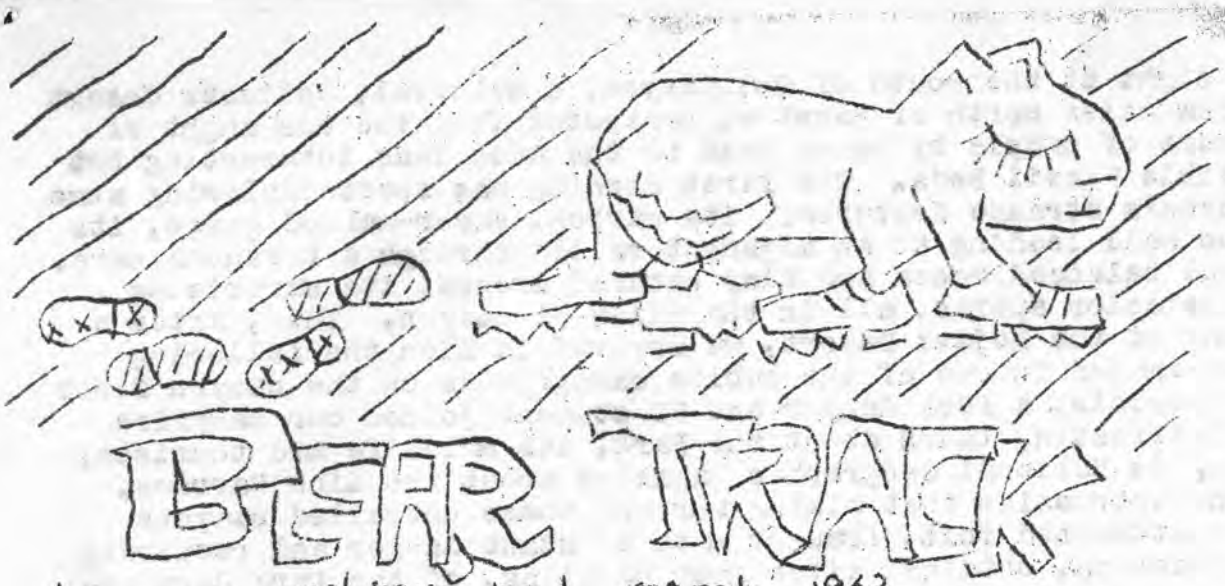

vol xxvi no 1 march 1962

SOUTHERN UTAH--1961

Just below the mouth of Soda Gulch

THE ESCALANTE RIVER

The canyon lands of Southern Utah and Northern Arizona constitute one of the most colorful and beautiful wilderness areas in the world. The variety of terrain, from cool, lake-covered plateaus to vast arid rocky deserts, cut by sheer-walled narrow canyons, tends to stun the imaginations of those seeing it for the first time. In the late forties, a study was made of this area to consider the possibilities of making parts of it into National Parks; the conclusion arrived at was essentially that the entire Southeastern portion of Utah deserved National Park status. Any one of the hundreds of minor side canyons of the Glen Canyon of the Colorado River would become at least a State Park were it located elsewhere. Here it is merely a minor part of the overall magnificent scene. This area has, in the past, been almost completely unknown even to the local people. In the last ten years, with the advent of the river running enthusiast, these areas have begun to become better known and the Glen Canyon proper, roughly 180 miles from Hite, Utah, to Lee's Ferry, Arizona, was found to be both spectacularly beautiful and one of the easiest parts of the Colorado River on which to negotiate a boat. Unfortunately, various political pressures have successfully kept all but a few acres of the tens of thousands of square miles of this country away from Park Service protection, and the Glen Canyon of today will cease to exist a year from now. In its place will be Lake Powell, covering with hundreds of feet of water a great portion of this wonderland.

