



UC Hiking Club Reunion at Natural Bridges NM, 2007

TRIP REPORT

By Mickey McKinney

Trip Report
UHC Reunion at Natural Bridges National Monument
2007 May 2-5

Attendees: Vincent and Margaret Arp, Mac and Marge Fraser, Ray and Anne Lucas, Mickey and Phyllis McKinney, and Lorie Scott.

Tuesday, May 1

Vincent and Margaret arrived at NBNM this morning, set up camp, and went off hiking somewhere. Mac, Marge, Mickey, and Phyllis arrived later in the morning, set up camp, and then took the drive around to see all three natural bridges from the roadside viewpoints.

That evening, Lorie arrived in Blanding, after an all-day drive from Cardiff by the Sea, and stayed overnight in a motel.

Also on that evening, Vincent and Mickey talked about the next days' activities.

That night it rained. One of the rangers called it a 100 year rain. My guess is that at least an inch of rain fell overnight.

Wednesday, May 2

As a result, our plans for this day changed. We decided to go into Blanding and visit the Edge of the Cedars State Park and Museum. It turned out to be a very nice museum, and right outside the museum is an Indian ruin. We spent the rest of the morning in the museum, then went to lunch at the Old Tymer restaurant (so-so). Then we went back to the museum and spent another couple of hours there.

On the way back to camp, one of the two car-pool vehicles stopped at the Butler Wash ruins (mine), and the five occupants (Vincent, Mac, Marge, Mickey, and Phyllis) hiked a mile or so to see those ruins. Well worth the nice hike! (The other vehicle, the Lucas's, stopped at Clark's Market, then made the trip back to camp.)

Back in camp, we had a pre-dinner gathering, at which we decided to do some hiking the next day. The rain had stopped that morning, but the clouds remained overhead.

Thursday, May 3

A nice day! Sunny, mild. We piled into McKinney's van and Lorie's car and drove to the trailhead for the Sipapu bridge. Six of us then hiked down to the bridge, while the other three (Marge, Anne, and Phyllis) hiked partway down, then went back to the van. They drove to the third bridge to wait for the rest of us.

So Vincent, Margaret, Mac, Ray, Mickey, and Lorie started down the canyon toward the second bridge (Kachina). Actually, we broke into two groups, with Mac, Ray and Mickey in the first one. The other three walked more casually. The first group got to the second bridge before noon and ate lunch. The second group then caught up, and ate their lunch.

Ray decided to hike up to the road at the second bridge, but the rest of us hiked on to the third bridge. Mac and Mickey reached it at 3 p.m. Marge, Anne, and Phyllis were waiting for them at the base of the third bridge. We all piled into the van and drove back to Bridge 1 trailhead, where Mac got into Lorie's car, and both vehicles headed for Bridge 2 overlook to pick up Ray.

But Ray had gotten a ride back to camp, so nobody was waiting at Bridge 2. Mickey drove the van on to Bridge 3 trailhead, leaving Mac and Marge in Lorie's car at Bridge 2. Using CB radios, Mickey then suggested that Mac give up waiting, and drive to Bridge 3, which he did.

The other three hikers arrived at Bridge 3 trailhead at 5 p.m. We all drove back to camp, to find Ray waiting for us.

It was a nice hike, and a nice day; rather windy at times, but mostly clear and sunny.

Once again we had a pre-dinner gathering, to decide what to do on Friday.

Friday, May 4

The decision was to hike to two ruins in the Mule Canyon area. We went in three vehicles, because Ray and Mickey both needed to go into Blanding later to get gasoline. Vincent drove his RV as well.

Mickey took his van into Blanding while the others hiked out to the first ruin, on the south side of the highway. Vincent led Mac, Marge, Ray, and Anne down into the canyon to get a first hand look at the ruins, while Margaret, Phyllis, and Lorie waited above, and looked for birds.

When Mickey got back, Vincent's expedition was returning to the top, and so we all ate lunch. It was a cold and blustery day.

After lunch, the Lucas's headed for town to get gas, while the rest of us went to see the Official Mule Canyon ruins – nice! Then we drove down into Mule Canyon proper (on the north side of the highway), and prepared to hike in to some other ruins. Unfortunately, at that point a few drops of rain fell, and Mickey and Phyllis chickened out and drove back to camp, where they relaxed for the afternoon. The other five had a nice hike into the ruins (no more rain fell!), and returned to camp later in the afternoon. I think the Lucas's also returned to camp from town.

We had another pre-dinner session, where Anne promised to make her famous lingonberry pancakes on Saturday morning, if the weather was favorable.

Saturday, May 5

We woke up this morning to find that several inches of snow had fallen during the night. The morning was quite cold, although the snow was melting on the roads. So we all made hasty departures! And that was the end of the reunion! (We regretted missing those lingonberry pancakes, which presumably Anne fixed when back home in New Mexico!)