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Save Mono Lake! April 1989

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**A** reading from the book of the King

In the beginning, when the King created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a cold breeze swept over the waters.

Then the King said, "Let there be moonlight," and there was moonlight. The King saw how good it was.

Then the King said, "Let the water under the sky gather into a single basin, to expose young craters and the Mono hot springs. The King saw how good it was. Evening came and morning followed — the first day.

Then the King said, "Let there be mountain bikes, capable of traversing vast areas of untracked desert, and let them have dominion over all forms of life on this planet. And so it was. The King saw that it was really cool.

Then the King said, "Let there be Coleman lanterns and plentiful stoves so that campers may cook with ease under the moonlit sky." The King saw how good it was.

Then the King said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation — but not so much that you can't ride the mountain bike over it. And so it happened. Evening came and morning followed — the second day.

Then the King said, "Let the hikers and bikers ascend the Great Sky Crater, but let the bikers suffer in bottomless sand. And let a patch of snow provide ammunition for the final destruction of the lost city of the Blue Tarp People. But let the Wind save the lowly tarp dwellers from abolition. And the King saw what a blast it was.

Then the King said, "Let there be too many cookies and not enough salad dressing, and let the campers rejoice in the abundant fruit of the vine. And it was good.

Then the King said, "Let us play elementary school games, in an open field, under the moonlight, with an Elton John pillow." The King found out how tiring it was. Evening came and morning followed — the third day.

And the Kings said, "Let us travel by Volkswagen to the great white mountains in the sky, and let really old trees grow there, okay. And the King saw how old they really were.

Then the King said, "Let there be a 6000 foot descent for the almighty mountain bikes, but let the bikers pay for the thrill with 5 flat tires and 6 crashes. The King saw how steep it was, and declared it insane.

Then the King said, "Let the bikers and hikers unite to eat chili and drink the blood of christ in a collection of mobile homes called Laws. And let blinking car lights provide disco entertainment for all to enjoy. The King saw how 70's it was, and declared this

an Elton trip.

Then the King said, "Let us travel, again by Volkswagen, to the hole in the earth where hot water bubbles into the sky — but let us take the roller coaster route to get there." And the King felt how warm it was. Evening came and morning followed — the last day.

Then the King looked back on all that He had done, and in a mighty voice proclaimed the trip a success — to be an annual affair. And as the dust settled over the barren wasteland, while a mighty wind swept over the waters, the campers made their way back to their lost civilization . . .

#### -Spring Break at Mono Lake-

It was a dark and stormy morning as the group set off for a plethora of fun and games in the eastern Sierras. The trip was scenic and long, broken up by a lunch stop at Taco Bell. 59¢ tacos were had by all, and Sean demonstrated a deft aptitude in taco wrapping.

We arrived at the campsite in time for the first of many gastronomic delights: pizza and enchiladas. Happy gluttony continued throughout the trip: fettucini alfredo, pasta primavera, s'mores á la Mr. Goodbar, a fresh salad bar, individually wrapped Twix bars, and more. "Too many cookies, too little salad dressing" succinctly mourned one camper.

The climax of dining experiences was after the hiking/biking adventures in the White Mountains. In the tiny, unsuspecting town of Laws, we staged a chili cook-off/70's disco party complete with strobe effects from the flashing hazard lights of all 4 vehicles.

This trip was haunted by a pervasive strain of 70's flashbacks, especially musically. The bell-bottomed spectre was symbolized by the ubiquitous, multi-purpose Elton face pillow possessed by 'Nola Mike. The pillow was used for tent decoration, as a car ornament and for "Elton Ball", a game created by moonlight in a meadow under the Sierras. The object is to possess the Elton-face pillow, preferably by attacking the possessor with a flying tackle. Not a game that can be sustained at high altitudes, we eventually opted for less violent contact sports like the "ha-ha game", tackle duck-duck goose, building human pyramids and un-tangling human knots. Mayhem prevailed.

