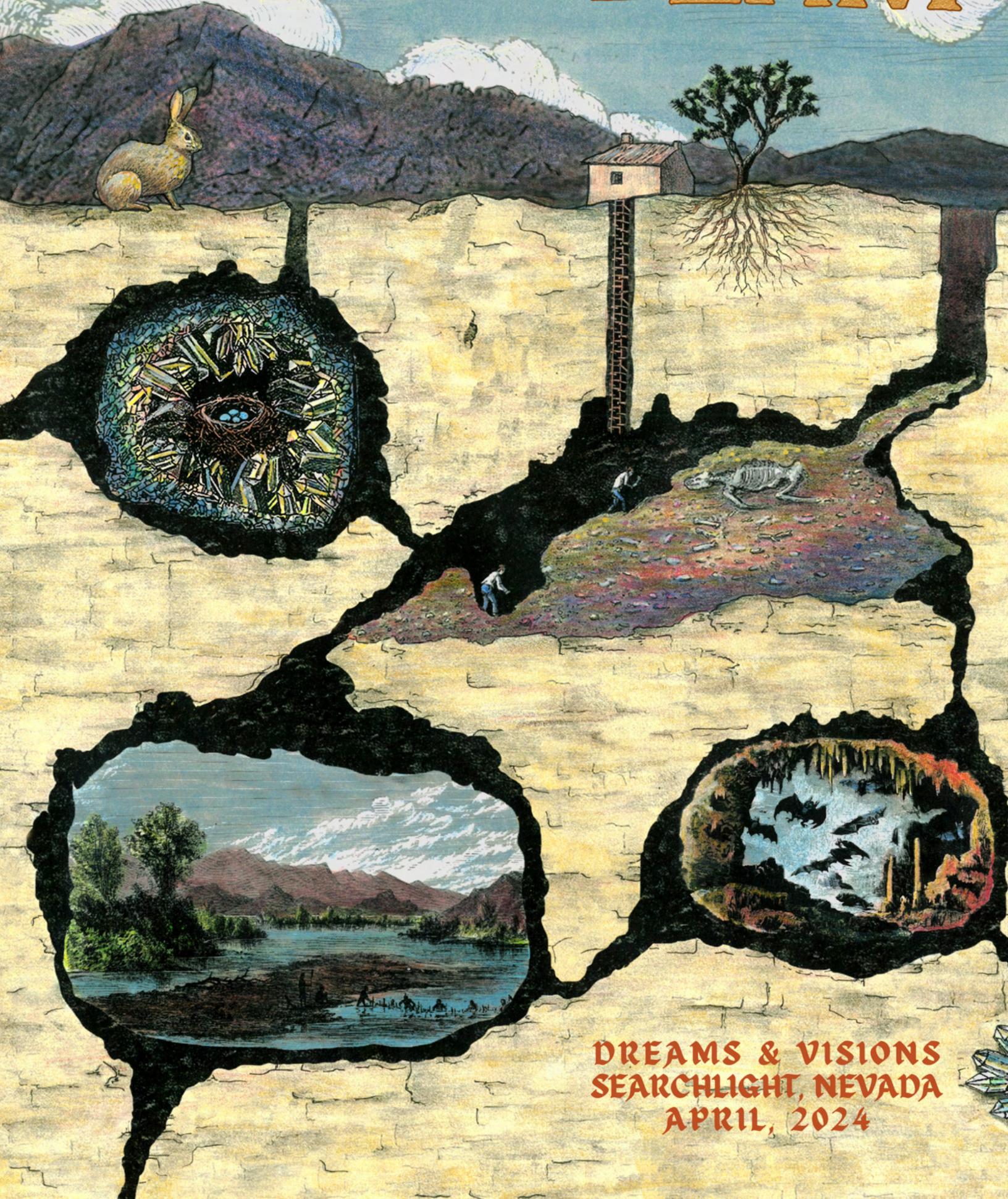


THE
SEARCH
LIGHT

GOLD BEAM



DREAMS & VISIONS
SEARCHLIGHT, NEVADA
APRIL, 2024



Dreams of Above and Below cover art by Kim Garrison Means
watercolor, colored pencil, pen, collage photographs and historic imagery

From the Editors: WELCOME TO THE SEARCHLIGHT GOLD BEAM!

Through this yearly journal, we share investigations of the cultural, ecological and historical treasures of the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument area and beyond, with the goal of providing resources to residents and visitors who are exploring the tip of Southern Nevada, and to build new connections within and between our local rural, tribal and urban communities.

We share our deep affection for this part of the world through science, art, history, and culture -- all wrapped up with a double dose of desert humor. Each year, we offer a free, black and white, newsletter version of the Gold Beam at locations in and around the East Mojave, and a deluxe, full-color, collectable magazine with over twice the content -- well worth the \$20 donation that helps keep this project going. We also have bonus info and online issues available on our website at goldbeam.org.

THE DREAMS AND VISIONS ISSUE

Dhis year, as we celebrate the first anniversary of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, we are sharing this region's fascinating historical dreams, highlighting its local mythic wonders, and exploring the natural world and our local communities. We investigate these topics with the idea that every living being exists with its own set of experiences and perceptions that make its vision of the universe unique from ours.

The style inspiration of this issue comes from the pre-printing press era of hand-written and illustrated books. During this time in European history, stories were illuminated by beautiful drawings and paintings, mystical symbols, medicinal plants, visual humor, and fanciful creatures, which lent a dreamlike quality to the pages. It was expensive to handwrite a book, and the information contained within was considered precious and important. We believe that the stories of this place are also precious and important, and merit the same treatment.

The 15th century was also a time of exploration, which means its imagery can sometimes be associated with colonialism, especially due to the fact that many European-based nature and cultural symbols continued to be used in America in later centuries, despite the fact that the same plants and animals were not present here. Our vision was to use what was useful in the structures of the medieval book, but to update the imagery to celebrate pride in our place, our time, our landscape, and our communities.

Twelve local illustrators and youth from the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe have filled these pages with colorful desert scenes, native plants and animals, and Mojave geometric designs to delight the eye and illuminate our dreams of Southern Nevada. We hope you enjoy every detail.

Cheers!

Kim Garrison Means, Steve Radosevich
Editors, Searchlight Gold Beam

Introducing

FRIENDS OF AVI KWA AME NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Gold Beam is now published by the newly-formed Friends of Avi Kwa Ame non-profit organization, which helps ensure the protection of the ecological, cultural, historic, and recreational resources of the monument area. You can find out more information about Friends of Avi Kwa Ame at www.friendsofavikwaame.org



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SEARCHLIGHT GOLD BEAM

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The geometric Mojave illustrations you see throughout this issue were created by members of the Fort Mojave Tribal Youth Division Program and include work from Amelia Jackson, Cecilia Collier, Dennis Campos, Erin Torres, Maliya Russell, Nathan Richard, Noah Richard, RJ Jackson, Stephen Lopez, Vinnie Castillo, and Zach McCord

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HAPPY FIRST ANNIVERSARY Avi Kwa Ame National Monument!

Avi Kwa Ame was designated as a national monument by President Joe Biden on March 21st, 2023, after a bill was introduced into Congress and supported by our entire delegation of Nevada representatives. The national monument is approximately 506,000 acres that stretches from the California border in the west to Lake Mead Recreation Area to the east, and from the Boulder City limits in the north to the tip of Southern Nevada. That's around 800 square miles of protected public landscape for everyone to enjoy and appreciate.

With the Newberry and El Dorado mountains in the east and the New York, South McCullough, Castle, and Piute mountains in the west, these lands feature dramatic peaks, scenic canyons, natural springs, sloping bajadas covered with ancient Joshua tree forests, unique grasslands, and a rich history of rock art and other cultural sites.

The entire area is considered sacred by ten Yuman-speaking tribes as well as the Hopi and Southern Paiute. For the Yuman tribes, the area is tied to their creation, cosmology, and well-being. Avi Kwa Ame (also called Spirit Mountain) is located on the south eastern side of the monument. It is designated a Traditional Cultural Property on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its religious and cultural importance.

You can explore Avi Kwa Ame National Monument by taking a scenic drive down one of its 500 miles of backroads, or by taking a nature hike to experience the native plants, animals and birds. Or you can stay the night and enjoy wilderness camping and looking up at a myriad of stars in the dark night sky. Any way you decide to enjoy, be sure to pack smart, be safe, leave no trace and leave everything in its place for future generations of visitors.

More information about the monument can be found on the Friends of Avi Kwa Ame website at friendsofavikwaame.org



Illustration by Patrick Zolp-Mikols.



ASK THE PROFESSOR

Professor, what is your recommendation for a good desert cheese? -Bree Wheeler

Tam glad you asked. I have received many letters concerning dessert cheese, but the proper desert cheese is another story altogether. There are two philosophies on this subject. The first is to buy pre-sliced as the slices dry out very fast and are great replacements for the gaskets on your well pump. The other is to buy the stinkiest ones you can find to help rescue workers find you when you are lost in the desert. But just in case you meant *dessert* cheese, I highly recommend a good Stilton accompanying a glass of vintage port, which I would be happy to join you in.

Professor, my neighbor tells me there were a lot of mines here in Searchlight back in the day, and that there are miles of tunnels underground. just how many tunnels are there? I've seen "Paint your Wagon"... how worried should I be about sinkholes? ~Watching Every Step

First off, "Paint Your Wagon" is a work of fiction. I mean, they let Clint Eastwood sing. Searchlight is a real place and would never permit that. Nothing to worry about these days. By now the sinkholes have been forgotten and the people who fell in them covered up. I mean the sinkholes have been covered and the people forgotten.

Dr. Emeritus, my partner and I have a dream to live off-grid one day. We've talked for years now about buying a little piece of property and getting away from the city, (mostly while we are stuck in traffic on the way to Whole Foods). My partner thinks we should sell everything now, buy the first plot we see and just go for it, but I'm a little bit more cautious. What is the best way to go about this?

~ Dreaming to be Unplugged ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

Ever since there has been a grid we have been trying to rid ourselves of it. From Walden Pond to Morningstar Commune, self-sufficiency has been a dream. Only recently has it become possible to do so without real hardship. Because now there are solar espresso makers. So armed with that technology everything else should be a piece of cake. Or at least hardtack.

Dear Professor, everyone is talking about dreams in this issue, but I can't remember any of mine in the morning no matter how hard I try. Can you give me any advice? ~ Dreaming to Dream ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

Quit trying so hard. Make them up. That's what your friends are doing. And now that you know the secret you can make yours far more interesting than theirs.

Professor Emeritus, a well known sesquipedalian pontificator, has lectured domestically and internationally at universities and taverns. He is a recognized authority on trivialities, verbosity, and cryptids, with a specialization in personalis sententia. Send queries to: SearchlightGoldBeamInfo@gmail.com ☺☺☺☺☺☺

NATURE'S WISDOM

A DESERT HOROSCOPE

ARIES March 21 to April 19 Letting go of the old means the opportunity to welcome in the new. What are you excited about cultivating?

TAURUS April 20 to May 20 Your life will expand in proportion to your bravery. Don't be afraid to fail your way toward fulfilling your dreams.

GEMINI May 21 to June 21 If you wish to dream, make some time for sleep.

CANCER June 22 to July 22 Every tie that binds us is of our own making. Acknowledging our choice in the matter brings us more contentment and less resentment. Our bonds feel looser and we feel more free.

LEO July 23 to August 22 When time gets away from you, chalk it up to the unexplainable. UFOs and desertyetiis are always on hand to blame.

VIRGO August 23 to September 22 The road to everywhere is long. Pace yourself and celebrate your progress. Every step is a win!

LIBRA September 23 to October 23 Can't see clearly? Zoom out! The top of a mountain or the bottom of a tree are good places to gain a new perspective.

SCORPIUS October 24 to November 21 Empathy can give you the power to see with different eyes.

SAGITTARIUS November 22 to December 21 We always write the stories that drive us forward on our journeys. How are yours serving you? Is it time for a re-write?

CAPRICORNUS December 22 to January 19 Don't let your big dreams outshine the small ones. Time with loved ones, taking care of body, mind and soul, remembering that everything is connected: these are small, daily treasures worth as much or more than any loftier goal.

AQUARIUS January 20 to February 18 Inspiration is all around you: in the ways of growing things, in ways of doing things, and in doing nothing at all.

PISCES February 19 to March 20 Life is a series of adventures with the biggest one at the end. Put on your best hat, don your adventuring cloak, and don't forget your walking stick.

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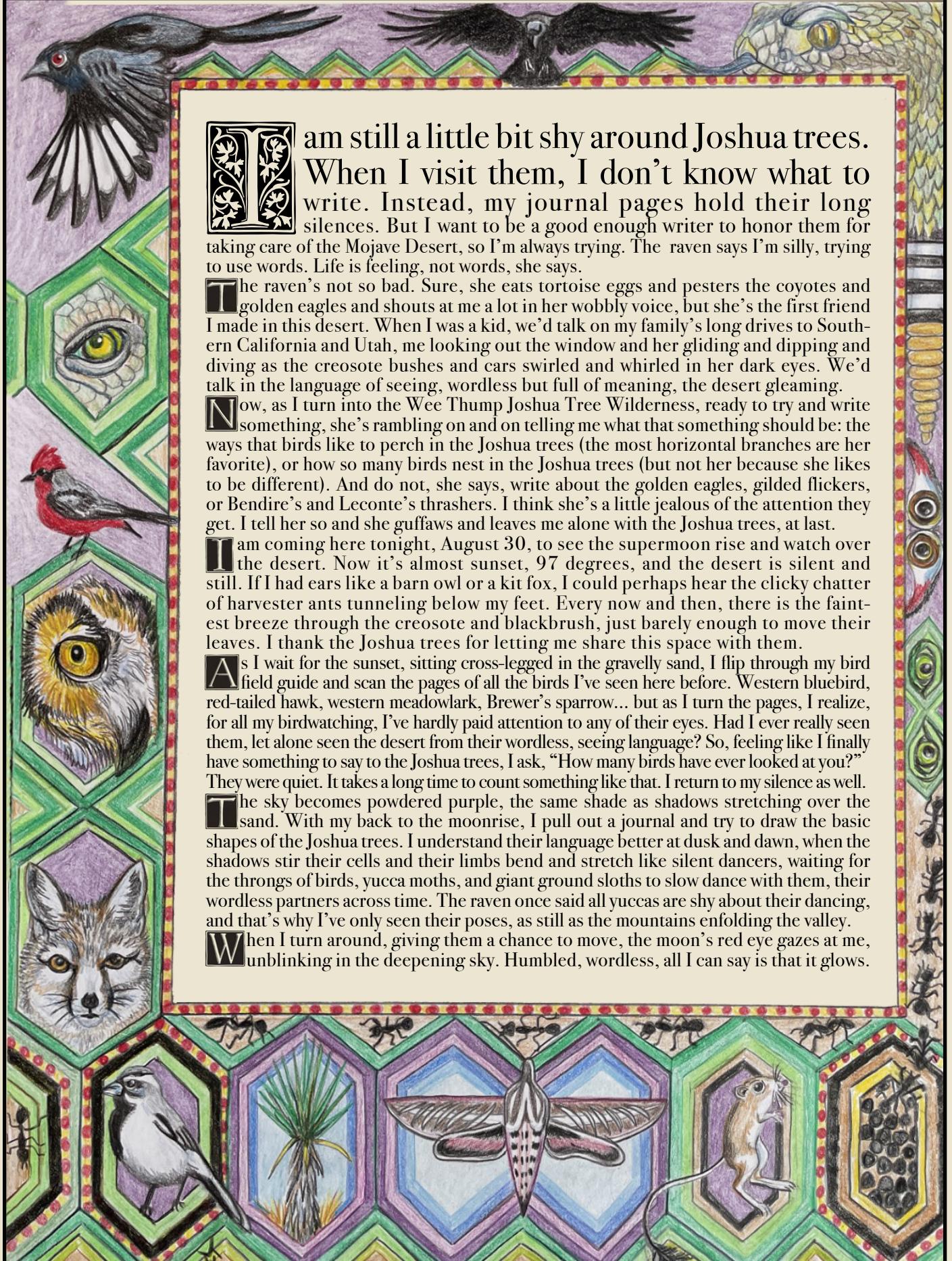
FOR YOUR EYES ONLY
SECRET MESSAGE

BY ANA GRAHAM

SEEING AMONG *the* JOSHUA TREES

by Morrigan DeVito

Illustrations by Maria Volborth.



I am still a little bit shy around Joshua trees. When I visit them, I don't know what to write. Instead, my journal pages hold their long silences. But I want to be a good enough writer to honor them for taking care of the Mojave Desert, so I'm always trying. The raven says I'm silly, trying to use words. Life is feeling, not words, she says.

The raven's not so bad. Sure, she eats tortoise eggs and pesters the coyotes and golden eagles and shouts at me a lot in her wobbly voice, but she's the first friend I made in this desert. When I was a kid, we'd talk on my family's long drives to Southern California and Utah, me looking out the window and her gliding and dipping and diving as the creosote bushes and cars swirled and whirled in her dark eyes. We'd talk in the language of seeing, wordless but full of meaning, the desert gleaming.

Now, as I turn into the Wee Thump Joshua Tree Wilderness, ready to try and write something, she's rambling on and on telling me what that something should be: the ways that birds like to perch in the Joshua trees (the most horizontal branches are her favorite), or how so many birds nest in the Joshua trees (but not her because she likes to be different). And do not, she says, write about the golden eagles, gilded flickers, or Bendire's and Leconte's thrashers. I think she's a little jealous of the attention they get. I tell her so and she guffaws and leaves me alone with the Joshua trees, at last.

I am coming here tonight, August 30, to see the supermoon rise and watch over the desert. Now it's almost sunset, 97 degrees, and the desert is silent and still. If I had ears like a barn owl or a kit fox, I could perhaps hear the clicky chatter of harvester ants tunneling below my feet. Every now and then, there is the faintest breeze through the creosote and blackbrush, just barely enough to move their leaves. I thank the Joshua trees for letting me share this space with them.

As I wait for the sunset, sitting cross-legged in the gravelly sand, I flip through my bird field guide and scan the pages of all the birds I've seen here before. Western bluebird, red-tailed hawk, western meadowlark, Brewer's sparrow... but as I turn the pages, I realize, for all my birdwatching, I've hardly paid attention to any of their eyes. Had I ever really seen them, let alone seen the desert from their wordless, seeing language? So, feeling like I finally have something to say to the Joshua trees, I ask, "How many birds have ever looked at you?" They were quiet. It takes a long time to count something like that. I return to my silence as well.

The sky becomes powdered purple, the same shade as shadows stretching over the sand. With my back to the moonrise, I pull out a journal and try to draw the basic shapes of the Joshua trees. I understand their language better at dusk and dawn, when the shadows stir their cells and their limbs bend and stretch like silent dancers, waiting for the throngs of birds, yucca moths, and giant ground sloths to slow dance with them, their wordless partners across time. The raven once said all yuccas are shy about their dancing, and that's why I've only seen their poses, as still as the mountains enfolding the valley.

When I turn around, giving them a chance to move, the moon's red eye gazes at me, unblinking in the deepening sky. Humbled, wordless, all I can say is that it glows.



It rises over the gentle slope of the bajada as an unseen chorus of black-throated sparrows sing a moon song to the desert, pouring silver light from their voices. The sun dissolves. And I, dissolving with it, feel the peering eyes of hundreds of unseen creatures across the desert, a language in their blinking, holding precious water in their eyes.

As I fall asleep that night, after much moon-gazing, I find myself in other bodies, seeing through other eyes. A nighthawk flies beneath Polaris, mouth agape, its black eye reflecting the moonlight and illuminating tiny insects to eat. A great-horned owl hoo-hoos from one of the Joshua trees, listening to the underbrush for scuffling kangaroo rats, pupils deep and wide like two pools of moonless water.

In follow the moonlight to other days, to other forms. I look across the desert from the eye of a greater roadrunner, as golden as the sunrise. The roadrunner coos and coos to the desert, to nearby mates and rivals. Suddenly, he flutters down, blinking. He pumps his tail and stands straighter, scanning the shadows beneath blackbrush and sunny rocks for lizards and grasshoppers. His stomach growls. He runs, parting salt and sand beneath his scaly feet, two toes forward and two backwards, like the paths crossing between dreaming and waking. He runs, stops. Scans, runs. As he hunts, salt leaks from his solar eye. He continues to zigzag through the brush and cactus spines...

In fall away from the roadrunner, and the current of eyes carries me beneath blackbrush and into a creosote where ravens squabble overhead. A turkey vulture soars through the cloud of volcanic feathers, following the highway, looking for blood and guts against the tar with an eye as dark as a new moon. Thousands of feet below she finds a hairy splotch and sails down to a black-tailed jackrabbit, the buzzing flies talking into his ears. How to eat this? Guts first? She peers at the cloudless sky. Soon the ravens will come, hungry from all their creosote whirling. So she stabs her beak into the jackrabbit's eye, still wet, hazel like dappled light on a Joshua tree's stalk.

That hazel eye spills me down a sandy wash where the jackrabbit ran. Clumps of mistletoe hang in a thorny thicket of catclaw acacias and mesquites, a trio of Joshua trees on the horizon. Here, a slate Phainopepla wrups from a hunched honey mesquite. The mistletoe clinging to its twisted branches is as red as the first flush of sunrise, as red as the Phainopepla's eyes. She flutters and gobble up some mistletoe fruit, red eyes eating red eyes. A male joins her, jet wings swooshing like a cloud's shadow over the land. They frantically eat and eat, eat thousands of berries every day. Blinking berries and dreaming berries, they eat as the honey mesquite grows heavy beneath the mistletoe, redder and redder each day. Its roots plunge into unseen waters, sifting through sand that holds traces of the ocean millions of years ago...

Awave of awakening crashes over me and I stir beneath the Joshua trees. My eyes feel dry, as if they've been open all night. The first flush of sunrise is as red as a Phainopepla's eye. Unseen, the black-throated sparrows sing a sun song as rising rays restore the forms of living things. I pace and shuffle the sand around the Joshua trees, thanking them for letting me spend the night. I wonder where the raven is and what she'd say about my dreaming... she'd laugh at all this writing.

There is nothing more to write. The Joshua trees are still counting all the birds. They've reached the thousands now. In roots and eyes, wordless water flows.



Desert Mistletoe is toxic to all except Phainopepla, who have adapted to eat them safely.





A Glimpse into the History of WALKING BOX RANCH

By Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett

Cattle ranching has been an integral part of Nevada's story for over 150 years, and has drawn people from all walks of life and many parts of the world. In the early 1930's, two Hollywood silent film stars left the bustling world of Hollywood for the stark, open landscape of the Mojave Desert. The legendary Clara Bow and her husband, Rex Bell, left their movie star lifestyle to become ranchers at the Walking Box Ranch just west of Searchlight, Nevada, now in the heart of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument.

HOLLYWOOD FILM STARS

Rex Bell (born George Francis Beldam), a dashing leading man of the silver screen, starred in Western films during the 1920s and 1930s. His rugged good looks and on-screen presence earned him a dedicated fan base. His debut film was *Wild West Romance* in 1928 and he continued to make several films a year into the mid 1930s. Although he continued acting until 1961, he began chasing other pursuits which lead him to leave Hollywood.

Rex Bell's aspirations extended beyond his acting career. He came to Nevada to become a cattle rancher and later entered politics. He was elected Lieutenant Governor of Nevada in 1954. He later ran for the position of Governor in 1958 but was unsuccessful; he was running again at the time of his death in 1962. Rex Bell's political endeavors showcased his commitment to public service and his love for Nevada. Longtime Las Vegas residents may remember the Rex Bell Western Store downtown or be familiar with the Rex Bell Elementary School named in his honor.

Clara Bow was born in Brooklyn, NY, and lived an early life of poverty. After winning a contest in the early 1920s, she left her dismal childhood behind and moved to Los Angeles to become a silent film star. She was one of the most prominent actresses of the silent film era and was dubbed the "It Girl" of the roaring 20s. Her bubbly personality, infectious charm, and undeniable on-screen presence made her a beloved figure in Hollywood during the 1920s. She starred in fifty films, including *Wings* (1927), which won the first Academy Award for Best Picture.

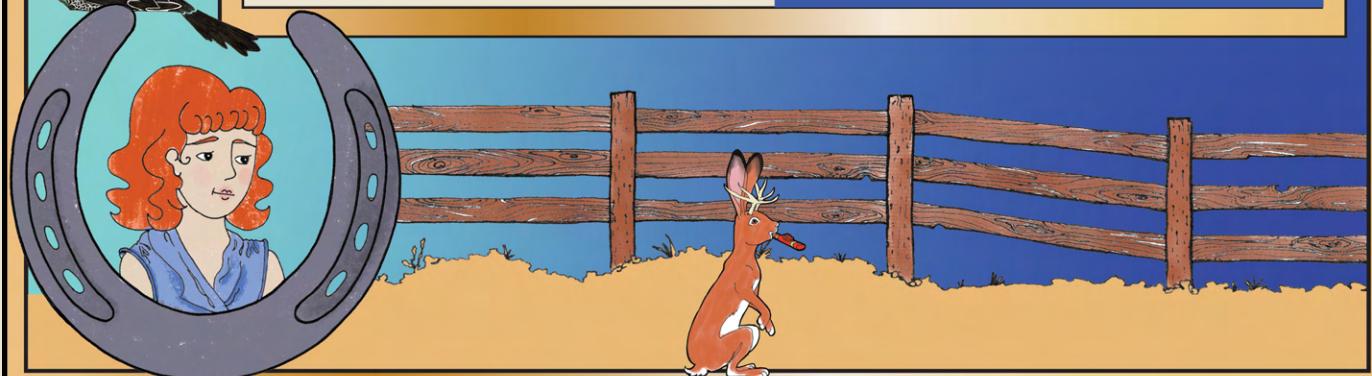
Despite her immense popularity, Clara Bow's life was not without challenges. She faced scrutiny from the press and battled personal insecurities. Clara's stress and anxiety showed in her health, and Rex wanted to move Clara away from the bustling world of Hollywood, saying "this is the last time you are going to see Clara. I'm taking her out of this town, and she's not coming back. I am going to save her life."

THE BIRTH OF WALKING BOX RANCH

In the first decade of the 1900s, southern Nevada was booming with people looking to find their fortune in gold and silver. Searchlight was a hotbed of activity with one of the largest populations in the state. Gold mining



THE CZECH NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE holds the only known copy of *WILD WEST ROMANCE*.

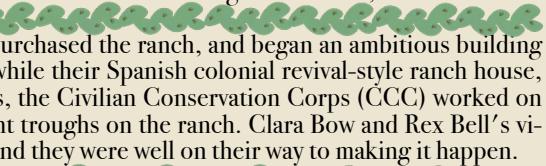


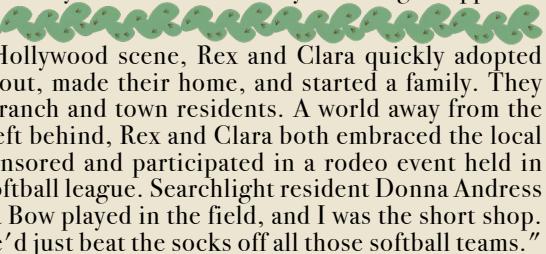
Above: Clara Bow and Rex Bell at home.



was prosperous, and with the influx of people to the area, supporting businesses also sprang up, willing to sell their goods to the miners. The Rock Springs Land & Cattle Company responded to the need for food and other resources in Searchlight and the surrounding region. The operation quickly grew to one million acres of grazing land across Southern Nevada and California.

