in historic beverages. And, it turns out, the same family that operated Haas Brothers in the 1800s still runs it today. Brilliantly, the Haas Brothers chose to revive Cyrus Noble a few years ago for the benefit of all, and their historic bourbon is now craft-distilled

once again in Kentucky using the family's century-old mash bill recipe.

Last year, the miraculous revival of Cyrus Noble was discovered by your GOLD BEAM editorial staff, who meticulously and repeatedly tested this product, setting aside all other professional and personal responsibilities, in order to bring you

our town saloons and personal liquor cabinets. Cyrus Noble's toasted nut, vanilla bean and toffee notes balance its full flavor with a rich, velvet smoothness that is instantly classic, drinkable and satisfying.

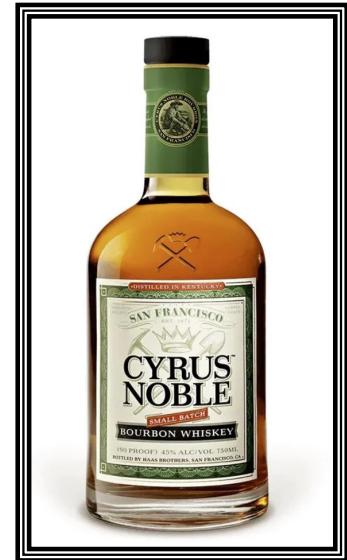
We recommend a single or double shot served neat, with a splash of water or ice, or mixed



Cyrus Noble Advertisement, c. 1882

the most informed information about its return to glory. After many thorough and lengthy tasting sessions, your editors must agree that this was once Searchlight's top shelf whiskey for a reason, and it should once again, take pride of place in

into your favorite cocktail, such as a classic Manhattan or a Sazerac Old-Fashioned. When the weather is cold, you can reach for a bottle of Cyrus Noble to make yourself a Miner's Mocha (historic recipe on the next page). *It will save your



life and improve your day, all at the same time.

Whatever way you experience Searchlight's "spirit of possibility," it's good to know Cyrus Noble is back in town.

Editors' Note: Please be aware that drinking whiskey irresponsibly will probably not save your life or improve your day.



Upon the passing of fall, came the cold winter months with the chilly winds and ice blasts. Coming home from a prospecting trip he was overtaken by a bitter cold and a chill to the skin he at last reached his tent. A heavy cold settled on his lungs which turned into a hacking cough, and he was soon in bed with a raging fever. Many times he endeavored to sell the Birds Nest, but his efforts were in vain. Feeling that he could not hold out much longer, he packed his outfit on the burro and followed the lead, but in the end disappointments were his lot.

Tobe Weaver, a type of the old school of gamblers who infest the western mining camps, had a saloon under a crackling tent, where Jim was wont to sit around and tell stories of bygone days. Jim swam by Tobe, and when he became ill he lay under Tobe's tent and was nursed back to a semblance of his former health by Tobe's wife and ate Tobe's vittles.

With tears in his eyes he bade Tobe goodbye and asked for pen and paper. Sitting down alone with his trembling hand he penned the Birds Nest Group mine for \$100,000. An offer of \$650,000 has since been refused for the same property, which is now turning out to be one of the richest mines in Southern Nevada.

MINER'S MOCHA



RECIPE: MINER'S MOCHA

Miners in Searchlight during the boom of 1900 drank literally tons of whiskey, coffee, cocoa and tinned milk, and had access to spices like cinnamon, as evidenced by the bottles and tins they left behind. A research team from the Mystery Ranch that has been sifting through collections of this debris while studying Gold Rush foodways, has assured the Gold Beam that, while they have not found any surviving recipes of the Miner's Mocha, the artifacts found point to its probable existence during this era.

INGREDIENTS:

- * 1 cup brewed coffee (8 oz)
- * 1 Tablespoon Ghirardelli cocoa powder
- * 1 dash cinnamon
- * 1-Tb sweetened condensed milk (to taste based on sweetness)
- * 1-Tb evaporated milk (to taste for creaminess).
- * ½ shot (or more!) bourbon whiskey (Cyrus Noble was the best whiskey in town in 1900.)

PROCEDURE:

Combine all ingredients except whiskey in a pan and heat over stove or campfire until warm and well-blended. Remove from heat, pour into cups and add whiskey. Serve in small doses (this makes two servings) and repeat as needed to get through the day.

We mix up a concoction of the two tinned milks and it keeps in the fridge for quite a long time.

You can also mix ingredients ahead of time and keep in the fridge to reheat. This keeps longer than a fresh milk-based beverage would and can last for up to a week.



Above: Photograph of mining camp midden in Searchlight, Nevada.
Below: Photograph of original Ghirardelli's Cocoa Tin found near mine.



LOOKING TO GET YOUR
HANDS
ON YOUR VERY OWN BOTTLE
of CYRUS NOBLE WHISKEY?

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF NEAR LAS VEGAS, VISIT
ONE OF THESE fine ESTABLISHMENTS:

TOTAL WINE & MORE, LEE'S DISCOUNT LIQUOR & THE CASK

OR PURCHASE FROM A CONVENIENT ONLINE
RETAILER.



TREASURED RECIPES



SEARCHLIGHT STEW A RECIPE REMEMBERED FROM SEARCHLIGHT*

Put one #2 $\frac{1}{2}$ can of tomatoes into a saucepan and break up fruit with spoon. (in modern lingo a large, 28oz can.)

Form $\frac{3}{4}$ pound unseasoned ground beef into balls, size of a walnut, roll in flour, and drop into tomatoes in saucepan. Add about a pinch or two each of rosemary, oregano, garlic salt, powdered sage, powdered mild red chili pepper, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. parsley. (Dry spices may be used.) Add black pepper and salt to taste. Bring to boil, then simmer covered while preparing and cooking vegetables.

Peel and cut into bite-size pieces the following vegetables: one medium red onion, one large carrot, one large potato, four large stalks celery, $\frac{1}{2}$ small bell pepper. Put in another saucepan with minimum water, season with salt and cook until tender. Vegetables and meat should be done about the same time. When both are ready, combine them and mix well.

This stew can be served immediately, but it is tastier if allowed to stand for at least an hour, to allow spices to mellow and flavors to mingle, and then reheated. It is also good when prepared beforehand, and then heated in a casserole in the oven.

Serve in soup plates, with hot bread, a crisp salad, and a rich dessert. This recipe makes about six servings. Allow at least two servings per person.