The second night, many went for a moonlight walk up a road flanked by the snow-blanketed peaks on our left and the craggy rock faces on our right. Peaceful tranquility was shattered when Rex spotted a shifting circle of red lights that could only be an alien flying object. The threat of the UFO awakened in the group a dread terror of being captured and transported back to the 70's. Connections were made: 'Nola Mike was pegged as the "Elton Alien", extraterrestrial imposter that had been filling our ears and tents with tunes from the 70's. Obviously, he was part of a plot to make us all

relive the disco-bell-bottom-"me" decade. This conclusion was supported by the Elton Alien's possession of an uncanny, blinding spotlight, identical to that commonly found on conventional alien vehicles. This light was flaunted during the rollercoaster ride on a very hilly road. Certain campers will attest that, indeed, the E.A.'s vehicle became suspiciously airborne on several occasions.

Truly a highlight were the trips to the Mono Lake hot springs, a sunken pit of liquid thermal bliss bathed in the full moonlight. The scum came off the skin easily.

To get there, we had to traverse fields of tufa, unearthly calcium carbonate formations deposited by extinct springs. Despite the lack of evidence that the bubbly mineral bath was safe or fit for human use, (La Brea tar pit jokes were volleyed for a good five minutes), we all disrobed and slipped into the pungent pond, some using a more flamboyant style than others.

There were peculiar bubbling jets that came from the vibrating rock floor. As we placidly soaked in the unfamiliar tub, Rex cheerfully inquired from his corner, "Is that...lava?"

Friendly violence was another facet. During the trip, the van was victimized by the UFVW bug, which evilly launched a snowball at the van's passenger window. Justice was gracefully rendered down the side of a crater. Sean and Sarah cowardly huddled under a tarp as they were targeted for a retaliatory onslaught from a team of six.

On a historical note, we visited Bodie, a ghost town famed for debauchery. One group went for a bike ride, on which everyone had the opportunity to fly over the handlebars at least once. The hiking group explored the fissures in the Black Mountain, slender high-walled canyons best described as...fissures.

It was all in all a trip chock full of adventure and fun. The weather was perfect, as was our timing for all meeting points. The only minor mishap was when Lacy's truck ran out of gas — nothing AAA couldn't handle in 15 minutes.

Future repercussions: The Hiking Club is now a proud member of the Mono Lake Committee (free Mono Lake guidebook!). Also, the club is looking to adopt a trail, somewhere.

Helen Wagenvoord

Mountain Biking in the White Mountains  
Spring Break/Mono Lake Trip  
by Rex Frobenius

On the fourth day of the fabulous Mono Lake trip, the adventurous Hiking Clubbers were inspired to go to the majestic White Mountains, which are about 80 miles from Mono Lake. After a very scenic drive through the valley, the Bus was faced with the 8,000' ascent

(with 5 people in the passenger compartment). There were many opportunities to take in the panoramic view through the sunroof, at an average speed of about 15 mph. (Those were some steep grades!) About 3/4 of the way up, the U.F.VW. ('Nola Mike's alien wonder Bug) came along(side) to provide some moral support ("Let's touch door handles!").

Eventually, we all made it to the top, where the others were waiting (and waiting...). After the mandatory milling about period (1-2 hours), two groups set out for the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, the hikers and the mountain bikers. Needless to say, the Mountain Bikers got there first, but the cunning hikers were the ones who had all the lunch food (very smart move). Lunch was good. Arrangements were made for a rendezvous at the Laws railroad museum. The hikers would drive the cars down and pick us up. Hikers are definitely a good thing to have along on mountain bike trips.

Having eaten a hearty meal, the bikers went on to tackle the snow covered roads. At first the bikers made good progress, plowing through the snow with great enthusiasm, but soon the snow became deep and slushy, testing their will. "Don't come this way," Sean was heard to say from the middle of a snow-covered "short-cut." Enough said about snow. We were wet and tired, and the sight of bare ground near the ridge made us weep for joy. (Perhaps we were not quite that excited, but we were "psyched" in any case.) A quick group photo captures the moment on film. Now it was up to Joe and Sean to figure out... was this route Option One: short and steep, or was it Option Two: long and level? Soon we all knew the answer: steep, with hairpin turns, sheer dropoffs, patches of snow, and rocks. Joe was having a good time. For the rest of us it was... memorable. Fortunately, the trail quickly became more manageable, but not before everyone had been dumped from his or her bike. (I was left out from this hazardous ritual.) Flat tires took longer and longer to repair as we ran out of spare tubes, the smell of burning brake pads was in the air, clothing was soaked from the numerous stream crossings, ...ahh yes! It was the true essence of the sport- an uninterrupted 6000 vertical foot descent, and we were loving every minute of it. Perhaps the most memorable part of the ride was making that "final approach" coming into Laws, with the sun setting into the Sierras in front of you and the steep walls of the canyon giving way behind you to a panoramic view of the valley, the road gently banking back and forth before finally becoming perfectly straight and then paved... a "runway." Welcome to Laws...