In 1927, when a multi-year drought greatly affected production, the Rock Springs Co. sold off their interests. Several smaller ranches from Rock Springs were formed: the O.X., Kessler and Valley View Ranch. The southern portion became the Woolf Ranch. In 1931, John Woolf sold his ranch to Rex Bell and Clara Bow, who continued to use the property as a working cattle ranch, and as a retreat

to escape from the pressures of Hollywood life.  Rex and Clara married around the time they purchased the ranch, and began an ambitious building project. The couple lived in a shack onsite while their Spanish colonial revival-style ranch house, Rancho Clarita, was built in 1931. In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) worked on improvements to the wells and water containment troughs on the ranch. Clara Bow and Rex Bell's vision was to create a place of beauty and respite, and they were well on their way to making it happen.

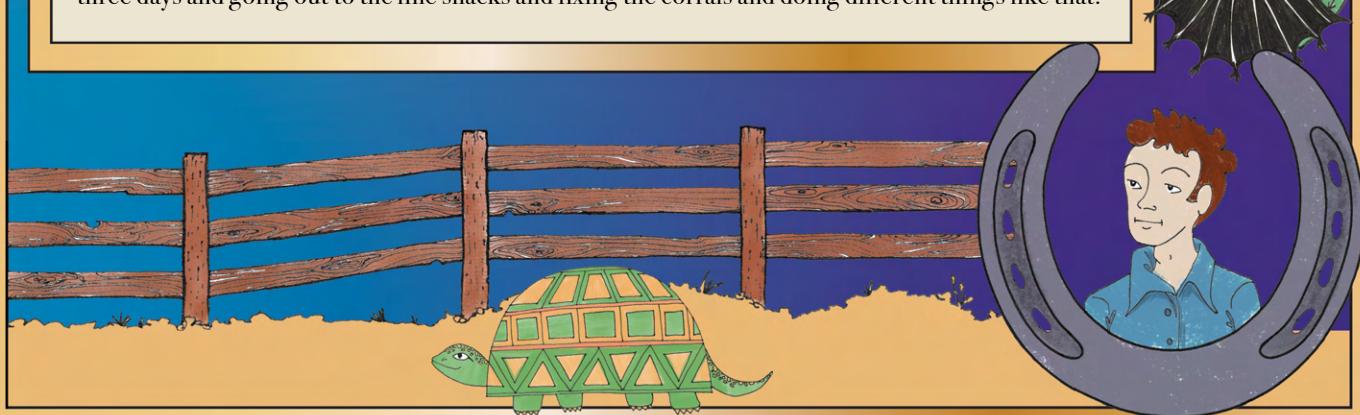
DAILY RANCH LIFE  With a desire for change away from the Hollywood scene, Rex and Clara quickly adopted the ranch life Rex had once dreamed about, made their home, and started a family. They settled in and were well-liked by the nearby ranch and town residents. A world away from the glamorous, high-pressure lifestyle they had left behind, Rex and Clara both embraced the local ranching effort and area activities. They sponsored and participated in a rodeo event held in Searchlight, and Clara even joined the local softball league. Searchlight resident Donna Andress remembers playing softball with Clara: "Clara Bow played in the field, and I was the short stop. We used to come to Vegas all the time, and we'd just beat the socks off all those softball teams."

The quiet, natural setting provided the retreat Clara sought. Each day after breakfast with Rex, Clara spent hours in the desert hiking with their dogs. In the evenings, Rex and Clara would ride their horses to the base of the nearby mountain and watch the sunset. This was their home and, for a time, a happy one for both Rex and Clara.

While the Walking Box was most certainly a working ranch, a bit of the Hollywood lifestyle crept in. The Bells would host large parties for their Hollywood friends and even hosted General Patton's troops while they were in the area training during World War II. Life at the ranch was hard and often lonely between the intermittent parties. Clara gave birth to two boys, Tony Beldam (who later changed his name to Rex Anthony Bell, Jr.) and George Beldam, Jr., who spent their childhoods on the ranch until their move to Las Vegas in 1945. Rex Bell Jr., speaking about growing up on Walking Box Ranch recalls, "We were taught to be young cowboys. I believe I had learned to fix a fence by the time I was seven years old. I was pulling wire and fixing fence. I was taking pack horses for two and three days and going out to the line shacks and fixing the corrals and doing different things like that."



We beat
their
Socks off!



Above: Ranch hands brand a calf at Walking Box. Illustration by Rachel Hillberg.



REX AND CLARA PART WAYS WITH THE RANCH

Rex moved into the retail business as the boys grew, opening a store specializing in Western wear in Las Vegas. This venture and a series of health issues for Clara prompted the family to leave the ranch and move to Las Vegas. Later, each chose a separate life: Clara created a life of seclusion in California while Rex stayed in Nevada and became involved in politics. He served as Lieutenant Governor for eight years. Although separated for the remainder of their lives, Rex and Clara never divorced. Rex died of a heart attack in 1962 while running for Governor, and Clara died three years later at her home.

The Walking Box Ranch was leased and eventually purchased by Karl Weikel in 1945. The days of lavish parties were gone; the ranch was strictly a working ranch but a content place for Weikel and his family. Then, in 1990, the desert tortoise was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a recovery plan that essentially halted livestock grazing in the lower portion of the state. Their livelihood ended, and the Weikels sold the ranch. Eventually, the Viceroy Gold Corporation purchased the ranch to use as a corporate retreat and headquarters for their gold mine in the nearby Castle Mountains. Corporation head Ross Fitzpatrick and his wife Linda took on the ranch as a personal project, pouring money and time into the now dilapidated buildings and structures. Their time and effort eventually led to the restored Walking Box Ranch being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

WALKING BOX RANCH TODAY

In time, gold prices rose and fell, and the ranch was sold and bought several times before the Bureau of Land Management

purchased the ranch in 2004 using Southern Nevada Public Lands Management (SNPLMA) funds. After several years of renovations, the ranch is open for limited guided tours, hikes, star watching events and volunteer cleanups, managed by the BLM in collaboration with the non-profit organization Friends of Avi Kwa Ame. In addition, some of the items from the ranch collection are now in the process of making their way back to the property to be displayed once again to the public.

The ranch also has had a long relationship with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). History professors Andy Kirk and Dierdre Clemente have been instrumental in placing the ranch on the National Register of Historic Places and managing the artifacts donated to the university by Rex and Clara's son Rex Bell Jr. such as historical photographs, furniture, and ranching equipment. Claytee White and Barbara Tabach of UNLV's Oral History Research Center have worked hard to collect the oral histories of ranch residents Rex Bell Jr., Ron Marshall (son of ranch foreman), Carl Weikel (son of Karl Weikel), and the Fitzpatricks. These items and histories tell a tale of the journey to find solace and prosperity.

The Walking Box Ranch stands as a testament to the intertwined lives of Clara Bow and Rex Bell – two extraordinary dreamers who left their mark on Hollywood, Searchlight, Nevada, and beyond. They created a place of solace and beauty through their shared vision, dedication, and love for nature. Today, as we explore the ranch's history and the lives of these iconic figures, we gain a deeper appreciation for the connections between Hollywood's glitz and glamour and the desert landscape's tranquility. Walking Box Ranch stands as a reminder of our local area's rich ranching and mining history, and most of all, of the tenacity and drive of those who call Nevada home.✿

MORE INFORMATION ON WALKING BOX RANCH

Scan the code for more information and resources about Walking Box Ranch, including how you can also sign up to volunteer during one of Friends of Avi Kwa Ame's monthly cleanup events! 



Above: Walking Box Ranch today.

CACTUS CORNER



The red barrel cactus (*Ferocactus cylindraceus* var. *tortu*-*spinus*) is native to Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in the rocky granite outcroppings of the El Dorado, McColough and Newberry Mountains. It is also called the California barrel, compass barrel, or miner's compass, due to its tendency to lean slightly towards the southwest. You can see some excellent examples growing out of seemingly solid rock along the cliff walls of Hiko Spring Canyon. The California Barrel has a green outer skin that is sheltered by rows of many long, curved spines that start out red but turn lighter as they age. This creates a bright red halo effect that makes this cactus stand out from its surroundings.

Like all cacti, barrels store water in their spongy tissue. If you see one with straight or concaved sides, you will know that the plant could use a drink—if you see one with plump, swelled-out sides, you can be sure that it has rained recently or that the cactus has a good source of underground water. And speaking of drinking: sadly, the old cartoons are not true. You can't just cut the top off a barrel cactus and drink from a magic container of water inside.

In the early to mid-20th century, cactus sales were big business, and unfortunately, so was poaching cactus on public lands. For this reason, some areas in the El Dorado range were totally denuded of these majestic plants. Barrel cacti reproduce mostly by the spread of seeds, and you can see evidence of this in the different sizes of cacti found in family groups upon a single hill. Thankfully, with more protective laws in place, this and other species of cacti are making a strong, slow comeback.

BARREL CACTUS



You can easily obtain barrel cactus seeds and specimens at native plant nurseries or online if you'd like to include one in your drought-tolerant yard. While you wouldn't be able to drink from it, you can eat the barrel's small, black seeds, and the small, skinned fruit is pleasantly tart and lemony.

ACTUAL BARREL



Illustration by Patrick Zolp-Mikols.



THE YORK FIRE: Interview with ENVISIONING Emily Willard, WHAT COMES NEXT plant rehabilitation S P E C I A L I S T

The York fire burned 93,078 acres of land (around 8,000 acres of it in Avi Kwa Ame National Monument) in July and August of 2023. It is considered the largest fire to date in the Mojave, surpassing the 43,273-acre Dome Fire in August 2020. Your Gold Beam editors recently had a chance to speak to plant rehabilitation specialist Emily Willard, who works for the Castle Mountain Mine within Castle Mountains National Monument, located adjacent to Avi Kwa Ame and the Mojave National Preserve, to find out more about what to expect in the years to come after the fire.

GOLD BEAM: Fire is an ecosystem catalyst, and it dramatically changes the look of a landscape. How much change is the area actually going through, versus what we see on the surface? Will the ecosystem grow back one day in the same way it was before, or will it become something new and different?

EMILY: It depends on time more than any other factor. The Joshua tree is one of the yucca species least adapted to fire, although research indicates variation; it is expected that this fire will not benefit them in the long run. Quick, low temperature fires may trigger vegetative growth in the form of “pups,” rosettes that grow from the base of a scorched trunk, however, many of the Joshua trees in this burned area suffered too much stress and will eventually expire, even though they had some green on them after the fire. The native, perennial bunch grasses have already regenerated, but whether the area will ever return to an old growth Joshua tree woodland is unknown. Maybe in a thousand years. We can hope to see Joshua tree and other yucca species recruitment (seedlings) within the next few decades. More immediately, we can expect to see a healthy, native ecosystem filled with perennial bunch grasses, cactus, shrubs, and wildflowers.

GOLD BEAM: Seeing fire reshape a place you are attached to is emotional. It’s hard to look at a burnt landscape and not feel that everything is dead. However, life does slowly return – How does this regenerative process work?

EMILY: The blackened scenery definitely affected our mood at the mine. The greens, blues, and golds found in nature were created to be naturally calming and uplifting for us as humans. The lack of bird-song and small animal life left a noticeable vacancy that felt lonely. However, beneath the surface is a living, dormant seedbed, waiting for solar exposure. The bare ground provided this window of opportunity. The gift of rain in late August and early September 2023 helped to nurture herbaceous plant life. Many native and non-native plants jump at the chance to grow in bare ground situations, whether it be in a tire track, a rock fall, or a burn. These plants are called pioneer species. Their ecosystem role or “job” is to colonize open areas. There are also species that are fire-adapted, meaning they may resprout or send out suckers (stump sprouts) after being burned, or fire-dependent, meaning their seeds require high heat to germinate. Many annuals prefer disturbance and pave the way for perennials and woody plants. So no, not



everything is dead, in fact, many plants are feeling rejuvenated. A few weeks after the fire, we spotted a burned cactus at the edge of our nursery that was growing a new pad out of its charred stub; remarkable, really!

GOLD BEAM: What types of plants are you seeing emerge, and when? ♦♦♦♦♦

EMILY: Twenty-four days after the fire I was surveying a burned fence when I noticed on the ground what I thought was green sand or an old, green, asphalt shingle. Upon closer inspection, I discovered the most minute plant sprouts, too tiny for me to identify. I was so excited and relieved! As a bonus, these sprouts did not appear to be invasive species like cheat grass. In the subsequent weeks we received rain several days and nights in a row. Hopefully the El Niño weather will bring more precipitation that will keep the seed bed moist, and help injured plants grow new tissue. Heavy rains have the potential to do harm by washing away topsoil, but I believe the quick regeneration of perennials in August and September has already helped to stabilize much of the burned acreage. Some of the plants that have already regrown are big galleta, blue grama, and pink bush muhly grasses, Phacelia, desert marigold, Mojave aster, brittlebush, leafy fleabane, various buckwheats and rabbitbrush, mesquite trees, and desert willow (*Chilopsis*).

GOLD BEAM: How does a fire like this impact animals and birds as they look for food and shelter?

EMILY: On one of the fire nights, two of our miners responding to the fire saw a hawk resting on a berm. It appeared dazed and exhausted. They said they could have reached out and caught it in their hands. This is how I expect a lot of the birds felt; causes could be smoke inhalation, diurnal species having to move at night, dehydration, hunger, heat stress, exertion, or a combination of these factors. Nesting birds would have to abandon eggs and babies, which would cause distress and affect future populations. I'm afraid that many animals were unable to outrun the York Fire. I hope that it burned quickly and cool enough not to deplete the oxygen in animal burrows; this would allow creatures like lizards, mice, badgers, and tortoises to escape the fire. Burrowing animals dig new burrows in charred soil; the food supply is more of an issue since the habitat has been altered. Birds, especially woodpeckers, will nest in burned trees, usually after the ash has washed away, and the lack of vegetative cover may help raptors hunt in scorched areas, but I noticed an absence of raptors at the mine for roughly 2 months following the fire. Lately, I have observed hundreds of small songbirds, such as white-crowned sparrows, house finches, and juncos. They seem overjoyed with the fresh new plant life and the water in our bird ponds. Many pioneer plant species are prolific seed-producers, an adaptation which serves various ecosystem functions, like topsoil conservation, but also provides food for small mammals and birds. New, tender plants feed herbivores such as pack rats and mule deer. ♦♦

GOLD BEAM: The Dome Fire that happened in August 2020 gives an example of a similar area in recovery. What lessons are there for us from that area, and what are we studying now to help us understand and respond to future fire events in the Mojave Desert?

EMILY: The National Park Service has been planting Joshua tree seedlings on the Cima Dome burn, but the survival rate is low. I have heard that the Dome fire burned hot, and many partially burned Joshua trees that initially survived have since perished; if the rosettes are not completely green following a fire, the plant likely has experienced too much stress to recover. The Bureau of Land Manage-

Illustration by Cat Johnson.

ment (BLM) conducted a hydrologic survey of the York Fire for their Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) program. Federal funding for noxious weed control will be provided in support of these post-fire efforts. ◇◇◇◇◇ At the Castle Mountain Mine, I am planning several studies on the relationship between the Joshua tree and fire. Our mine is special in that we already have research underway with Desert Research Institute (DRI) and the University of California Davis studying mycorrhizal bacteria, organisms which usually form a mutually beneficial relationship with their plant hosts. This research could expand into fire investigations; for example, how does fire affect the mycorrhizal structure and colonization on burned vs. unburned Joshua tree woodland sites? Very exciting stuff! ◇◇◇◇◇ According to the Fire Effects Information System of the USDA Forest Service, Joshua tree seed germination is high following heat treatment at 190° Fahrenheit. I decided to test this myself and heat-treated two batches of seed in the oven at our on-site assay lab; I planted two batches of seed without treatment. The results were 90% germination after heat treatment and only 9% germination without heat treatment, which may indicate that fire promotes Joshua tree sexual reproduction (seed). I will be running more heat treatment tests in the future.

I also want to explore the use of natural wildfire ash as a fertilizer for Joshua tree seed propagation, and compare the germination rates, growth rates, and establishment of seed from burned and unburned trees. This is an exciting time for discovery, especially since we have all these resources at the mine and a greenhouse facility in which to grow! ◇◇◇◇◇

GOLD BEAM: What are some of the ways that desert fires start, and some things we can do to minimize the chances of contributing to a desert wildfire?

EMILY: Possible wildfire ignition sources are many, from lightning, the spark from a trailer chain on a rock, and recreational target shooting, to smoking, campfires, arson, fireworks, or the hot undercarriage of a vehicle. Fires may even be

started from the magnification of the sun's rays through a broken piece of glass! As far as I know, the cause of the York Fire is still undetermined. ◇◇◇◇◇ Our desert ecosystems are especially prone to invasion by non-native annual grasses like the bromes (e.g. cheat grass) and other flammable annual weeds like tumbleweeds (Russian thistle) and mustards. Each state has a noxious weed list with plants that require management by law because of their detrimental effects to agriculture, wildlife, and other valuable features of our landscape and economy. Many noxious weeds are pioneer species which readily colonize disturbed areas, reproducing and dying off quickly. Due to the flammable nature of dead annual weeds, fires are more easily started. Our desert soils are easily compacted, and with little rainfall, native reclamation is difficult. Therefore, it is vital that all vehicles remain on designated roads. ◇◇◇◇

GOLD BEAM: We don't usually think of the desert as a place where a wildfire can spread. What are the factors that create this opportunity? The York Fire was even larger than the Cima Fire, so it seems as if recently desert wildfires are getting larger. Is there a reason for this potential trend?

EMILY: The Mojave Desert is a truly unique area with incredible plant and animal diversity. I have yet to work in a desert with more herbaceous plants in the understory than you will find in the Mojave National Preserve. Dry,

dormant, or dead herbaceous plant material is the perfect fuel for a fire and creates a pathway for the flames to travel to new areas. Mature Joshua trees often have a thick layer of dead leaf blades covering their trunks. This allows flames to climb higher and embers to blow greater distances. High winds over the first weekend of the York Fire also contributed to its spread.

A collection of different government jurisdictions in the immediate vicinity of a fire's epicenter can make allocating fire-fighting resources complicated. Increases in fire frequency and intensity have been widely documented across the West. Causes for this include long-term and extreme drought, the mismanagement of forest stands, invasive species, and increased human-landscape interaction. Wildfire research is constantly being updated.

GOLD BEAM: Working at Equinox Gold Corp.'s Castle Mountain Mine, what was your experience like as the York Fire was happening? ◇◇◇◇◇

EMILY: At first, I thought the fire was exciting. I get



Miners at the Castle Mountain Mine watch the York Fire approaching. Photo by N. Rubio.

Russian Thistle
(*Kalitragus*)
Illustration
from U.S.
Agricultural
Dept. 1895

a kick out of watching natural phenomena, like thunderstorms rolling in. Having worked for the US Forest Service in the past, there was that feeling that I describe as adrenalized communal spirit that you often get during the fire season. I think it is the anticipation of a fast-paced group effort and the opportunity to do something great as a team. Everyone was outside watching the smoke plume. We were not evacuated but I did get a call from my boss on that Sunday recommending that I not come in to work on Tuesday due to the poor air quality. I anxiously checked the online fire maps in the meantime. Professionally trained fire fighters did not use Equinox equipment to fight the fire, but Equinox had our own volunteer fire fighters, of whom we are very proud. Our miners diligently combatted the flames with our water trucks and hand tools. Two of our Process Plant Operators, Phil Hoth and Nick Rubio, saved our greenhouse, North Nursery, and administration complex with shovels and fire extinguishers on the night of July 29th. They are my heroes!

The Castle Mountain Mine not only reported the York Fire, but we also played an integral part in preventing it from spreading eastward, despite our limited water resources. We did lose approximately 300 acres to the fire, but no structures were damaged, or employees harmed. We wish that we had been permitted to drive our water trucks, which hold a combined 12,000 gallons, onto the Preserve to put out the initial blaze in Caruthers Canyon before it had a chance to spread and destroy  loved old growth Joshua tree Forest.

GOLD BEAM: Thanks to everyone at the Castle Mountain Mine for their service. Are there things we can do to help the plants, animals, and ecosystem as a whole recover from the York Fire? What should we be doing, avoid doing, or be aware of that pertains to this landscape?

EMILY: As I touched on earlier, it is imperative that all motorized vehicles remain on designated roads and do not forge new trails. **Please check your wheel wells and undercarriages for debris that may ignite or spread weed seeds before recreating on public lands.** Ensure that trailer chains do not drag on the ground. 



A fire-damaged Joshua tree. Photograph by Maria Volborth.

Keep an eye out for any invasive species on public lands and alert your public land managers to their locations; GPS coordinates and photographs are especially helpful. Hand-pulling Sahara mustard is a quick fix. Volunteer to assist with weed control and revegetation efforts on your public lands; volunteers have accomplished so much!

Thoroughly douse your campfires with water before leaving a campsite. Follow fire restrictions, do not litter, and pick up trash when you can. Animal populations are often linked

across wide areas, especially migrating bird species, so any changes made at home, even if you are a good distance away from your nearest public land, will help wildlife recover. 

Do your research on landscape plants and try to select plant species that are native, or if non-native, are not invasive and provide food and nectar to wildlife. Control weedy and invasive species in your own backyard and contact your local government officials about weed control in your town or city. Efforts to control weeds in populated areas will decrease their spread into wilderness. Consider venturing into public lands on foot or on horseback, rather than on motorized transportation (always go prepared). Be respectful of wildlife and observe them at a safe distance to minimize stress. We can gain so much by quietly watching animals going about their daily routines! 

GOLD BEAM: What is your dream for this landscape's recovery, your vision for how it happens, what we learn, and how people are involved?

EMILY: I am already admiring the fresh regrowth of the perennial grasses and I am amazed by the wildflowers and grasses that have grown, flowered, and seeded for the second time this year! I can't wait to unravel the mysteries of Joshua tree regeneration, some of which will answer very practical questions relating to

conservation and reclamation efforts, with and without fire. My dream for this landscape would be minimal noxious weed invasion and erosion, the return of reptiles, and an increase in desert tortoises. It would be awesome to find baby Joshua trees! I hope that folks will continue to enjoy nature and learn about the landscape while being mindful of their footprint and tire tracks.



invasive Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*)

Illustration from Selected Weeds of the United States U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Handbook No. 366

CLARA BOW: From Hollywood to Searchlight Desert Serenity

BY N. RON SAFRAN



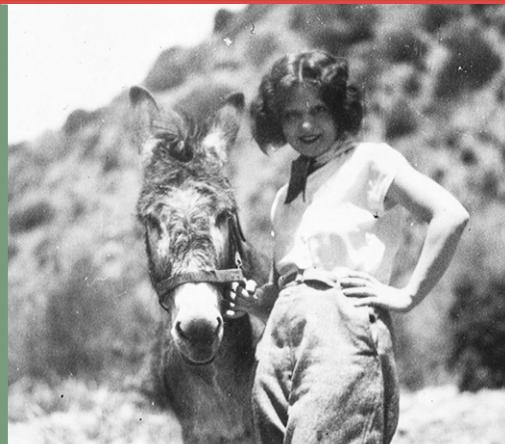
etween Nipton, California, and Searchlight, Nevada, the enigmatic aura of Walking Box Ranch weaves a captivating narrative. This remote desert retreat, a place of beauty and solace, once offered refuge to one of Hollywood's most iconic stars, Clara Bow. It was at Walking Box Ranch where the celestial beauty above and the tranquility of the landscape below would mirror the luminescence of her silent film stardom, providing Clara the profound escape she craved from a hectic history. Her story, intertwined with the allure of this dreamlike landscape, reveals a tale of escapism, renewal, and the enduring appeal of the Nevada desert.

The name Clara Bow is one that resonates with the grandeur of Hollywood's golden age. She wasn't just an actress, but a star whose presence on the silver screen could illuminate even the darkest of theaters with a unique charm that was all her own. Clara epitomized the exuberance of "The Roaring Twenties," becoming Hollywood's quintessential flapper girl. With hit films such as "Wings" and "It" (1927), she embodied female empowerment during a time of great societal change for women, earning her the title of the "It" girl. Receiving 45,000 fan letters in just one month, the public undoubtedly adored her, yet the tale of Clara Bow and Walking Box Ranch begins a world away from the glitz and glamour of Tinseltown.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Clara faced a tumultuous childhood marked by her mother's mental health struggles. Growing up, she experienced some harrowing incidents; from her mother threatening her with injury to her childhood friend dying in her arms. Clara sought refuge in the world of magazines, and after winning a local beauty contest, she catapulted quickly into the spotlight of silent cinema. The red-haired sensation's meteoric rise to fame was accompanied, however, by scandal and controversy.



Clara Bow, *It*, promotional poster, 1927.



Clara Bow was Hollywood's first true sex symbol, setting the standard for future icons like Marilyn Monroe, she faced relentless scrutiny for her unapologetic embrace of youthful femininity. Amidst the turbulent Hollywood scene, Clara's life was a whirlwind of excesses and high-profile relationships, including romances with luminaries like Bela Lugosi and Gary Cooper. Her personal life was closely followed by the media, who exploited the dramas of her offscreen life to the point of making them legendary, and her presence in the gossip columns was a constant source of fascination for the public at large. When Clara's secretary, Daisy De Voe, publicly accused her of promiscuity and erratic behavior, resulting in a litany of lawsuits, the media eagerly reported on her alleged crimes, gambling debts, and courtroom battles, and her reputation took a hit as the public turned against her.

During these trying times, one man remained her anchor—Rex Bell. The popular Western film star, whose arrival marked a turning point in Clara Bow's life, starred alongside her in "The Legion of the Condemned" (1928) and "True to the Navy" (1930), showcasing their undeniable chemistry. As Clara faced unprecedented libel from Daisy's smear campaigns, Rex was a constant source of support. Clara felt betrayed and devastated, and her health deteriorated to the point where doctors recommended institutionalization in 1931. Wanting something more real and lasting than Hollywood could offer, a new beginning beckoned her. Enter Walking Box Ranch, the ideal opportunity to escape and start a new life, away from the pressures of fame and the big city.

Con their journeys through Las Vegas, Clara and Rex's affection for the desert deepened. Before the Hoover Dam boom, when nearby Las Vegas' population was only 5,000, the unlikely town of Nipton is where Walking Box Ranch was born,



Top left: Clara Bow and Rex Bell, with her own award sitting behind them. Top right: Clara Bow, with her donkey, Beautiful, in Searchlight, Nevada. [Walking Box Photograph Collection, 1930-1970]. Special Collections & Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

becoming a landmark in the trajectory of Clara's life. The pair was captivated by the quaint, five-room accommodation called 'Hotel Nipton,' where they often stayed in room 3. Clara would gaze out of the windows onto the vast and serene desert landscape—a stark contrast to the frenetic world of Hollywood.

Now affectionately known as the "Clara Bow Room," UNLV English Instructor and Nipton resident, Shannon Salter, explains that the hotel would have been rustic and cozy in Clara's time. An adobe built of clay and railroad ties, "you could sit on the porch and watch the train day and night."

TIt was here where Clara and Rex heard about an opportunity that would change the course of their lives: a large property was for sale only fifteen miles from Nipton, called "Woolf Ranch." The Joshua tree filled landscape beckoned the two newly-weds with dreams of embracing a slower-paced, cowboy way of life. In 1931, John Woolf sold the ranch to Rex Bell, who initially dubbed it "Bell Ranch," but later named it the Walking Box (named after the type of camera used in early motion pictures that made him and his beloved famous). This sprawling 500,000-acre property became the canvas of Clara's dreams and a haven for their friends, including Clark Gable, Carole Lombard, John Wayne, and a young Clint Eastwood.

