



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



DECEMBER TRAIL WORK PARTY

The next work party will be held
December 20

again on the **Mt. McCoy Trail**.

Meet at the trailhead on Washburn St.
We will work from **8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon**. Hope to see you there.

Work Parties Chair
John Sabol



NOVEMBER TRAIL WORK PARTY

We had a great work party on the Mt. McCoy Trail on November 15. It was a nice cool day and we even received some light rain to keep the dust down. We widened the trail by hand clearing weeds at the trail sides, lopped shrubs that were growing out into the trail, and did some drainage repair work on several of the switchback turns. Additional effort was expended in blocking off several trail shortcuts. After the work party we met at Baja Fresh for lunch.

Many thanks to the following workers:

Arlene Altshuler, Martin DeGoy, Tom Frye, Mike Kuhn, Louise Pomes and her daughter Jennifer, and John Sabol.



HOLIDAY POTLUCK

The **Rancho Simi Trail Blazers Holiday Potluck**

will be held on
Wednesday, December 17th

starting at 6:30 p.m.
at Al and Marty Richards' home

at
2086 Elmdale Avenue in Simi Valley

Directions:

Elmdale is about one half mile west of Sycamore Drive, south of Cochran Street, and one block east of Justin Avenue, just past the dip.

Please call Marty at (805) 526-4414 to discuss what you should bring. We look forward to seeing everyone.

Our thanks go out to Al and Marty for again opening their home to us.



RSTB LOGO T-SHIRTS

Are your old logo T-shirts worn out? We still have short sleeve, long sleeve, and sweat shirts in assorted sizes and colors. Prices are:

- short sleeve \$12
- long sleeve \$14
- sweat shirt \$18

Please call Marty if you'd like to place an order: 805-526-4414.



Upper Zuma Trail, left To right: Carol Tucker, Arlene Altshuler, and John Sabol.



HIKING TIDBITS

Stay On Trails

The Simi Valley fires have burned through many of our trail areas. With the vegetation gone, there is a tendency for users to take shortcuts. Please resist the temptation to go off trail as well as ask others to stay on the original path.

RSTB Has A New Website

For those of you who use the Internet to check out our hiking schedule, please note that <http://rstb.homestead.com> no longer exists. It has been changed to <http://rstb.topcities.com>.



THE RENEWAL OF THE SUN

CA-VEN-630 is an approximately 25-acre archaeological ceremonial complex in the hills around Simi Valley. One area of the complex includes a massive wave-shaped sandstone rock, which is positioned as though ready to break upon a smaller wave-shaped rock below. This small complex is set facing massive sandstone outcroppings, which tower to the top of the nearby ridge to the south. An ancient Chumash Indian trail is worn and carved into the rocks, terminating and originating at this ceremonial site. Wave-shaped rocks seemed to have held great spiritual significance for the Chumash and are often associated with ceremonial sites.

The back of the smaller wave-shaped rock is covered with man-made cupules, i.e., small pits in the sandstone, usually 1 to 1 ½ inches in diameter. Across the crest of the wave form are larger cupules with oversized drains to the lip of the wave form. Surrounding the back half of one of the largest cupules are smaller cupules. This pattern of smaller cupules surrounding a large cupule repeats itself throughout much of the Chumash sphere. A nearby rock contains still more cupules and one deep bedrock mortar of a type that was often used for ceremonial purposes. At this site, on the morning closest to the astronomical occurrence of the “winter solstice,” if the sky is clear, a spectacular interaction of the light rays from the rising sun and this man-altered complex occurs. What occurs bears witness to the spiritual power of the sun and man’s interaction with the supreme deity.

This site appears to have been used for the winter solstice ceremony, which was the most important religious ceremony of the year for the Chumash. If the Chumash failed to perform the ceremony, as per the ancient practices of their ancestors, the sun would continue to decline low in the southern sky, the nights would grow longer, the air colder, and life would cease to exist. Successful performance of the ceremony would result in the symbolic rebirth of the sun, and the daylight portion of each day

would become longer, with the resulting resurgence of vegetation and animal life.

As the sun rises behind a rock on the southeastern horizon, its changing position eventually arrives at a point where a narrow shaft of its rays shines through a small passage near the crest of the rock and can be observed as an irregular circle of light on the face of the large wave form a few inches above the deep bedrock mortar.

The Chumash employed a “sun stick” in the winter solstice ceremony. The stick was usually about 18 inches long, with a rock disk, usually painted and having a hole in the middle of it, mounted near the top of the stick. In this case, the first shaft of light could have illuminated a disk on a stick that was inserted in the bedrock mortar - a practices that was described by early Chumash informants of John Peabody Harrington of the American Bureau of Ethnology.

As the sun continues to rise, the circle of light migrates to the northern crest of the smaller wave-shaped rock and then progresses along the crest of the wave form illuminating each large cupule in turn. Then the circle of light disappears. The sun’s rays no longer align with the elongated hole through the rock.

