



NEWS FROM TREK COUNTRY

Stories and Events from the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation

Thoreau, New Mexico

Spring 2011

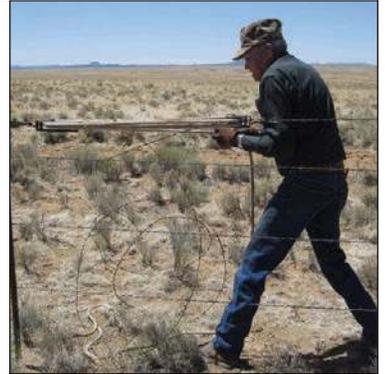
Note from the Director

In mid-May, I found a day in between our many school group treks to visit the childhood home of Vergil Ford, our close neighbor and friend. For years, Vergil and his wife Frances have spoken of the Ford Family homestead “on the mal-pie” and I’ve always wanted to see this place that has provided the Fords with so many wonderful stories and memories.

Vergil and Frances picked me up in a big, red pick-up truck at the Quemado exit on I-40 and we headed south along the Narrows, a long, winding strip of highway squeezed between the edge of the El Malpais lava flows and the base of beautiful red-rock mesas. As the land started to open up, Vergil turned onto a dirt road that led us through a couple of gates and by a few windmills and stock tanks. One more turn put us on an old two-track that carried us into the middle of an enormous grassy basin of rolling hills, rimmed by jagged mountains and lava fields in the distance.

When Vergil and his family lived here from 1933 to 1944, the land was

wide open -- no fences. He and Frances and their grown daughters put up the homestead’s first barbed wire fence only about a decade ago. We first stopped at the windmill, which was in better condition than any other we’d seen that day. Vergil and his brother have maintained it over the years and Vergil, 86, still climbs to the top if there is work to be done up there. Later, we visited the cabins (below left), hauled from a lumberjack camp by Vergil’s father, and which Vergil has restored after many years of disrepair. Later, during our lap around his 320 acre property, Vergil and Frances stopped to repair some broken fencing (above).



Over the course of the day, I heard stories about growing pinto beans in the blistering sun, digging “tanks” with a horse-drawn shovel, hauling water from 6 miles away, walking to a distant country school in the winter, finding potsherds and projectile points in the prairie, and watching coyotes trick his dogs into fatal ambushes. Of his childhood at the homestead, Vergil says, “A lot of folks say it was a hard life, but I don’t remember it that way. We were always working but we always had food and a dry bed. I just remember the good times, I guess.”

Vergil has graciously offered the homestead as a campsite so future Trekkers can learn about his family’s unique history. And we’re looking forward to hosting the Fords at the 85th this August, where we hope to carry on Vergil’s talent for calling square dances off the Back Porch.

- Mike Sullivan

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CELEBRATING 85 YEARS!

AUGUST 2-7, 2011

DETAILS INSIDE





The Cottonwood Gulch Foundation sponsors educational wilderness expeditions and outdoor programs in the American Southwest that promote personal growth, scientific, historic, and cultural discovery as well as a knowledgeable environmental ethic among all those who participate.

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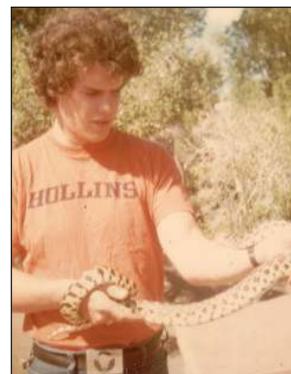
Henry Hooper

Note from the Board Chair

The Hooper family first met the Prairie Trek Expeditions in 1958, while we were tent camping in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona. Then 6 years later Eleanor and Millie Hooper, enrolled in the Turquoise Trail. Since those first TT summers, the Hoopers have had a family member who is either a camper, staff member, or board member nearly every year. Our extended family includes the names of White, LaFontaine, Caplan and Klaff. (Chances are that if you know a trekker with these last names, they are a relative!). As Chair of the Board, it gives me a chance to help pay forward to future trekkers, some of the blessings and good fortune our family has had to be affiliated with the Gulch.