While her intentions to stay in Nevada were steadfast, Fox offered Clara \$150,000 for a comeback, a staggering wage during The Great Depression. "Call Her Savage" and "Hoopla" (1932) were her final performances on the big screen when she retired at only 28 years old. "Nothing else except happiness and health count in this life. I have never had much of either but I am going to find them both," said Clara.

From then on, her earnings from Fox helped her vision materialize as she and Rex constructed a Spanish Colonial Re-

vival style ranch house on their new property. Rex nicknamed the Ranch headquarters "Rancho Clarita," (Little Clara's Ranch in Spanish). The house was thoughtfully oriented on the ranch to capture the mesmerizing sights, including a stunning view of Spirit Mountain from the upper floor. The main home featured a pool deck, game room, guesthouse, barn, cellar, rock garden, and miles and miles of desert.

Clara cherished the silence of the area, finding respite from her past. Equipped with every available utility at the time except a telephone, Clara finally found her peace, tending to the rock and cactus gardens, riding horses through miles of sagebrush, sunbathing under the blue sky, and gazing at the brilliant desert stars at night.

Clara would "[ride] along with Rex on their cattle drives. They took the cattle to Nipton and loaded them onto the Union Pacific," says Salter. Living out the life of Rex's fictional characters, Salter imagines that their rides to Nipton through the dense Wee Thump Joshua tree forest were met with the beautiful blue sky, the Castle Mountains, and juniper and pines. "As they

descended towards Nipton, they would have had the whole valley spread out before them, with that fantastic swoop of sky which now frames the Mojave Preserve from across the 15 freeway."

Walking Box Ranch was truly a paradise where she'd raise her two sons Rex Jr. and George, and even look after her estranged father, Robert, who once found himself a part of an infamous, yet comical kitchen catastrophe. The story goes that in the midst of hosting a dinner party for political dignitaries at the Ranch, Rex assigned Clara the unusual task of preparing the meal, despite her limited culinary skills. Clara's expertise extended only to macaroni and cheese, but when her father tasted her creation and found it to be less than palatable, he couldn't hide his disappointment. What followed was a play-

Clara Bow in the kitchen at Walking Box Ranch. [Walking Box Photograph Collection, 1930-1970]. Special Collections & Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

ful yet dramatic macaroni and cheese fight between Clara and her father in the kitchen, all while their guests waited unsuspectingly in the dining room.

Clara Bow's unconventional persona simply blossomed at the Ranch through experiences like these. However, their simple lifestyle took an unexpected turn as Rex's political and business success grew, starting in the mid-forties, and propelled him into various offices such as Lieutenant Governor of Nevada. Under the umbrella of Rexco, Inc., Rex and his brother even opened a novelty shop, and more notably, a Western clothing store bearing the label, "Rex Bell's Walking Box Brand."

As the Ranch inspired his public ventures to flourish, Clara found herself inadvertently thrust back into the limelight. Now in her forties, struggling with insomnia, anxiety and persistent discomfort, finding stillness became elusive at Walking Box Ranch and Clara's paradise was no longer enough to aid her in finding a peaceful life. They both ultimately left the ranch, and in 1951 it was sold and later acquired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Clara lived in California until she died in 1965 while

watching a Western film, but her legacy, dreams, and visions endure.

Today, the Walking Box Ranch serves as an educational and preservation destination, celebrated for its unique ecosystem and historical significance linked to Clara and Rex. The tiny town that started the Walking Box narrative, Nipton, CA, continues to acknowledge the Walking Box story on their town historic marker and information kiosk outside Hotel Nipton. Standing as a testament to Clara Bow's enduring spirit, Walking Box Ranch remains a site where one can feel the power and remnants of this Hollywood icon's sanctuary, witness the stunning desert vistas, and perhaps even feel the presence of a bygone era.

N. Ron Safran is president of the Board of Directors of Friends of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, which encompasses Walking Box Ranch. A former California resident and retired attorney, Ron began volunteering at Walking Box Ranch in May 2018 as an assistant tour guide with BLM. The history of the ranch and its connection to early Hollywood is of particular interest to Ron, who became acquainted through his late father with several silent era film actors during his service as a "goodwill ambassador," volunteer, and photographer at the Motion Picture and Television Fund Country Home and Hospital in California.



Hotel Nipton. [Walking Box Photograph Collection, 1930-1970]. Special Collections & Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

DOIN' IT: BUILDING A FLICKER HOUSE

By Steve Radosevich

In this issue's "Doin' it" we'll be learning how to make a nest box that will provide an attractive home for some lucky flicker couple looking to start a young family. The project is simple, and needn't take more than an afternoon to complete. It's not expensive either, even if you purchase all the materials instead of building everything out of junk like your "Doin' it" staff does. So, first-things-first: You have questions.

What is a flicker? That's easy. A flicker is a big woodpecker. Like in the cartoons. If you are lucky enough to have a copy of the April 2023 issue of *The Searchlight Gold Beam*, you may remember reading Alex Harper's excellent article on the gilded flicker, one of the many beautiful avian species that call the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument their habitat. The gilded flicker is at the Northern edge of its range in the Avi Kwa Ame Joshua tree forests, and like me, prefers to stay there and never go to Las Vegas if it can help it. The gilded flicker shares this habitat with its more widespread cousin, the northern flicker; the two often becoming chummy enough to produce a colorful hybrid, seen only within the monument. "That's Great," you say. But:

Why am I building it a house? There are many reasons you might wish to build a flicker house. The flicker population is an essential part of the fragile Joshua tree ecosystem and near populated places like Searchlight it is sometimes threatened by the encroachment of the invasive European starlings. This, coupled with the recent fire damage is reason enough to want to help our young feathered neighbors to get a leg up during these trying times. But if you live in a wooden house like your "Doin' it" staff does, there may be another compelling reason.

Alex Harper relates that the flicker is a songbird, and that since the bird is somewhat shy, you are more likely to hear its song than to see it, most of the time. He describes this song as a hearty, "kwik-wik-wik-wik..." lasting "ten to fifteen seconds." It is a lovely song, as I'm sure many of you can attest, but there is another flicker song that is played rather than sung. It is a percussive song, like that made by a jackhammer on the side of your house on a beautiful, lazy morning, and it can last for as long as you wish to stay asleep and then some.

If the sound alone wasn't enough to keep you from going back to sleep (and it is,) there's always the thought of the damage the bird is doing to the inner workings of your house to keep you awake. Okay, enough of this. Let's get started!

We're making this thing out of wood, because that's what the flickers like. You can go out and buy some wood if that makes you happy, but really, old dried-up wood that you get for free probably works better. The rougher the finish, the better, too.

If you look at the diagram on the next page, you'll see that we haven't really provided plans, per se, but

Invasive European Starling

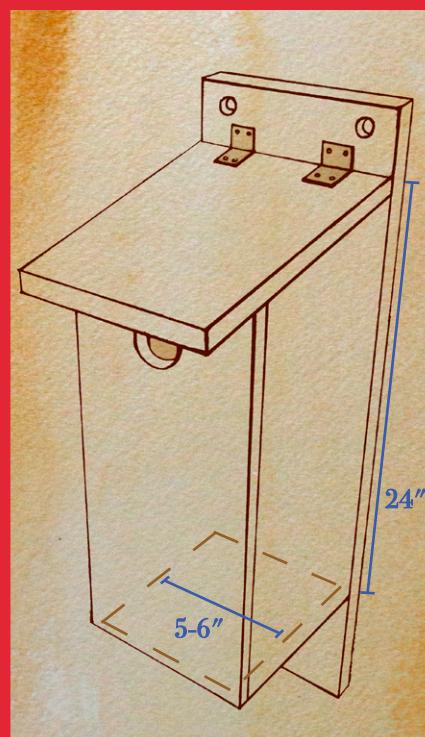
European Starling marginalia by Steve Radosevich.



a general idea of how this thing works, how big it is, and what it looks like. ♦♦♦♦♦
 Keep in mind, we're not really building them a house, we're providing them with a structure that they'll want to build a nest in. There are a few basic rules to making a suitable structure, and if we follow them, we can't go too far off. ♦♦♦♦♦

- Use 1"-1 1/2" thick boards for nest boxes. Rough cedar works great. If the wood you get is too thin, just build it up in layers.
- Interior dimensions should be about 5-6" square, and the whole thing should be about 2' high.
- Cut 1/4"-deep parallel kerfs on the inside walls to assist the nestlings in climbing out. The cuts should form a shallow "ladder" with "rungs" spaced every 1/2" from floor to hole.
- The entrance door is a 2 1/2" diameter hole, 16-20" above the floor. You can cut this out with a hole-saw, but it might be better to just gouge it out roughly, part of the way, leaving a small hole to the interior. Flickers sometimes prefer to finish their own doors.
- Completely pack the box to the top with white pine wood chips (not sawdust) that the flickers can excavate. Excavation is part of their mating behavior. Replace with fresh wood chips every year by April 1. Pet stores sell wood shavings. (This simulates the interior of a dead tree.)
- Keep all those nice wood chips dry with a good, forward sloping roof to shed the rain. Equip the roof with hinges and a latch so you can switch out the chips each year.
- Either mount the whole box so that it is angled slightly forward (about 15 degrees) or construct it so the front slopes forward to make it easier for the birds to feed their young, and to help the chicks climb out. This also discourages predators.
- Place the box in a shady area, near sparsely scattered trees, with an open flyway. Mount the box six to twelve feet high. (You can place it much higher, but it's not necessary, and anyway you have your own safety to consider.)
- If you're in an area with tree squirrels, place the box on a pole equipped with a baffle at least 10' from the nearest tree (the distance most squirrels will jump).
- No perches (flickers don't like 'em, and predators do) and no paint. Use rustproof hardware.
- If you're fastening a nest box to a live tree, use aluminum nails or screws to minimize damage to the tree. Do not wire a box to a live tree.

Follow these guidelines and you'll have a little cozy hideaway for Flicker and family. Flickers are territorial, so your new housemates will also become your guard flickers, and keep other birds from wanting to do their own personal carpentry projects on your siding or roof. ♦♦♦♦♦



Border illustration by Carin Agiman. Diagram illustration by Kyle Larson.

VISITING AVI KWA AME



The Avi Kwa Ame landscape is sacred to at least a dozen indigenous communities who have held spiritual and cultural reverence over these lands since time immemorial. To the tribal communities with affiliation to the area, everything in this landscape has life, whether it is the mountains, rocks, water, plants, animals or soil -- and, as such, is sacred. Everything in this land is connected and valued. As new visitors embrace Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, we need to value all the traditions that predate us, as well as the current rules and guidelines. And, as more people will now enjoy recreating on this landscape, we must act to minimize our impact upon it, and help sustain its health for future generations.

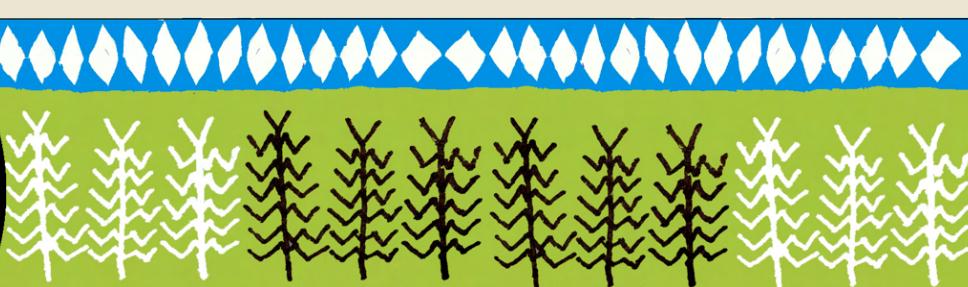
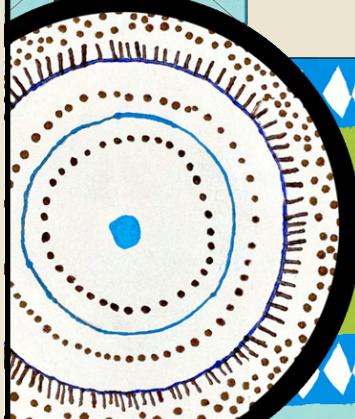
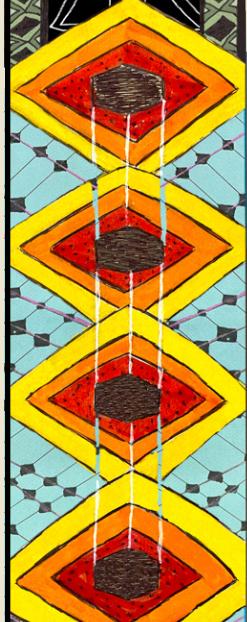
The rich human history revealed by Avi Kwa Ame coexists with the area's scientifically significant biological diversity, rare plants and animals, expansive views, natural quiet and dark night sky. Avi Kwa Ame National Monument can be enjoyed through many activities: as a place for hiking, camping, birdwatching, motorized touring, stargazing, hunting, climbing, and pursuing amateur geology. Here are some tips for visiting Avi Kwa Ame that are founded on the Leave No Trace principle.

DRIVE LIKE A TORTOISE. Travel slowly on backcountry roads to avoid running over or stressing the animals. Cars are a top killer of the slow-moving, endangered desert tortoise. We are all visitors in someone else's home when we're out on the desert; be aware that many animals live above, on, and under the sands. Loud vehicle noises can cause so much stress to some animals that they will move their homes away or refuse to care for their young.

DON'T BLAZE A TRAIL. There are over 500 miles of designated backcountry roads within the monument that provide access to the diversity of the landscape. All wheeled travel is required to be on designated routes only. Absolutely, don't drive off the road or create a new trail. Designated routes are clearly posted by Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service signage. Motorized travel of all kinds (including motorcycles and electric bikes) is prohibited on single track trails. If the route is wide enough to fit a car and is designated, you can drive on it.

DON'T CRACK THE CRUST. Much of Avi Kwa Ame's lands have a biological (cryptobiotic) soil crust. This "biocrust" is the lifeline of the desert because it plays a vital role in soil stability, moisture, and nutrient cycles. Without it, nothing can grow and the plant and animal life that rely on the biological crust would not survive. When damaged, the colony of organisms could take several hundred to 5,000+ years to recolonize and reform,

The top speed
of a desert
tortoise is
only .3 MPH.



WITH RESPECT

By Alan O'Neill

so don't leave the road when driving, and stick to trails while hiking.

LEAVE IT THERE. Avi Kwa Ame is home to numerous significant prehistoric and historic resources. It is illegal to remove or damage archeological materials, and disrespectful to the tribes who have direct ties to these sites. These sites include historic structures, rock art, and stone flakes left over from primitive tool fabrication. Leave artifacts where they are so that others can see the story of the past. Removing or vandalizing artifacts limits their scientific value and the experience of future visitors. Even touching petroglyphs or pictographs can cause damage. Just look, observe, imagine. Be still and listen. Let the rocks speak.

DON'T ADD YOUR MARK. Do not draw, paint, carve, tag, decorate, or leave your mark on any rock, tree, structure, or surface within the monument. Defacing petroglyphs or other sites is illegal, expensive to clean up (when it can be repaired) and requires many volunteer hours of work to address. Stacking or arranging rocks can harm the biocrust, is disrespectful to tribal communities who consider this area a sacred landscape, and detracts from the next visitor's experience.

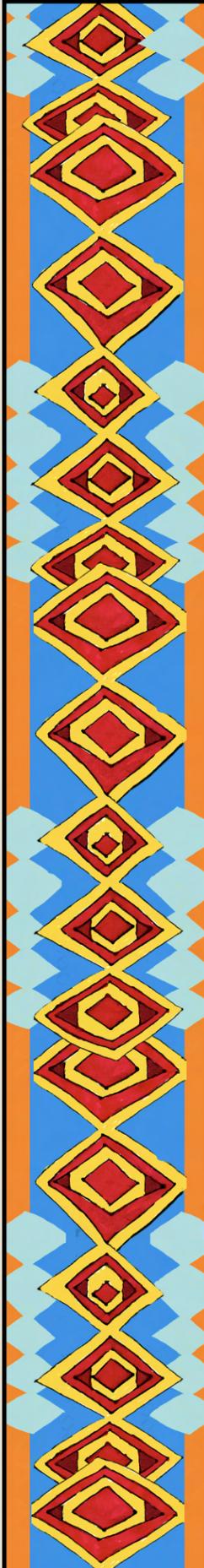
DON'T DECORATE FOR THE HOLIDAYS. In the past, some families have enjoyed decorating the juniper trees along the road near the top of Spirit Mountain (Avi Kwa Ame). These days, we know that this practice is culturally disrespectful to people in the many tribal communities that consider this mountain one of their holiest of places. We also know that tinsel, ornaments, and garland have been found in the remains of deceased animals and birds, who have died after mistaking the bright colors and shiny surfaces for food and moisture, so there is double reason to leave these trees bare.

PACK IT OUT. Carry plastic bags and pack out all your trash, including toilet paper and hygiene products. Utilize toilet facilities whenever possible. Otherwise, pack it all out, including human waste. Dumping trash, furniture, tires, or anything onto federally protected lands is illegal and carries a heavy fine.

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS. Symbolic rituals and practices are important components in this sacred landscape as they reflect local people's religious world views and cultural identity. Indigenous peoples use this landscape for important cultural, social, and ceremonial purposes. Please do not disturb others who are participating in these activities or quietly visiting this place. Avoid loud voices and disturbing noises to let nature's sounds prevail so others can enjoy.



Illustration by Amelia Jackson, Cecilia Collier, Erin Torres, Maliya Russell, Nathan Richard, RJ Jackson, Stephen Lopez, and Zach McCord.



RESPECT PRIVATE LANDS. There are some private lands and residences within the monument. It is essential to respect private property, road signs, and no trespassing signs. Some old buildings and mines are privately owned, and structures that look abandoned may actually be maintained as historic sites by the families. Cameras and security systems are common on private property and can be used to prosecute trespassers. These private landowners are key partners, working with the managing agencies in the stewardship and care of the monument.

KEEP PETS SAFE AND RESPECTFUL. Control your pets at all times or leave them at home. Keep dogs on the leash whenever possible for their safety and to minimize stress on nearby wildlife, and observe leash rules where required (like Grapevine Canyon). Keep them away from animal burrows and rock crevices and pack out your pet's waste (dogs are predators and their waste is stressful to smaller animals and unpleasant for visitors).

RESPECT THE LOCAL WILDLIFE. Observe wildlife from a distance (binoculars are a good item to pack). Do not follow or approach animals, and never feed them. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors (habituates them to humans, which can be dangerous to humans and the animal), and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Fed wildlife is dead wildlife.

HUNT ONLY IN LEGAL AREAS. Hunting is legal in most areas of the monument with a Nevada hunting licence and in accordance with Nevada Department of Wildlife regulations. The exception to this is the Grapevine Canyon area which is closed to hunting. There is a Clark County ordinance that bans shooting within half a mile of a highway or within 500 feet of a public or private road or designated campground, picnic areas, or improved trail. The harvesting of wildlife is carefully regulated by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service working with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to ensure equilibrium between wildlife and their habitats. Those hunting on monument lands must be safe and also pick up their spent ammunition and any trash.

WHERE AND HOW TO CAMP: There are no developed campgrounds in Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, but primitive camping is legal in most places and is limited to a maximum of 14 consecutive days per stay. Do not make camp in a dry wash – flash floods develop quickly in the desert. Campsites must be more than 200 yards from any water source, which are mostly the natural springs. Concentrate use on existing campsites where vegetation is absent and keep campsites small. In pristine areas, disperse use to prevent the creation of new campsites and trails and avoid places where impacts are just beginning. Camping is not allowed on the east side of Spirit Mountain along the Christmas Tree Pass Trail but is allowed on the west side.

KEEP FIRES SAFE. Small fires are permitted in the back-country areas unless seasonal fire restrictions are in place. Use fires only when necessary to keep warm; otherwise enjoy the dark night sky without the added light pollution of firelight. When a small fire is needed, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires, and check wind conditions before you light. Only use dead wood from the ground that can be broken by hand. Do not throw trash, cans, or glass in the fire. To help prevent wildfires, never leave your campfire unattended. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes. Make sure it is completely out before you leave. Wildfires are a serious problem in the Mojave Desert, so be vigilant. Always check the monument's official webpages before your visit, to see if a campfire ban is in effect.

KEEP YOUR SITE CLEAN. Dispersed camping in a motorhome is allowed on officially designated backcountry roads, but dumping black or gray water isn't allowed. Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite, food preparation areas, and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pull off in already established pull-outs – do not create new pullouts.

KEEP SKIES DARK. The monument's night skies are some of the darkest in the Lower 48. Before you deck out your camp with string lights or overpowering camp lights, remember you may be blowing out a fellow camper's night vision, and otherwise prime stargazing conditions. Help protect this disappearing, natural and culturally important resource by lighting your camp mindfully.

BONUS POINTS: The truest form of respect is to leave a place better than you found it, so consider carrying an extra bag to pick up trash on your excursions, and be sure to report anything you see that is potentially causing harm, including graffiti, dumpsites, permanent encampments, and other illegal activities. Your mindfulness while visiting and acts of appreciation will help keep Avi Kwa Ame clean, pristine and respected for everyone who visits in years to come.

The monument is managed by both the National Park Service (NPS) & the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); rules may vary between jurisdictional boundaries. If you have a question or concern, you can report it by calling:

BLM's non-emergency number 702-515-5300
BLM/NPS emergency number 702-293-8932

Alan O'Neill is an avid nature lover, conservation advocate, and public lands expert. He is a founding board member of Friends of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument and the former superintendent of Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Illustration by Dennis Campos, Noah Richard, Nathan Richard, and Vinnie Castillo.

BORN FROM THE MIND'S EYE:

By Kim Garrison Means



The tip of Southern Nevada has inspired people's visions of who they are and what their future could be since time beyond memory, and dreams have shaped this area's story and changed the features of its landscape down through the millennia. Like the Mojave Desert itself, these dreams have been rugged, daring, beautiful and far-reaching; and all of them, no matter how desperate or ill-suited, are worthy of inspiring wonder in those of us who are lucky enough to hear of them. Many of these dreams quickly came to pass, and then just as quickly faded into the oblivion of unknown history, possibly leaving a remnant or two behind through artifact or story. Others were dreamt of and pursued, but never came to fruition, and fell away like sand escaping through the fingers of time and space.

In this article, we seek to highlight for you some of the more noteworthy and interesting examples of these historical adventures and misadventures wrought from dreaming. We share these few while we recognize the myriad of other dreams that must also have existed through the long history of this region, and that, while forgotten to us, have also impacted people's lives and the landscape we see today. As we marvel at these stories, let us also respect the courage and tenacity that it takes both to dream dreams, and to work to fulfill them.

AVI KWA AME, THE RIVER TRIBES AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLD



We should start, then, at the beginning of humanity's interactions with Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) itself (which the larger monument is named after), and its relationship to the creation stories of the Mojave people and their relatives from the nine other Yuman-language speaking tribes, (or as they often prefer to be called, the River Tribes, as these communities name the Colorado River and its surroundings as their birthplace and spiritual home). For the River Tribes, Avi Kwa Ame, Black Canyon, the Needles, and the Colorado River are all part of a more extended spiritual landscape tied to the stories of the Creation of the World and the First Times. Mutavilya created the world's features and the first animals, plants, and people. He also taught the people how to survive, grow food along the river, how to treat each other and all beings with respect, and how to live and die. Reverence for Avi Kwa Ame has been passed down through tribal teachings: throughout the year, people in the River Tribes connect with the

Dreams Have Shaped the Southern Nevada Landscape

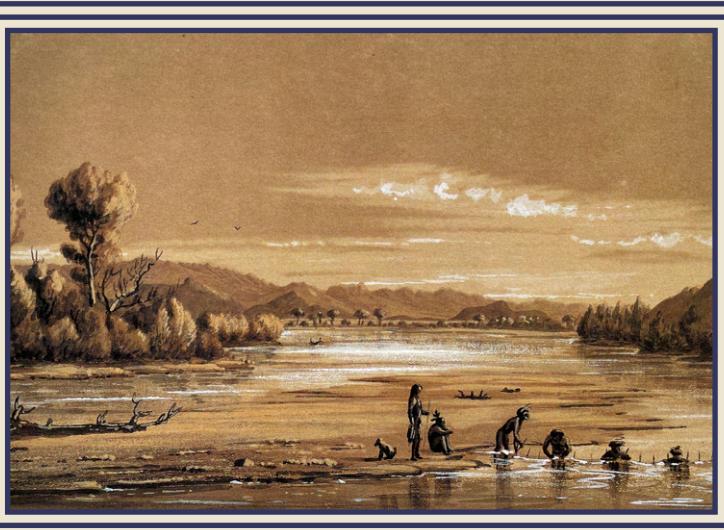
wisdom of the First Times through ceremonies, events, and personal reflection, which includes taking time for dreams.

The sharing of these dreams has especially shaped the history of the local Mojave people and the landscape around them. In the 1970 book *Tales from the Mohaves*, by Herman Grey, of the Shul-Ya (Beaver) Clan of the Fort Mojave Tribe, Alice Marriott writes in the foreword: "Most Mohave religion is centered around the belief of a supreme creator and the significance of dreams. All the Mohave religion ceremonies of the past consisted of singing cycles of songs that came to the tribe members in a dream or vision. Dreams were their source of knowledge and courage. They looked to dreams for the solution of finding a chief, war, gaining courage and furthering skills."

The Mojave Nation was the largest in the Southwest when the Spaniards arrived in the 1600s. During the 1800s, non-native American settlers were keen on crossing the Colorado River through the traditional land of the Mojave to get to settlements on the California coast. Because of disrespectful behavior on the part of some settlers, the Mojave people resisted, and fought off the invaders to protect their homeland and their sacred places.

The U.S. army was called in to try to subdue the Mojave, and during this period of conflict, the tribe was split into two groups because of two contrasting visions of the future.

One faction, led by Irataba, led people south to form what is now the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) reservation. Irataba had previously agreed to be a guide for the Sitgreaves (1851), the Whipple (1853), and the Ives (1858) expeditions, and had then had traveled to Washington D.C. to meet President Abraham Lincoln (1864). On these journeys, Irataba could see that the immigrant settlers were everywhere, were highly organized and had extensive military capabilities, and he dreamt that his people should cooperate because they would not be able to defeat the U.S. forces in the long term. Other tribal members refused to leave their ancestral homelands in the river valley at the base of Avi Kwa Ame. They held that as part of their Creation story, the Mojave had been charged to stay near the place of their creation and protect their sacred sites, while other peoples traveled. The descendants of this group are now known as the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe (FMIT). Splitting the tribe into two helped maintain the strong connection of all of the River Tribes to Avi Kwa Ame and their sacred landscape, while appeasing the U.S. government at the time. Following the instructions of the Creator and the wisdom of the First Times, the Mojave people in both communities have worked tirelessly as stewards of the land, and now have a national reputation for being strong advocates for conservation. In the efforts



Above: Cottonwood Valley, c. 1857, watercolor by Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen, from the Joseph C. Ives expedition.

to protect their ancestral lands from harm, all of the river tribes banded together to create a more powerful public voice, and this voice was a crucial part of the success of the effort to create Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, as well as in protecting other parts of their sacred landscape, such as preventing Ward Valley from being used as a toxic waste disposal site.

According to anthropologists, the ancestors of the Yuman-speaking River Tribes and the Mojave people have inhabited Arizona, Nevada, California and Northern Mexico for over 6,000 years. The earliest petroglyphs found at the base of Avi Kwa Ame, in Grapevine and Hiko Spring Canyon, for example, were made by these ancestors, and their descendants have continued the tradition of telling sacred stories and recording their dreams.