* Editor's Note: This recipe is reprinted from "Searchlight Remembered" a memoir of Arda M. Haenszel's life in Searchlight from 1919-1922. Fresh pasilla pepper is a tasty substitute for bell pepper, and this recipe is made extra easy using frozen grocery store meatballs (or veggie meatballs).

DELICIOUS DESERT DESSERT CHOCOLATE CHIA PUDDING

A delicious and light breakfast, snack or dessert made with chia seeds, a Southwestern native plant food common to this area. You can use dairy for this, or make it totally vegan. Vary the toppings with fresh fruit, granola, nuts, yogurt or whipped cream (or coconut cream). It takes a while to soak, but is so easy to make, and keeps several days, that we find it a great staple item. Sweeten with agave nectar to carry on the native plants theme, or you can use maple syrup, honey, or your favorite syrup.

Ingredients:

1/3 cup chia seeds
1 and 1/2 cups milk (We usually use oat milk or almond for a nice non-dairy treat everyone can enjoy)
1/4 cup cocoa powder
2-3 Tbs agave syrup (you can add more at any time)
spices (a pinch of salt, dash of cinnamon or clove, hint of espresso powder, be creative)
1/2 tsp vanilla extract (or experiment with other liqueurs or extracts)

Process:

Pour 1/2 cup milk into a container or mason jar. Add the

cocoa powder and shake or stir. Add the chia and repeat, then add the rest of the milk. Stir and let rest for 10 minutes, then stir again. Put in the fridge for at least 4 hours. It's even better overnight. Add more liquid as desired for consistency. Chia reacts to humidity like flour, and so may absorb more or less moisture on any given day. Taste and adjust sweetness and spice! Serve with the fruits and nuts on hand, and enjoy guilt-free.



About Chia:

Salvia columbariae (chia) is a member of the mint family. With square stems and showy purple flowers, it is a festive annual after a good spring rain. Its flower calyxes look similar to its relative, *salvia dorrii* (desert purple sage), but have protruding spikes.

Chia is an important Native American food plant, and is, of course, also eaten by birds and small mammals. It is best to leave wild chia seeds for the ecosystem, but it can easily be purchased at health food stores, Mexican markets, or online. It can also be grown from seed in the Southwestern garden.

We are:

a 501C3 Non Profit to help support, facilitate and fund projects that encourage economic growth, housing, infrastructure development and an overall better quality of life for Searchlight and its surroundings.

searchlightbetterment.org



SEARCHLIGHT TREASURE HUNT

BY ANA GRAHAM



Search for the answers to the questions below, hidden within this grid. Circle the answers when you find them, and write them in the spaces next to the questions. You will find that one question cannot be answered in this manner. To answer this last question, you must first answer all of the others, and then find the left-over letters from the word search. Some of these letters, when unscrambled, will provide the two-word, 11 letter answer to this puzzle.

Three clues to success:

* You may encounter other words hidden here that don't answer questions -- these do not lead to the treasure.

* X does not mark the spot of any clues to the treasure's identity.

* Patience is a virtue here. All treasures worth finding are worth the act of seeking.

1. A box to keep treasures in _____.
 2. Vertical access to liquid treasure below land _____.
 3. Sacred mountain of twelve local tribes (3 words)
-----.
 4. It's at the end of the rainbow (3 words) _____
-----.
 5. The business of Searchlight Treasures (two words)
-----.
 6. Plant used to help prospect for gold (two words)
-----.
 7. Mythical creature that has trouble sharing
-----.
 8. It glitters like gold, but it is not (2 words)
-----.
 9. White rock that may indicate veins of gold
-----.
 10. A hole in the ground -- or 'not yours'! _____.
 11. Local bird with golden underwings (2 words) _____.
 12. The evening's golden hour _____.
 13. Hollow stone full of crystals _____.
 14. The desert's most needed treasure _____.
 15. Purity rating for gold _____.
 16. Site for a national treasure _____.
 17. The treasure we should treasure most (2 words) _____.
 18. A gang or crowd of people plundering _____.
 19. Local gemstone _____.

P	M	A	E	B	D	L	O	G	E	H	T	X	X	A
R	X	E	X	L	X	C	M	O	N	U	M	E	N	T
I	A	K	A	X	X	H	T	A	E	R	B	H	X	G
S	S	I	A	D	O	E	R	O	D	A	T	W	X	I
L	I	X	N	R	X	S	X	N	X	U	X	E	H	L
A	L	T	D	X	A	T	X	P	R	X	N	L	X	D
N	V	E	E	X	X	T	O	T	X	I	X	L	X	E
D	E	S	E	R	T	T	R	U	M	P	E	T	N	D
X	R	N	X	X	O	D	L	O	G	S	L	O	O	F
X	T	U	X	F	X	Z	X	A	X	X	A	D	G	L
G	X	S	G	X	X	E	T	X	R	X	X	A	A	I
E	R	O	T	S	T	F	I	R	H	T	X	Y	R	C
O	L	X	R	X	X	E	U	L	A	V	S	X	D	K
D	X	C	H	I	A	T	U	R	Q	U	O	I	S	E
E	A	V	I	K	W	A	A	M	E	T	Q	X	X	R