I also am privileged to have a strong executive committee, with Richard McGinnis (Treasurer) and Ellen Ebersole (Secretary), to help move forward with important board matters. Our agenda is focused, as we work with Mike and his staff to be stewards of the foundation that was started 85 years ago this summer, by Hillis Howie. As we look at the challenges ahead of us, we often muse, "What would Mr. Howie do?" We have some "heavy lifting" to do as we research options for protecting the Gulch and other nearby properties. Jamey French and John Bloch, both of whom are former board chairs, have volunteered their talents to help us make sure our interests are preserved and protected in the process.

I want to personally invite you to visit the Cottonwood Gulch this summer to help us celebrate our 85th anniversary. You will find an announcement in this newsletter and on our website: www.cottonwoodgulch.org. Be sure to send the news to your friends from the Trek, who will want to visit Base Camp the first week in August (2nd - 7th). We will have accommodations available to you on the Gulch property or some nearby hotels to recommend if you don't feel like "roughing it." I look forward to seeing you this summer.



Henry on Group 1 Staff in '78.



Grandpa Joe Silversmith

We knew him as the brother of Ada Henio, builder of the caretaker's house and general friend to the Gulch. But when Joe Antonio Silversmith died this spring at age 86, a flurry of articles and public statements hailed him as an American hero: a Navajo code talker who served in the South Pacific from 1943 to 1946, helping the Allies win WWII.

During a commemorative speech from the House floor, Representative Ben Lujan (D-NM) noted that Silversmith had been the recipient of a Silver Congressional Medal of Honor. Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly ordered flags flown at half-staff for three days in his honor. Silversmith's funeral included a 21 gun salute, an Air Force fly-over, and taps played by Marines flown in from Fort Pendleton.

But to current Gulch Staff members Walter and Nicholas Cloud, their "Grandpa" Joe Silversmith will always be remembered as the man who wanted to arm wrestle. "Every time we'd go over there he'd challenge us. He'd get all ready and then...he'd stick out his pinky and laugh," says Nicholas. He said 'A Marine never gets weak. A Marine never gets old.'"

Gracie Henio says after returning from the war, her uncle spent some time in California before moving back to Coolidge for good, where he married, had three daughters and took up missionary work. "I'm proud that he was a veteran and a codetalker from here," she says.

Mr. Silversmith's wife, Ramona, remembers of her husband, "He loved working with the community, horses, herding sheep and playing the harmonica." Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie and his wife Raedean both said he will be greatly missed: "Joe was a man with strong courage, a role model of what a Navajo man should be like and he's one of our heroes. He was always telling us to believe in our goals and in ourselves, and be proud of who we are, where we come from and to take great care of our Navajo land."

All of us at The Gulch wish the very best for Joe's family.



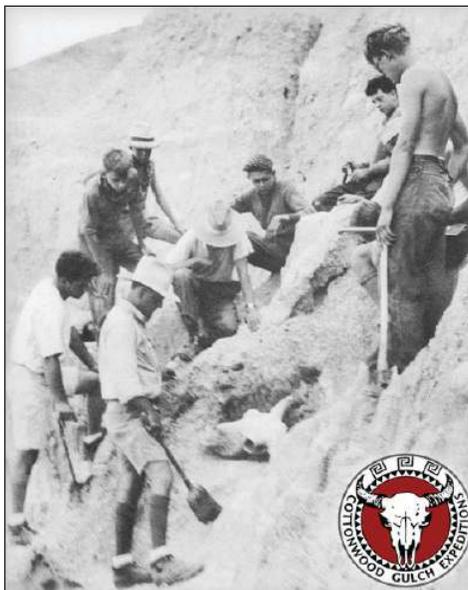
Joe Silversmith, Mr. Howie, and Tom Henio laid the foundation for the Caretaker's House in the mid 1950s.

The 85th Anniversary and Reunion

Friday, August 5th to Sunday, August 7th

This newsletter probably arrived in your mailbox folded around a hefty pile of junk mail, right? For just a minute, push aside those credit card offers and insurance come-ons. Turn off the TV and radio, set aside the newspaper and think back to an earlier time in your life. A time when your biggest worry was what to wear to Rendezvous, and how to position the lattie tent to ensure pretty views and proper concealment. Remember the smell of ponderosa bark and the heat of a touché? Jokes about canned beans and iodine water? You might not be able to go back in time, but we can help you pretend at the 85th Cottonwood Gulch Reunion this summer!