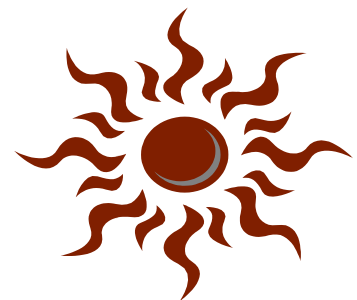
Another possible alignment associated with the winter solstice is also associated with this ceremonial site. Twenty to thirty minutes after the first event the sun, when viewing along a row of cupules on the north northwestern face of the smaller wave shaped rock, appears at the top of a square notch on the horizon. While the first alignment is derived by looking at where a shaft of light falls, this second alignment is derived by direct observation of the sun from a particular point along a sighting device.

A “shaman” based religion with the worship of the sun and ceremonies based upon the winter solstice event may have been the first nearly universal religion. Clearly, shaman based religion

originated in the eastern hemisphere and moved into the new world with the coming of modern man. So, it is appropriate that a Siberian term, i.e., “shaman,” be used by us to describe this universal trait. The date of the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ was selected as a device to displace in northern Europe the pagan celebration of the winter solstice. In Ventura the erection of a cross on a hill at the site of a Chumash winter solstice site was used to displace the native religion by the Franciscans. The same intent may have inspired the erection of the cross on Mt. McCoy by the early Spanish settlers of El Rancho Simi.

Though Chumash shamans are no longer present to conduct the winter solstice ceremonies, the sun is none-the-less renewed. Perhaps some vestige of the hopes of those people who gathered each year for thousands of years is still present and still influences the course of the sun. In sitting there, on cold clear mornings in late December of each year, I feel as one with the past. I think of those people, who gathered here so long ago and how different their world, lived in this very same place we know and love, was from ours. Their world was infinitely smaller, their resource base entirely different, their awareness of the rest of the world entirely lacking. This was their universe. They lived their lives in their own cultural universe, and they sought the renewal of their world each year. I am satisfied to pay respect to their beliefs by my presence in this special place.

Mike Kuhn



RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

During December 2003 I will retire after nearly three decades of working for the City of Simi Valley. One of my favorite stories from the early days, 1975 or 1976, relates to a citizen phone call that, for some reason, was directed to me.

I received the call at 11:55 a.m. from a lady who said that she lived at the northern end of Erringer Road. The road was a dead end, with no cul-de-sac bulb at the end, so people who drove up the street often had a hard time turning around. She asked why there wasn't a "not a through street" sign down by Alamo Street. I indicated that it probably was because no one had requested such a sign before – however, I would see what I could do. I called the street maintenance folks and asked about getting a "not a through street" sign for that location. The individual I talked to checked in the back and said he had such a sign. Further, he was "heading up that way and would throw the sign in the back of his truck along with a post hole digger."

At about 1:15 p.m. I received a call from the same woman. She said that she had just returned from lunch and that the sign was already up. She seemed astonished as to the quick action by the City. Retaining my composure, I explained that we try to be responsive to our citizens and thanked the lady for letting me know that there had not been an unusual delay in responding to her request.

The moral of the story is to keep it simple unless there is a good reason to make it more complicated. I hadn't seen a good reason to write a memo, however, I would not have been surprised to be asked to do so. The gentleman at the other end apparently had the ability to make that type of decision on his own. Perhaps those were simpler times.

Stop signs are another matter – they are somewhat governed by state law. You can generally get a pothole filled and graffiti removed in this town within 24 hours.

Mike Kuhn

MT McCOY TRAIL

Mt. McCoy is the prominent hill west of Madera Road with the cross on top. The trail to the Mt. McCoy uplands, where the Park Districts owns more than 200 acres of natural open space, begins at the western end of Washburn Street at the base of the hill. Street parking is available. The moderate 1.3-mile climb to the upland area, through a series of switchbacks, is 1.3 miles in length, with a 500-to-600-foot gain in elevation. The trail to the top affords magnificent views of Simi Valley, Wood Ranch and the mountains. The highland area provides vistas to the west and north, including of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

The trail starts in natural grasslands, with native bunch grasses, climbs through dense chaparral past a densely wooded canyon, with coastal sage scrub and grasslands on top. The geologic formations encountered include the non-marine Sespe Formation, dominated by very soft sandstone near the base of the trail, then up through a basalt-based portion of the Conejo Volcanics and finally into an andesitic-based portion of the Conejo Volcanics. The three different geological formations result in differences in soil and vegetation.

The upland area has very high-clay acid soils and some very unique plants. Those plants include one federal and state designated endangered species, one federally threatened species and a plant that is considered rare and endangered in California and has not been reported elsewhere in Ventura County. During the late-winter and spring period the wildflowers can be spectacular.