20. The time that matters most _____.

21 Your favorite new publication (3 words) _____.

22. Lone Ranger's horse _____.

23. Creative treasures, like music and painting _____.

24. Delicious desert seed _____.

25. Honey beverage, or the name of a local lake _____.

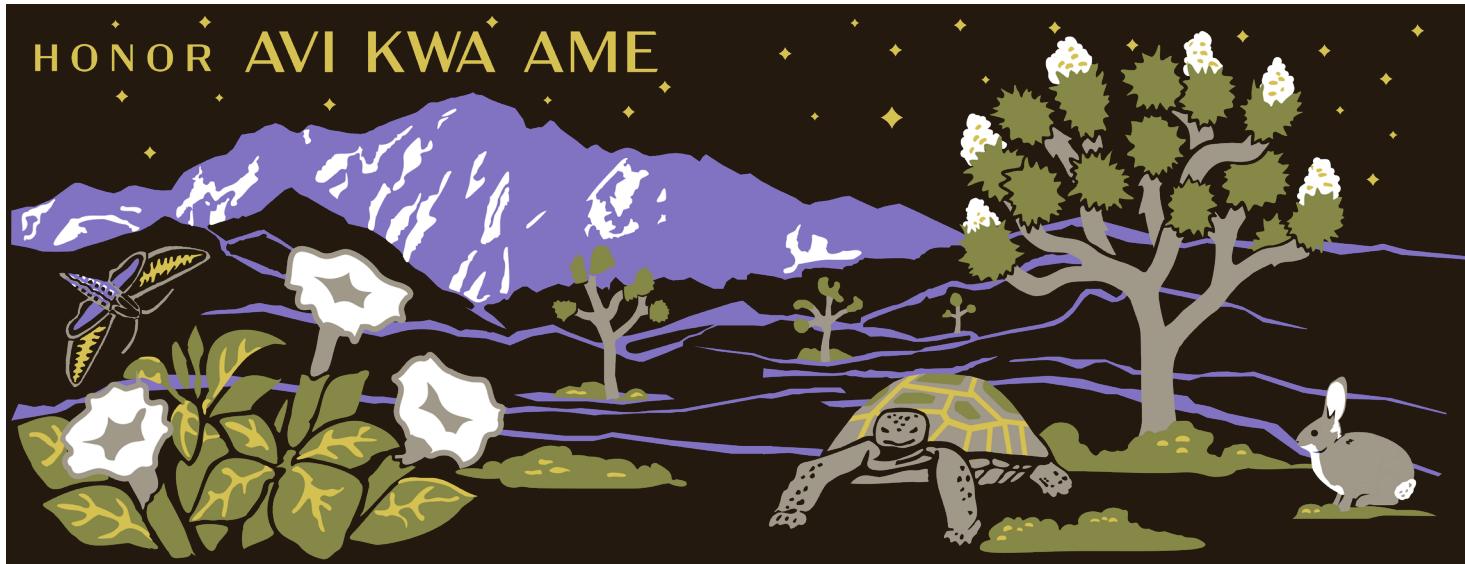
26. A treasure in communication _____.

27. Treasure place of Robert Louis Stevenson _____.

28. The worth of something _____.

29. To love and cherish _____.

30. Without it, treasure means nothing _____.



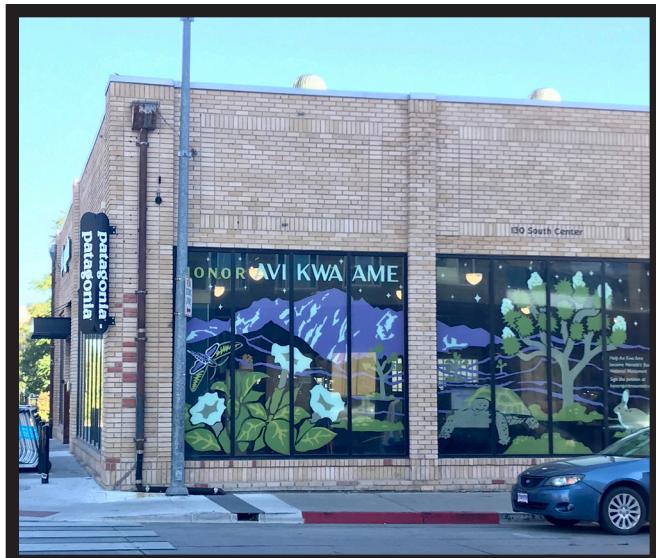
❖ A TALE OF ❖ TWO MURALS

AVI KWA AME ON DISPLAY IN RENO & SEARCHLIGHT

Mystery Ranch artists have designed two murals featuring the plants, animals and landscape that surround us in Searchlight, Nevada.

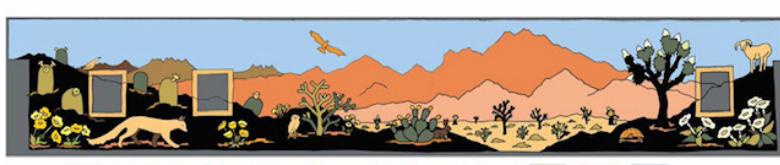
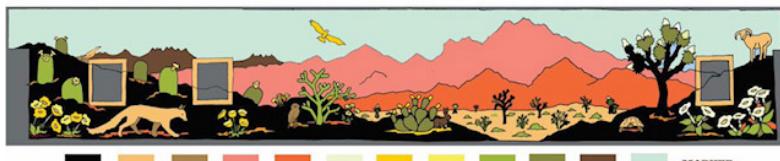
Avi Kwa Ame at Night is on display at the Patagonia outlet store in Reno, Nevada. The mural celebrates the bright stars of the area's dark night skies. Many thanks to Patagonia for supporting this project.

Searchlight's Treasures is an extensive, sixty-one foot mural highlighting more than twenty natural features, flora and fauna. It is currently in progress at the time of printing this publication, with the help of more than 80 volunteer painters. This mural can be seen on the corner of Main and Hobson, on the back of the Searchlight Treasures Thrift Store. Support for this mural came from the Searchlight Betterment Organization and the Conservation lands Foundation.



SNEAK PEEK!

As of the end of March, the Searchlight mural is underway! Be sure to check out the finished mural soon.



Searchlight's Treasures, color study.



Volunteer architecture students help transfer the Searchlight Treasures mural design
Photo credit: Gold Beam staff

ASK THE PROFESSOR



Dear Professor,
My wife and I enjoy exploring the desert and she collects rocks on all of our trips. Now our windowsills, bookshelves, bathroom counters, garden pots, and the whole house is filling up with rocks. How do I get her to stop?

-- Hitting Rock Bottom

Ah yes. Rocks, in their natural state, actually supply fodder for beautiful objects. I suggest you

buy your wife some rock polishing equipment or find your local rock club who often have equipment she can use. This is how rocks can become very special objects (and much smaller in the process) but more importantly, once she sees how much work the da*n things are she will probably lose interest in collecting them.

Professor, What vehicle do you recommend for traveling on desert backroads? -- Roland A. Long

The one you have. I have personally spent quality time on desert back roads in cars such as Austin Healeys and Karman Ghias, and they all did the job either very well or at least in an interesting fashion. Two pieces of equipment that are essential: a shovel, in case you need to dig yourself out of a situation, and a piece of rope that is used to hold in your hand while you look pitiful after burying your fine street auto up to its axles in sand. A cooler of beer is also handy while waiting for someone to come by and help you. Be sure to save a beer for them.

Professor, is sunscreen a scam? Or, if not, what's a good one?
--Bernie "Red" Burns

Mr. Burns, a lot has been written in this and other publications about commercially made and DIY sunscreens. I have noticed that, no matter what substance you use, you won't need to re-apply very often if you spend more time in Terrible's Roadhouse than out in the sun. Guaranteed.