Join us from August 5-7 for music, games and excellent food (spam and iodine water available upon request). Repair that ring you made in the NAW when you were 16, or give the pottery wheel a go for the first time. Learn about local geology and Gulch history, enjoy some Navajo fry bread, play your favorite tunes around the campfire, and gaze at the nighttime sky, under more stars than you can imagine. Take a hike to Bluewater Canyon, rediscover the red rocks, or try your (chalky) hand at rock



climbing. Record your Gulch stories for posterity in a StoryCorps-style com studio. And most importantly of all, catch up with the old friends who were with you at that most pivotal time in your life.

The reunion runs from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, all meals included. The \$85 dollar admission guarantees a spot in a cabin or tent (Baker tent, anyone?), though we are also happy to recommend hotels in Gallup or Grants.

If you're looking for a more extensive re-introduction to the Southwest, check out the many Reunion Treks being offered in the days leading up to the main event! From August 2-5, you can rediscover favorite sites like Chaco and El Morro, or travel to Jemez and Valles Caldera for the first time. The treks are only \$400/adult, which includes admission to The 85th. **Kids under 10 are free.** For more information about the Reunion Treks and the 85th itself, visit us at www.cottonwoodgulch.org, or give us a call at 1-800-2-GO-TREK. You can also find us on Facebook to see the latest happenings at The Gulch and to learn who else will be at The 85th. Hope to see you there!

Reminisce "On The Road"

Join a Reunion Trek!

Reunion Trek 1: "The Chaco Loop"

led by Professor Lucy Kluckbohn Jones

- August 2 Arrive in Alb. and drive to Mt. Taylor
- August 3 Explore Chaco Canyon and camp at Ahshislepah Wash
- August 4 Visit the Peter Family Farm on the San Juan River
- August 5-7 Return to The Gulch for the 85th

Reunion Trek 2: "The Zuni Loop"

led by Dr. David Salmanson

- August 2 Arrive in Albuquerque, camp near El Morro
- August 3 Explore El Morro and lava tube caves at El Malpais
- August 4 Visit Zuni Pueblo, camp at Ojo Redondo in Cibola NF
- August 5-7 Return to The Gulch for the 85th

Reunion Trek 3: "The Jemez Loop"

led by Chet Kubit

- August 2 Arrive in Alb., camp at Camino de Paz Farm School
- August 3 Explore and camp at Bandelier National Monument
- August 4 Explore Valles Caldera and camp in Jemez Valley
- August 5-7 Return to The Gulch for the 85th

All food, programs, group gear, and transportation in NM will be provided. Cost: \$400/adult (includes admission to The 85th) and FREE for all kids under 10. Sign up online!



Thank You to Our Contributors

The following individuals, foundations, and corporations have given generously to the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation during the dates of **July 1 - Dec 31, 2010**. We are extremely grateful for all of the support. Your kindness sustains the Trek. Thank you very much!

Pacesetters \$5000 or more

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Joseph Traugott and Laurel Wallace
John Wehmiller



Above: sunrise on Mt. Taylor. Right: jumping for joy at Abshislepah. Several dinosaur bones are sticking out of the rocks just to the left of these hoodoos.

Upcoming Loop Highlights

Like every summer for the last 85 years, our 2011 expeditions will travel all over Trek Country as they explore the wide variety of ecosystems and cultural history this part of the world has to offer. Our groups will climb Mt. Tukuhnikivatz in Utah, lope over the Great Sand Dunes in Colorado, ford rivers in the Gila Wilderness of Southern New Mexico, and exhaust themselves on a hike to Arizona’s Keet Seel Ruins. These wide-ranging expeditions are fun and important, but every year we also seem to discover (or, as our alumni often point out, rediscover) that some of the best places to trek are the ones right in our own backyard. Recently we have made several new connections with local scientists, artists, farmers, and park rangers, who in turn have been able to (re)introduce the Gulch to the beauty and history of Northwestern New Mexico. Our 2011 road loops reflect this renewed local focus.