It is important to remember that the Mojave people and all the River Tribes continue to be alive and well in 2024, and that the

connections between their spiritual practices and their sacred landscape, though impacted by years of religious and cultural persecution, are also unbroken. The tribal stewards of this landscape have graciously shared some of their history, culture, and stories with us, and we can visit the spectacular features of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument and gaze

up at the awesome spires of Spirit Mountain.

We are visitors in these spaces, but for thousands of people who are part of these tribal communities, these are holy places that are actively a part of religious and cultural traditions, rooted back to the beginning of time, honored in the present, and tied to their dreams of the future.

"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. We, as members of the River Tribes, don't go to some of the places on Avi Kwa Ame, because these are sacred places to us. We ask that visitors to Avi Kwa Ame 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." Paul Jackson Jr.
Fort Mojave Tribal Elder

EL DORADO, STEAM SHIPS, AND FANTASTIC RIVER CROSSINGS

The name El Dorado was given to the mountains and canyon to the north and east of Searchlight by the Spanish explorers who prospected the area in 1775. El Dorado, (Golden One, in Spanish) is associated with a number of myths of South American origin that fueled the dreams of the

Mill in El Dorado Canyon, 1890.

Spanish Conquistadores. Spanish explorers of Southern Nevada sought to find gold, silver and jewels, and El Dorado eventually became a popular name for any place where such treasures could be found in quantity.

In this case, the Spaniards found El Dorado in the form of gold and silver, and temporarily established a small settlement and mining camp here near the edge the river. Ultimately, the Spanish were unable to continue mining these mineral deposits, but in the mid-1800s, a new wave of dreamers found promising veins. During the American Civil War, soldiers deserting from both sides of the fighting found their way into El Dorado Canyon and began mining the Techatticup, which would become Southern Nevada's largest historic gold mine, and continue operation until the 1940s – an exceedingly long life-cycle for a mine.

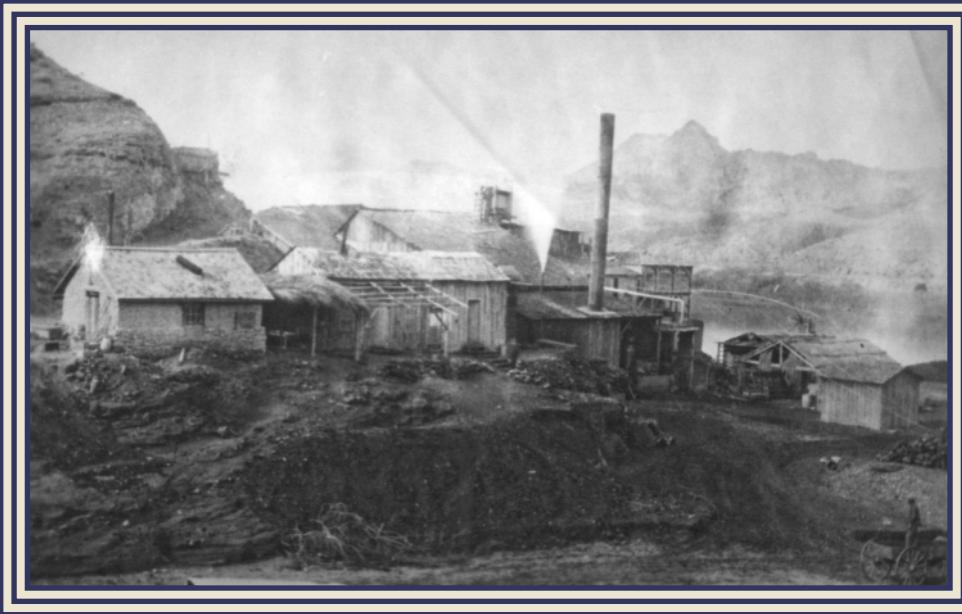
While most of the artifacts, buildings, equipment and mining sites from the El Dorado Mining District that survive today in Nelson and its surroundings date back to the classic Gold Rush era of the late 1800s/early 1900s, there is also local story floating around about the days of Spanish exploration. The story describes a prospector finding a cave that contained a cache of long-forgotten items, including a Spanish rapier and an armored

breastplate, and then losing their way back to the location when they tried to find it again.

Meanwhile, another fantastic vision of the Gold Rush era would have been to catch a glimpse of one of the steam-driven paddle boats that navigated the Colorado River from the Gulf of California all the way to El Dorado and Black Canyon (near Hoover Dam), bringing supplies to the mining operations upriver and ore downriver to be processed. These riverboats also transported passengers, but they were not decked out with the same amount of comfortable accommodations as the steamboats on the Mississippi.

There are records of at least 19 of these boats that operated on the lower Colorado from 1852 to 1909, with names such as Mojave, Searchlight, Cocopah, Explorer, and Colorado. The largest of these was the Cocopah, which was 29 feet wide, over 140 feet long and had a shallow draft of only 19 inches. It could carry up to 100 tons of cargo. The last steamer afloat was the Searchlight, which began operation in 1903. Its primary job was to haul ore from the Quartz Mine in Searchlight to smelters downriver near Needles. It was recorded as lost in 1916. With the construction of dams on the lower Colorado and the building of ore processing facilities in Searchlight, this form of transportation was no longer needed.

Travelers during the mining era not only had occasion to go up or down river, but also needed to get across it. The area near present day Cottonwood Cove was a popular spot, and was known as the



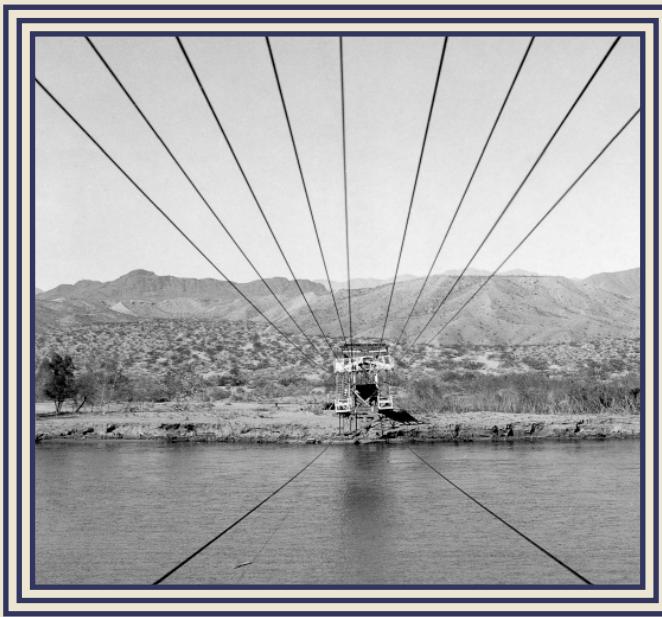
Searchlight Crossing. A handful of boat ferry operations were in use around what is now Lake Mojave until the dams went in, including the Stones, Bonnels, and Arivada Ferries, but perhaps the most interesting of these was the Cottonwood Aerial Ferry. This contraption was not for the faint of heart, as it was suspended from cables strung across the banks of the Colorado River, and would propel travelers through the sky on a platform from the Searchlight Nevada side on the west to the Chloride Arizona side on the east. For a fee, the ferry would take cars, motorcycles, and trucks, but also horses, riders, stock and pedestrians for a transportation thrill ride that folks would not soon forget.

THE SOUTHERN PAIUTE AND THE SALT SONG TRAIL

The ten Colorado River Tribes are not the only native communities who have lived here for centuries and shaped the landscape with their dreams and pursuits. The thirteen bands of the Nuwvi (Southern Paiute) marked out migration and ceremonial routes in a vast circle through California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah, with the Colorado River at its center. The Salt Song Trail and other historic routes provided their communities with resources like plants and animals, salt, and tool and basket-making supplies.

The Salt Song Trail (Asi Huvia), is especially important because it is associated with a cycle of 142 sacred songs that describe a journey to important cultural places across the landscape. These songs also name the plants, animals, and other resources that can be found along the way, as well as identifying the natural features of the landscape as a wayfinding aid, and correspond to the times of the year for traveling.

Well-marked paths led through the mountains and across the valleys from spring to spring, and were used by many local native groups. Some of these pathways, like parts of the Mojave Road (which crossed the most southern part of the monument), eventually became wagon routes for migrant settlers, and others remain hidden today within the remote landscape. After a long period of religious persecution and forced assimilation, the details of some of these migration routes have been lost to history, and the Salt Songs were in danger of dying out. Thanks to the Salt Song Trail Project's co-founders and co-directors Vivienne Jake (Kaibab Paiute) and Matthew Leivas, Sr. (Chemehuevi), the entire song cycle has been recorded and preserved, and it is now being taught to younger generations.



CASINOS, BROTHELS, AND FREE AIRPLANE RIDES

Drinking, gambling and adult entertainment establishments have been a part of our area's history since the mining boom of the late 1800s, when it boasted dozens of gambling halls and a red-light district known affectionately to locals as Gonorrhea Gulch. However, no one took this enterprise quite as far as Willie Martello, known as the Casino King. In 1946, Martello purchased the Wheatley Hotel in Searchlight and turned it into a glamorous nightclub and resort filled with live music, dancing, gourmet dining, a pool, celebrities and beautiful

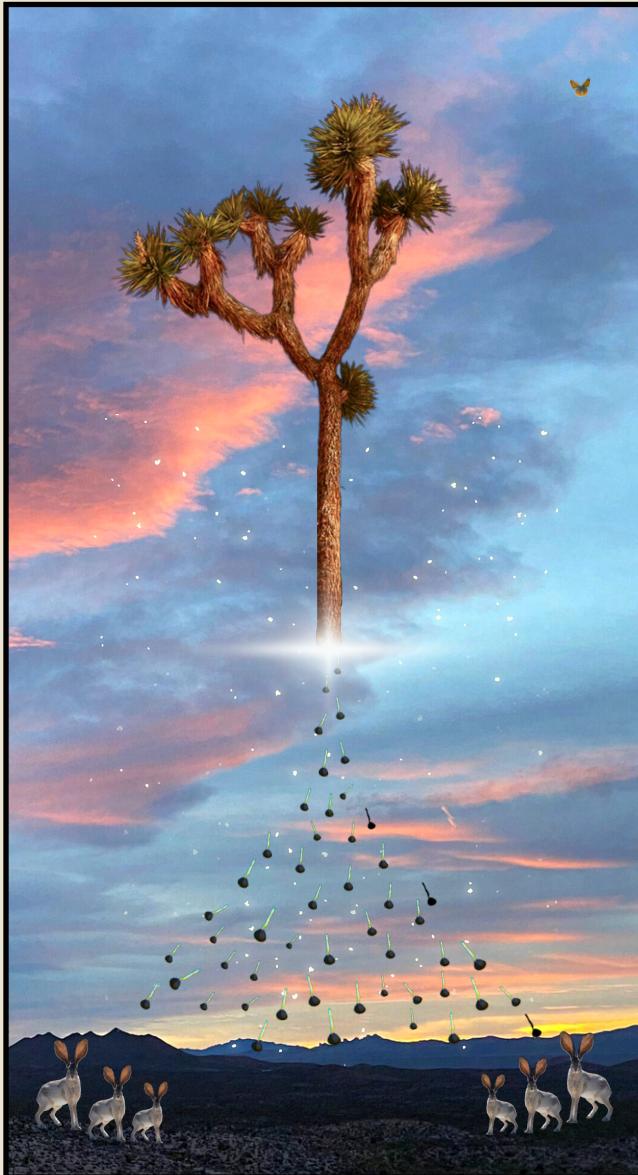
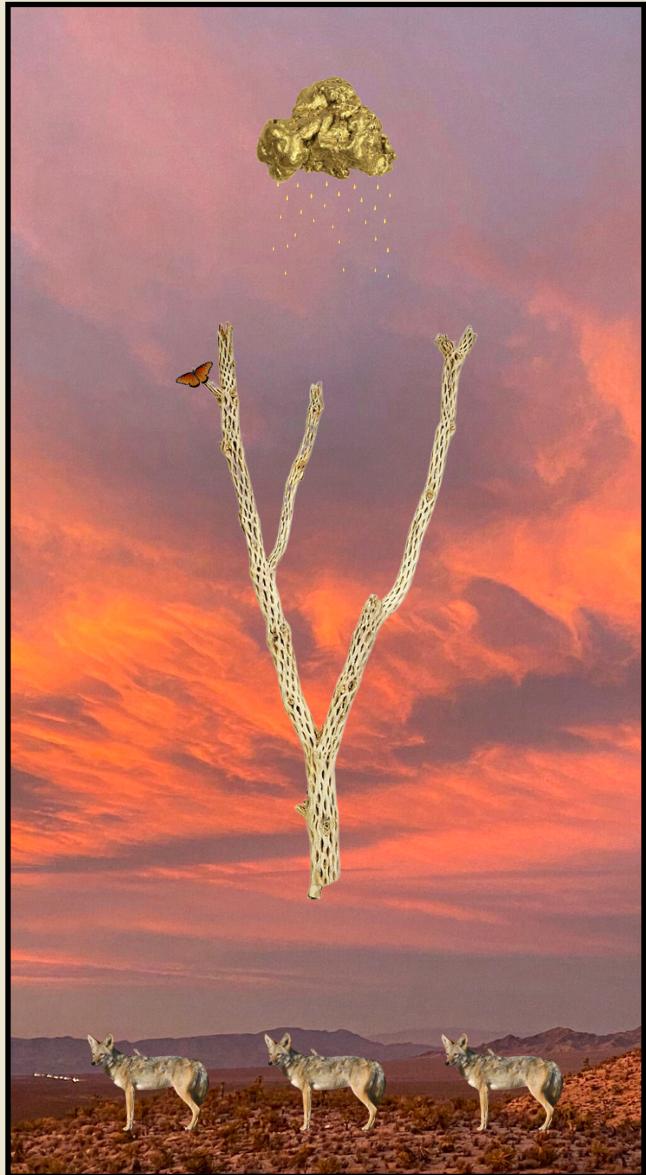
women. Hollywood movie stars and the Las Vegas rat pack would descend on the club to get away from it all, and first timers to Searchlight would marvel at this seeming mirage in the middle of the desert. Willie Martello even devised a clever way to get new customers to his remote resort. He advertised a free plane ride from Long Beach, California to Searchlight and a free weekend hotel stay for visitors (using the Searchlight airstrip, first built in the 1950s as an emergency landing spot for Nellis Air force Base). All folks had to do was pay \$25, which would be reimbursed in poker chips. Guests soon found out that a stay at the El Rey could include many "extras", and Martello made his money back and then some from eager customers.

The famous El Rey Club burned down in a fire in 1962, but not before the establishment influenced the new casino resort industry in Las Vegas. According to Andy Martello, author of the book, *The King of Casinos* "Willie Martello should easily be as famous as Howard Hughes or Steve Wynn is today thanks to all of the innovations and ideas he brought to the Las Vegas gambling industry." Willie Martello's dream of an adult oasis in the desert helped Searchlight live on after the mining and ranching days, and its legacy as a rest stop and gambling spot lives on today in the two current Terrible's Casinos, but the ladies of the night have since retired.

EVEN MORE DREAMS...

From the second town of Searchlight and the Pleasant Valley Farming District, to the Oil Boom and the US Army Camel Corps, there are many more stories to tell about how people's dreams shaped our area's history than there is space in this article. Some of these stories, like that of the Walking Box Ranch, can be found in other places in this issue. Look for more of these amazing tales in the issues to come.

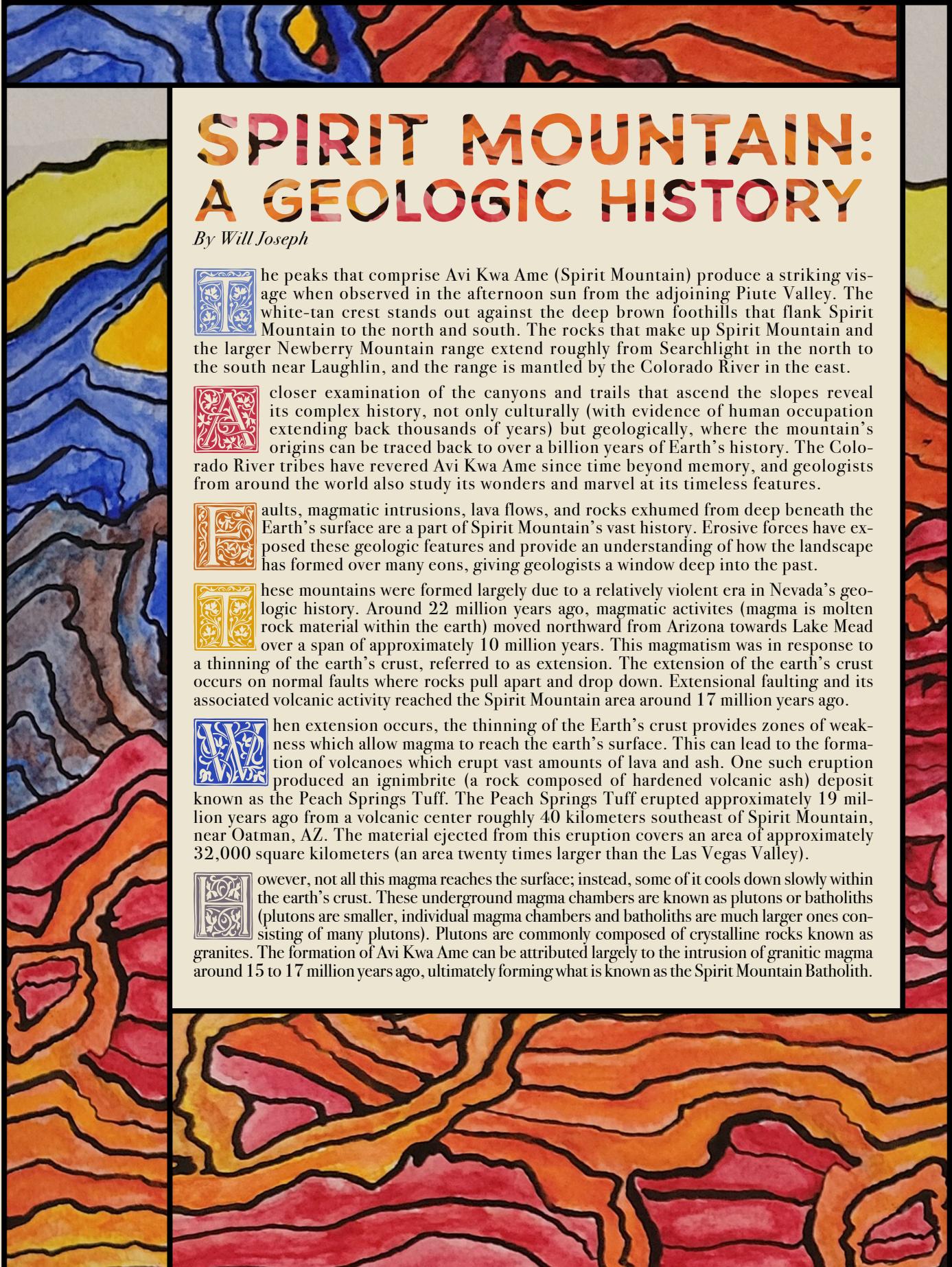
Searchlight Aerial Ferry, 1938.



FEATURED ARTIST: ADRIANA CHAVEZ

A These collage poems are Spirit Cards—a wisdom deck from which one may gather meaning. The Spirit Cards are inspired by my time spent at the Mystery Ranch Research Station within Avi Kwa Ame National Monument; a time that for me was colored by deep, personal grief. The land offered me a resting place; arms to cradle and soothe my heartbreak and longing. I channeled those feelings into my images and created these Spirit Cards as a way to give thanks for what the land provided. In them, I have explored themes of creation and rebirth, fertility, sensuality, vulnerability, courage, majesty, and moments of stillness, wonder, and magic.

Adriana Chavez (she,they) lives and works in Las Vegas, NV, and incorporates theatre, mask making, mask performance, collage, assemblage, movement, and sculptural installation into their art practice.



SPIRIT MOUNTAIN: A GEOLOGIC HISTORY

By Will Joseph

The peaks that comprise Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) produce a striking visage when observed in the afternoon sun from the adjoining Piute Valley. The white-tan crest stands out against the deep brown foothills that flank Spirit Mountain to the north and south. The rocks that make up Spirit Mountain and the larger Newberry Mountain range extend roughly from Searchlight in the north to the south near Laughlin, and the range is mantled by the Colorado River in the east.

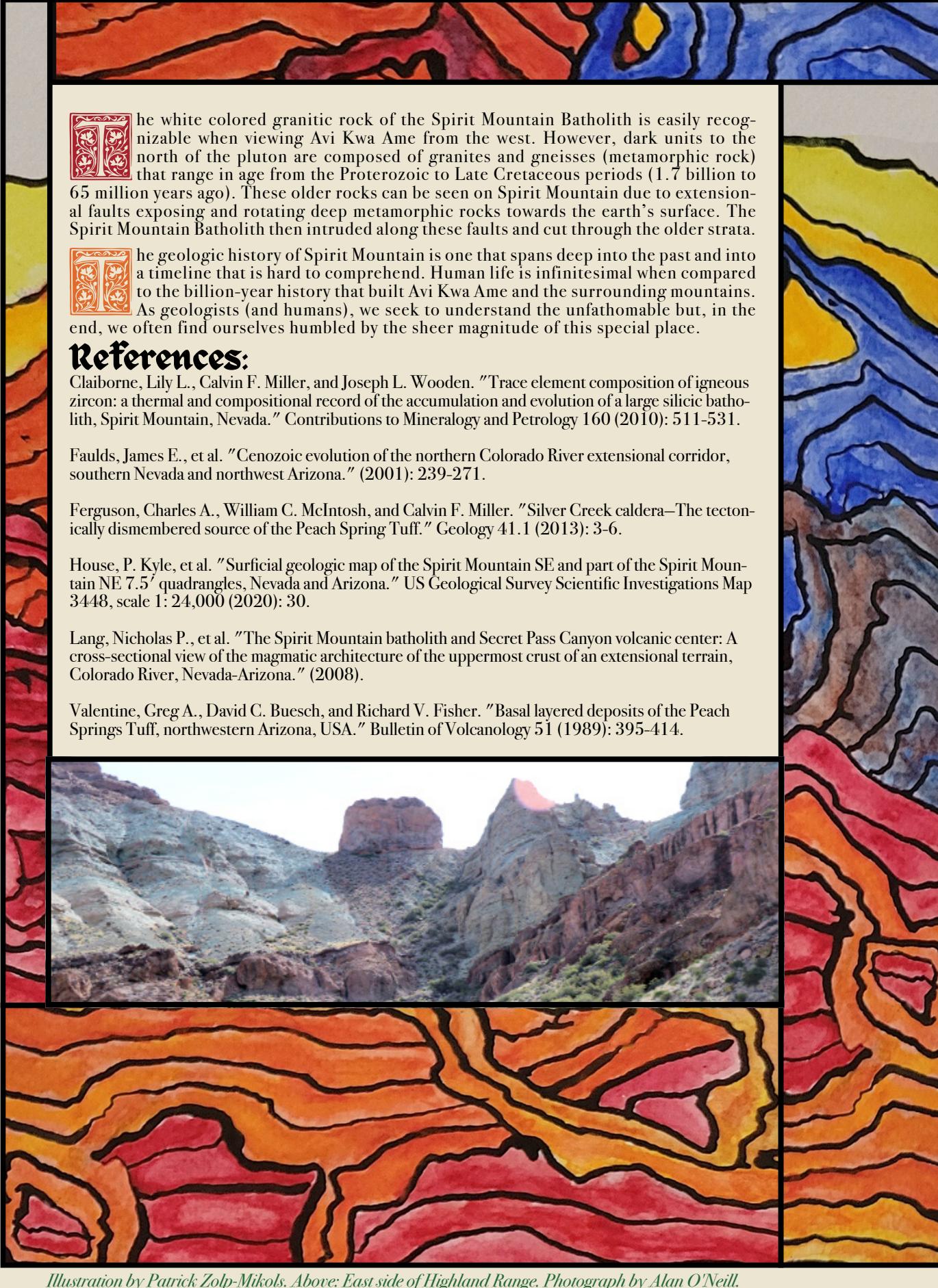
A closer examination of the canyons and trails that ascend the slopes reveal its complex history, not only culturally (with evidence of human occupation extending back thousands of years) but geologically, where the mountain's origins can be traced back to over a billion years of Earth's history. The Colorado River tribes have revered Avi Kwa Ame since time beyond memory, and geologists from around the world also study its wonders and marvel at its timeless features.

Faults, magmatic intrusions, lava flows, and rocks exhumed from deep beneath the Earth's surface are a part of Spirit Mountain's vast history. Erosive forces have exposed these geologic features and provide an understanding of how the landscape has formed over many eons, giving geologists a window deep into the past.

These mountains were formed largely due to a relatively violent era in Nevada's geologic history. Around 22 million years ago, magmatic activities (magma is molten rock material within the earth) moved northward from Arizona towards Lake Mead over a span of approximately 10 million years. This magmatism was in response to a thinning of the earth's crust, referred to as extension. The extension of the earth's crust occurs on normal faults where rocks pull apart and drop down. Extensional faulting and its associated volcanic activity reached the Spirit Mountain area around 17 million years ago.

When extension occurs, the thinning of the Earth's crust provides zones of weakness which allow magma to reach the earth's surface. This can lead to the formation of volcanoes which erupt vast amounts of lava and ash. One such eruption produced an ignimbrite (a rock composed of hardened volcanic ash) deposit known as the Peach Springs Tuff. The Peach Springs Tuff erupted approximately 19 million years ago from a volcanic center roughly 40 kilometers southeast of Spirit Mountain, near Oatman, AZ. The material ejected from this eruption covers an area of approximately 32,000 square kilometers (an area twenty times larger than the Las Vegas Valley).

However, not all this magma reaches the surface; instead, some of it cools down slowly within the earth's crust. These underground magma chambers are known as plutons or batholiths (plutons are smaller, individual magma chambers and batholiths are much larger ones consisting of many plutons). Plutons are commonly composed of crystalline rocks known as granites. The formation of Avi Kwa Ame can be attributed largely to the intrusion of granitic magma around 15 to 17 million years ago, ultimately forming what is known as the Spirit Mountain Batholith.



She white colored granitic rock of the Spirit Mountain Batholith is easily recognizable when viewing Avi Kwa Ame from the west. However, dark units to the north of the pluton are composed of granites and gneisses (metamorphic rock) that range in age from the Proterozoic to Late Cretaceous periods (1.7 billion to 65 million years ago). These older rocks can be seen on Spirit Mountain due to extensional faults exposing and rotating deep metamorphic rocks towards the earth's surface. The Spirit Mountain Batholith then intruded along these faults and cut through the older strata.

The geologic history of Spirit Mountain is one that spans deep into the past and into a timeline that is hard to comprehend. Human life is infinitesimal when compared to the billion-year history that built Avi Kwa Ame and the surrounding mountains. As geologists (and humans), we seek to understand the unfathomable but, in the end, we often find ourselves humbled by the sheer magnitude of this special place.

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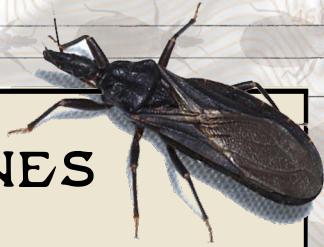


Illustration by Patrick Zolp-Mikols. Above: East side of Highland Range. Photograph by Alan O'Neill.



