

Southern Arizona Hiking Club - The Early Years

Pete Cowgill

A killer snowstorm enveloped Southern Arizona in mid-November 1958. We had more than six inches of snow in Tucson and the stuff was neck-deep on Mt. Wrightson. Three young Boy Scouts died on their way down the mountain. A shrine in their memory was subsequently placed in Josephine Saddle.

I had written in my weekly "Tucson Trails" column in the *Arizona Daily Star* that any people interested in forming a hiking club should meet at Hutch's Pool that weekend. Eber Glendening and Dave McGowan braved the elements to show up at the pool and Dick Duffield got to the end of the road in Sabino Canyon where the trail started. That was it.

A month later, I tried again. This time, eleven hikers showed up at the Pool. We sat on the sandbar at the lower end of the pool and talked about how much we liked hiking. We didn't know each other but we decided that if this many hikers would show up on a cool day in the middle of winter with snow on the surrounding peaks, there was hope. We decided to give this fledgling, unnamed hiking "club" a chance to grow and prosper.

Did it ever! Our first "official" hike was on the last Sunday in December, 1958, to Wasson Peak in the Tucson Mountains. Carl Rinker and I were the guides. We really didn't need any guides because most of us had been there before. But we had fun. We enjoyed the company of new friends and planned to have one hike in the area each weekend.

We must have been a pretty tough bunch. In our first two months, we made it to Mt. Wrightson twice and to Baboquivari Peak twice. Other hikes were to Seven Falls, Linda Vista, Saddle Ridge and Maiden Pools.

At one of our early social meetings, we talked about a lot of names for our group and finally settled on the Southern Arizona Hiking Club. Lawyer Dick Duffield was elected our first President and I was what would later become Chief Guide. Since I was writing a weekly outdoor column for the *Star*, I was Trailscriber and publicist. Marian Sarrels, who owned Cox Mimeo on downtown Meyer Street, was our publisher.

Our social meetings were on North Stone Avenue downtown in the basement of the Tucson Newspapers Inc. building, next to the rumbling printing presses.

Our hiking horizons expanded to La Milagrosa Canyon, Newman Peak, Atascosa Peak, Rincon Peak, The Window, and Onyx Cave. The number of guides also expanded: Mac Campbell, Charlie Thornton, Eber Glendening, Tom Harlan, Phil Healey, Charlie Mensch, Helen Jones, Don Morris, Bob Ward, Evelyn Wirtz, Sy Zuckerman, and John McEldowney.

By the end of May 1959, we had 56 paid-up members. We decided to go back to Hutch's Pool and have a big blast to celebrate our great fortune in being part of such a wonderful hiking club. Social Chairwoman Lorna Glendening was in charge of this fun get-together on May 17, with SAHC providing the hot dogs, buns and all the other goodies. There was a great natural rock and water slide just

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upstream, so we spent a lot of time shooting down the slick rock into the big pool at the bottom. We even brought our own swimming duds.

It was a grand weekend and a fitting way to celebrate our good fortune and all of the new friendships we made. We were young and enthusiastic. SAHC had arrived.

If we wanted to get the next *Bulletin* out, which was due in September, we had to pay our annual dues of \$1.00. That was one dollar, mailed to Treasurer Annita Schmutz. Each *Bulletin* ran about five cents per copy.

Like many Tucsonans in those days, we took a break from the hot summer Tucson sun and decided to meet again in the fall for a bigger and better hiking season. A few of us diehards got together for some informal hiking, but SAHC took a snooze until early fall.

To show how upscale we were, a committee was formed (Duffield, Glendening, Cowgill) to draw up By-laws and Articles of Incorporation. Dick Duffield was a member of a pioneer family and an avid hiker. His office was downtown. Eber Glendening was raised at the Santa Rita Experimental Range Station and graduated from the University of Arizona. He was a civil engineer. I was born in Minnesota and, after World War II, graduated from Northwestern University and eventually came to Tucson. It took a few meetings but the committee got the job done.