**Coming next month:**

- Utah write-up (maybe?)
- Spring Ski Trip (probably not)
- Lost Coast write-up (definitely)
- Mt. Tam MTB write-up (definitely)

## Desolation Death Ski

While hoards of hikers crammed into Sykes Hot Springs, five skiers headed into the wilderness for a ski trip to remember. Natalie, Joe, 'Nola Mike, 'Lectro Mike and his friend Jay left Echo Summit late Saturday after-noon and skied five miles across Echo Lakes before Jay, a neophyte skier, had enough of the wind and snow. We camped in a fir stand above Tamarack Lake. As we played Hearts and all through the night the snow was falling and we had great hopes of a clear day.

But, alas, the following morning was cold, windy and snowy with only brief respites of warming sun. The five of us skied up to and through Haypress Meadows and down to Lake of the Woods in fine, fresh snow. Crossing Lake of the Woods and Desolation Valley we reached Waca Lake with more and more sun poking through the storm clouds. After Lunch 'Lectro Mike and Joe decided to ski as far up Pyramid Peak as they could while the others wandered onto exposed Lake Aloha.

The Pyramid Peak attempt was doomed from the start as white-outs above timberline made route finding impossible. Joe, breaking trail in such a white out, skied right into a gully without ever seeing it. We pushed on until our allotted time had run out—still a good 500 vertical feet from the top. Before the descent we took photos to remind us not to do such a thing again. After carving telemarks through steep untracked snow the whole group met up at Waca Lake for the final ski back to camp. On the way back we stopped to do some cornice jumping. Later that night as the skies cleared we went out for a moonlight ski up the hill to catch the view down Echo Lakes.

The following, final day of our journey brought glorious sun and dry snow. We all skied up Ralston Peak (9235 ft.) via the ridge and had lunch on top. The view was dominated by "The Wall" at Kirkwood in the South and the Crystal Range to the West. Though we wanted to ski the bowl under Ralston Peak, the sight of two very recent avalanches made us reconsider. Nonetheless, the run down the back side was incredible. 'Lectro Mike and Joe carved figure-eight telemarks through the trees and we all had a blast in the best snow of the season. On the 5-mile ski back to the cars we had time to contemplate whether our cars would still be there (we heard conflicting reports). Of course, they were. So we drove down Hwy 50 for the obligatory stop at Wendy's for all-you-can-eat-and-all-you-can-drink-for-only-four-dollars. And to top it all off, 'Lectro Mike got a balloon from Wendy herself.

## THE VENTANA WILDERNESS STORY: A TALL TALE OF TWO TRIPS

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story combines the events of two different trips into a shady sequence of events. The names have been included to incriminate the guilty. If you have trouble remembering these events happening this way, don't worry—so did the author.

Friday night—The parking lot of Andrew Molera State Park...

Leader 1: Six, seven, eight...We are still missing two.  
Member 1: Two people are still missing?  
Leader 1: No, two cars of people are still missing.  
Member 2: Has anyone seen Sarah?  
Leader 1: Hi, do I know you?  
Member 3: No, we've never met. I'm Matt. Great trip so far. Which tent am I sleeping in?  
Leader 2: How many medical forms do you have? I have 13.  
Leader 1: I have 15. How many people do we have all together?  
Leader 2: More than 28....  
Member 2: Here comes the last two cars.  
Driver 9: Sorry we are so late. We ran out of gas, lost a fan belt, and made a wrong turn.  
Driver 10: Really, we just stopped to play at the beach.  
Leader 1: Where is Sarah?  
Member 4: Isn't she here already?  
Leader 1: I'm not sure...but I don't think she is.  
Member 4: Which car was she in?  
Leader 1: My guess is...none of them.