It was into this country that thirteen UCHC'ers, Dick Lamm, John Faust, Peter Barna, Jim O'Loughlin, Christie Suczek, Sy Benton, Tim Taylor, Phil Pennington, Henri Benoit, Julie Verran, Art Knoebel, Mel Bernstein, and Marcia Lightbody, went to spend a memorable two weeks at the beginning of last summer. Heading for the canyons of Zion National Park, in southwestern Utah, via Barstow and Las Vegas, the party spent

the first night at the mouth of Owl Canyon, a colorful, delicate desert Canyon a few miles north of Barstow, protected from the onslaught of large numbers of people by being next to the much less interesting but more accesible Fossil Beds. The first morning was spent exploring some of Owl Canyon's strange features; its narrow, sheer-walled gorge, its hole in one wall leading to an adjacent valley through a tortuous cave, its numerous balanced rocks and tiny natural arches, its surprising bowl of versicolor spires, all in two miles of canyon. Then, after a hot crossing of the Mojave Desert, we arrived in Zion the following evening and camped in one of the public campgrounds on the canyon floor where Bill Daniels, a Park Ranger and UC student joined our campfire with some interesting tales about the Park, its wildlife and tourists.

Reading in National Geographic Magazine about the Zion Narrows, one gets the impression that hiking through these untrailed canyons is a rarely attempted feat, fraught with constant danger and requiring special permission, obtained after much haggling, of the Park Service. However, communication with the Park Service earlier in the year revealed that it is a fairly common trip, and is hazardous primarily in the later summer when unexpected (and unseen) thunderstorms upstream can cause the water to rise wall to wall several feet in a matter of minutes. The Park Service has a mimeographed sheet to hand out to parties interested in traveling the narrows describing the several approaches from the North, North Fork, Kolob Creek, Deep Creek, and others, and suggesting what to take for the trip.

Leaving one car at the end of the road at the Temple of Sinawa, we took the other two cars up through the mile-long tunnel to the east rim and then over a long dirt road, through dense pine forests to Chamberlain's ranch on the North Fork. Up on top we could see practically no indication of the thousands of feet deep canyons which thoroughly cut this region, only rolling hills with an occasional sandstone rock outcropping. The ranch was just a few apparently unoccupied buildings located in the bottom of a pretty, but unspectacular V-shaped valley--a small stream meandering from one side to the other through pine forests and sage-covered meadows. Starting downstream, with sleeping bags and cameras in waterproof bags, we soon found the rocks on the sidewalls getting more numerous and the stream meanders more entrenched in solid rock. After a couple of miles the walls were over a thousand feet high and the canyon but a few feet wide. Colorful stains on the smooth walls, tall pines scattered throughout the canyon floor, and thin rock ribs contributed to its awesomeness. Many interesting-looking side canyons had to be bypassed and the two days we were taking for this part of our trip would scarcely be adequately to begin to explore them.

As we got further down North Fork, the walls got closer together until just before Deep Creek only a few feet separated them even hundreds of feet above the stream. Here the normal-height water marks were often a couple of feet higher than the present water level (this was an exceptionally dry year) and the high water marks were something to think about. Finally we came to Deep Creek, in reality the main canyon--North Fork enters Deep Creek through a narrow slot in the wall. While here, we explored a little up Deep Creek, satisfying ourselves that we would like to see much more; also it was here that Art Knoebel bounced off a rock under the water, on his head, while diving into Deep (but not enough) Creek necessitating that he be taken out that night. John and Christie having taken Art down the canyon, the rest of the group camped a half mile or so below Kolob Canyon--a then dry canyon which a cursory investigation found to be one of the most beautiful in the area, taking many right angle turns as it heads up toward Cedar

Breaks national Monument. Lying in our sleeping bags that warm night we had a strange view overhead of a small portion of sky surrounded by a skylight windowframe of massive cliffs.

The Narrows were still below us and in the morning we started early, wading downstream. At one point a huge log jam 20 feet and higher attested to the fantastic flash floods that occasion the canyon. The Narrows themselves were not as narrow as North Fork or Kolob Canyon, but the convoluted rock walls made it much darker and the wall-to-wall water heightened its eerie quality. The highlight of Zion Canyon was a side trip up Orderville Canyon, a canyon with moss-covered walls and water seeping from a horizontal crack several feet above the floor. Several waterfalls had to be negotiated, one by shallow holds cut into the rock, one by swimming a deep pool and clambering up some logs jammed into a crack, and finally one that stopped all but Tim, Henri, and Sy which involved some strenuous third class while being drenched by the waterfall. They reported an even more spectacular canyon above. Returning to the main canyon, we soon began meeting people wading from below and soon were on the paved trail ending at the water's edge with an appropriate sign, "End of Trail". We were glad to find that Art's injuries were not serious and that John and Christie had gotten the cars from Chamberlain's ranch. We were soon off for the Colorado Plateau after saying good-bye to Dick Lamm who had to return to Berkeley.