Dear Professor, Sir: My friend and I are planning some back roads excursions this fall, and I never seem to know what to do as a driver when I encounter another vehicle on a dirt road. Is there an etiquette to meeting strangers in a remote area?

--Freddy Kat

My dear Freddy, it is always the best policy to treat other people as potential friends. So slow down to keep dust to a minimum, roll down your window, wave and smile. If they want to stop and chat, so much the better. Keep your arm on the car door which gives you an open, friendly look. And the other hand on your gun. Just in case. But keep smiling. (Just kidding about the gun.)

More Wisdom from the Professor: The creative process - a definition: A series of compromises, mis-steps and mistakes leading eventually to a disappointing conclusion.

Professor Emeritus has opinions on all things desert-related, and shares them freely and frequently ad nauseum. Send queries to:

searchlightgoldbeaminfo@gmail.com

675 E. Cottonwood Cove Rd.
Searchlight, NEVADA

STUDIO 65
SALON & SPA



WHERE YOU
ARE TREATED LIKE
ROYALTY!

studio65salon@yahoo.com
(337)401-0393

I have sold mining and industrial stocks for 17 years; I have offices in Boston, Hartford and Springfield; I am here to stay, and when I tell YOU that

SEARCHLIGHT GOLD BEAM

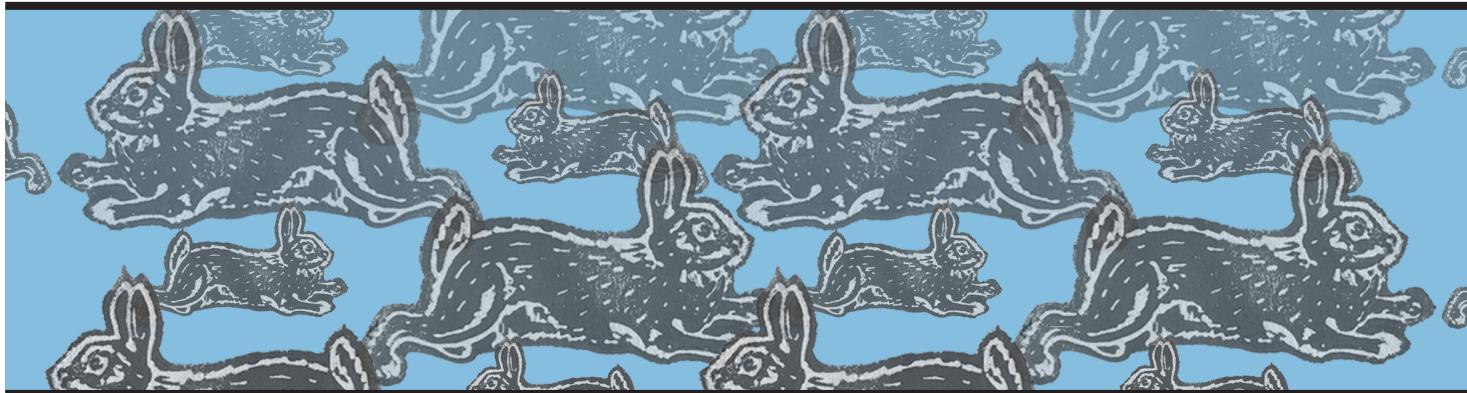
will positively advance 150% in value by November 1st, I know that my prediction will be fulfilled

Lafayette E. Pike



What's Up With The Rabbits?

The Gold Beam interviews Todd Esque, US Geological Survey



Todd Esque is based at the Western Ecological Research Center, where he investigates a range of issues related to species diversity and environmental change. We sat down with Todd to get some insight into the mystery of our disappearing rabbits.

Gold Beam: I've been noticing that there are dramatically less rabbits, (both cottontails and black-tailed jackrabbits) in the landscape, and it seems concerning. From your perspective as a researcher, am I imagining things, or are we really seeing a decline in rabbit populations?

Todd: We've actually seen a real decline in rabbit population numbers in the last 2 years or so. We know that because there are different ways that we try to measure the abundance of rabbits.

For the last 3 or 4 years, my team has been going out once a month to drive the roads for 3 nights in a row, and count rabbits and everything else that they see, so we can get an idea of the relative abundance. But those numbers are fairly loose, and in the last year we quit doing the road surveys because people were driving all night and seeing

maybe just one jackrabbit. So, the return on the work that we were doing was not sufficient to warrant continuing. We can also capture rabbits and put GPS collars on them so that we can track them on an hourly basis, and that gives us a lot of good data about where they are. We also have cameras, and you can create ratios of how much time you have a camera up, and how many rabbits are seen.

What is really important about this data, is that while populations normally fluctuate, going up and down through time in a cycle, we had moderate levels of jackrabbits a few years ago, and then we went into this drought, which has been discussed as being the worst drought in the Southwest in 1,200 years, and the numbers we are currently down to are very low.

Gold Beam: So drought is the cause here, and it's part of a

cycle, but still concerning?

Todd: Yes, because a cycle would be a regular pattern of up and down – about the same amount. And our numbers are very low now, lower than the usual cycle. We call that a fluctuation, because you can never predict how high or low it's going to go.

There is also another interesting part to this. In 2019, researchers discovered a new disease that was introduced to North America, called RHDV2, (Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Number 2), and they were very concerned that it would get into our rabbits here and also cause a decline. But, although it might have been here before we could detect it, we've been working on the rabbits here the whole time, and haven't seen any unusual observations in the El Dorado Valley. We do have some reports of the virus being in other parts of Clark County, but it's really quiet now. It's possible that the low population size from the drought has actually reduced the possibility that the disease would move around among the rabbits, because higher populations carry disease more readily.

Gold Beam: Wow, that's really interesting. It's almost a silver lining to the drought for our rabbits. But meanwhile, while there are so few of them, how does that affect other animals and plants in our ecosystem?

Todd: Well, we have quite a large population of golden ea-

gles down in Avi Kwa Ame – we are a pretty good nesting site for them. Eagles being a top predator, there are never lots of them, but just about every mountain down here has a site where there are eagle nests, and some of them are active, so that's really wonderful. And they are dependent on rabbits. And we know coyotes depend on rabbits, and other predators as well: kit foxes and gray foxes, and bobcats. Badgers probably get baby rabbits, and for that matter, snakes and Gila monsters do too, especially cottontails, when they can find them.

Gold Beam: So basically, every predator out there would like a tasty rabbit as a meal.

