

IN PRAISE OF THE BEST OF ALL CLUBS

It has lasted! Fifty years isn't old for institutions that promise future bliss, but for a club that promotes prehistoric style travel and hard labor, unexpected stress, plenty of scratches -- and worse -- yes, it has admirably endured. S.A.H.C. remains the best key in Arizona to walking adventure. Some of us need that key.

What about all the members who have given their time freely on the board, fixing trails, and leading? Who are these generous people? I suggest it doesn't matter. Think of Eber and his wife, Lorna, primary givers during all those many early years until his fire consumed him - only a few of us remember him. Being an ongoing active supporter isn't a path to fame. It honors the value of hiking - satisfaction is abundantly built into the giving.

Imagine the demand for a quick and easy way to health, excitement, laughter -- and the sense of being fully alive in the ongoing right now. There isn't any. These treasures must be earned with old time discomfort. The informality, irreverence, and easy relating outdoors soothe our hyperactive minds and restore our child spirit, a reward beyond all expectation. Only time spent otherwise allows thoughts to wander uselessly into the past or future. The best and simplest fun is at hand walking around and looking at the world as it was formed while listening to and enjoying one another. That's what my writing and drawing are all about.

Our club has some entertaining personal history. A range of outstanding stories in past bulletins deserve reprinting. I've noted many going through my complete file recently. To name just a few, Mona Wright's wild "Viva Mexico" in 1964, Rita Montgomery's mud wallow on a San Juan River trip, Eveli Sabatie's account of time spent under a tarp in endless rain, Eber's many laughable commentaries on his backpacks into unfamiliar wilderness, Linda Miller's survival experience, and an anonymous criticism of John McComb's list of things to take along on an overnight pointing out one essential omission - though quite funny this might not pass current censors. As for all the basic history, Pete Cowgill, founding the club and monitoring it through the years, writing news stories about hikers and special events, knows it well. His summary would be nice to add to a collection as well as some of his most talked about columns on hiking; and then there's Joe Hoxie - his amusing cover drawings and adventure stories belong in it as well as the best of photos shared at the anniversary event. Speeches and displays are soon forgotten -- and denied to future members, even if printed in the bulletin.

The excitement of joining! When have I ever felt such a thrill as I did in 1973 - not yet as Alice O. - when Jan Bell got me involved? She gave herself in a big way as president and board member for several years. Through her I accessed places, trails, and an extraordinary range of people I could not have enjoyed otherwise - wish I could describe all of them here! I'm especially grateful for being able to wander cross country like in 1987 when I went with off-trail sports like Dean Staley into the southeast foothills of the Tortolitas, totally unknown to me and unoccupied then, and found that gorgeous rocky terrain.

Jack and I are sorry everyone everywhere can't have the privilege of living in Arizona - the best of all states - and experiencing the variety of crazy wonderful fun this forever young old club continues to provide.

Alice Olson

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