That night we stayed at a fine camping spot near Henriville beneath colorful cliffs with a view across the valley to Bryce Canyon, albeit our campground was the Henriville city dump. The ride to Escalante through badlands and pine forests was the last forest were to see for several days. We had heard that the road to Hole-in-the-Rock was a jeep trail, but the 65-mile wilderness trail turned out to be a newly-built gravel road, and near the end we were greeted by a National Park Service sign; the area had just become the Lake Powell National Recreation Area. Passing near many startling spires and bright, deeply wind-carved red sandstone rocks we could see fifty to a hundred miles of uninhabited canyon country to the north; a distant view of weird rock formations and crossible by unroped parties in but one or two places per hundred miles of river length. We arrived at Hole-in-the-Rock near noon and the view of the Colorado River over a thousand feet below looked inviting. It was here that the Mormons took their covered wagons down to the river by blasting out a narrow, steep trail, some of which is already covered by falling boulders. The trail was incredibly hot (but it was 10 degrees hotter in San Francisco that day) and everybody was in the river a few moments after getting down the trail. Here we spent the afternoon by the reedy bank of the 1/6-mile wide river under thousand-foot sandstone cliffs, watching the muddy river steadily flow a good three or fourmiles per hour around its tremendous bends. Here the Colorado River, unlike at the Grand Canyon, is entrenched in a single canyon without the numerous intervening plateaus. The top is almost level and in places but a stones throw from the river.

That evening we investigated the possibility of taking the VW bus over the jeep road shown on the map to the Escalante River, but decided that it was a jeep road and camped on the end of an airstrip by the edge of a low mesa with a fine overall view of the country that we were to explore the next day. The escalante River is a major tributary of the Colorado joining the Glen Canyon a few miles above Hole-in-the-Rock and completely entrenched all the way to the town of Escalange 60 air miles and probably 200 river miles upstream. There is, according to National Geographic, but one easy way down to the river level in the entire lower half of its length, over a steep ledge that is intended for horses, but is covered with deep scratches from their steel shoes, and beneath the ledge is the bleached skeleton of one that didn't make

it. The fourmiles from the airstrip was over low rounded sandstone domes interspersed with snady flats. A deep, surprising canyon led at one point toward box-ended Clear Creek a mile to the west where the "Cathedral in the Desert" is located, a place where the thousand-foot stained walls of Clear Creek overhang several feet on both sides. A pot hole dug by swirling water and sand was seen that measured not several inches, as ones found in Yosemite Creek, but many feet in diameter and about 12 feet deep at one side. The route to the river floor was a little difficult to find past the end of the jeep road which we picked up a mile from the cars, and a false start down an innocent-looking minor gully ended abruptly when the gully became an overhanging waterfall into a short side canyon of the Escalante. We finally got to the river and were pleased to find a clear, wide stream several inches deep flowing mostly over a fine gravel bottom, a welcome change from the slippery-rocked bottom of the Virgin River.