Inspired by the Mountain Desert Trek’s challenging backpack through the Zuni Mountains last summer, the Prairie Trek and Turquoise Trail will each embark on their own versions of this hike in 2011. The Zunis are not an easy place to live—water is scarce and

July hailstorms are not uncommon. At Base Camp we have simple luxuries like cabins and a fully stocked mess hall, which make it easy to forget that simply surviving in this place that we call “home” was not always an easy task. The PT and TT will have the opportunity to experience those same challenges firsthand—a history and backpacking lesson all rolled into one.

Mount Taylor is another place where most of our groups have only been skimming the surface recently. The sunrise hike to the summit is still a staple, but we also plan to do volunteer maintenance on the Continental Divide Trail (which passes right over the mountain), giving Trekkers more time to take in this monumental site. At the base of Mount Taylor, groups will have more time to hike through the lava flows of El Malpais while receiving geology lessons from our friend Paul Yoder. Nearby El Morro, Nutria Canyon, and Zuni Pueblo are on several groups’ itineraries, as well. Overall, our expeditions will spend significantly more time within 60 miles of Base Camp than they have in recent years, and we are confident that these experiences will foster an ever deeper sense of connection to Cottonwood Gulch.

Summer 2011

Over 135 Trekkers are currently signed up, but there’s still room for you!

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Outfit Expedition, Session 1 | 6/25 - 7/10 | 3 openings |
| Outfit Expedition, Session 2 | 7/17 - 8/1 | 4 openings |
| Wild Country Trek, Session 1 | 6/25 - 7/14 | 1 opening |
| Wild Country Trek, Session 2 | 7/17 - 8/5 | 2 openings |
| Turquoise Trail | 6/27 - 8/1 | 6 openings |
| Prairie Trek | 6/27 - 8/1 | 3 openings |
| Trek Institute | 7/17 - 8/5 | 2 openings |
| Paleontology Trek | 7/10 - 7/17 | 2 openings |
| Family Trek | 7/17 - 7/24 | 8 openings |
| Mountain Desert Trek | 6/27 - 8/5 | 2 openings |

Reunion Treks and The 85th Aug. 2 - Aug. 7
The 85th Anniversary and Reunion Aug. 5 - Aug. 7

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| First Rendezvous | Saturday, July 9th |
| Navajo Picnic | Saturday, July 23rd |
| Final Rendezvous | Saturday, July 30th |





Gardening at The Gulch

Amid our new fence and a row of stubborn sunflower stalks, the cover crops are coming in nicely and we are getting excited for another season of growing in the Gulch Gardens. This summer, our new farm manager Josh Knight will be leading the charge with two simple but ambitious goals in mind: grow more food, and teach the Trekkers how to do that, too.

As it turns out, growing vegetables at the Gulch is not an easy task. While our gardens have produced plenty of produce over the last two years, trying to grow food in the high desert inevitably leads to a series of challenges. Thanks to a variety of amendments and cover crops, the nutrient levels in our beds have increased dramatically, more so than we even thought possible in such a short time. However, the salt content of our soil has gone up as well. To correct this, we plan to leach the soil with plenty of water

and monitor the salinity more closely.

Another difficulty we're trying to overcome is the wildly unpredictable temperature at the Gulch. Last summer we had a hard freeze in mid-June and another light freeze in July! Not to be deterred, we have plans to use more row covers and build a small hoop house or two, which should give us more control over our growing environment.

However, the biggest challenge this summer involves more than just soil levels and hoop houses. Now that we have a few years of growing under our belts and a few kinks straightened out, we plan to increase the educational aspects of Gulch gardens by getting the Trekkers more involved in the full process. We will turn the "farm" into a "farm program," and connect the dots between this new program and our existing ones. How does a garden affect the local ecosystem? Are we using too much water? How did people grow food here 500 years ago? What about those cattle down the street? Is it OK to put a garden on a nature preserve? These are complex questions without simple answers—just the kinds of questions Trekkers and staff have been asking themselves for the last 85 years.

Luckily, we are not the first organization to begin a food program, and there are many resources out there to help us along. Over the winter we have collected many garden-related curricula and also developed

relationships with several local growers and educators who will continue to act as valuable resources while our program grows. With a little guidance from the staff (many of whom have experience in this field themselves), we believe the Trekkers can help design and plan large portions of the gardens, and then work alongside the staff to help carry out those visions. This could involve a variety of food crops, native plants, wildflowers, and even communal space to relax—whatever their imaginations create. Of course, there is a practical side to this as well: we want to grow a lot of our own food. Getting the Trekkers more involved in this program should help us achieve that goal, too, especially as the gardens become integrated into the Gulch culture.