Todd: Absolutely! Great horned owls and raptors too. Every predator is depending on rabbits, so they are absolutely fundamental to the food base for our whole system. And while they are at the bottom of the animal hierarchy, they are also at the top of the plant situation. They eat a lot of plants of all different types.

Leslie deFalco, USGS, has been doing restoration experiments in what we call a "common garden" in the El Dorado Valley. It's one of a number of gardens across the Mojave that contains representative plant species, at plants will grow best under each site's different conditions.

There is a part of the garden that is not fenced, and there are rabbits all over the place when she puts fresh plants out there.

Gold Beam, advice is given,
stories are told here,
let's read together.

Martha Radosevich

Gold Beam: We've had very minimal wildflowers the last couple of springs, so I imagine that while they are partial to certain plants, rabbits will eat just about anything when they are desperate. Is that affecting plant health and populations too?

Todd: Yes, it is a dramatic response when there are so few fresh plants for rabbits to eat, and they also depend on plants for the water that they get in their systems. They will resort to eating plants that are much tougher, and will even chew on the trunks of large Joshua Trees, which looks like a beaver has been chewing on them. They'll strip the bark at first, and then they'll just keep going. It's not uncommon to see that out in the desert, and we don't know whether that has a population level effect on the Joshua trees or not. It's something that researchers are working on.

Rabbits also tend to be in places where there is a bit more cover, and when there are no leaves on the shrubs, it's probably easier for the eagles and great horned owls to see right in there and see where they are, and easier for coyotes to find them. One part of the study we are doing for Clark County is to look at coyotes, and when we have fewer rabbits, we should see smaller groups of pups in the litters, and higher mortality of the older and weaker ones, so we should see a decline in their populations as well when we have less rabbits. That's usually how the system works.

But we aren't seeing that yet, and one of our studies is asking the question: Are the coyotes being subsidized? Because it's not very far from Searchlight to Boulder City and Henderson, and a coyote can go between those towns in a day. So, they can get a drink when there is a drought, and on Tuesday or Thursday in Boulder City, they can have a feast down in the alleys by going through the garbage cans. We haven't studied it long enough yet, but as the rabbits go down, the coyotes are so far not going down at the same rate.

Gold Beam: Wow, I never thought that how we might be interacting with coyotes in populated areas might be having an effect on the rabbit population in the middle of the pristine desert.

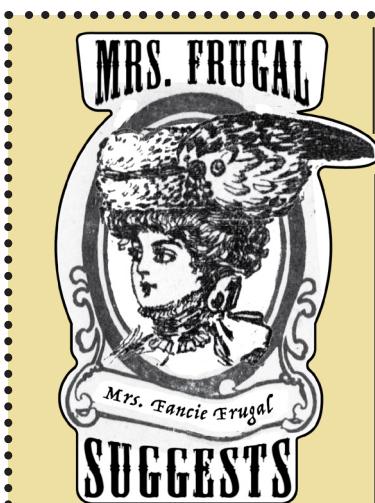
What can we do as people who live in or are visiting the Avi Kwa Ame area, that can positively affect the situation for the rabbits?

Todd: For one thing, when we take our trash out, let's make sure to get it in the trash bin, and make sure it's closed properly, so that the coyotes have a tougher time getting to it. And we can encourage the management of our areas where we take our trash, to deposit it in ways that reduce its availability to predators.

And we also want to do that when we are riding around and enjoying the desert – we want to pick up after ourselves out there. A lot of times we get casual, and we figure, "It doesn't matter" or "Something will eat it" or "It will all be cleaned up", but it's more complicated than that. It used to be that the desert was much bigger than the towns, but we're filling in all the spaces now. There are smaller and smaller amounts of wild places and shorter distances between the towns, and we want to take good care of areas like Avi Kwa Ame, and manage our activities properly so we aren't subsidizing the predators. Coyotes and ravens are the two subsidized predators we worry about most right now.

Gold Beam: In my parents' and grandparents' day, we just left the food scraps out in the desert, thinking "it's got to benefit somebody". Of course, all we would ever see were happy animals eating what was left for them, if we were lucky enough to see that. I've changed my mindset on that in recent years, and what did it for me was hearing that it increased the number of ravens that prey on young desert tortoises. It was hard to change that mindset though, and not to get to see those animals enjoy the food.

Todd: I know there are a lot of well-meaning people out there that probably have had the same experience that you've had in your lifetime, and that I have had too. It's a hard thing to change, but when you know the outcome of it, it makes it easier to make the change, I think. It has made me change the way I do things, and be more careful as well. I didn't have the same recognition of this before I started studying these things, and the good thing about it is, we have the capacity to learn.



Soup. Nothing is more welcome at table, more nourishing to the body, more enjoyable at all times of year, more pleasing to the palette of young and old, and more cost effective. From hearty, meaty stews to smooth, delicate creams, soup is relished as a starter or main, and soup's infinite variations will surely lighten the vegetable load in your crisp drawer, use up those half-forgotten sundries in the pantry, and the frost-kissed meat from the back of the freezer. Throw together a savory broth with a vegetable or five, and combine with endless options of weekly leftovers: pasta, rice, tortilla chips, chopped chicken, beans, sausage or cheese.

The only thing more praise-worthy than a steaming bowl of this goodness is one that features your own, home-made soup stock. It is a simple procedure, and one that you will learn to do automatically as part of your kitchen routine, once you have tried it a few times and experienced for yourself, the exceptional alchemical transformation of your foodscraps into a quart of kitchen gold.

To make soup stock, you must first collect these neglected gems: onion and garlic skins, carrot peels, and trimmings of mild vegetables such as squash, celery, potato and tomato, in any combination. To make chicken, pork or beef stock, also gather the bones, skin, and leavings from your Sunday meat roasts. Store these items in a bag or lidded container in the freezer, adding to them throughout the week as you prepare and clean up your meals.

A weekly inspection of your

refrigerator bins will yield more willing participants in the form of wilted vegetables that need a job, pronto. Mild herbs such as parsley, green onion, and cilantro can be added in small amounts, as can apple cores and trimmings. For vegetarian stocks, an old bit of parmesan rind, mushroom stems, leftover beans, or a knob of tomato paste can work wonders in achieving a rich and well-balanced, earthy broth.

Resist the temptation to include members of the brassica family, bitter greens, or any product of strong flavor: vegetables such as brussel sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, beets, mustard and kale can be harsh and unpleasant to the tastebuds, and are best avoided.