IN SEARCH OF TRIATOMINES

By Richard Oxborough



Editors' Note: Triatomines, known locally as kissing bugs, are a usually reclusive resident of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, where their preferred host is the common pack rat. The study described below is an excellent example of how much more we have to learn about the flora and fauna found here in the East Mojave: if you happen to find a kissing bug, you too can take part in this citizen science project and help us all find out more about their creepy but fascinating ways.

Triatomines are a group of insects that have a rich variety of colloquial names, ranging from ghoulish (Vampire bug), aggressive (Assassin bug), anatomical (Cone-nose bug) to almost romantic (Kissing bugs). There are around 125 species of triatomine described in the Americas, with 11 species found in the USA.

In Latin America, people tend to be wary of triatomines and learn about them from a young age as they can transmit a dangerous parasite (*Trypanosoma cruzi*) that causes Chagas disease. Unlike mosquitoes, infection is not carried directly through the bite of a triatomine, but rather through infected bug feces, which can be deposited on humans shortly after the insect feeds; the feces can then be unwittingly scratched into an open wound or rubbed into an eye.

The acute symptoms of infection are often mild or asymptomatic, leading to underdiagnosis. However, without treatment, the infection can become chronic, and several years or even decades later can cause cardiac abnormalities in 30% of cases, including arrhythmias, heart failure and even sudden death. Fortunately, human cases of Chagas disease are very rarely acquired in the USA (mainly due to good quality housing and triatomine species that prefer living and feeding on animals outdoors). Nevertheless, human expansion into triatomine habitat and an ever-changing climate make it important to study local triatomines to detect changes in their behavior or usual territory that could lead to an increase in human infection.

In the American Southwest, triatomines are mostly encountered during the late spring and summer months when seasonal flight dispersal occurs at night, often at dusk. US species of triatomine bugs prefer to live in wild terrain, particularly where there are plenty of rocky hideouts and the availability of animal hosts such as woodrats. This is why they are most often encountered in yards and houses that are situated close to the boundaries of natural areas such as canyons, federally managed land, state parks or mountains.

Early reports from the 1940s described several species of triatomines as a pest of humans at the Alvarado Mine of Yavapai County,

Border illustration by Checko Salgado.

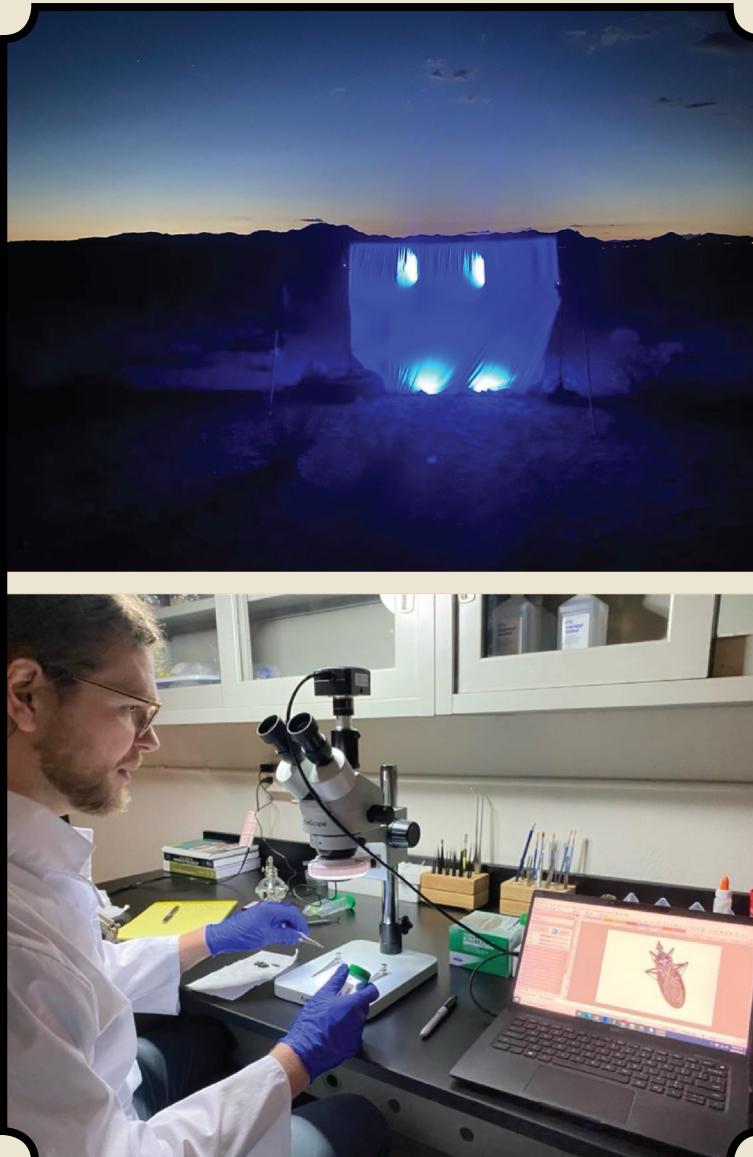
AZ, where it was a common invader of the mining employees' houses and tents. In fact, this is an early example of a citizen science study which used the campaign slogan, "Nab that bug at one cent each for Dr. Wood at City College to keep", which appeared on the large collecting cans supplied to mining houses. The local name for triatomines in this mining area was the "Walapai Tiger".

In 2023, UNLV (University of Nevada Las Vegas), in collaboration with UCSF (University of California San Francisco), embarked on a citizen science project to study triatomines of the American Southwest to determine which species are present, what proportion might be infected with the *T. cruzi* parasite, and to analyze their blood source (which comes from host animals) and their genetic diversity.

iNaturalist.org is a popular citizen science data portal where users can record an encounter with any plant, mammal, bird or insect, and upload photographs for identification. We are using this platform to contact observers of triatomines in the American Southwest and have asked them to collect triatomines and mail them to us for laboratory analysis. So far, we have received 404 insects that represent 5 species of triatomine, primarily collected by citizens in Arizona and California.

In Nevada there have been very few studies of triatomines, so armed with white sheets and UV lights we spent several weeks in Southern Nevada attempting to attract these flying insects. Unfortunately, we found a to-

tal of zero, but we had some interesting encounters with various scorpions, spiders, snakes, coyotes and UFOs (that turned out to be SpaceX Starlink satellite launches).



We were growing weary, but then a chance contact with an iNaturalist user led us to the Searchlight Mystery Ranch Research Station within the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument area. We went armed with trapping gear and shortly after dusk were rewarded by the appearance of *Paratriatoma hirsuta*, a species of triatomine that was reported historically in CA and NV but has been largely unstudied in recent decades. Laboratory analysis at UNLV is underway and we will continue to visit the area for this study through 2024. If you encounter any triatomines and would like to contribute to the study, get in touch with us.



LEARN MORE:



Dr. Richard Oxborough is a medical entomologist based in Henderson, Nevada. He is currently involved in Chagas disease research with the PARAVEC laboratory at UNLV, which is led by Dr. Louisa Messenger and Professor Chad Cross with support from research staff and students, Zoee Sanchez, Evan Teal, Karen Figueroa, Miklo Alcala, Katie Major and Austin Tang. Dr. Oxborough is the author of numerous scientific articles on entomology, and, if you haven't guessed already, specializes in studying the creepiest of bugs.

Top: UV lights set against a large white sheet to attract flying triatomines in Nevada. Bottom: Researcher Evan Teal examines a triatomine under the microscope.

THE TRAIL OF THE OPAL SKULL

By John LeGallee

CHAPTER IV. *Fireball in the Sky!*

When we last saw Jason and Gilbert, they were knocking back a few in Nipton's dingy Blue Light Café near the California-Nevada border, and enjoying the company of local legend Deke Nivens, who was filling them in on the whereabouts and layout of the various holdings of the Longhammer Mining and Milling Co., as well as offering opinions concerning the riddle of the Opal Skull. The scene erupted in a flash of violence and brutality, however, when thugs from the Longhammer outfit crashed the party with murder in their crosshairs!

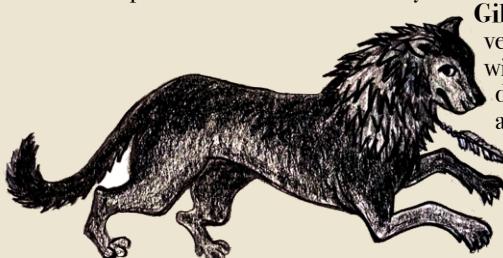
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Fifteen minutes after the boys quit Nipton, **Big Blue** was trudging up the pass on a line due East to Searchlight. The road was better maintained along this route than it had been west of here, but it was still no picnic. The way was dark and straight and steep as it climbed toward the Nevada border, and the boys didn't feel like talking while they could still see Nipton. They had left town in a hurry after the fracas, not feeling satisfied with the conclusion of their business there. **Red Watson** had meant to *kill Jason Terrell*, and no bones about it! Jayce had missed death by only a fraction of a second. Down in Nipton it very much appeared that Red and the other Longhammer henchman, "Swede" Malloy, had been looking for the boys. How these criminals knew the crew would be in Nipton, or indeed that they even existed was a mystery. Unfortunately, there had been no opportunity to interrogate these men in the aftermath of the shooting, for it was agreed by all that it would be best if the boys vacated Nipton as soon as possible. Our heroes quickly returned to the spot where they had stashed Big Blue. There they found **King Snedley** anxiously awaiting their arrival, having been alerted by the gunshot. King hopped into the truck immediately when the door was opened, and the gang hastened out of town. Now, as the three continued up the pass, the brave dog was reacting to the smell of adrenaline, gunpowder, and blood on the boys. Tensions ran high in the truck.

Gilbert Mantree was sitting very straight in his seat, with an intense look in his dark eyes. He had been anxious for his turn behind the wheel to begin, but Jason Terrell had just looked down the barrel of a .44 caliber revolver for what appeared would be the last time, and they

both knew that piloting the big Dodge would do him some good. Jason gripped the wheel a little tighter than usual. He operated the truck with machine-like precision as always, but still something was amiss.

"You were talking to that old dude for a while," Gilbert began,



"Did he tell you anything good?"

"He said those Longhammer guys can be dangerous," answered Jason awkwardly, suddenly shaking his head like a wet dog. Then he ran his fingers through his dark hair, smoothing it back in place. Gilbert looked at him carefully. "I might have got that on my own," he said.

Jason flashed a strange grin at Gilbert and went back to staring through the windshield. Then after a pause, "He thinks the skull might be in a cave, west of here."

"Okay," Gilbert registered. ("F___ the skull," is what he was thinking.) King Snedley was sitting up now, and staring at Jason too. J.T. was definitely not his usual taciturn self. "What did he say about the Ferry?" Gilbert asked.

"Still don't know," Jason answered resignedly. "We didn't get that far, 'cause those guys came in. But there's got to be a way across; if it isn't down by Cottonwood Island, then it'll be up at Nelson Landing. Probably. Unless it's that sky-cable thing, but I don't think it's there yet," he said, pondering. "We can ask at Searchlight."

"Sky-Cable thing?" blurted Gilbert, looking concerned.

Jason's hands were itchy. It took him a while to answer. "The cars don't float," he said finally, "they pull them through the air!"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Gilbert.

"I don't know," admitted Jason. "I think I need to drink some water."

"Yeah, you do," said Gilbert, "Let's pull over!"

In truth, both men were badly in need of water, although presently Jason was feeling it more acutely. Hydration was always a serious factor on a shunt but not for the reasons one would normally assume. A Temporal Shunt produces a jarring effect on the cellular tissue of one's body. The factors involved were not well understood, but the simple solution was to drink lots of fluids.

And, while eating foods *contemporary with the shunt*, that is to say foods procured in the past timelines, (in this case, 1924) always resulted in violent illness, the boys were free to forage liquids as they went. Still, it was easier to assimilate liquids from their natural timeline; so Big Blue was equipped with a fifty gallon copper lined barrel filled with fresh water from 1971.

The boys were comfortably on the Nevada side of the border now, having passed the state line marker some five minutes before. Jason maneuvered Big Blue onto a two-track tributary of the Nipton road branching off to the North. The rough dirt trail

twisted over a mound, down across a dry wash, and back up to a flat spot that looked like a fine place to stop. They would not be easily seen here from the road, but they'd have an unobstructed view of the valley from which they had just emerged.

Gilbert jumped out and threw a chock under the wheel as Jason shut down the motor and ancillary systems of the truck. The driver's side door pushed open with a squeak as Jason and King piled out onto the crunchy gravel. With the motor off and the lights extinguished, a welcome feeling of calm descended upon the three.

They met just back of the cab on the left side where Jason was already climbing into the truck bed. He grabbed a big enameled pan out of the back and filled it from the barrel. Pausing first to splash water on his face, he passed the pan over to Gilbert who immediately placed it on the ground for King. Meanwhile, J.T. fished a couple of tin cups out of the box and filled them too, handing one to Gil, and drinking the other greedily as he filled up a large coffee can and climbed on down with it. The boys sat down on the running board with the can in between them. And for many long minutes they stared in silence, looking back at the valley; just drinking, refilling their cups from the can, and drinking some more.

After a while they started feeling better. They had both downed several cups of water and their bodies were responding quickly. Their faculties began to return; it was easier to think now, and to breathe. The tightness in their muscles began to loosen, and their sense of humor showed signs of returning as well.

King was still lapping up the water in his pan, although at a slightly slower rate. The silver feather around his neck was clinking rhythmically against the pan as he drank, making calming music for the three. Abruptly, he stopped drinking and lay down panting with his hind feet pointed behind him like one of those carved wooden flying pigs from Thailand. Jason and Gil regarded him with genuine affection. It was a beautiful night. If Hick Fenton hadn't been kidnapped, this would have been a really nice moment.

More time passed in silence with the can getting emptier, and each man peering into the landscape, lost in his own thoughts. Then at once they each took a deep breath and turned to look at each other for the first time since they sat down, and immediately both started laughing. Without knowing it, each man had been

Illustration by Maria Volforth.

sitting with an unlit cigarette dangling from his lips long enough for it to have wilted.

"I think we can risk a flame," chuckled Jason while digging in his pocket. "I don't think they're coming up this way," he continued, snapping his trusty Zippo open and holding it to Gil's cigarette. "Anyway," he concluded, lighting his own, "we would hear that big A.C. Mack from miles away if they were."

Gilbert Mantree nodded, smiling as he blew smoke straight up in the air. They had both been thinking the same thought. "Where do you suppose they are going?" he wondered.

J.T. shrugged. "I'd guess they're headed straight to the nearest company doctor they can trust. Probably somewhere this side of the river. Their outfit has holdings all over this region, according to Deke. Some of them above board --others, no one knows."

"They might be doing some smuggling," mused Gilbert. "It would explain them needing a plane."

J.T. thought about it. "They could have legit reasons for a plane," he opined.

"Not driven by goons," Gilbert observed, shaking an ash loose. Jason stared out over the valley and nodded thoughtfully. The plane hadn't borne the Longhammer Company logo.

• • • • •

~ Some hours earlier ~

Hi c k Fenton a w o k e again, his head still throbbing painfully. His throat was very dry, and he had a strong metallic taste in his mouth. His wrists were noticeably swollen now, and the rope binding them bit sharply into his flesh. Realizing he had drifted back into unconsciousness again, he wondered how much time had passed. He was still in the jostling airplane. He had certainly been hit harder than he'd thought.

It was time to hatch an escape plan. The first step would be a systematic assessment of his situation. Careful to continue feigning unconsciousness, Hick began to look about the cabin through half closed eyes, turning his head only when the movements of the aircraft through the rough air seemingly rolled him around the floor. The cargo area in which he lay was loaded haphazardly with supplies, most of them typical of a mining operation, some others decidedly not.

He started compiling a mental list of the things he could see in the darkened interior of the ship. Near the front there were two cases of **Dynamite**, and a case each of **Blasting Caps**, slow burning **Fuse**, **Mexican Beer**, **Canadian Whiskey**, and **U.S. Army Hand-Grenades**(!). Aft of these were a 50lb. **sack of flour**, four dozen **eggs**, some **Powdered Milk**, a **Winchester rifle**, and a **monkey wrench** which matched the dent on Hick's head. Back of these, a five gallon can of **Kerosene**, three cartons of **Cigarettes**, two **Thompson sub-machine guns**, and multiple boxes of **Ammunition** in assorted calibres including what appeared to be about 2000 rounds of **.45acp** and 2 cases of govt. issue **.30 Springfield Rifle Ball**. Nearer to Hick was a canvas **sack full of tools** (shovels, picks, hammers, etc.), a locked **toolbox**, some **hardhats**, a small carton of **Canned peaches**, five large cans of **Coffee**, and a box containing 12 tins of **Canned fish**. At the extreme rear of the cabin there were 2 **parachutes**, a large **flare-pistol**, and a bag of leftover **Chinese food**, which incidentally, was not helping Hick's nausea.

The pilots' cabin, which was really part of the main compartment, and communicated directly with it, sat just fore of the upper wing, and was slightly elevated. In it, Hick could see **Crease Mulraney** and that loudmouth **Guf Brinkston**, the jerks that clobbered him, crowded together at the controls of the ship with their backs to him.

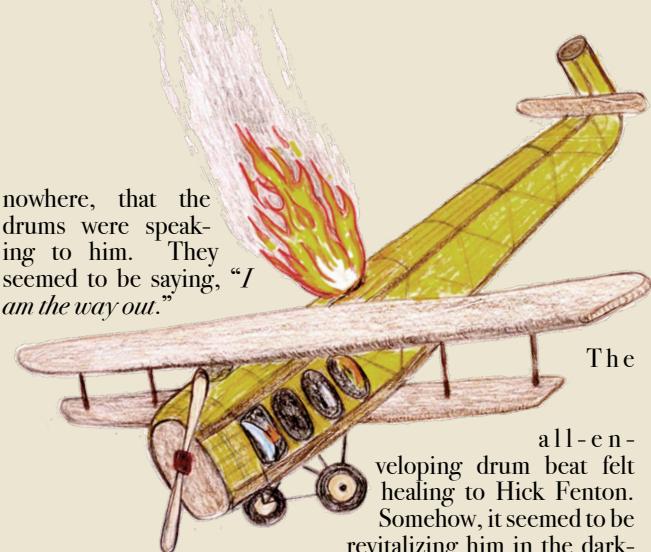
The plane was a large single-engine cabin job, he recalled. He started to calculate the dimensions of the interior; mapping in his head the layout of the plane. The odds were against him and he knew it; any detail he was aware of could be the one that saved his life!

At this point in the narrative, the reader may be wondering how it is that our injured hero was able to compile so thorough and detailed a manifest of the cargo he could see from the floor of a darkened airplane cabin through drowsy half closed eyelids. Indeed, a less generous reader might be fully justified in concluding that the author had overstepped the bounds of credulity and hence, strained his contract with the reader near to its breaking point. Allow me then, to remind you that Hick Fenton, as has been amply demonstrated in the two previous volumes of this series, is a singular individual, possessed of some rather remarkable attributes, among which are a seemingly flawless Photographic Memory, coupled with a phenomenal ability to store and retrieve facts, figures, and memories in his mind. Recall as well, that in *Chapter Two*, Hick was looking directly inside the ship as it sat on the ground at the makeshift airstrip North of Barstow, and thus had ample time to employ his celebrated mental-photography apparatus before he was surprised by Guf Brinkston and Crease Mulraney, who quickly conked him on the head and absconded with him.

Hick lay still now, confident that his inventory of the deadly situation was as complete as it would ever be. Now, with detailed plans of the plane, and lists, and various calculations floating about in his head, Hick began to search for the opportunities that must be hidden within his predicament. Opportunities to stay alive! One distracting thought, however, kept threatening to sidetrail his process: Hick couldn't tell if he was awake or not. Not that it mattered that much; he could proceed with his plans either way, but his waking and sleeping thoughts *were* different, and he would have preferred to factor those differences into his calculations.

The sound of the motor was reverberating in the darkness all around him. The drone seemed to be getting louder; throbbing and ringing. The more he listened, the darker his environment seemed to be getting. Hick visualized the taut skin of the airplane resonating with the sound as the plane bumped through the sky. "It is the sound of a drum," he thought, "or rather, a symphony of drums." The notion emerged in his mind, seemingly from

nowhere, that the drums were speaking to him. They seemed to be saying, "*I am the way out.*"



The all-enveloping drum beat felt healing to Hick Fenton. Somehow, it seemed to be revitalizing him in the darkening cargo hold, and he began to relax into it, feeling oddly confident that whether asleep or awake, he was making progress.

The darkness was near total now. But lying there, Hick sensed something even darker within the plane, and it was moving closer. Something warm and dark, but strangely comforting was now hovering above him, nearly enveloping him like the sound of the beating drums. Presently, he felt soft, feminine hands on his chest, sliding up toward his face. The dark form moved closer, and suddenly he was being kissed on the lips. Warm, full, soft lips. The dark body fully pressed against him.

This kiss gave him strength. Hick felt more awake now, (even though he was now fully convinced he was dreaming,) and much of his pain and discomfort disappeared. The woman-thing moved away slightly after the kiss, and Hick observed that the blackness of her form appeared to be dense animal fur. She started to sit up, drawing her hands back across his chest and abdomen as she went. As she straightened up, Hick saw her more clearly in silhouette. She looked more like a panther than a woman.

The panther-thing now slowly stood up, turned, and began to stalk off. As she turned, she caressed Hick with her long furry tail; just as though she were a dancer flirting with him with her feathered boa. Hick noticed a pattern of spots emerge on her fur as she moved through the cargo; spots like those of a Jaguar. There seemed to be more light in the plane now, as though it were glowing. A high frequency electric glow, he thought, something like an Aurora Borealis. The light began to flicker, and Hick glanced up to see a spot on the ceiling begin to catch fire. The flames burned a hole in the ceiling above him, and Hick climbed on out and stood on the top of the plane. "It's nice out here," he thought, "like standing on the deck of a riverboat in Spring."

The constellations were bright, and it felt good to be out of the close confines of the cabin. Much of the ship was on fire now, and the smoke was twisting straight up into the sky. Hick followed the smoke trail with his eyes, and began to rise with it and float and climb into the sky as well. The higher he climbed, the brighter the stars grew. He was unimaginably high now, but the drumbeat was just as intense. He chanced a look down and saw that the mountains had flattened out a bit, and he could begin to see the curvature of the Earth.

He climbed still higher, and abruptly he found he had reached the very canopy of the sky and could proceed no further. The canopy extended from horizon to horizon, and Hick understood it to be the upper boundary of his natural world. The canopy he experienced was something like a thick spongy membrane. He saw the smoke slowly penetrating the soft membrane, and determined to follow it in. Squeezing through, he soon found himself emerging in another world, a world above the sky.

It was an odd kind of place, this "world above the sky," and Hick found he could move about it freely. Soon he'd alighted on a little

patch of earth. It felt like they were standing on a mountain top, but couldn't see the rest of the mountain below. Hick was astonished to be standing there with **Marcus Dee**!

To be honest, Dee looked a little different than usual though. For one thing, his hand-carved crutches appeared to be made of bone. Also, it seemed like he might have bird's wings growing out of his back. Glistening 24-karat gold bird's wings!

Dee smiled that strange smile of his, tilting his head to the side as he did so. He made a slight gesture, offering Hick the cigarette he'd been smoking; a short nub of a filterless Pall Mall he held in the yellowed fingertips of his left hand. Hick declined, feeling a bit confused. It seemed like there were more than two of them up on this mountain.

"You can ask them a question up here," Dee explained in a confidential tone. "They will answer you."

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, Hick answered slowly, "I need to know how to get loose when I'm tied up."

Another figure stepped forward into the light; a short, powerfully built, curly-haired man in a green suit. He had a head like an anvil, and the smile of a vampire. Hick recognized him as the legendary magician, **Harry Houdini**. "It's simple," Houdini said, staring intently at Hick. "When you wish to be bound, you must make yourself big before the ropes go on. Then, when you want them off, you make yourself small."

"I didn't wish to be bound," Hick explained. "I was unconscious when they did it. I couldn't make myself big"

"Well next time you have yourself bound, make yourself big," replied the magician.

Hick's dander was up. "I don't have myself bound. They did it without my consent. I didn't choose this situation."

Houdini's eyes softened. "We are all bound with ropes of our own making. We are all bound with our consent."

Hick looked confused, and a little frustrated. Houdini clarified, "It's you. It's always you."

A dark figure then stepped up between the Great Houdini and Marcus Dee. It was the **Panther Goddess** from the cargo hold. She was woman shaped again. Standing her full height, she was unbelievably tall. With an imperious look in her fascinating eyes she slowly donned a magnificent headdress crowned with a glowing jaguar skull. The skull looked to be composed of a multitude of fire opals welded together, each glimmering a different color. The oversized teeth were solid gold, and the back of the skull was festooned with large colorful birds' feathers.

The headdress formed a hood which attached to the sleek fur tippet she wore atop her long black silken gown. From her spacious sleeves she now produced a folded fan in each hand. Facing Hick, and capturing him with her eyes, she snapped the fans open dramatically, and began to display them with a graceful series of ritual hand gestures. The fans were large, and made from the feathers of numerous varieties of brightly colored tropical birds. The feathers were each about two feet long, and every one of them appeared to have come from a different type of bird. No two colors were the same, and Hick imagined these must have been birds from every epoch and continent on Earth.

As the Panther Goddess continued to make the fans dance in her hands, her bewitching eyes glowed and flashed with all the colors of the skull headdress, and reflected the movements of the fans. Utterly transfixed on the goddess and her movements, Hick felt his body becoming powerfully attracted to her. It was as though she was a giant magnet whose fields had attached to the iron in his bloodstream and were drawing him closer. Rays of pure color now began to project from the tips of the feathers and create moving prismatic orbs all around them.

As if on cue, Houdini and Marcus Dee took up positions on either side of Hick, faced him, and stepped two paces back. Then,

with the practiced flair of a famous magician, Houdini waved his hands and fingers in front of him, and caused Hick Fenton to levitate like in a classic stage show. At first Hick went straight up a foot or two, then found himself lying face up, as though on an operating table, while he slowly spun clockwise in front of the Panther Goddess.

Houdini caused Hick's rotation to cease, and he and Marc both backed away to the two enormous drums flanking the scene. With a signal from the panther-woman, Harry Houdini and Marcus Dee began playing their drums in earnest; adding the voices of these massive instruments to the already ever-present drum-beat that permeated this strange world.

As the air about them reverberated to the deafening drums, The Panther Goddess dramatically raised one fan aloft in her right hand, wielding it like a cutlass above a hovering, prostrate Hick Fenton. Looking up from his floating repose, Hick saw the panther-woman staring deeply into his eyes, her face swelling with emotion. Suddenly, the fan chopped down like an executioner's ax and severed one end of Hick from the other!

The Panther Goddess now stood with her legs apart in a wide stance, holding both fans above her head, palms out, while the top part of Hick turned slowly clockwise, and the lower portion turned counter-clockwise. After three full 360° turns, Hick's severed parts slowed down and came to a stop in perfect alignment.

It had all happened so fast that Hick had barely been aware of what was going to happen before it was all over. Now, he found he was startled at the outcome, but also cautiously optimistic.

The colored light rays were still streaming out of the feather tips as fiercely as ever. The Goddess held the left-hand fan up now, and slowly brought it into play like a surgical scalpel. She was removing something invisible from Hick Fenton's abdomen using a very careful touch. Then, holding it aloft, she transferred it to an enormous condor on the wing, who carried it off toward the West.