We decided to get politically involved in opposing reopening portions of Tucson Mountain Park to mining.

We also decided to categorize our hikes: "A" for hardy hikers and "B" for intermediates. Guests would be welcome but no pets and no children under 12. Charlie Thornton was in charge of putting together a schedule of Saturday hikes. On December 30, 1959, we had our first wedding of SAHC members: Annita Schmutz, a botanist, and Tom Harlan, who worked at the UA Tree Ring Lab, tied the knot.

By pooling our resources and ordering in bulk, we got USGS topographic maps at a 30 percent discount. Carroll Sundahl was in charge of creating a master file of trails.

Charlie Thornton welcomed all hardy SAHC hikers to join him and his group of equally hardy hikers at the Arizona State School for the Deaf and the Blind on their annual one-day hike from the South Rim to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

By now our *Bulletin*, still a mimeograph production, had grown to two – sometimes three – pages. We started putting sign-in registers on various peaks, either in circular pipes capped at both ends or in surplus ammo boxes. Eber Glendening volunteered to lead SAHC members on trail clean-up hikes throughout Southern Arizona. Marian Sarrels was signing off each *Bulletin* with a "Happy Trails."

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We decided to refine our hike classification system. "B" hikes were from 8 to 15 miles with from 2,000 to 4,000 feet of elevation. "A" hikes were anything above those limits and "C" hikes were below those limits.

In December 1960, we moved our social meeting time and place to 7:45 p.m. at the Central YMCA at 516 N. 5th Ave. We also decided that drivers on our hikes should be compensated at three cents per mile.

We also added this warning: "If you want to hike by yourself, go hike by yourself; when you hike with a SAHC group, you do what the guide says...and above all, SMILE."

Here's a brief rundown, from early 1960, of some hikes and some SAHC members who guided them. How many of these guides do you remember? Sandy Selovar led a hike to Picacho Peak. Tom Harlan led a hike to Cathedral Peak. Marian Sarrels led a hike to Golden Gate Peak. Dusty Rhodes led a hike to Saddle Ridge. Retired Harry Dunn led a hike to Hutch's Pool. Carroll Sundahl, a civilian employee at Davis-Monthan AFB, led a hike to Mt. Hopkins. Dick Duffield, then SAHC President, led a hike to Pusch Peak. Nancy Breazeale, whose family had a cabin at Marshall Gulch, led a hike to the Wilderness of Rocks.

Here's a leg- and lung-buster we haven't done in recent years: Eber Glendening led a hike from Sabino Canyon, over the top of Mt. Lemmon to the Town of Oracle, a jaunt of about 30 miles.

Here are some guides who were later elected to the job of SAHC President: Eber Glendening, Pete Cowgill, Mac Campbell, an X-Ray technician, and Dave Sanders, whose family owned a water company.

A total of 83 people showed up for our big fall social meeting in September 1961, at the Central YMCA. Forty-three of those were brand new members.

We finally put a Masthead at the top of our *Bulletin* in October, 1961: Dick Duffield, President; Dave Sanders, Treasurer; Carroll Sundahl, Secretary; Marian Sarrels, Trailscriber; and Pete Cowgill, Head Guide.

Our programs were really terrific. Vaughn Short gave a slide show of a 9-day trip he and noted river and wilderness guide Ken Sleight made into the Escalante River region in Southern Utah. George Olin, naturalist at Saguaro National Monument, gave a program on the flora and fauna of the southwest. Gilbert Ray, head of the Pima County Parks and Recreation Department, talked about the effects of the proposed takeover of the north half of Tucson Mountain Park by the National Park Service to prevent further prospecting and development in the county park.

Author Weldon Heald showed and narrated a 1½-hour color film, made in 1941, of the first running of the entire Colorado River.

Our annual dues were increased to \$1.25 per person. We sold SAHC patches for 60 cents. By the middle of March 1962, we had 145 paid-up members. Joe Hoxie, a carpentry contractor, led a hike up Mt. Wrightson. Again, we went back to

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Hutch's Pool for our annual spring picnic.