When you are ready to convert these castoffs into culinary treasure, take them from the freezer and place them in a pot, add enough water to cover, and bring to boil. A spoonful of vinegar can assist in breaking down proteins and balancing flavors. Once on the boil, cover the pot and lower the heat to keep the concoction at a lively simmer. Stir occasionally, and leave to brew for as little as 20 minutes if you are in a rush, or as long as 4-6 hours for vegetables, 8-10 hours for hearty, concentrated meat stocks. Strain into jars and use at once, or let cool, label and store in the freezer. Be sure to leave plenty of room for the liquid to expand if you freeze the stock in jars.

You can use your home-made soup stocks in any recipe that calls for broth or a canned product from the grocery shelves, and you will never wish to buy store-bought stock again, Mrs. Frugal guarantees.

One more thought before I go. The greenest, cleanest, safest and cheapest form of energy is using less energy, so in the words of the great Bugs Bunny: TURN OFF THAT LIGHT! The planet, your neighbors, and your pocket-book will thank you.

Until we meet again, may your cooking pot be full and your heart be warm.

Mrs. Fancie Frugal

THE BIRD WATCHER: GILDED AND GOLDEN

By Alex Harper,
Red Rock Audubon Society

The Gilded Flicker

is a shy woodpecker found in the Sonoran Desert of Mexico and Arizona and in the Joshua Tree forests of the southernmost tip of Nevada. It just barely finds suitable habitat in Nevada; go a few miles north and well before Boulder City, you're unlikely to run into the Gilded Flicker. The chance to encounter this bird only exists in the Joshua Tree forests bordering the town of Searchlight.

More often heard than seen, its rollicking song lasts ten to fifteen seconds. From its perch on a Joshua Tree, it can be heard giving a sturdy "kwik-wik-wik-wik..." song. It's a sound that many of us can recognize, but so often can't name the bird making the sounds. It's a bird that would rather not be seen, but still makes its presence known to those listening in the desert.

The gilded flicker is a rather large songbird, about the length of a pigeon, but sleeker. It has a pointed but sturdy beak, and a sandy-colored body. If one can get a close enough look, they'll notice the fine lines running horizontally across the back, a black bib on the breast, and dapples of dark spots across the belly. Males and females look nearly identical, but males have a dash of red on an otherwise gray face. When the bird opens its wings, it reveals the reason for its namesake: flashes of golden yellow glisten like the desert sun. It looks as if its underwings and tail have been dipped in gaudy yellow paint. They often fly low and purposefully between trees, making a bounding motion as they flap, dip, flap, dip and flap again.

Another variety, or species, of flicker calls the southern Nevada home. The Northern Flicker lives in a wider range of habitats and is more widespread overall. It's almost an exact clone of the Gilded at first glance. But unlike the gilded yellow wings of its cousin, the Northern sports crimson red underwings and tails. The areas around Walking Box Ranch and the Wee Thump Wilderness are some of the only

places that these two birds are known to overlap where they breed. In some cases, they're even known to pair up and hybridize. The result: offspring

Bewick's Wrens and Ash-throated Flycatchers live in the Joshua Tree desert and often depend on the carpentry of woodpeckers to create their homes; without

and wait for the bird to inevitably cross your path. Pay close attention to wing colors, and you'll have the chance to tell which flavor of flicker you've been lucky enough to set your eyes on.

Flicker photos by Justin Streit



with colors of yellowish reds and reddish yellows.

What these birds also have in common is their role in a functioning Joshua Tree ecosystem. Both flickers can excavate fist-sized holes in the woody branches and trunks of the Joshua Tree. They create these holes to build nests within them. In the years that follow, other birds and animals may move in to find cover or build nests. Small falcons,

them, these other birds must attempt to look elsewhere.

To find a Gilded Flicker, you must find the habitat of choice: Joshua Tree desert. Birds are most active and vocal in the hours following sunrise, and the cooler afternoon hours before dusk. They'll often visit pools of water. Since flickers are skittish and don't often tolerate close approach, the best method might be to listen for its distinct song

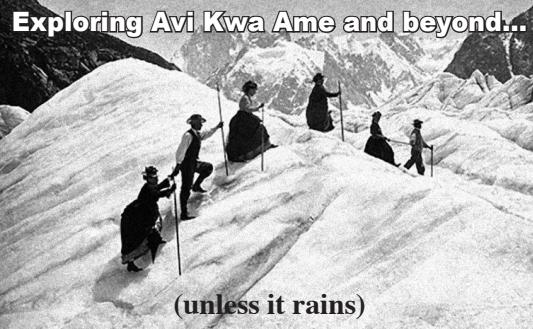


Scan for more about the Gilded Flicker including samples of its calls.

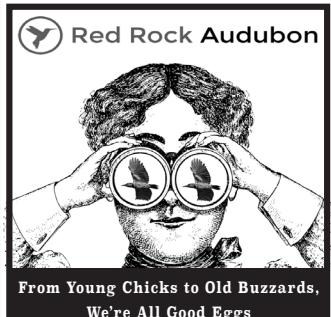
LEARN MORE ABOUT
BIRDING AND OUTDOOR
EVENTS IN
SOUTHERN NEVADA
WITH THE
RED ROCK AUDUBON
SOCIETY



SEARCHLIGHT HIKING CLUB



For information on our next adventure check
Searchlight Nevada Events and Advertisements on Facebook.



Learn about our excursions at:
redrockaudubon.com



* **Horseshoes on Sunday,** I've been playing for over a decade. *Scott Pratt*

* **Boating** is what got us to Searchlight, but we also love off-roading. You never end up the same place twice – there are so many back roads. I also enjoy the community art classes, and dominoes on Thursdays. *Ida Pratt*

* I like tooling around the Highland Range and McCollough Ranges, some of the last homesteading areas. *Jim Stanger*

* When I go to Denny's and they don't have the salmon, I raise hell. It's my favorite dish on the menu. *Ron Safran*

* It's true, he really flips his lid when they're out! *Jim Stanger*

* I like to dress up like Rex Bell and give people tours of Walking Box Ranch. Then I go across the highway and drive around Wee Thump in search of giant Joshua Trees. I bought a car just for going there. *Ron Safran*

* I enjoy painting in the landscape. I drive around and then hike and find places to paint, and then set up. When I'm painting, I feel at one with the whole space, and feel like I get to know every little piece – it really is special to me. *Maria Volborth*

* If you go south on the 95, somewhere on left in the moun-

tains to the East, there are feldspar crystals there. To the north, I walk the trail that goes through the train tunnel near Lake Mead, and then go into Boulder City and either have lunch at Milo's wine bar, or get Chile Verde at the Southwest Diner. Also, everyone should go to Hemingway Park at least once and look for the Bighorn on the lawn. *Nancy Gentis*