The canyons of this region are formed from very old rivers that had assumed a winding, meandering pattern and then were suddenly confronted by a (geologically) fast rising of the soft sandstone they flowed over. As the surrounding country rose, the rivers stayed much at the same level, cutting through the rock, forming the deep, narrow canyons characteristic of this area. Occasionally, a sharp loop in the river would be cut through leaving a natural bridge, sometimes only to be left as an arch high on the canyon wall as the river continued to cut, sometimes to remain in the canyon bottom as a present-day natural bridge. One of these, Gregory Natural Bridge, will soon be completely covered by the waters of Lake Powell, and it was to here that we set our goal for the day. Gregory Bridge is in Soda Gulch, about three miles above the gaging station at the foot of the trail we had just come down. Wading the river, we passed the solid vertical walls unbroken except for an occassional slot for a side stream. Many large arches adorn these walls and the river meanderings often encircle remnant spires. A pleasantly cool spring at the base of one of the larger cliffs completed the pleasantness of wading up the warm shallow water. Soda Gulch turned out to be an exceptionally winding corridor with much of its walls overhanging and stained with vertical dark iron oxide stains. Rounding one corner we finally could see the massive Gregory Bridge set amidst impressive rock towers and with cool grass and trees about its base. After eating lunch, attempting to hand catch minnows in the stream, and satisfying ourselves that climbing to the top of the bridge wasn't easy, we returned down to the gaging station. Several of the party went on down to Clear Creek, hoping to see the "Cathedral in the Desert", but as it was getting late this goal was not reached. However, a fine spring was found a little downstream from the gaging station. Crossing the plateau to the cars promised to be a hot ordeal, and we left just before dark and occasionally flashed the car's headlights to guide the rest across the folling desert below. By nine or so all but Jim and Marcia were in. By 11 the two still weren't back and Henri and Mel went out to look for them. In the morning, still no Jim and Marcia and another search party failed to locate them, and a car was sent back to Escalante for airplane help. Unbeknownst to us, Jim and Marcia had taken a slight turn to the right off the jeep road putting them on the other side of another low mesa thus making their position confusing; that morning while we were looking for them, they were unsuccessfully trying to head away from the cars toward the canyon lands. (to be concluded next issue)

Phil Pennington

GREETINGS!

I want to extend greetings to all the members of the club, and especially to those people who have joined for the first time this semester. I hope you will all take advantage of at least some of the trips we have scheduled for this spring. I Think you will usually find that most any weekend can be free if you plan ahead a little. Go on a trip!

Hiking Clubbers are friendly people--really. Of course there are some who look scruffy, moldy, or molten, but they are OK too. Even rock climbers are OK! You too can make the easy test. Go on a trip!

You paid your money and now you have to take your chances. Snow tripping, hiking, caving, backpacking, climbing, folk dancing; nothing but opportunities. Go on a trip!

Tom Aley
President

TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS--CHEAP!

A standard topographic quadrangle map may cost 50 cents or more if bought at a local bookstore, 30 cents if gotten directly from the US geological Survey. However, it is possible to get the USGS standard quadrangles at 18 cents apiece if an order for $36 or more is sent at one time. About once a semester such an order has been gotten from UCHC members at a considerable savings. It has been found that the necessary $36 was always far surpassed, so a new system will be tried that will get maps sooner.

If anyone, UCHC member or not, wants maps, they should leave tacked to the bulletin board a list of what maps are wanted, listed according to state, the cost being calculated at 60% of the regular price listed in the index, along with the name, address, and telephone number of the person desiring them. The list should be marked "Map Order" on the outside. When a little over $36 worth of orders is collected, those who have left the orders will be contacted to verify their orders, and perhaps a deposit will be asked. For additional information contact

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Phyllis Tate
XT
Artist Ricky Tejada-Flores