In the fall of 1962, I started what became the "Who Went Where" section in *The Bulletin*. We were getting a lot more guides: Jack Magee to Pontatoc Ridge, Roger Dean to Milagrosa Ridge, Ted Marley to Mt. Hopkins, and Jim Kennedy to Atascosa Peak.

We had 42 members and guests on a hike led by Lorna Glendening to Wasson Peak in March 1963. And more guides: Lois Laufenberg, Jack Clemenson, Bill Faust, John Bradner, Jane Templeton, and Russ Weber.

In September 1963, we finally elected Eber Glendening for his first of several terms as SAHC President. And we raised the dues to \$1.50. This was also the year when we gained two of our most active guides and members: Gilbert Jimenez, who worked for Pima County, and Stuart (Doc) Queen, a UA sociology professor, along with Abe Aragon, Iona Hansen, John McComb, Chuck Rider, Randy Sholes.

Trailscriber Harry Dunn started compiling the early history of SAHC. We scheduled a couple of trips to Mexico. One was to San Jose Peak, an 8,000-footer south of Naco, and a four-day tour of the Pinacate volcanic region west of Sonoyta.

We published a series of articles in *The Bulletin* on the various wilderness areas in Arizona. The first, by Eber Glendening, was for the Galiuro Mountains. Other articles were also published on the Grand Canyon, Navajo Reservation, Blue Range, Chiricahua Mountains, and Mogollon Mountains.

We finally acquired an official address: P.O. Box 12122. Don't try it today as we have a different one now...Box 32257.

In March 1964, Eber Glendening put together a weeklong trip to the two big volcanoes in Mexico: Iztaccíhuatl at 17,158 feet and Popocatepetl at 17,802 feet. We made it to the top of both. Chuck Rider, a civil engineer, and Jane Templeton went on their honeymoon on this trip.

In June 1964, the following officers were elected: Mac Campbell, President; John McComb, a Sierra Club representative, Vice President; Jane Rider, Secretary; Harry Dunn, Treasurer. Randy Sholes, a Southern Pacific foreman and a rousing poet, was Trailscriber. The appointed Executive Committee (I still don't know what we did for this exalted title) was Eber Glendening, Charlie Thornton and Pete Cowgill.

Joanna McComb and Dan Jones completed a technical climb up the northeast buttress of Baboquivari Peak. SAHC members floated down the Gila River from Coolidge Dam through the Narrows to Dripping Springs Wash and Winkleman. We also floated down the Salt and Colorado rivers. SAHC finally organized a backpack trip to Mount Baldy in the White Mountains.

We printed a number of songbooks so weary backpackers could sing themselves to sleep around the campfire. SAHC now had 203 members. In September 1964, we raised the annual dues to \$2.50.

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Mac Campbell was elected president in the fall of 1964. To officially start our new hiking year, we put 65 hikers on top of Old Baldy. The McCombs, Glendenings and other SAHC members toted nine gallons of water to the top for hot coffee, tea and cold lemonade plus other snacks to munch on.

Eber led the first of more than 30 annual backpacking trips to Rainbow Bridge and other spectacular sites in the Navajo Indian Reservation. We also backpacked into Kielberg Canyon on the west side of the Galiuro Mountains and shared a warm campfire for a few minutes with old gimpy-legged, one-eyed John Power of Power Cabin Shootout fame (1918).

SAHC made a couple hikes to the top of Wasson Peak, one a moonlighter, in late December 1964, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of our first official hike.

So ended the first five years of SAHC.

I have just barely touched the tip of the iceberg in this short history of SAHC. I've mentioned dozens of guides and hikers. To most of you, these are just names on a sheet of paper. To be honest, some of the faces are a bit blurred to me. They all deserve credit, however. Many, many others whose names I didn't mention also gave a lot to SAHC.

We all had a great time hiking in the outdoors and starting the groundwork that made SAHC what it is today.