The severed portions of Hick's body were now glowing with the colors of the fan-rays. It was barely discernible when it started, but now the wounds were positively radiating, and Hick could no longer look directly at them. With fields of light-energy swirling around him, Hick felt his body being pushed back together and welded in place.

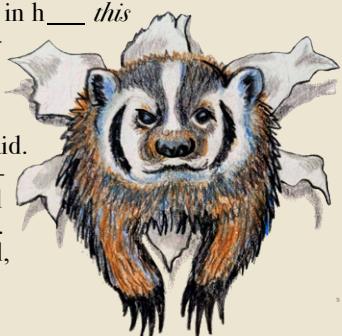
The tall, beautiful spirit folded her fans and put them away. Now, she bent down next to him, and placed her hands on Hick's stomach and chest. Leaning over him, she began to blow something into his solar plexus from about a foot away. It looked like the flickering light from a movie projector was streaming out of her mouth and into Hick's body. Hick was certain he knew this movie, that the movie was one of his old time favorites. But he couldn't sense what movie it was, only how it made him feel.

When it was over, Hick found himself standing with the other three, near a large, mature oak tree. Marcus Dee stood uncomfortably close and shook his hand firmly. "Be your word, Fenton," he said, in that odd, gasping, fish-like way of his.

Houdini moved in front of Hick. "Remember the key, now," he said, while producing a silver key 'from thin air' through expert sleight of hand, and shoving it in the right front breast pocket of Hick's jacket.

While Hick Fenton was wondering what the in h___ this meant, he felt Marcus Dee behind him messing with his arms. "Make yourself big," Marc advised, as he began tying Hick's wrists.

"You must go into the passage with him, if you would be free" the panther-woman said. She gestured to a badger who had silently joined them. The badger then squeezed through a small hole at the base of the tree. Hick looked at her balefully, and she said,



"Make yourself small..."

Frustrated, but anxious to leave this place, Hick did as he was directed. Not exactly knowing how, he made himself "small" and started to shimmy into the burrow.

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Ahead in the cabin as the plane twisted through the night sky, Guf Brinkston had a thought. Hollering over the throaty growl of the engine, he suggested, "Y'know, instead of shootin' that guy, we should jus trow him outta the airplane, an lighten the load!"

"You know why we're takin' him to camp, Guf." Mulraney hollered back, "We got to find out what he knows!"

"AAAhh, he ain't never waking up!" countered Guf, turning in his seat to look behind him as though to emphasize his point. Startled to see what was transpiring in the main cabin, Guf drew out his Luger and snapped the action back, charging the pistol. "I'm gonna kill that little sh—-for-brains!" he screamed.

"Put that thing away, you idiot!" cried the pilot, "you'll hit something back there and kill us all!"

"Aw, I can hit better than that!" Guf growled, prying the pilot's fingers off his arm as he struggled to crawl over the wicker seat. Guf was facing backwards now, struggling with both the pilot and the tight space he was trying to force his body through. The pilothouse of the Longhammer bush plane was cramped under the best of circumstances, but with the likes of Crease Mulraney and Guf Brinkston wedged up there, the situation was turning into something Marcus Dee liked to call "an *impaction*."

Crease Mulraney, who usually had his hands full just keeping the plane in the air, was now locked in a struggle with his blood-mad partner. And Guf, who was a little bit top-heavy to begin with, began to teeter over the seat. Balanced on his mid-section, something rather primal began to overtake Guf. From the waist up, he was driven by only one thought: get to Hick Fenton and murder him. But his body from the waist down had gone into a panic. Already, his hob-nail boots had knocked the ship's magnetic compass from its perch above the windshield, and his flailing legs seemed determined to leave no part of the ship's controls undamaged.

Mulraney, meanwhile, had given up trying to get Guf to sit back down. And, because his actions were split between trying to keep the plane under control, trying to defend himself (and the plane's controls) from Guf's feet, and in general, just trying to survive the next few minutes, he had no time to unleash the string of obscenities he felt bursting in his heart.

In an effort to keep control of the situation, Crease grabbed ahold of Guf's pant leg and concentrated on flying the aircraft. Guf's fury would not be damped though, and he began swinging at Crease behind him with his gun hand to knock

himself clear. As he did so, he started to slip over the seat, into the back of the airplane and his gun hand got stuck between the seats. Squealing in frustration, he yanked it free, sending a bullet through the oil pressure gauge and into the half empty fuel tank behind it in the bargain. A second bullet came out quickly and gave Crease another scar on his head to justify his nick-name. Still fixated on killing Hick, and beside himself with rage, Guf found his foot fouled in the ship's wheel, and started to kick himself free.

The plane was now rollicking every which way,

with Crease heroically attempting to counter the swinging yoke while trying to disengage Guf's foot from it. Guf was kicking with both feet and twisting, trying to propel himself to the back of the plane. Pulling on the stuck foot, and pushing on the back of the seat with his gorilla-like arms, Guf yanked the plane into a nose up attitude and finally got free of the yoke, kneeing Crease square in the face in the process.

Finally, Brinkston's oafish, teetering form tipped into full totter as he slipped face-first into the cargo hold. Kicking as he went, Guf's right boot hit Mulraney in the ear and nearly tore it half off. As the plane stood on its tail, much of the cargo moved aft along with Guf, and the plane's wings began to shudder violently.

With the nose up, Hi-Test gasoline poured through the bullet hole and onto Crease's lap. The plane went into a full-power stall, dropping the nose hard over immediately.

Crease Mulraney wasn't a great pilot, but even with a face full of blood and one eye out of action, he knew enough to shove the yoke forward for all it was worth and kick the rudder hard right or they'd all be soon dead. Unfortunately, with the loose cargo shifted aft, and the 'G's they were pulling, the ship was out of balance and recovery was slow. Overcome with rage, Guf was clawing his way aft to Hick, heedless of his own safety, as the ship entered a deadly flat spin.

Meanwhile, Hick Fenton was head-first down a badger hole, desperately cutting his wrists free on a sharp amethyst crystal, while above him in the hole a single-minded badger seemed to be trying to pull off his pants. The badger hole now seemed to be spinning madly however, and shortly he awoke to find himself upside down in the extreme rear of the Longhammer airplane, rubbing his ropes on a sharp piece of metal behind him, with his legs above him hopelessly tangled in some cargo.

Several tins of Kerosene fell over, giving Guf a clear view of Fenton. The thug raised his right hand to shoot, and was astonished to find it empty. Frantic to kill Hick, he clawed his way up toward the rear of the plane as it spun. Pushing cargo behind him like a mole as he advanced, Guf inadvertently shifted enough weight forward to enable the ship to recover from the stall.

Crease felt the ship recover, but with blood in his eyes, and most of the instruments smashed, he had trouble knowing if the ship was straight and level. He was flying blind, by the seat of his gasoline soaked pants, and it wasn't going well. The ship was weaving around like a carnival ride. "What're you doing back there?" he hollered at Guf, "Let's try to get through this alive!"

"Hold yer HORSES," Guf shot back, "I'm almost there!"

Hick tried to right himself, and whatever his feet were tangled in fell over and took his legs with it. He sat up now, still holding the object he was using to cut through his bonds. The ropes were looser now, but his wrists were still tied.

Guf tried to stand up and stagger toward him, but a sack of flour fell and broke on his head. Cargo was busting loose all around them and the floor was slick with Whiskey, Beer, Kerosene, and broken eggs. A crate slid across the floor and broke right through the cargo door, taking the door with it, hinges and all. Wiping flour from his eyes, Guf tried to stand up once more and found himself completely untethered in mid-air, before hurling an expletive with all his might and landing on his elbow.

Hick had determined that the sheet metal object he held behind him was somewhat pistol shaped, and he resolved to put it to good use. Just then, Guf rose up, and with Herculean effort, flung himself at our hero. At once, Hick rolled over and let loose with the ship's emergency flare-pistol. Guf's startled face lit up with terror as the flare passed close enough to burn him and bounced through the plane on its way up front.

Like a sparkling comet, the flare glanced off Crease Mulraney's head, luckily without doing too much damage, (Crease



was gifted with a very hard head) but unfortunately his lap was now aflame. The flare smashed against the instrument panel and bounced its way back into the cargo hold and finally caught itself up on an ammunition crate, having deployed its parachute. The flare was still burning brightly, as was much of the plane's interior.

Guf had launched himself at Hick and was mid-fling when the flare went past. When he landed on Hick he was fit to be tied. Grabbing Hick by the ears, he hauled him to his feet, and hurled him toward the open cargo door. Hick landed on the floor, and looked back at Guf without emotion. Overcome with anger, Guf started for him, tripped on a toolbox, got up, tripped again, and hurriedly crawled the rest of the way to his victim.

Guf Brinkston was on top of Hick, ready to pummel him with his massive fist when he looked down and saw his trusty monkey wrench on the floor next to his knee. "Just too perfect!" he thought. It was like an omen. He reached down to grab the wrench and held it over his head so Hick could see what he was being bludgeoned with before his face got caved in, but Guf's hand was empty! The plane had banked over to Starboard, and Guf caught a glimpse of the wrench sliding out the door just before he fell out, himself.

Hick lay on the floor, astonished for a short moment. Then he heard cargo shifting again and he slid out the door. On the way out, he snagged on something, and dangled by his feet long enough to see the plane on its side, lit up like a Japanese lantern, its mighty engine howling at full throttle.

Then, with a lurch he was free; falling headfirst through the firmament like Guf and the wrench before him.

Is this the end of Hick Fenton?

DON'T FAIL TO READ

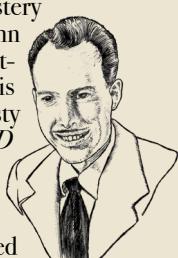
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John LeGallee

Exploring the MILKY WAY

By Francisco Silva, Las Vegas Astronomical Society



vi Kwa Ame National Monument is an excellent place to view the stars and planets of the dark night sky away from the glow of the city lights. On clear, moonless nights, our home galaxy, the Milky Way, is on spectacular display. The Milky Way is a majestic spiral of stars that houses our solar system. Everything we see with the naked eye in the night sky is part of this galaxy. The Milky Way has captivated and intrigued people around the world for millennia, and its impressive presence as a sparkling band of light across the night sky has inspired countless myths, legends and spiritual beliefs.

Various cultures, including the Chinese, Greeks, Zulu, Hopi, Navajo, and Mojave, have interpreted the Milky Way in their own way. In one Chinese story, it is known as the Silver River and associated with the romantic legend of the Cowherd and the Weaver. The cowherd and the weaver are separated by the Silver River and are only allowed to meet once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, during the Qixi Festival. In Greek mythology, the Milky Way was the product of milk spilt by Hera, queen of Olympus, while she was breastfeeding the mortal Hercules. This celestial milk gave rise to the galaxy we know today.

To the Zulu people of South Africa, the Milky Way is known as *inkanyezi*, which means stars. They believe that it is a path that spirits take to travel to the afterlife. The appearance of the Milky Way in the night sky is considered a sign of the presence of ancestral spirits watching over the living. In Hopi mythology, the Milky Way is the backbone of Mother Earth, and a symbol of the deep connection between the Earth and its inhabitants. In Navajo stories, the Milky Way was the path full of challenges and trials, traveled by the First Man and the First Woman in their search for the Promised Land that finally brought them home.

According to Mojave elder Paul Jackson Jr., the night sky has always been a place of deep spiritual connection and ancestral wisdom to the Mojave people. The stars told the time and the directions to travel at night. The Milky Way represents an immense school of salmon travelling up river to where they were born in order to reproduce, and the Big Dipper is the fisherman throwing a large net into the water to catch the fish.

By observing the Milky Way in the night sky, we all connect with our past, present and future. It is a reminder of our place in the universe, a space for reflection and deep inspiration. Regaining the ability to see the Milky Way is a crucial step in preserving our connection to the cosmos and the cultural heritage that defines us.

Unfortunately, increasing light pollution threatens our ability to see the Milky Way. As urban areas continue to grow and artificial lighting becomes more prevalent, the problem of light pollution has increased. Light pollution occurs when artificial light from urban and industrial areas illuminates the night sky, obscuring the stars, and depriving us of this natural spectacle. If we want to guarantee that future generations can enjoy its beauty, light pollution must be reduced. We can use nighttime lighting responsibly by installing lights with tops that help cast the light downward, and by limiting the amount of lights we use in the evening hours. By modifying the lighting on our own properties and in our larger communities, we can ensure that others can experience the night sky's wonders in the years to come. :

Mysteries of the Sky

By Sage Reynolds

I grew up near Searchlight in the 1970s and 80s, when Art Bell's late night radio broadcast from Pahrump had the adults talking about UFO sightings, secret government installations, and mysterious beasts in the desert. In a 1998 interview, Bell observed "when we're done here on Earth, we all want to know that there's something else out there, don't we? That's the land of the paranormal."

Reports of interesting sky phenomena abound in Southern Nevada, and the area around Searchlight is no exception. Former director of the Nevada State Museum Dennis McBride, in an interview with the LV Review Journal in 2017, described the oldest UFO sighting as dating back to the early 1930s during the construction of Hoover Dam; reports of strange sky visions have also come from Boulder City, Black Mountain in Henderson, Moapa Valley, CalNevAri and Nelson.

While the public has historical records of official sightings, many more stories have remained unreported but passed down through the decades. Once you get talking to friends in Searchlight about the desert's mysteries, chances are, a number of them may share experiences about seeing strange lights or reclusive desert yetis, or being overcome with powerful emotions and feelings of spiritual connectedness, catching glimpses of interesting flying machines, and other out of the ordinary run-ins with the unknown.

Even movie stars Clara Bow and Rex Bell, living at Walking Box Ranch (between Searchlight and Nipton), reported a strange encounter they witnessed there in the 1950s:

"According to Clara and Rex, they were driving back to the Walking Box Ranch after a trip to Las Vegas when they saw a group of strange lights in the sky. The lights seemed to be moving erratically and were changing colors. They initially thought that it might be an airplane, but as they got closer, they realized that the object was unlike anything they had ever seen before. The object was reportedly about 50 feet in diameter and had a metallic appearance. It hovered above the ground, emitting a low humming sound. As Clara and Rex got closer, they noticed that there were strange symbols etched onto the surface of the craft. Suddenly, the object shot up into the sky at an incredible speed, leaving Clara and Rex in awe."

After the incident, Clara and Rex contacted the Air Force to report their sighting. However, they were met with skepticism and were told that their experience could be explained by natural phenomena or human-made objects. Despite this, Clara and Rex were convinced that they had witnessed something extraordinary."

Whenever we witness something that we don't understand, something that points out how little we actually know about the vast cosmos around us, the experience is, of course, extraordinary, regardless of the scientific truths surrounding the actual cause of the event. One of the most magical aspects of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument and the lands surrounding it is the fantastic and expansive views one has of the Earth below and the Sky above. Spending time here invites us to think expansively about life, the universe, and everything, and to roam the

Illustration by Patrick Zolp-Mikols.



uncharted territories in our mind and soul as we navigate through the physical realm of Joshua Trees, granite spires, and back roads. That experience connects us to our inner selves and to the world around us in a profound and moving way.

In a New York Times article from 2021, former U.S. Senate Majority Leader (and long-time Searchlight resident) Harry Reid discussed his history with Nevada's "unidentified aerial phenomena":

"I've always been fascinated by things I don't understand – by the mysterious and the unexplained – and I believe this fascination comes in part from growing up in rural Nevada. People who live in rural America, away from the light pollution of the major cities, can gaze at the night sky and see the marvel of the Milky Way and more. In Searchlight, I spent many evenings in my youth lying on an old mattress gazing up at the endless, starry heavens. It was a rare night I didn't see a shooting star. The shimmering expanse filled my eyes and sparked my imagination. Years later, when I entered public life, I was as curious as ever."

As a Democratic senator from Nevada, I visited Area 51, the top-secret Air Force testing site in southern Nevada long associated with U.F.O.-related conspiracy theories. What I saw fascinated me, though much of it must remain classified. During one visit I traveled a short distance to the facility that housed the Air Force's secret new stealth fighters. For security reasons the pilots could fly them only at night – under the same Nevada stars I had gazed upon as a boy."

The lands surrounding Searchlight were used as military airspace for the Nevada Test and Training Range (where Area 51 is located) and the Nellis Air Force Range, and are still used as a military flyway today. One internet source reports that in 1952, Air Force Fighters witnessed a series of flying saucers flying in formation over the town of Searchlight. Additional sightings described unusual craft exhibiting sudden and erratic movements, stops and turns. Since WWII, the area has been an air training and testing space for new aircraft and pilots, so it is no wonder that there are reports of strange ships in the sky doing all manner of strange maneuvers.

My grandfather was stationed at the Mojave Marine Air Base during WWII, where he was on the aircraft recovery crew, whose job it was to search for and recover downed pilots and planes. He and my grandmother built a cabin in the mountains near Searchlight in the 1960s, and enjoyed exploring the back roads by day and stargazing at night.

One of my earliest memories was of our family's encounter with a strange aircraft as we traveled home from a day at Lake Mohave in the late 1970s. It was just after dusk, and my grandfather was at the wheel as we headed up a bumpy dirt road, when suddenly a round, silvery craft sped into view and hovered over the road ahead. The

road was hilly, and as we continued driving toward the aircraft, which was low to the ground, it kept going in and out of view.

The adults seemed at first astonished by the sight, and everyone got excited, which got my attention as a child that this was something out of the ordinary. Then, as we got closer and closer and the aircraft seemed to stay stationary in mid-air, as if it was waiting for us, the talk in the car changed to a tone of concern. Over the next couple of hills we would be driving right under it, and the adults had heard enough about "UFO" sightings to know that some strange stuff might happen underneath. When we reached the top of the hill, however, the aircraft zoomed off fast towards the north.

I was small enough to be in the back, mid-seat of the station wagon, so most of my memories are of what was happening inside the car and the interesting reactions of the adults; it was the first time I had heard my parents and grandfather have fear in their voices.

Back then, the popular answer to this mystery was that we had seen a spaceship from another world, but there were also enough military operations going on in the area that it also seemed reasonable that this was something secret from our own world. My grandmother got an earful about it when the family got home, and the story would be told every so often on a dark night after dinner, but only among family.

Area 51 wasn't publicly acknowledged until 2013 (although it was a fairly open secret in Nevada before then), and a top-secret military installation is a pretty good explanation for weird sky happenings. A quick search on the internet will provide other, more colorful possibilities, and since no one can rewind an extraordinary event, we are each free to embrace our own explanations.

Psychiatrist Carl Jung called the phenomenon of alien encounters "a modern myth in the making", and Joseph Campbell stated that one of the functions of myths is to act as a mirror into our own selves. Certainly, our collective descriptions of people and spacecraft from other worlds look a lot like how we might see humanity itself evolve, while descriptions of bigfoot or yeti (yes, we hear about sightings of those out in the desert here once in a while too) look a lot like where the human race came from. While we will never know the answers to all of the mysteries of the East Mojave, our encounters can teach us that the universe is vast, that we ourselves navigate only a small part of it, and that we always do so with little understanding of it.

DESERT SAFETY 101

By Alan O'Neill

Avi Kwa Ame National Monument provides a distinctive and beautiful backdrop for recreational activities such as hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, orienteering, archaeological sightseeing, wildlife viewing, camping and viewing dark night skies. Because of its remote nature, you'll want to prepare for your visit in advance with special attention to safety precautions.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: Check the monument regulations, special concerns like fire restrictions or area closures, travel updates and weather forecasts before your visit. Weather can change quickly, especially during the summer monsoon season when flash floods can impact the condition of backcountry roads in minutes.

Travel in a group of two or more vehicles in remote areas and on rough roads. If that is not possible, leave a trip plan with a reliable person that will follow-up on your safe return.

There are some essential items to bring that can be helpful in the event of accidents, inquiries, sudden weather changes, or unexpected delays. You may need additional items depending on the activity in which you participate.

VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT: All vehicle travel is limited to designated routes on back country roads. Most backcountry roads require either a 2WD high clearance vehicle or a heavy-duty 4WD vehicle to travel, as most are not regularly maintained. Flat tires are a common problem for backcountry visitors due to rough road conditions or from having unsuitable tires. Make sure your vehicle has clearance and is, preferably, equipped with "off-road" tires if you are exploring the backcountry. Carry at least one inflated spare tire, a can of fix-a-flat or tire plug kit, a 12-volt air-compressor, a lug wrench, a shovel to smooth off cut banks or dig out of sand, and a jack to lift your vehicle with a base that can be set up on rocky

or sandy ground. Cell coverage is spotty in some parts of the monument so a satellite phone or satellite messenger such as a Garmin InReach is also a good item to bring along. Know how to use your equipment before you head out, and always keep your cell phone charged in case of emergency. Make sure your gasoline tank is full.

NAVIGATION: There are over 500 miles of designated back-country roads within the monument that provide access to the diversity of the landscape. Presently, there are only a few developed trails, so many of the hiking opportunities are in washes and on paths or roads that are not routinely maintained. Although there are some signs marking designated backcountry road routes, there are very few directional signs and it can be easy for people to get lost without a map.

Don't trust internet reception to navigate while on site from your phone—download maps of the area in advance. Know how to use a map and compass before going out. A GPS unit can let you give exact coordinates to your location if you need to call for help. There are also satellite-driven apps like "onXhunt" available that can show your location and the backcountry roads network.

NUTRITION: Be prepared for changes to your trip plans, and pack an extra day's supply of food--preferably no-cook items that have nutritional value to keep your energy high. Salty and easy to digest snacks (e.g. trail mix, nuts, and granola bars) work well for outdoor activities.

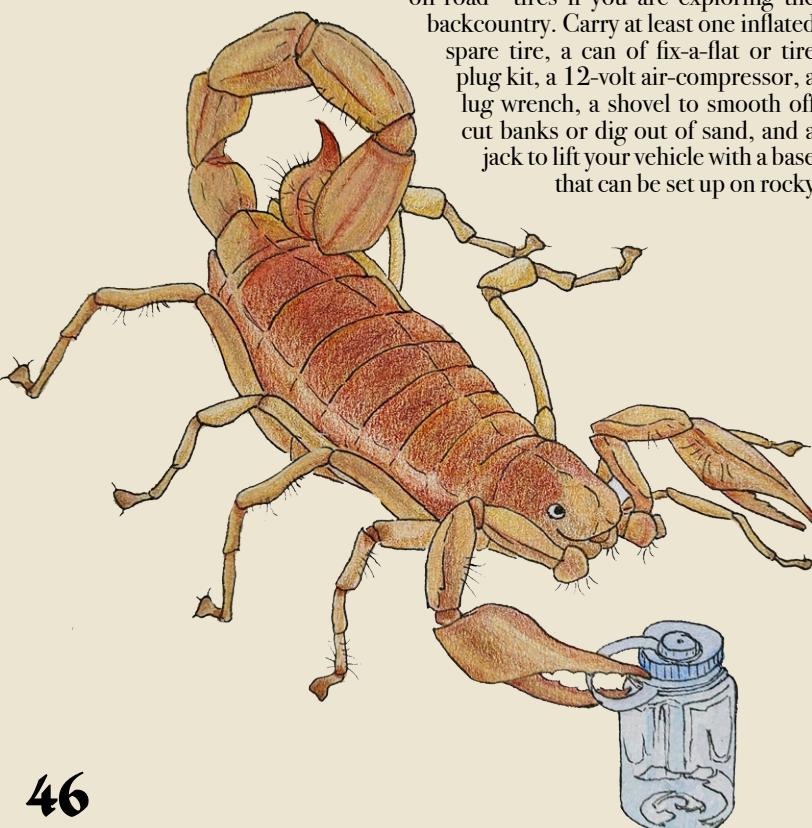
HYDRATION: Always bring an ample water supply—more than you think you will need. On a hot day, you should be drinking 1 quart of water per hour of hiking. When half of your water is gone, head back. Drinking water before and during hiking helps reduce the risk of dehydration (don't wait until you feel thirsty). Bring electrolyte replacements such as sports drinks or salty snacks. Bodies not only suffer from lack of water, but lack of sodium electrolytes as well.

CLOTHING AND SUN PROTECTION: The desert sun is penetrating and temperatures can reach over 110 degrees in the hot months of the summer. Protect your skin and eyes by wearing sunscreen and protective clothing that minimizes your exposure. Pack an extra layer of clothing that reflects the most extreme conditions you could encounter – weather changes rapidly here. Wear hiking shoes or boots with sturdy, rubber soles for stability and traction.

FIRST-AID SUPPLIES AND TOOLS: Start with a pre-made kit and modify it to fit your trip and your medical needs. Bring your medications with you. Consider including an emergency guidebook in case you are faced with an unfamiliar medical emergency. Augment your kit with basic tools, including duct tape, a knife, scissors, tweezers, waterproof matches and a multi-tool. A whistle and a mirror can help people find you if you are lost, and these save your energy from yelling. Flashlights or headlamps are also important emergency items. A tent, tarp, bivy sack, or emergency space blanket are all light-weight options for emergency shelter.

SAFETY AROUND WILDLIFE AND PLANTS: Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow, approach or feed animals; it damages their health, alters natural behaviors (habituates them to humans), and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Most animals you encounter in the backcountry will be more frightened of you than you are of them. However, in the

Illustration by Nancy Ko.



unlikely event that you have a threatening encounter with a large predator such as a mountain lion, stand up tall, wave your arms, make noise, and slowly back away. Do not run, as that may trigger the animal's instinct to chase. If you are actually attacked, fight back.

Never place your hands or feet where you cannot see first. Rattlesnakes, scorpions, black widow spiders or other creatures may be sheltered there. Do not touch, collect or try to kill these animals. If you see a rattlesnake, back away and leave the snake an escape route. They are beautiful creatures that use camouflage as their primary defense, their rattle as a secondary defense, and their fangs as a last resort.

Crossing paths with rabid animals is not likely, but possible. The most common mammals to carry the disease are skunks, foxes, coyotes and bats. If you encounter an animal exhibiting strange behavior and/or acting aggressively, do everything you can to keep from being bitten. Unusual animal behavior includes nocturnal animals out during the day, disorientation and stumbling, and aggression. If you are bitten, clean the wound and seek medical attention at the first available opportunity.

Many plants in the monument have barbed spines, thorns, and sharp edges that provide shade from the scorching sun and help protect them from browsing animals trying to get moisture. Some even use their spines as a means to reproduce, like jumping Teddy Bear cholla. What serves a purpose for the plant might present a danger to you from cuts, scratches and embedded spines. Tweezers are helpful in removing cholla and other cactus spines from the skin.

Leave pets at home where they are safe. If you must bring them, keep them on a leash and under your watch at all times.

WATCH FOR HAZARDS: Numerous abandoned mine shafts dot the Avi Kwa Ame landscape from past mining operations. They are not maintained and can be extremely dangerous. Do not enter these tunnels or shafts, and avoid the temptation to use them as shelter from rainstorms. Mines may be unstable, have hidden shafts, pockets of bad air, and poisonous gas. Mine tailings often contain high concentrations of toxic metals and other chemicals – don't dig in them.

Temperatures can average more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer months. Low humidity, combined with the increased respiration rate during strenuous hiking, can result in potentially dangerous dehydration. Heat exhaustion can overtake a person rapidly, and, because disorientation and confusion are common symptoms, a victim may never know what happened. Keep an eye on each other and be aware of these symptoms: chills, clammy skin, stumbling, muscle weakness, nausea. If heat exhaustion advances, it may turn into heat stroke, which is even more serious and often deadly. Skin will go from clammy to hot and dry, and unconsciousness may follow. Rapid and immediate cooling of the entire body is the only backcountry response, and emergency medical personnel should be contacted immediately. In summer, do not hike in the heat of the day.