Above: produce from the Gulch gardens. We plan to grow all of our own greens this summer.

Springtime!

Once again, the Gulch is currently hosting a record number of "outside user groups" during our not-so-off-anymore season. The organizational gymnastics involved in squeezing trips into two warm-ish shoulder months (April and May) is certainly intense, but also well worth the effort. Not only are we able to share our programming and beautiful facilities with an ever-widening audience, these Treks generate funding to support our core summer treks.



Our spring and fall treks run from one to seven days, either at and around Base Camp or in the warmer climes of Southern Ari-

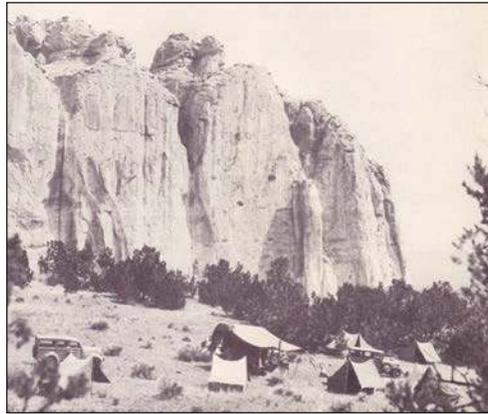
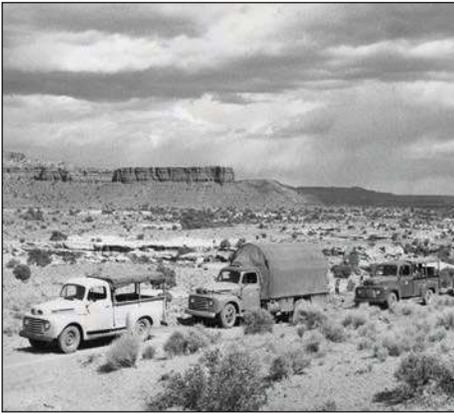
zona—as in the case of York Country Day School, which this year chose to make its third annual trip with the Gulch to the Tonto National Forest and Aravaipa Canyon. It's a good sign that many of our veteran school groups, like Escuela del Sol Montessori in Albuquerque, are now scheduling longer trips and for more age groups. We're also starting to field more requests to serve as a conference or day-trip site from organizations like Teach for America, which brought a group of 50 to Base Camp in early April, and AMIGOS, an international service-learning organization. We're also thrilled to be working with a few new local groups like the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project and a couple neighboring Girl Scout troops. In August, former Trekker and Staff member Austin Troy, who is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Natural Resources at UVM in Burlington, will bring a class of students to the Gulch for a week to study fire ecology and forest health.

Even as the calendar fills up, we always welcome opportunities to share the Gulch with the wider world. Many of these relationships grow from alumni contacts at schools or nonprofits throughout the country, so please let us know if you have people to contact or ideas to pursue.



Left: Jordan led an April trek in Aravaipa Canyon, AZ. Above: local TEA teachers were the first 2011 residents at Base Camp. Of course, we made them do a Peach Toss.

85 Years of Trek History (1926-2011)



Celebrate The Trek's 85th Birthday This Summer
The 85th Anniversary and Reunion at Cottonwood Gulch, August 5th - 7th
Reunion Treks and The 85th, August 2nd - 7th



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Sign up online for the **Reunion Treks** and **The 85th Anniversary and Reunion** at www.cottonwoodgulch.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A Report from *The General Store*, our two-story, four-seater, composting latrine:



During Base Camp Opening on April 30th, after a few years of trials and frustration, we happily harvested a dozen barrels of fully composted “humanure” from *The General Store* latrine. The finished product is a sweet -smelling, high-quality soil, and we plan to use it this summer to grow flowers around the Mess Hall. To celebrate and share our excitement, we

*There once was a fine Gulch meal
Enjoyed by Trekkers with zeal.
They went to “The Store”
To make room for more
Where compost happens for real!*