Saturday morning—At the trailhead...

Leader 1: Twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one...Who are we missing?  
Member 5: Where is Mike?  
Leader 1: Which Mike? Bio? Astro? Bones? Mighty?  
Member 5: Never mind, I found him.  
Leader 1: Thirty-one, thirty-two...  
Member 6: Is it going to rain?  
Leader 1: What? Uh, yes it will...where was I?  
Member 7: Can we go now, pleeeaaase?  
Leader 1: Who is missing?  
Member 8: EVERYONE COME OVER HERE FOR A GROUP PHOTO.  
Member 9: Is everyone here?  
Leader 1: We don't know for sure.

Saturday afternoon—In the rain on the trail...

Member 10: I'M FREEZING!!! I can't wait to get to the hot springs.  
Leader 1: Me too, I just wonder where we are going to be able to camp with this large group.  
Member 10: What did the Ranger suggest when you got our wilderness permit?  
Leader 1: Oops...

Saturday afternoon—Three river crossings later at Sykes...

Leader 1: This is it, a perfect campsite for all of us!!  
Member 11: It looks a little small.  
Leader 1: Don't be silly, see that patch of sand...two tents will fit there (of course one will have to be set up on top of the other), see that space between the trees...a sleeping tarp will fit there(although a small rain trench will form under the sleeping bags) it will do just fine.  
Member 11: Yea, I guess you're right. Plus it is very nice to be able to refill your water bottles in the river from the door of your tent.

Saturday evening—Before the hot springs...

Member 12: Don, pass me the wine.  
Don: Which bottle would you like?  
Member 13: You mean we have more than one?  
Don: Well, yes, but only for the wine; we only have one bottle each of vodka, whiskey and kahlua.

Saturday evening—In the hot springs...

Member 12: Is there room for one more?  
All: Sure. Come on in; relax and enjoy the peaceful beauty of this place...mmm  
Member 12: Oops, excuse me, could you move your foot a little? Ouch!! there's a sharp rock here. What is this?  
Member 13: It looks like a wind up toy shark.  
Member 14: Isn't it great to get away from it all?  
Member 15: Whose foot is this between my legs?

Saturday evening—Coming home from the hot springs...

Member 16: Wow, it's really dark out.  
Leader 1: Listen up, we only have one flashlight for the eight of us, so hold hands and I'll lead us along the trail, over the slippery cliffs, and back to camp.  
Leader 2: Look up ahead! It's a group of eight people wandering around in the dark.  
Leader 1: That's part of our group that left the hot springs about 30 minutes ago.  
Member 7: Hey, it's great to see you guys. We lost our flashlight. We have had a little trouble staying on the trail. How far have we made it so far?  
Leader 1: About 50 yards from the hot springs.  
Miles: Um, could you pass the flashlight to me... I dropped my shoes down this slope.  
Leader 1: Be careful, this is our only flashlight.

**CRASH! RUSTLE...RUSTLE AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!! SPLASH!!**

Leader 1: Miles, are you all right?  
Leader 2: Miles, where are you?  
Miles: I'm fine. I just slipped off the trail and slid down the mud slope about thirty feet.  
Leader 1: What was the SPLASH sound we heard?  
Miles: Well, at the end of the mud slope was a 15 foot cliff...now I'm sitting in the river.

Saturday night—Dark, possibly late, perhaps even raining...

Member 17: Could you hand me a flashlight?

PHROROOOOOM! (BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT)

Leader 1: What was that?!?!?!?  
Member 18: Oh, Don's just lighting up the campfire.  
Leader 2: Don! You better not breathe on it again.  
Leader 1: Is everyone here?  
Leader 2: Thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven...I thought we only had thirty-four.  
Leader 1: Don't forget about the BIA members.  
Member 19: Oh, the freshmen up at Yale get no tail...  
Leader 1: Is this song from Glenn's songbook?  
Member 19: Oh, the freshmen up at Yale get no tail...  
Member 1: No, it's a religious song.

Monday night—At the cars, damp, smelly, tired...

Leader 1: Is everyone here?  
Leader 2: How many people went on the trip?  
Leader 1: I don't know...

Bio-Michael Childress