Lightning storms frequently occur in the afternoon during the summer monsoon season, but can occur other times of the year as well. To prevent lightning from striking you, avoid high places and seek cover in buildings or in vehicles with the windows rolled up. If caught outdoors, crouch down on both feet with your arms wrapped around your knees and wait out the storm.

Flashfloods occur when thunderstorms drop a large amount of rain and the ground cannot absorb it. Dark skies and the sound of distant thunder are warning signs, but floods can develop many

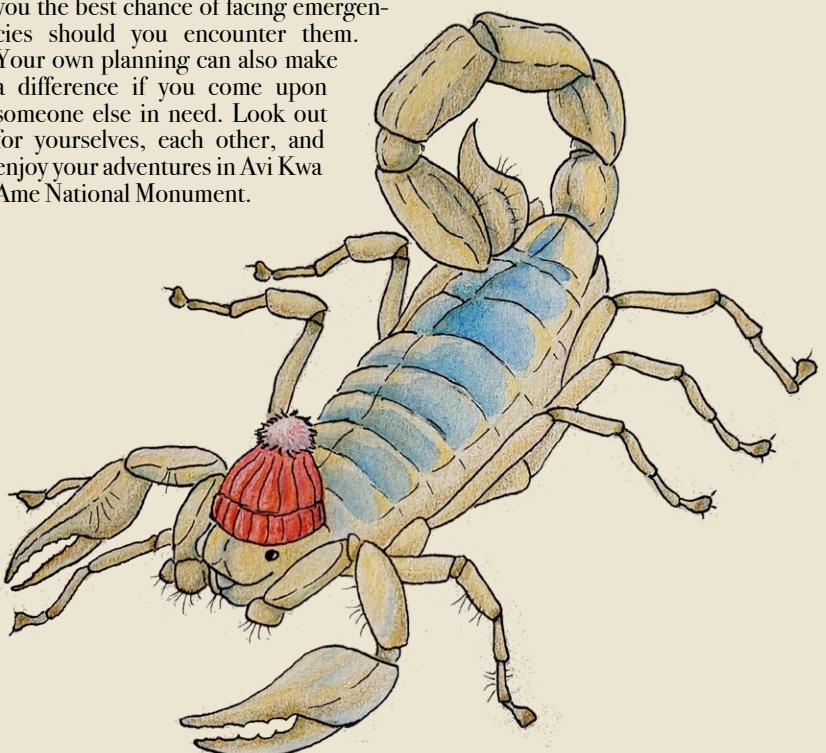
miles away, and the storm may not be evident downstream. Floods follow established waterways and seek the lowest ground, so do not camp or linger in dry washes or near streams or rivers, especially during the rainy season.

IF YOU BREAK DOWN OR GET LOST: First, take a moment to calmly assess your situation. Use your map, compass, handheld GPS, or visible landmarks to find your location. If it is safe to do so, retrace your steps to get back on your planned route. If you have cell coverage, dial 911 if the situation is an emergency. Make sure to leave your name, phone number, location, description of issue, vehicle type and license plate. Let them know of any medical conditions you may have.

Staying with your car is the most important thing you can do in the event of an emergency. Wait patiently for help to arrive and conserve your energy. Move only if there is an immediate threat to life. People have died from exposure trying to walk back to the paved roads. If you do not have cell coverage where you are, try walking uphill to a higher elevation to see if you can get a connection. You can also try to signal for help with a whistle, flashlight, or mirror. Use the SOS pattern: three times quickly, three times slowly, three times quickly. This can alert planes and helicopters flying in the area.

IF YOU GET INJURED: Use the First Aid kit you brought along for minor injuries like scrapes, bruises or muscle strain. Clean and cover the affected area, stay hydrated, eat a salty snack, and rest in a shaded area, if possible. Call 911 for major injuries and emergencies, and let them know what is in your first aid kit. Give them the GPS coordinates from your phone and a description of your surroundings including visible landmarks. If there is no reception, flag down a visitor if one comes by and ask them to travel back to an area with reception and call 911. Minimize movement as this will prevent further injuries. Control bleeding by applying direct pressure to the wound. Keep warm. If someone in your group gets injured, send several people to alert authorities while the rest stay with the injured person.

Packing well and planning ahead will give you the best chance of facing emergencies should you encounter them. Your own planning can also make a difference if you come upon someone else in need. Look out for yourselves, each other, and enjoy your adventures in Avi Kwa Ame National Monument.





GETTING UNSTUCK in the DESERT.

INTERVIEW WITH SOUTHERN NEVADA OFF-ROAD RECOVERY [SNORR]

Gold Beam editors Kim Garrison Means and Steve Radosevich sat down with the executive board of SNORR to talk about their incredible organization. SNORR is a group of around 80 off-road enthusiasts who rescue stranded off-road travelers and their vehicles, bringing them safely home. Since their founding in 2018, SNORR volunteers have received close to 15,000 calls.

GOLD BEAM: How did SNORR come about?

JACOB: Six years ago, I had a crazy idea to start this non-profit to help out people who were stuck on off-highway excursions. I had been part of a Facebook group that would go out on trails, and people were getting stuck all of the time, and were posting to the group asking for assistance. People in the comments section were responding by wanting to charge them money or asking for something in trade for their help. That triggered something in my head to say, "Why are we charging our brothers and sisters like this? We should just go out, have fun with them and bring them home." So that is what started the whole thing.

GOLD BEAM: What kinds of situations happen to make people call you?

DANIEL: We receive calls from people who have run out of gas in the middle of nowhere, people who have flipped their trucks over on the side of a mountain, people who had their vehicles end up in the lake – you name it. Everything from getting stuck in the sand to injury accidents and everything in between. We even get calls for heat distress, and we try to get those to the 911 operator to get them evacuated by helicopter or other means to get them to a hospital.

GOLD BEAM: What is the geographic range you are working in with these rescues?

JACOB: We go anywhere to 4 hours outside of Las Vegas, mainly in Southern Nevada but sometimes we make exceptions. We had a call recently that was in California, an elderly couple who were in a truck with a camper on it. They went up a steep incline to a mine, and somehow the vehicle slipped backwards on the terrain, started going sideways and backwards, hit something, fell onto the driver's side and slid into a tree, which stopped their fall. Luckily it was there, otherwise they would have kept going for another couple thousand feet or more.

GOLD BEAM: Your volunteers have off-highway equipped vehicles that can go some places that the emergency vehicles can't go. How do you get the calls from folks who need help?

JACOB: When someone calls 911 and needs help from a remote area, they are directed to us through the 911 operator or Lake Mead Communications Center. Those services will text or call us to ask for our assistance. Sometimes people also find us directly through Facebook or another social media platform.

GOLD BEAM: What happens after you get that initial call?

ANTHONY: First we try to figure out exactly where the person is. We have an app on our phones called Active 911, which is used by many volunteer services that assist with emergency services, and this helps



Illustration by Kyle Larson

coordinate people. We send out an alert on this app with the information that we are given, and we communicate on Facebook Messenger for photos and non-critical information related to the call.

GOLD BEAM: Tim, how did you start up with SNORR?

TIM: My son started me with this. One of his friends rolled an ATV out in the NW area of Las Vegas, and SNORR came and helped them out. No questions. They asked nothing. They came and got the vehicle, put the quad in the bed of their truck, and I thought it was the coolest thing when I heard about it. I work as a mechanic, so I can bring my skills to the team to fix things on the trail, and it's always rewarding to go out and help somebody that needs it.

GOLD BEAM: You brought up the "no questions asked" policy of SNORR. How does that work for the people who need help?

CARLOS: We aren't here to judge, just help people out. We work with other emergency services, and they may have to make decisions about the law, but that's not our job. The only thing I will say is that we won't put anybody that's under the influence back on the road.

DANIEL: One of the things that happens in those situations is that people's stress levels are way up, so it's important that we make them feel comfortable and convince them that we know what it's like, and bring their stress levels down.

ANTHONY: One thing I think a lot of people don't realize is that if they are in a situation where they have to call search and rescue, Metro, or the park service, they're going to pick up the people and get them to safety, but they're going leave their backpacks, their cars, their dogs and their vehicles behind.

That's where we can help with rescuing. But, it's important that people understand this and always prepare for the worst-case scenario when they are packing for a drive.

GOLD BEAM: Getting stuck is perhaps a life-changing situation. It can be dramatic when you are far from civilization, don't have resources, and start to feel powerless in the great big desert.

ANTHONY: You are absolutely right. And part of the problem is bad information. People get a lot of information off YouTube – some good – but there is also a lot of wrong information out there, and people have the wrong gear with them, or not enough gas or water, or are otherwise not prepared for their situation. Also, people move from all over the country to Las Vegas, and what prepared them for their environment elsewhere doesn't always work here.

A great example is when the water in Lake Mead went down so much last year, it exposed a lot of mud, and people were getting stuck. Some of them had plenty of experience driving in Alabama mud or mud from wherever – but it's a completely different type of mud in a completely different type of environment here, and they just overestimate their ability.

EAN: Our biggest goal as an organization is not just to help rescue those in need, but more importantly, to be proactive in

teaching others how to off-road safely, and how to utilize safe recovery techniques, so people know what to do when they get stuck, and how to assist themselves, and look out to assist others. When people go out adventuring in a group, we want there to be at least one person who is properly trained on what to do. Then they can self-recover and get home on their own. We've never turned down or had to abandon a recovery. We've recovered every single vehicle, and we've done it safely.

GOLD BEAM: How do you get funding for this great work?

JACOB: We are a non-profit organization, and we're able to receive donations from the people that we assist and from anyone who believes in our cause. We think it is important that the people we help have a chance to give back what they can afford, to help the next person who needs rescuing. It's a Karma thing. We've also received grants, so we've been able to bring in some income from that. Our volunteers also put a lot of time into each recovery mission, and a lot of effort and money into their own vehicles, fuel, equipment and training to do this, so when people who are rescued give back in some way, it really helps boost everyone's morale.

GOLD BEAM: A lot of people in this area love off-roading. How can people become part of SNORR?

ANTHONY: We're always looking for new rescue team volunteers and people who want to come help us out in any way, full-time or part-time. We'd love to see more folks from the Searchlight, Nelson and Cottonwood Cove areas sign up, as we get quite a few calls from around those areas but don't yet have a lot of volunteers who know those places well and are close to them. We'd also love to see more women in the off-road community get involved.

YOU CAN FIND OUT
MORE ABOUT SNORR,
EMAIL ABOUT CLASSES
OR VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES,
OR MAKE A DONATION
THROUGH THEIR
WEBSITE AT:
www.snorr.vegas



call them at
702-706-2330 if
You are in need of a
recovery.

Volunteering with SNORR is a good fit for people with a sense of adventure. That's why most of us have jeeps and trucks and vehicles that go off the pavement. Like Carlos said, you can go places you might not have thought to go to on your own, and you get to do it with your teammates and have a bit of an adventure for a good cause. There are also plenty of ways to volunteer with us that don't put you in charge of the technical rescues. You can help by bringing people who are stranded extra water or food, or help dig someone out of the mud, for example. And you don't always need a fancy rig to help out—we have volunteers with a bunch of different types of vehicles. We are always looking for anybody and everybody who has the willingness and the heart to go out and help others.

OFF-ROAD ADVICE FROM SNORR: Assess the situation, and be willing to abandon your original plan at any time if necessary. Lower the air in your tires. Most mishaps happen due to a lack of traction. FOUR WHEEL DRIVE doesn't mean you can go anywhere. It just means getting stuck in a harder spot to reach.

Help without
Judgment
is a rare
and precious
gift.



JANE OVERY: Outstanding Woman OF SEARCHLIGHT

By Patricia Mayne

Editors' Note: The Searchlight Museum Guild annual November event included several interesting speakers, one of whom was long-time resident Jane Overy. Jane gave an excellent talk about her life and accomplishments for the Searchlight community, and we were so impressed, we wanted to include a write up about her here. If you haven't had a chance to attend one of the Museum Guild events, know that they come highly recommended by us.

"Women have always been the strong ones of the world", said the famous designer Coco Chanel. I believe this is because they must be able to take care of those babies crying for attention, and hopefully raise them to have strength of character and perseverance. But first, the women themselves must have these traits to share. One of these distinguished women of our lifetimes, with so many fine qualities and ideas to share is Jane Overy, an outstanding woman of Searchlight.

Jane was born in June of 1937, and came to Searchlight in 1979. She was a veteran, a female vocalist and performer, newspaper reporter, painting instructor and public relations specialist. While living in Clear Lake City, Texas, where her husband Carl worked for IBM, Jane became ill with a rare reaction to the many industrial chemicals in the environment. She and her husband were sent to live in the high Mojave Desert to breathe the pristine air, which helped purify her body. She and Carl stayed in Searchlight for the next 40 years (they currently live in Henderson with their Son Scott and his partner Sharon).

Jane worked for Verlie Doing (a well-loved person in her own right) as a cashier and managerial assistant at the Searchlight Nugget Casino (now Terrible's Roadhouse), and also managed the Doing's registered quarter horses in locations around the country. Jane was good at just about everything she did, and she did what she was good at far beyond the extent of her career – she also volunteered around the town and instigated many community improvements.

Jane didn't just bring cookies to a meeting to support other's ideas. Rather, she would grab a hold of one of her creative thoughts and make it a mainstay of Searchlight life from the beginning to the end. Her passions for history, community, and order are buried deep in the virtue of this town.

In 1981 and 1982, Jane was the Chairman of Parades (parades are a beloved tradition here to this day). In 1985, she became a member of the Searchlight Town Advisory Board (STAB), and has served three terms. In 1986, she founded the Searchlight Museum Guild, and was the chairman of the planning and building committee for the Searchlight Community Center. Jane also founded the Searchlight Mining

Border illustration by Carin Agiman and Kim Garrison Means.



Park, and was the producer of the elaborate Searchlight Centennial Celebration in 1998. In 1989, you'd see her working for the Community Center in the charming and well-visited museum she created that is a satellite of the Clark County Museum and is still served by the Searchlight Museum Guild today.

From 1999 to 2014, she served on the Clark County Citizen Development Advisory Commission (CDAC), acquiring two firetrucks, two ambulances, new wells and water lines, water holding tanks and fire hydrants. Her work on this committee has and will make our town a safer place to live for generations to come.

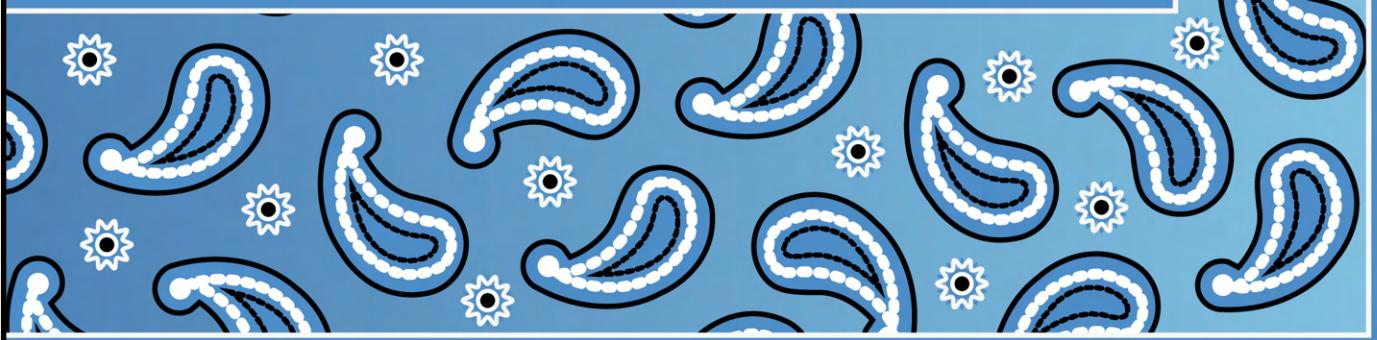
Jane has said that her proudest achievement was in her work for the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization (VFW), and Searchlight's cemetery. After travelling to other cemeteries in Nevada, Jane had the idea for, and oversaw the building of the beautiful iron gate with the date of 1906 that greets visitors at the entrance. She also made sure that every known person buried in Searchlight had their name included on a plaque within the cemetery, a feat that took many years, and much effort, research and perseverance.

More recently, Jane helped found the Searchlight Betterment Organization (SBO), a local non-profit that raises money for community events and projects, and continues to be an important positive force within our community.

Jane has received numerous awards over the years for her work in service to the Searchlight area, including multiple Congressional recognitions and the Spirit of Nevada Award. She was honored as one of the top two hundred women in the state at Nevada's 150th anniversary in 2014.

In spite of multiple hardships and physical disabilities, Jane has never given up her self-worth and ability to be of service to others. She also has never given up on her dreams for our town, and we are all the better for it. Jane has the virtue of tolerance, and a moral excellence that has allowed her to pursue her ideals with integrity. We will forever admire our outstanding woman of Searchlight, Jane Overy.

Who will be next?



Jane Overy with the late senator Harry Reid.

MRS. FRUGAL SUGGESTS...



nions. You heard me correctly, dear readers. If there is one edible plant you should take more notice of -- it is the onion. This humble vegetable is a powerhouse in the kitchen, a showpiece in floral bouquets, and will win your undying admiration in the garden. Often relegated to supporting culinary roles, the onion dreams of taking center stage at your table, performing a perfect pirouette for your taste buds, and landing with a bow to applause and a standing ovation by your dinner guests. For the moment, banish from your mind the thought of the "blooming onion" or other fat-soaked culinary missteps, and walk with me upon a garden path of culinary delight.

Let us begin our foray into all-things-onion in the kitchen garden, where, for even the most novice of gardeners, this member of the allium family will bring hearty satisfaction with little worry of failure. Even if you have never tended a green thing in your life, you will be able to grow onions. They can be planted from either seed, potted nursery rootings or bulb sets, or even your discarded refrigerator detritus. You can pop these obliging fellows in the ground just about anywhere, in any kind of soil, under the harshest of weather conditions, and for those with limited space, they take to pots like a charm.

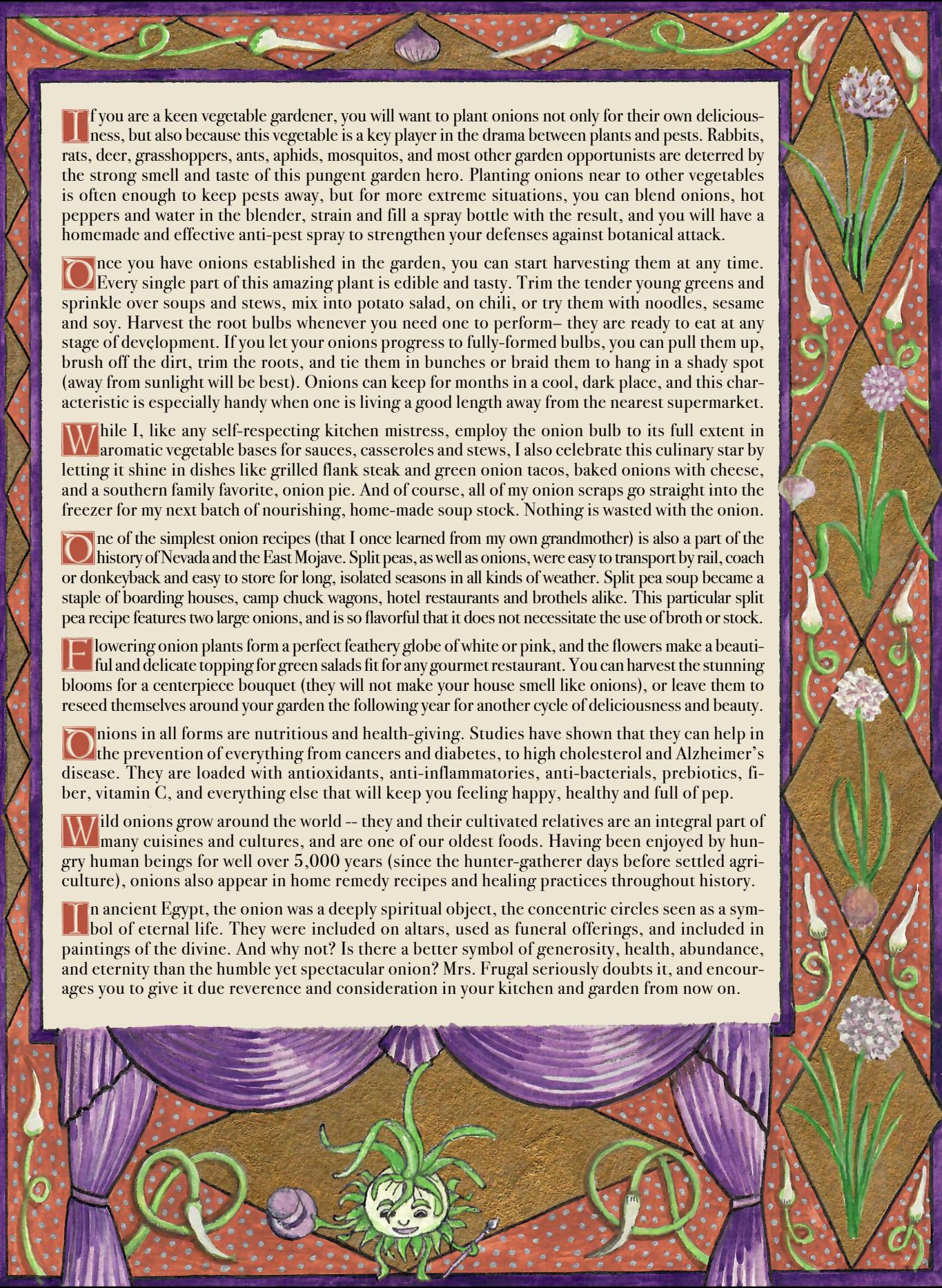
Onions need little tending other than to water them on a fairly regular basis (twice a week will usually do) and keep them somewhat free of weeds. They will tolerate full sun or partial shade as your yard allows. Green onions and chives will even do well indoors on a sunny windowsill, and this proximity to the kitchen will encourage you to trim, chop and sprinkle those beautiful green tops into all of your favorite dishes.

There are many colors and flavors of onions, and different shapes to the bulbs (round, oblong or squat), but all are easy to plant and look pleasant in the vegetable, herb or flower garden. To grow from seed in the spring, dig the soil up a bit, wet it down with water, and sprinkle the onion seeds about the top. Within days you will see sprouts begin to grow. You can also do this any time of year indoors, by growing onions in a bit of potting soil (a misting bottle works well for keeping potted soil moist). Onions will tolerate any soil, but you can befriend them further by adding compost and making sure your soil is well-draining.

Large onions need room around them to grow, so you may need to separate small onion plants that have sprung from seed or that you have bought as seedlings from the garden center. Simply use a small spade or spoon to help loosen the soil, then carefully pull the plant up and transfer it to a new location. With a gentle hand, your onions will not mind the change of scenery. 

Besides the plant nursery, the grocery store is an excellent place to obtain onions for the garden. The next time you buy green onions, try saving the bottom two inches and planting them, root down, in your garden or a pot on the kitchen window. They will immediately begin to put down roots and push up new shoots, which you can continue to trim and enjoy. The same can be done with large grocery onions. Cut and plant the bottom inch, and the plant will regrow like a magician slowly emerging from a vanishing cabinet. (Onion's first cousin Garlic will also happily root for you, and is often so enthusiastic to do so, it starts sprouting in the fridge. Divide the bulb into cloves, give them a chance to grow, and you won't be disappointed!) 





If you are a keen vegetable gardener, you will want to plant onions not only for their own deliciousness, but also because this vegetable is a key player in the drama between plants and pests. Rabbits, rats, deer, grasshoppers, ants, aphids, mosquitos, and most other garden opportunists are deterred by the strong smell and taste of this pungent garden hero. Planting onions near to other vegetables is often enough to keep pests away, but for more extreme situations, you can blend onions, hot peppers and water in the blender, strain and fill a spray bottle with the result, and you will have a homemade and effective anti-pest spray to strengthen your defenses against botanical attack.

Once you have onions established in the garden, you can start harvesting them at any time. Every single part of this amazing plant is edible and tasty. Trim the tender young greens and sprinkle over soups and stews, mix into potato salad, on chili, or try them with noodles, sesame and soy. Harvest the root bulbs whenever you need one to perform— they are ready to eat at any stage of development. If you let your onions progress to fully-formed bulbs, you can pull them up, brush off the dirt, trim the roots, and tie them in bunches or braid them to hang in a shady spot (away from sunlight will be best). Onions can keep for months in a cool, dark place, and this characteristic is especially handy when one is living a good length away from the nearest supermarket.

While I, like any self-respecting kitchen mistress, employ the onion bulb to its full extent in aromatic vegetable bases for sauces, casseroles and stews, I also celebrate this culinary star by letting it shine in dishes like grilled flank steak and green onion tacos, baked onions with cheese, and a southern family favorite, onion pie. And of course, all of my onion scraps go straight into the freezer for my next batch of nourishing, home-made soup stock. Nothing is wasted with the onion.

One of the simplest onion recipes (that I once learned from my own grandmother) is also a part of the history of Nevada and the East Mojave. Split peas, as well as onions, were easy to transport by rail, coach or donkeyback and easy to store for long, isolated seasons in all kinds of weather. Split pea soup became a staple of boarding houses, camp chuck wagons, hotel restaurants and brothels alike. This particular split pea recipe features two large onions, and is so flavorful that it does not necessitate the use of broth or stock.

Flowering onion plants form a perfect feathery globe of white or pink, and the flowers make a beautiful and delicate topping for green salads fit for any gourmet restaurant. You can harvest the stunning blooms for a centerpiece bouquet (they will not make your house smell like onions), or leave them to reseed themselves around your garden the following year for another cycle of deliciousness and beauty.

Onions in all forms are nutritious and health-giving. Studies have shown that they can help in the prevention of everything from cancers and diabetes, to high cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease. They are loaded with antioxidants, anti-inflammatories, anti-bacterials, prebiotics, fiber, vitamin C, and everything else that will keep you feeling happy, healthy and full of pep.

Wild onions grow around the world -- they and their cultivated relatives are an integral part of many cuisines and cultures, and are one of our oldest foods. Having been enjoyed by hungry human beings for well over 5,000 years (since the hunter-gatherer days before settled agriculture), onions also appear in home remedy recipes and healing practices throughout history.

In ancient Egypt, the onion was a deeply spiritual object, the concentric circles seen as a symbol of eternal life. They were included on altars, used as funeral offerings, and included in paintings of the divine. And why not? Is there a better symbol of generosity, health, abundance, and eternity than the humble yet spectacular onion? Mrs. Frugal seriously doubts it, and encourages you to give it due reverence and consideration in your kitchen and garden from now on.

Wet your hands and rub them against a stainless steel spoon to get rid of onion or garlic smell after cutting.



Illustration by Kim Garrison Means.

ONION RECIPES to cry for!

Grilled Cebollitas

- *1 or more bunches of green onions
- *salt
- *pepper
- *olive oil
- *lime juice

Trim off the end of the onion roots (if there are any) and any wilted green onion tops. Brush the onions with olive oil and place on a hot grill. Grill for 3-4 minutes on each side, turning occasionally. Remove to a platter and sprinkle with lime juice, salt and pepper and serve alongside or atop your favorite tacos.