* I like the outdoors and hiking in the Joshua Tree forest at dusk, but it's really the people that make this place special. The people here are genuine. *Nattaly Jeter*

* The night stars are the best! I also like watching the full moon rising through my kitchen window. I also like hiking in the washes through the Joshua Trees. *Sandy (Cricket) Bucklew*

* I am very interested in the history of this place – the people who were here during the civil war, the miners in El Dorado – I'm passionate about learning more about the many aspects of this history. I also love exploring and kayaking in the canyons. I had wonderful experiences kayaking out of Nelson at night. All of the parts of this landscape are integrated into a whole. The integrity of this place is one of my favorite things. *Ellen Ross*

* One of my favorite places here is Hiko Spring Canyon. I'd definitely recommend that as a must-see. *Bud Benneman*

CONGRATULATIONS, EVERYONE!

I am confident that by protecting Avi Kwa Ame we will also be protecting and expanding economic opportunity for those who call Laughlin, Searchlight, and Cal Nev Ari home.

– Clark County Commissioner Michael Naft



Searchlight Hiking Club members explore Hiko Spring Canyon

TREASURES OF THE TRAIL

FEATURED AREA: HIKO SPRING CANYON

By Alan O'Neill

Hiko Spring Canyon is a scenic, 3-mile long canyon that is easily accessible off Nevada State Route 163. Hiko Spring is a natural spring, and a hike through the canyon downstream takes you through some spectacular scenery, and Native American petroglyph sites. It is particularly beautiful in the spring with all the flowering yellow brittlebush and desert mallow flowers adorning the canyon walls and hillsides, along other wildflowers, trees and flowering cactus.

Hiko Spring is located at the trailhead, and there are a series of petroglyphs surrounding the spring. There are also petroglyphs at several locations in the canyon, the most prominent series located about a mile down the canyon. The petroglyphs here are pecked into vertical cliffs of granitic rock covered with a dark patina called desert varnish. Because the formation of desert varnish is a very slow process, it suggests that these images are quite old. There are also some historical writings, one from 1898.

You can see the power of the water that can run through this wash, in the way the rock has been carved and the amount of tangled up debris. In the spring, there is running water through much of the canyon. At other times of the year, the water disappears underground. Be still and listen. Look, observe, and

imagine. Let the rocks speak. And if you are lucky, you might see an eagle, a gila monster, or a desert bighorn sheep.

While visiting, please respect the traditions of the people who still consider this area to be sacred to their lives and history. Do not deface the petroglyphs in any way -- even touching them can cause damage. Archeological artifacts and sites are protected in all public lands. It is illegal to remove or damage archeological materials from their locations, as disturbance of these resources destroys our heritage. Please do not climb on the rocks and panels.

Warning: be sure to take plenty of drinking water. There is none available along the trail. Be prepared for summer temperatures that can be as high as 120 degrees F. These trails are not maintained, and contain the hazards of a remote, desert area, so come prepared.

From U.S.95, turn east on Nevada Highway 163 (Laughlin Hwy). After driving 8 miles on Highway 163, there is a fairly open four wheeling area on the right. About two miles beyond this area the road runs straight downhill. Just before the guard rails where the road makes a sharp left turn, there is an unmarked exit to the right that turns into a dirt road. Turn right and the Hiko Spring trail is about a half-mile where the road ends.

FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

TOP 10 TIPS FOR SAFE DESERT EXPLORING

1. Plan and Communicate

If you take a drive, walk, stroll or hike by yourself, always tell others where you are headed, and when you plan to return. Print or download area maps, as internet and phone reception may be spotty. Travel with a friend whenever possible. Keep your phone with you and fully charged at all times. If your phone battery is low and you are out on a walk or drive, it's time to turn back.

2. Prepare for the Outdoors

Always wear proper attire for outdoor activities. For off trail hiking, thick-soled boots or shoes, long pants, hat, sunscreen, water and snacks are a must. Take your medications, a first aid kit, and emergency water and snacks with you -- don't leave them at home or in the hotel room. Pain reliever, allergy medication, antiseptic cream, and tweezers might also come in handy. Bring more provisions than you plan to consume.

3. Check the Weather

It can change quickly and drastically, so bring layers for temperature changes. The high elevation of this area can get below freezing in winter, and strong winds amplify temperature extremes. Flash floods and lightning strikes are real dangers here, so skip adventuring in these conditions. In summer, do avoid hiking or exploring back roads in the heat of the day.

4. Prepare your Vehicle for Adventure

Fill your gas tank, check the tires, pack your gear and phone charger. If you plan to drive down dirt roads, make sure you have a full-sized spare tire and the ability to put it on if needed.

5. Take Care on Desert Roads

Watch for BLM signs and stay on designated off-highway routes, which will always be at least one car-width wide. Smaller trails are illegal for vehicles, and harm plants and wildlife. Dirt roads may not be maintained, and some may be highly degraded or unpassable. Be willing to turn around at any point when a road looks unsafe. Roads often get worse as you go further in, and there is no AAA tow service away from the highway.

6. Stay Focused On Your Surroundings

Take your time and look around you with every step. We share this des-

This is a remote area, and Emergency Fire and Ambulance services may take a significant amount of time (an hour or more). The nearest hospital is about an hour away in Henderson. Searchlight's small volunteer fire department receives over 300 calls a year on average. Frequent calls include car, motorcycle and boat accidents, as well as dehydration and heat exhaustion. Be cautious and aware of your surroundings at all times, so you do not need to call them for help!

ert with rattlesnakes, scorpions, cone nose bugs, stinging ants and bees, spiders, rodents and many kinds of plants with sharp blade-like leaves, as well as slippery slopes, and uneven ground. And sharp, old metal things. Oh, yeah, and old mineshafts. Be calm and cautious when exploring. Do not sit, stand, reach or walk anywhere that you cannot see first.

7. Keep Careful Watch Over Children and Pets

They are the most likely to get injured. Keep pets on leash outside — they may go from being mellow to chasing animals across the landscape in an instant. Check regularly for cactus needles in dog's feet, and watch for snakes, because your dog won't. Snakebite is a rare occurrence among humans, but sadly much more common in dogs. Keep in mind that if your dog or child gets bit by a snake, you will need to carry them to your car.