The cross on Mt. McCoy is a Ventura County Historical Landmark. A cross is thought to have been placed on the mountain during the Spanish Period. A wooden cross is indicated on an 1858-59 map of the area and the Runkle family reported the presence of a stone cross on the hilltop when they came to Simi Valley in 1904. A wooden cross was placed on the mountain in 1921. That cross was replaced by the present day concrete cross in 1941.

Hike the Mt. McCoy Trail and enjoy the wonders of nature so near our urban environment.

Mike Kuhn



Tom Frye working on the Mt. McCoy trail.

WATER IN THE WEST

John Steinbeck, in *East of Eden*, writing about the Salinas Valley, wonderfully expressed the whole story of water in the American West. In his word:

I have spoken of the rich years when the rainfall was plentiful. But there were dry years too, and they put a terror on the valley. The water came in a thirty-year cycle. There would be five or six wet and wonderful years when there might be nineteen to twenty-five inches of rain, and the land would shout with grass. Then would come six or seven pretty good years of twelve to sixteen inches of rain. And then the dry years would come, and sometimes there would be only seven or eight inches of rain. The land dried up and the grass headed out miserably a few inches high and great bare scabby places appeared in the valley. The live oaks got a crusty look and the sagebrush was gray. The land cracked and the springs dried up and the cattle listlessly nibbled dry twigs. Then the farmers and the ranchers would be filled with disgust for the Salinas Valley. The cows would grow thin and sometimes starve to death. People would have to haul water in barrels to their farms just for drinking. Some families would sell out for nearly nothing and move away. And it never failed that during the dry years the people forgot about the rich years, and during wet years they lost all memory of the dry years. It was always that way.

Mike Kuhn



December

2003



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Linda Travis</i>	5	6 Sulfur Mtn. See Schedule
7 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	8	9	10 <i>Happy Birthday Robert D. Galletly</i>	11 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Sharon Gochoel Rae Knapp</i>	12	13 Los Robles Trail See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Gary Valle Bill Cespedes</i>
14 SF Valley Hike 8:30am Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Samantha Cope</i>	15	16	17 Holiday Potluck See Page 1	18 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	19	20 Mt. McCoy Work Party See Schedule
21 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Tom Travis</i>	22	23	24	25 Christmas Day No Hike	26	27 Saddle Peak See Schedule
28 Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	29	30	31			



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

Hiking Schedule



- December 4 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 6 Sulfur Mountain**
Moderate to strenuous 6 – 10 MRT hike. This is a beautiful area in the mountains between Ventura and Ojai. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Wear boots, bring bug juice, snack, and 2 - 3 quarts of water.
- December 7 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 11 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 13 Los Robles**
Leader's choice. Moderate 4 - 8 MRT. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park district. Bring snack and 2 - 3 qts of water, wear boots. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal.
- December 14 San Fernando Valley Hike**
Moderately strenuous 6 MRT with 1700' elevation gain/loss. Directions: Meet at the Taft High school parking lot @ 8:30 AM for rideshare at the corner of Ventura Bl & Winnetka Ave. in Woodland Hills, or call leader (818-999-5385) for directions. Bring water, lugsoles and lunch. Please note, this is an official Sierra Club hike.
- December 14 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 18 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- December 20 Mt. McCoy Work Party**
Help maintain a one of our more scenic trails. Directions: From the 118 take Madera south to Royal. West on Royal, north on Acapulco, then west on Washburn. Trailhead is on the left, just before Washburn turns into Amigos Ave. We will be working from 8am to noon. Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves to work on the trail.
- December 21 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- December 25 Christmas - No Hike**
- December 27 Saddle Creek to Saddle Peak**
Moderate to strenuous 10 MRT hike with 1600' elevation gain/loss on a segment of the backbone trail between Las Virgenes and Stunt Road. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 qts. of water and lunch, wear boots.
- December 28 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)

For more information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400.

Special Note: - On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots. Hikes will be cancelled if it rains.

<http://rstb.topcities.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

EXECUTIVE CHAIR:	MIKE KUHN	HM (805) 583-2345, WK (805)583-6776
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SECRETARY:	DAVID WAGNER	HM (805) 577-5931
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WORK PARTIES CHAIR:	JOHN SABOL	HM (805) 583-2541
HIKING CHAIR & WEBSITE:	ARLENE ALTSHULER	HM (805) 581-9735
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	BRUCE SEVERY	HM (805) 526-1831

-----cut out and return with your payment-----

MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a New () or Renewing () member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of:

Single.....\$10 Family..... \$15

Name(s) _____ Birth Mo. ____ Day ____

Address _____

Email Address _____ Phone wk/hm _____

How did you find out about the RSTB _____

Please make out tax deductible member dues check for the year to:

“Rancho Simi Foundation” mail it to “RSTB, P.O. Box 630399, Simi Valley, Ca 93063-0399

Please list any extra names and birthdays of more than one member (Month & Day Only)



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