UCHC SCHEDULE--MARCH & APRIL
Check Room C for Signups and Details

Mon. Mar. 19	Moonlight Hike in Berkeley Hills Meet in Room C at 7:30 PM Leader: Phil Pennington
Wed. Mar. 21	General Meeting: Room 390 Hearst Mining, 7:30 PM Dr. Will Siri will briefly discuss his coming trip to Everest and show slides of the Peruvian Andes. Refreshments will be served.
Sat. Mar. 24	Mt. Berryessa; about fifteen miles round trip, excellent view from summit (Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. Shasta, Mt. Diablo, and the Sierras). Bring water and lunch, meet at west gate at 7:00 AM. Leader: Art Knoebel
Sat. Sun. Mar. 24-25	Pinnacles National Monument: Climbing and hiking (If you're stupid (sic)) and caving for the enlightenment of the masses. Climbing experience recommended but tolerance level at 50% mark. Warm sleeping bags Leader: Phil Scott
Sat--Sun Mar. 31--April 1	Bicycling in Big Sur: Four-mile bike trip from Point Lobos State Park to Big Sur State Park, camping overnight at Big Sur. Leader: Joe Maxwell
April 1 Sun.	Intermediate Cave Trip: Previous rumors mentioned spectacular vertical caves and underground rivers. Up-to-date information has it that we will be going to Pinnacle Point. Leader: Howard Sturgis
April 6 Tuesday	General Meeting: check Room C for announcement.
April 7 Saturday	Fremont Peak State Park: Near San Juan Bautista, Gilroy, Salinas, we will spend the day hiking, exploring small caves in the limestone summit, visiting interesting and extensive mine tunnels, and enjoying spectacular views of the valleys 3000' below. Leader: Dave Rottman
Sat--Sun Apr. 7-8	Inaccessible North Coast: Car Camping for the adventurous in a primitive section of the Coast Range South of Eureka, large redwood groves, lush douglas fir. Leaders: Christie Suczek and Dick Scheible
Sun April 8	Snow Mountain: Day hike and scouting trip to a 7056' peak north of Clear Lake offers many trails and spectacular view. Possibly this area could become an alternate to the Big Sur Area. Leave Saturday afternoon and camp at the base of the mountain. Leader: Helen McGinnis

Check in Room C for Signups and Details

Further Scheduled Trips in Next Issues

SLIDE SHOWS
Friday 7:30 pm Senior Men's Hall
Just before folkdancing

EDITORIALS

TO HIKE OR NOT TO HIKE

There has been a great increase in the amount and intensity of squabbling taking place in Hiking Club in the last few months. Debate has ranged from important issues such as admittance to folk-dancing, climbing insurance and trip leadership responsibility to minor issues such as the listening to the tape of the Mandel-Schwarz debate. The climbing insurance and other questions about rock-climbing leadership seems to have nonentitized the "Mountaineering" section, with few experienced climbers still in the club. One hears the complaint voiced repeatedly about trips which didn't go because the leader couldn't make it, or because of insufficient transportation, or recently because of inclement weather. WDL recalls the former staunch tradition of trips going in rain, snow, hurricanes and early morning volcanoes, which tradition seems to have diminished if not evaporated. The struggle to get members to work on publicity, planning trips, leading trips, serving on the functional committees of the Club while a proverbial problem has increased in these last few months.

One subjective factor which is related to these problems is the lack of spontaneity which used to be a byword of UCHC'ers. Spontaneous trips, enthusiastically received and massively attended, have not occurred for several months, covering several vacation periods. These formerly were common. The spontaneity and humor which provided much entertainment on campus through such now-famous events as the Pink Bunny, the Great Pumpkin, and the Waterfight with Rally Committee, seems to be entirely gone. We cannot of course conceive of such a thing as planned spontaneity, but we do ask, what has happened, where has it gone, isn't it a good thing and can it be reclaimed?

The real root of the matter seems to us can be expressed as the substitution of what Pat Murphy called "Room C Conviviality" for the eager going off on hikes, overnights, and climbs. Gradually the spirit which sought and loved the outdoors, whether underground, at the beach, in the trees, or on the rocks has found a comfortable niche in the social atmosphere of Room C and no longer has the get-up-and-go to keep going back outdoors. Room C serves a vital function of unifying the Club, but it is having this bad side effect of becoming the main function of the Club. We don't know whether anything can change this trend but we deplore it and hope that it can be reversed.

THE EDITORIAL WHEE

We took this job as editor because we realize that all it takes to operate the mimeograph machine is a brawny arm (not that we have one but it doesn't take brains) and because we can spell, not good or superbly and perfectly. However, brawn and spelling are useless unless we get the news, get the articles, get the information to print. So this semester we want to see a barrage of composition from the club.

Articles on trips, providing an interesting, informative, and useful record; on natural history such as will be interesting and useful to hikers, climbers, and spelunkers; about climbing, hiking, ski mountaineering, equipment, political issues such as conservation; and especially letters to the editor will all be welcomed and printed. We have no censorship policy, utterly none, unless you misspell a word.

Let's build up the Bear Track into an organ of stimulation and value to the Club, to us and to future members.

John Fitz, editor

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