8. Limit Distractions

Do not drink, smoke, or otherwise ingest mind-altering substances beyond a mild effect (including alcohol). You will need your wits about you to keep safe and healthy in this untamed environment! Do not hike or drive while intoxicated. Beautiful scenery, music, conversation, children and pets can also be distracting — make sure you are watching where you are going and how to get back.

9. Quit While You're Ahead

Temperature extremes, lack of humidity, and elevation combine to dehydrate people more easily here. Sunstroke, wind-stroke, and exhaustion can happen quickly. Drink hydrating beverages that replenish electrolytes, eat snacks, and don't push yourself.

10. Do No Harm

Drive on designated routes, and walk on trails whenever possible. This will help preserve the fragile soil biocrust. Do not feed the wildlife. If you want to help them, water some of the plants that provide them with food and shelter. Please do not stack rocks or otherwise alter the natural environment. Pack it in, pack it out, and leave no trace. Even better, leave it better than when you found it. Future generations of humans and wildlife will thank you for keeping their home safe too.

MANY THANKS

TO THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONS
MAKING THE GOLD BEAM POSSIBLE!



Especially the National Parks Conservation Association, Searchlight Betterment Organization and all of you who have contributed to this publication. We couldn't have done this without you.

NEED TO
CONTACT US?



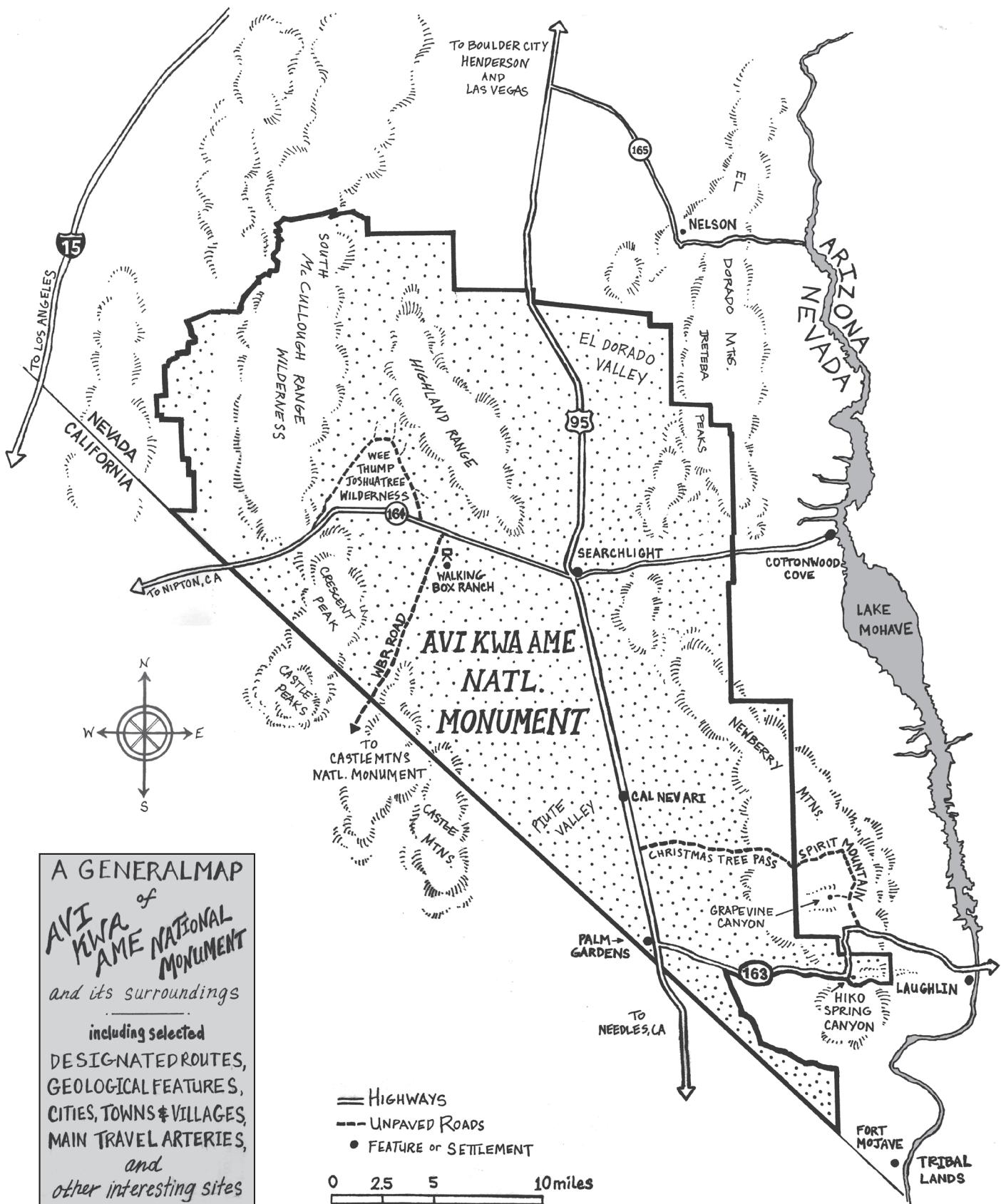
searchlightgoldbeaminfo@gmail.com

JOIN A LOCAL
OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE
CLUB AND EXPLORE
OUR BACKROADS!



Check out these fine organizations on Facebook:

- ★ Vegas Toyota Offroad (VTO)
- ★ LV Trail Addicts
- ★ Big Rig Vegas Offroad
- ★ Battleborn Toyotas
- ★ Desert Overlanders
- ★ Vegas Valley Fourwheelers



THERE ARE MORE THAN 500 MILES OF UNPAVED DESIGNATED ROUTES WITHIN AVI KWA AME NATIONAL MONUMENT. MOST OF THESE ARE UNMAINTAINED OR RARELY MAINTAINED. USE CAUTION AND CARE ON ALL UNPAVED ROADS, AND WATCH FOR HAZARDS. MANY ROADS ARE NAVIGABLE TO SOME EXTENT WITHOUT 4-WHEEL DRIVE, BUT BE PREPARED TO TURN BACK AT ANY TIME. WALKING BOX, CHRISTMAS TREE PASS, GRAPENEVINE & HIKO ROADS ARE GENERALLY PASSABLE WITH HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLES, EXCLUDING AFTER WASH OUTS.

Note: This map was created before the final boundaries were established by the Department of the Interior. The final boundaries now include all of Spirit Mountain, Grapenevine Canyon, and part of the Ireteba Peaks Wilderness Area.



USA \$20.00