Smoky Split Pea Soup with Lemon

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| *2 cups split peas | *5 cups water |
| *2 large onions, diced | *2-3 Tb lemon juice |
| *4 Tbs olive oil | *salt to taste |
| *1-2 dried chipotle peppers | |

In a soup pot, heat olive oil on medium heat. Add onions and sauté 3-4 minutes. Add peas, water and chipotles, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, 30-35 minutes, stirring occasionally. Peas should be cooked but not mushy. Blend with a submersion blender in the pot, or in batches in a stand blender, until creamy, including chipotles to taste. The soup should be creamy but retain some textures. Serve topped with drizzled olive oil, coarse salt and Golden Coin Carrots. This soup is also lovely with a dollop of sour cream or yogurt, and a sprinkling of roasted and salted pumpkin seeds (pepitas).

Golden Coin Carrots

- *4 large fresh carrots
- *1 Tb olive oil
- *1 Tb. Lemon juice or more to taste
- *1 green onion, white and green parts sliced thin
- *zest of ½ lemon
- *½ tsp sugar
- *salt to taste

Cut carrots into bite-sized coins. Steam for 6-8 minutes, or until fork tender. Place in a bowl and toss with the other ingredients. Serve warm or at room temperature – perfect as a topping for split pea soup.

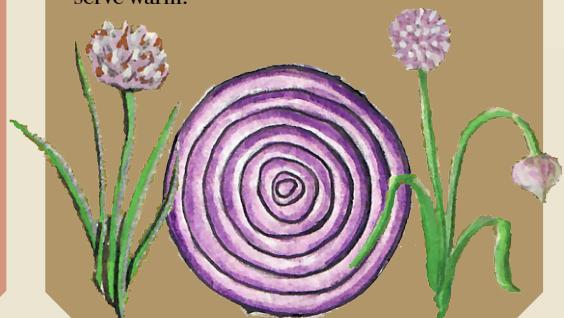
Sweet Onion Pie

- *1 frozen pie crust
- *1 very thinly sliced large sweet onion (Walla Walla, Maui, Vidalia or any other variety)
- *4 large eggs, beaten
- *½ cup whole milk, or a combo of milk and plain yogurt or sour cream
- *¼ tsp each: salt, pepper and garlic powder
- *2 Tb salted butter
- *1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar cheese (or another strong-flavored cheese)
- *1 Tb flour
- *optional: a few pinches of dried parsley or thyme for the top of the pie

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit, place the frozen pie crust on a baking sheet and line it with two thicknesses of aluminum foil to weigh the empty pie crust down while baking. Bake the crust for 8 minutes, remove the foil, and bake for an additional 5-6 minutes, or until lightly browned. Decrease the oven temperature to 325.

While the crust is baking, cut the onion in half, remove the skin, and slice as thinly as you can. Heat the butter in a skillet and sauté the onions over low to medium heat for 6-8 minutes to soften them (you are not looking to brown them).

Beat the eggs and stir in the milk and spices. In a separate bowl mix the cheese and flour, then add to the egg mixture. Pour the egg mixture over the onions and top with a sprinkle of herbs. Bake in the middle rack of the oven for 45-55 minutes, then let cool slightly and serve warm.





the story of the SEARCHLIGHT TREASURES MURAL

Goceived by the Searchlight Betterment Organization in 2021 as a beautification project on the Searchlight Treasures Thrift Store building, situated along Highway 95, this mural is the embodiment of an outpouring of community pride and love for our desert surroundings. It was designed by artists Kim Garrison Means and Steve Radosevich from the Searchlight Mystery Ranch desert research station, using imagery inspired by Searchlight's first community art exhibition in 2022, *Spirit of the Land*.

Over 200 postcard art entries were received for *Spirit of the Land* from residents and visitors, who admired the sweeping vistas, interesting geology, and unique Mojave plants, animals and birds. This beautiful set of images was displayed alongside the work of professional artists from around the country at the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art at UNLV, the Laughlin Library, the Searchlight Community Center and the Doyle Arts Pavilion at Orange Coast College. You can find the complete collection of postcard art online at spiritoftheland.org.

While the Searchlight Treasures mural couldn't include all of the amazing desert imagery generated by the community, it does feature over twenty special features of our landscape. A gilded flicker sits atop a blooming Joshua tree, while a sphinx moth pollinates a stand of datura flowers, and a desert tortoise comes towards us curiously. A mighty bighorn sheep stands on a rocky ridge looking out over Spirit Mountain (Avi Kwa Ame), the Castle Peaks, Crescent Peak, Hart Mountain, and the hills near Searchlight, as a redtail hawk soars over desert marigolds, cholla and beavertail cactus, and a desert kitfox pads quietly by. Other animals include the burrowing owl, cotton-tail rabbit, and Gambel's quail.

The inspiration for the mural's style came from two sources: 1930's NPS posters, which emphasize bold, shape-based objects and heightened natural colors, and vintage postcards of the desert southwest showcasing plants and animals, all congregating together in slightly ridiculous proximity. The bold colors of the mural are designed to attract the eye and help the individual features read more clearly, as it is set back from Hwy 95.

After the design was completed and digitized, it was printed on a large-scale document printer by the architecture department at Orange Coast College. A volunteer group of students and faculty punched small holes in the outlines, attached the series of 21 printouts to the 61-foot wall, and forced acrylic paint through the holes to transfer the design, which was then traced with permanent sharpie markers. Dunn Edwards in Henderson generously donated the exterior house paint, and a small team of lead artists added dabs of color to each enclosed shape, indicating how it should be filled by the community painters.

Ssix public painting days over two weekends brought out volunteers in droves, with about a hundred in total. Searchlight teens painted alongside members of the Fort Mojave Tribal Youth Council, and art students from the Las Vegas Equipo Academy public school came out to paint with Mystery Ranch artists and Searchlight residents. Members of the monthly Searchlight painting club were out multiple times, and even our fine Searchlight police officers made time to lift paintbrushes at the wall, or offer motivating words of encouragement from the loudspeakers of a squad car. The Searchlight Betterment Organization (SBO) not only funded this project (with additional support from the Nevada Conservation League, Searchlight Treasures Thrift and Mystery Ranch) but SBO volunteers also provided snacks, drinks and a delicious taco bar for the hungry painters from in and out of town.

While this mural was two years in the making, its completion in Spring 2023 coincidentally corresponded to a historic event for the Searchlight area – the designation of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, permanently protecting over 500,000 acres of federal public land from industrial development, and ensuring our continued public access and enjoyment for generations to come. It's a big transition time for Palm Gardens, CalNevAri, and Searchlight, as we are now gateway communities to this declared national treasure for visiting tourists. This is the perfect time for coming together with each other and our tribal and urban neighbors to celebrate our history, culture, and natural world, and work together with pride for the betterment of our communities and shared spaces.

Members of the community paint the Searchlight Treasures mural. Photo by Mikayla Whitmore.



THE SIBLINGS AND THE GIFT



nce upon a time there lived a boy and a girl, a sister and a brother, who grew up on a little farm, surrounded by the great Mojave Desert.

The brother and sister lived with their grandparents in a little cabin on a hill, where they kept a flock of chickens to sell the eggs in town, and a few hives of bees to trade honey with the neighbors, and a garden of edible plants for themselves and their friends.



One afternoon, when the children had finished their chores, they walked up into the mountains, as they would often do. The brother carried a big canteen of water for them both, and the sister carried a bag of trail cookies that their grandma had made.

As they went up the riverbed, through the wire fence, and into the bigger hills, the girl and boy were mostly silent. They looked at and listened to everything around them. Every so often, they would stop, and point something out to each other. "Oh, look at that fat, furry caterpillar!" or "I wonder if a tortoise lives here?" (they knew that tortoise holes are tortoise-shaped). Or "This lichen looks just like a painting!" That was how they talked as they walked.

On this day, the children were searching for something really special --a rock or feather or flower to give their grandma for her birthday. But, even though the two saw many delightful wonders, they never happened upon just the right thing for Grandma.

"Look at this mariposa lily. it's the most beautiful flower I've ever seen!" said Edmond (for this was the brother's name). "That tiny stem only grows a few flowers a year. It's too precious to pick," said his sister (who knew a lot about flowers, and whose name was Helen).

So instead of picking the flower, the two children climbed to a nearby hilltop, checked the rocks for snakes, and sat down to eat cookies and have a drink of water.

While they sat quietly, a family of quail came walking by. The birds called to each other and ambled about, foraging for insects and seeds. Edmond and Helen did not scare the birds, for they were all neighbors in the desert, and the children knew how to sit still and keep from frightening animals.

"How I wish we could bring Grandma a cute little quail!" cried Helen finally. She found the tiny topknots on their heads quite adorable. "What would she do with a quail?" Edmond responded. "It's better off with its family." "You're right, of course," the sister replied, for Edmond knew a lot about animals.



Recipe for
trail cookies at
mysteryranch.org



Just then, the two were distracted by something glinting in the afternoon sun. It was coming from a small hole in a big boulder at the top of the rocks. "I wonder what that is?" they both cried together. And they made their way to the very top of the mountain's back.

They had to climb carefully, and pick a path around catclaw and yucca. When they reached the great boulder, they could see the hole still gleaming. Gripping the rough granite stones and hoisting themselves up, the children peered inside the hole and breathed in with surprise.

It was a cave full of tiny quartz points, like a perfect geode built into the mountain. And inside the cave was a carefully-woven nest full of four fuzzy baby birds.

"Look at those clear, shining crystals! Aren't those baby birds lovely!" the children exclaimed these and many other excitable phrases as they climbed back down on the rocks, sat with a plop, and took in for a moment what they had just witnessed.

"I've never seen anything so wonderful in the whole world!" cried Edmond. And even though he had seen many wonderful things, he meant it. "Imagine being those little birds and growing up in a house made of crystals!" said Helen. "Let's go home and tell Grandma all about it."

Forgetting their quest, the two rushed back to their cabin, where Grandma had just finished cooking chicken and dumplings and apple cobbler. "You children are just in time to wash for a birthday dinner!" Grandpa said, his eyes twinkling. "Yes, Grandpa," the children replied, and took a moment to wash the dirt from their hands.

"Now", Grandma said, once they had given thanks for their meal, "You two look fit to bursting with a story, so let's hear it." And they told her all about their discoveries, and the little crystal cavern nursery, and Grandma's eyes shone with delight!

Then the children gave Grandma the presents they had made for her. Edmond had carved a paper-weight of a leaping kit fox, made from piñon pine. Helen had gathered her favorite tea of wild rose, sage and elderberry. "How beautiful and useful these presents are, children!" cried Grandma, smiling.

Helen and Edmond were quiet and a little sad at this moment, for they thought of their quest to find Grandma something really special on their walk. "But my dears," Grandma laughed when they told her of their failure, "You brought me something much greater than any feather, rock or flower."

"We did?" they asked together. "Of course!" Grandma nodded. "You brought me an unforgettable story," she said, with a gleam in her eye. "And stories last much longer than feathers, rocks or flowers, children," she said. "You can carry them with you wherever you go, because they are in your heart."

And the children laughed and were happy, for they both knew they would remember that spring day, that magical bird's nest and Grandma's lovely birthday smile for all of the rest of their lives.



Illustration by Alisha Kerlin



Editors' Public Service Announcement: **CYRUS NOBLE WHISKEY**



Why is the availability of whiskey deemed a public service announcement, you ask? The answer is because this particular whiskey is strongly tied to Searchlight's history, tied to one of our most famous mines and to one of our most famous stories. During our mining boom of 1898 to 1910, Cyrus Noble was on the top shelf of every saloon in town (and there were dozens of saloons at that time). Just think of all the deals that were struck and claims that were celebrated over a glass of this stuff (or let's face it, sometimes over a whole bottle).

The Cyrus Noble mine was named after this famed whiskey. Mining claim names are often fanciful, and it wasn't unreasonable to pen one after everyone's favorite libation (or favorite pain killer, after a long day of digging).

Nearby to the Cyrus Noble mine is the Little Brown Jug mine, for example. Unlike the Little Brown Jug, whose story and brand have been lost forever, the Cyrus Noble has a story behind it that became famous across the country, was published for years in national newspapers, and even made an appearance in a Ripley's Believe It Or Not comic!

There are many versions of this story, but it goes something like this: In 1901, prospector Jim Coleman sited a group of claims that he named the Bird Nest Group (there's probably a good story there too). Coleman spent that year working the claim, trying to find his golden prize, but nothing was panning out for him, so to speak. In the fall he became ill, and was nursed back to health by his good friend: gambler and proprietor of his favorite saloon, Tobe Weaver.

Coleman gave up on his Bird Nest, and hoofed it out of Searchlight with his pack burrow, headed for other adventures, but not before he sold his potentially-worthless claim to his friend the bartender for one bottle of Cyrus Noble bourbon whiskey (for medicinal purposes).

Soon, the lucky bartender's gamble paid off, the name of the claim was changed to the Cyrus Noble, and Tobe Weaver was offered \$100,000 by Judge Otis for the mine, which went on to produce millions of dollars-worth of ore in today's money.

At least this happens in one version of the story. In others, the mining claim is first sold for a cigar to a customer in the saloon, who then turns around and asks what someone else will give for it, and then the bartender chimes in with his offer of a bottle. Other versions have a slightly different order of events or different dollar amounts or dates or number of claims, but all of them tell the tale of a wild success story based on camp comradery and a bit of luck. They tell a story that was exactly what the public wanted to hear about making good in the American West.

HAS RETURNED TO SEARCHLIGHT!

The 19-aughts were the first decade where the stock market was more accessible to the general public, not just to the wealthy. In fact, most of these cheaper stocks were mining stocks, newly available on the market. They were advertised to the rising middle classes who flocked to buy them in quantity, hoping to make a killing by backing companies that were mining the rich mineral deposits discovered in California, Nevada and other western states. At this time, Searchlight was the largest town in Southern Nevada (yes, larger than Vegas), and its stocks were very popular. The rags to riches story of Searchlight's Cyrus Noble Mine was popular too, because it spoke to the dreams of every person who gave up everything to head out west, and to everyone who had gambled their nest egg on mining stocks.

The Cyrus Noble Mine was situated to the west of Highway 95, behind the big hill where the headstock of the Duplex Mine sits even today as a proud monument to Searchlight mining history. The Cyrus Noble is said to have been the first well-producing claim located on the flats rather than in the hills.

You can still see some of the ruins of the Cyrus Noble Mine if you drive west down Hobson Street, then left onto the dirt road as it curves toward the famous Quartette Mine. As you round a corner along the dirt road, there are several large metal vats near the road that were used for processing the ore at the Cyrus Noble Mill. Across the street, beyond a chain link fence, you can see the ruins of Little Brown Jug mine. Please do not leave the road, and respect the no trespassing signs and fences, as most of this area is private property. From your car, imagine the wall of sound that must have accosted the camp as multiple stamp mills pumped, ore chutes

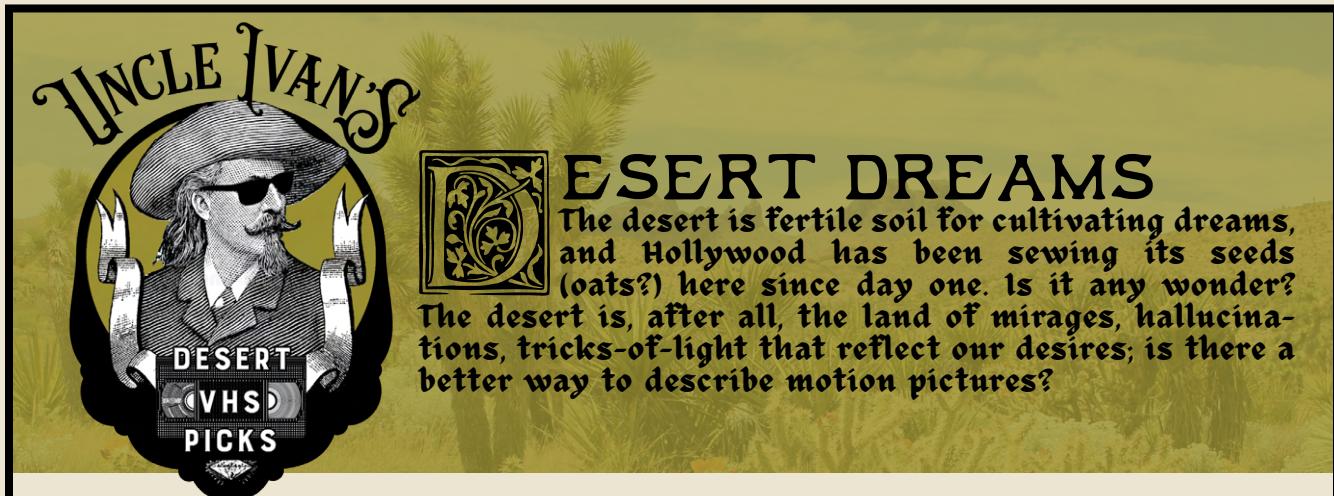
dropped, hoists lifted, carts rolled, burrows brayed, powder monkeys blasted and blacksmiths sharpened tools, and the miners worked the many mines in this area while their hopeful stockholders dreamed far away dreams of getting rich quick.

At the end of a hard work day or week, the crew and management could head over to the bars and order their favorite drink, a glass of Cyrus Noble. Now we can do the same at Terrible's Roadhouse, where this delicious historical relic is available at the bar, and in bottles to take home. You might still be able to hear the distant din of Searchlight past if you drink some.

EDITORS' NOTE: Hearing the distant din of Searchlight's past may be a sign that you've had too much whiskey. Please drink responsibly.

Cyrus Noble vintage advertisement from mining-era.





DESERT DREAMS

The desert is fertile soil for cultivating dreams, and Hollywood has been sewing its seeds (oats?) here since day one. Is it any wonder? The desert is, after all, the land of mirages, hallucinations, tricks-of-light that reflect our desires; is there a better way to describe motion pictures?

(1959) Edge of Eternity. This is a glorious technicolor travelogue wrapped around a violent underbelly of crime, deception, and hate. Director Don Siegel (Dirty Harry, Charlie Varrick) made his name shooting films noir in the bright sunlight. He doesn't fail to deliver here. Seigel sets us out a smorgasbord of western delights; a slice of "Old West" here, a generous helping of sleek, "Mid-Century-Modern-West" there, and a rich stew of corruption, murder, addiction, and greed; all served up by a smiling, easy-going Cornel Wilde in the title role.

In a Don Siegel movie, if the protagonist is not a full-blown anti-hero, (often on a murderous rampage) you should at least expect him to be psychologically damaged. Cornel Wilde gives us an upbeat damaged-hero on the mend; Deputy Les Martin, whom he plays with a bad "Colorado" accent. It sounds more like North Carolina than anything; like he's channeling Randolph Scott. Wilde had a bad Italian accent in the Greatest Show on Earth, (or maybe it was French?) which incidentally, while it doesn't entirely live up to its name, is one of Uncle Ivan's favorites.

The shiny mid-century trappings of this film that once gave it an up-to-the-minute counterpoint to the legendary boom-days past, now give us unforgettable glimpses back in time: unpaved highways, airplanes skimming the river in the Grand Canyon, and an unbelievable sight – a death struggle staged aboard an aerial tramway (hauling bat-poop) that once spanned the Grand Canyon, and existed for less than three years.

(1925) Go West. Why is it, only the most surreal movies manage to speak the important truths? If they were swearing me in as President, and there was no bible handy; I would happily take my oath on a print of this brilliant and subversive film.

You can't beat a romantic cowboy flick. This one interprets the grand old formula thusly: Boy meets Cow. Boy loses Cow. Boy gets Cow. - I'd come up with a more detailed synopsis to give you, but it would be a fool's errand to try. More words could only distance us from the genius of this film. You should really just watch it.

Go West is a Buster Keaton film. He wrote, directed, starred in it, and produced it. Keaton has often been called "ahead of his time," but that implies there might be a "time" he could fit into. I say he transcends time. It's true he understood what he was up to better than anyone else in the film business, and the more control he had, the better the film – that is evident here. The great surrealist artist Salvador Dalí described his film work as "pure poetry."



Promotional photo for the film *Go West*.

TREASURES OF THE TRAIL

Christmas Tree Pass: Scenic Loop Drive

By Alan O'Neill

Gone of the most interesting drives within Avi Kwa Ame National Monument takes you over Christmas Tree Pass, near to the peaks of Avi Kwa Ame itself (Spirit Mountain), and past the entrance to Grapevine Canyon Trailhead. Christmas Tree Pass gets its name from the scattered forest of junipers and pinyons that grow among the rocky ridges of the Newberry Mountains.

For most of the 12-mile journey, the Scenic Road is flanked by the Spirit Mountain Wilderness Area on one side and the Bridge Canyon Wilderness Area on the other. The drive offers the best that southern Nevada landscapes have to offer. Sculpted granite rock formations rise impressively from the landscape, which is home to a cross-section of Sonoran, Mojave and Great Basin plant communities. Rock-studded canyons slope gently eastward toward the Colorado River. It is easy to spot animal and human likenesses in the jumble of rocks and boulders that abound in the area.

From the north, the drive begins about 14 miles south of Searchlight (2.3 miles south of CalNevAri), with a well-marked left turn onto a well-maintained dirt road. You'll see an information kiosk here on the right. The road takes you from the Piute Valley to the Newberry Mountain range, where you will enter a juniper forest. Many of the area's pine trees were cut down for use during the mining era of the early 1900s, but you can still see some piñon pine and scrub oak. Several turn-outs, side roads and wilderness camping spots are available on the west side of the mountain, and make good places to get out and take a walk or have a picnic.

As you drive over the crest of the Newberry range, you will encounter expansive vistas of the eastern side of the monument as it descends to Lake Mohave through the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, with views into Arizona on the other side of the Colorado River. As you descend, you'll get an awe-inspiring view of the tall, granite spires of Avi Kwa Ame rising majestically on the north side. There are a couple of right-side pull-outs in this area that you can use to safely stop and take in the scene.

Continuing to descend, you will pass some interesting shallow cave formations in the large rocky outcroppings on the south side of the road. Be on the lookout for a small thicket of scrub oak nearby. The road wraps around to the right toward the Grapevine Canyon Trail Road near this point, and soon you will notice a short side road on the right that leads to the trail, parking and restroom areas.

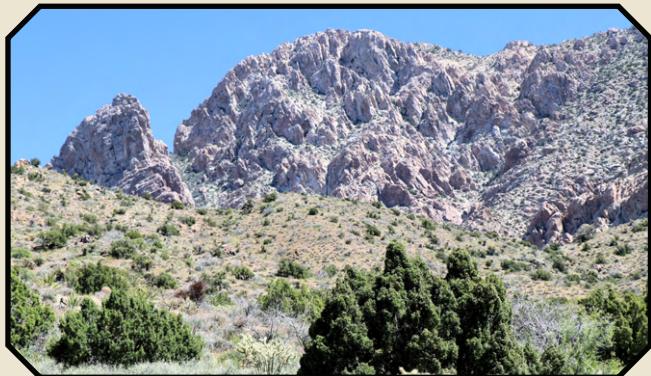
The entrance to Grapevine Canyon, as well as the foothills and canyons around Spirit Mountain, are home to one of the most significant and expansive petroglyph sites in the American Southwest. Archeological research of rock shelters in the area indicates that the ancestors of the Mojave and perhaps the Southern Paiute people camped here as early as AD 1100, using rock shelters for a few days at a time while they were utilizing the resources of the area.

A fresh water spring flows out of Grapevine Canyon in non-drought years, and provides life-giving water to a wide assortment of plants, such as Cottonwood trees, native grapevines, cattails and rushes. Animals who frequent the area include desert bighorn sheep, red-tailed hawks, chuckwalla lizards and desert iguanas. The lush plant growth on the canyon floor strongly contrasts with the stark rock formations of the canyon sides and the extensive petroglyph panels

displayed against the dark desert varnished rocks.

After passing Grapevine Canyon Trail Road, the Christmas Tree Pass Loop soon ends at Highway 163, about two miles west of Laughlin. You can head left down to the river area for lunch, or turn right (west) to take this road back to Highway 95.

Before you go: Take plenty of drinking water, as there is none available along the trail. Be prepared for summer temperatures that can be as high as 120 degrees F. The road is gravel and in most places is in good condition, but a high clearance vehicle is recommended. This entire area is sacred to a dozen local tribes, and its ceremonial use continues today. Please stay on designated roads and trails, visit with respect and leave the Christmas Tree Pass Loop Drive better than you found it.



HOW TO ACCESS CHRISTMAS TREE PASS:

*Drive south from Las Vegas on U.S. 93/95.

*At Railroad Pass, head south on U.S. 95 through Searchlight.

*About 2.3 miles south of Cal-Nev-Ari, turn left on the Christmas Tree Pass Road. There is a small road sign for the turnoff and a fairly large, covered information sign on the east side of the road that you can see in the distance.

*The gravel road loop is around 12 miles and connects back to the Nevada Highway about two miles west of Laughlin.

*Take 163 back to its intersection with U.S. 95 and head north on U.S. 95 back to Las Vegas.

THERE'S MORE TO EXPLORE

For more information
on special places to see
within the monument,
visit the Friends of
Avi Kwa Ame website



Above: View of Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) from Christmas Tree Pass. Photograph by Alan O'Neill.



provisioning your AVI KWA AME ADVENTURE

There are several small communities dotted around the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument area that can meet your basic needs for food, gas, and lodging. Since it is quite a distance between nearby cities and these sites, it is good to plan ahead and know where you can go for resources. Here is the scoop:

RESTAURANTS Searchlight has a Denny's, McDonalds, and a Terrible's Casino bar that serves meals, and the Cottonwood Cove Café at Lake Mojave is open on a seasonal basis for breakfast and lunch.

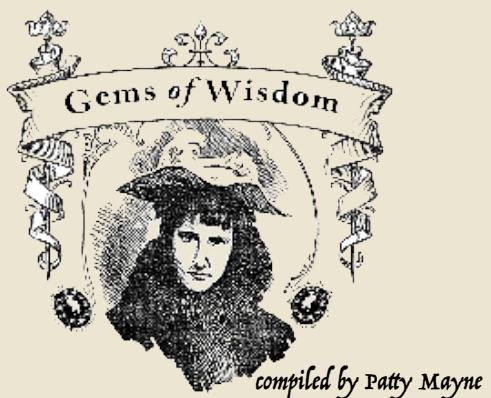
GROCERIES CalNevAri, Palm Gardens, Searchlight and Cottonwood Cove all have small provision convenience stores that sell snacks, some simple groceries and prepared foods.

GAS Searchlight and Palm Gardens have gas stations and propane.

LODGING Searchlight, CalNevAri and Cottonwood Cove have motels and RV hook ups. Cottonwood Cove also has a campground. Wilderness camping (no services) is available in many places throughout the monument, but there are no dedicated campgrounds, and all pull-over camping is on a first-come basis.

OTHER RESOURCES Searchlight Treasures Thrift Store and the Haberdashery in Nipton are thrift stores that carry clothing and other supplies that might come in handy if you forgot something. Searchlight also has an historic museum, post office, laundromat and public library. Cottonwood Cove offers boat rentals on Lake Mojave.

More accommodations, grocery stores and restaurant options can be found in the nearby urban areas of Boulder City, Henderson, Laughlin, and Bullhead City, Arizona.



Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

—MARY OLIVER

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

— ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Ponder and deliberate before you make a move.

— SUN TZU

Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

— ALEXANDER POPE

Courage mounteth with occasion.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Things are seldom what they seem.

— GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

You must be the best judge of your own happiness.

— JANE AUSTEN

Envisioning the Future of AVI KWA AME NATIONAL MONUMENT

Friends of Avi Kwa Ame would like to know more about what resources are important to you, so that as we grow and develop as a non profit organization, we have a clear idea of what topics the community would like us to focus on and what projects we should most support the BLM, NPS, and tribal co-stewards in developing.

TAKE THE
SURVEY



