



KANSAS PRAIRIE PACKERS BASECAMP NEWSLETTER

BASECAMP is published by the Kansas Prairie Packers Association, Inc., at Topeka, KS. Membership in Prairie Packers is open to individuals and families interested in hiking, backpacking, canoeing, bicycling, cross-country skiing and other outdoor activities.

www.prairiepackers.org

SEPTEMBER, 2009

MONTHLY MEETING

WHEN: **SEPTEMBER 9, 2009**

WHERE: Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka, Topeka, KS
Board Meeting 6:00 pm, Visit and Eat 6:15 pm, Meeting 7:00 pm

PROGRAM: TBA

ACTIVITIES

September 26-October 5--Fall backpack - John Peterson

October 3--First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

October 14—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

October 17-18--Canoe Kansas River, DeSoto to Kaw point - John Stambaugh 862.6621.

November 7--First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

November 11—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd,

November 14--Soup hike - Rick & Trudy Racine 484.2108.

December 5--First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.
Topeka.

Activities

December 9—Annual Holiday potluck and election of officers, Lake Shawnee.

January 1, 2010—New Year's Day hike - Jon & Rosemary Ware 266.2144.

Trip Reports

Make a Man Say Grace

Submitted by

Jerry Reichenberger

It's no secret that I love the Southwest. Always have and always will. For the last 35 years I have backpacked its red rock canyons, climbed its mesas, explored its ruins and studied its history. Its ancient cultures and enduring mysteries have captivated me for years and I find it to be the most remarkable area I have ever visited. Before the Capital was built in Washington DC the largest building in the country at that time was a pueblo in New Mexico. And during the height of the Chaco Phenomenon more people inhabited the Four Corners area than reside there today. Fascinating stuff, but this summer I went back to its mountains, specifically the mountains of northern New Mexico and fell in love all over again.

It has been 30 years since I last backpacked in the mountains of New Mexico and this story starts at the small village of Pecos. It sits on the southern edge of the mountains in the north central part of the state and is about thirty miles east of Santa Fe. For you history buffs like myself, Glorita Pass sits in between the two and the only Civil War engagement west of the Rio Grande took place here in 1862. It seems the confederates were interested in New Mexico's silver mines. Regular Union soldiers, some under the command of Kit Carson, and Colorado militia led by Colonel John Chivington defeated the confederates at what became known as the Battle of Glorita Pass. A few years later, with no more rebels to kill in the west, Colonel Chivington turned his attentions on the Indians and in 1864 massacred

nearly 400 Southern Cheyenne and Arapahoe men, women and children at Sand Creek located in southeastern Colorado. Afterwards Chivington was asked why he killed children and he simply remarked "nits make lice." Nice guy. As the facts came out about this fight, few historians, if any, called it a battle. As a matter of fact a small monument marks the lonely site today as the "Massacre at Sand Creek."

The mountains of Northern New Mexico used to be the land of the Apache and Pueblos. The Apache have been removed but the Pueblos remain unconquered and strong as they have withstood over four hundred years of Spanish and Anglo Saxon invaders. This is quite an accomplishment considering the intentions of these aggressors; i.e.: God, Glory and Gold and not necessarily in that order.

Prairie Packers Dave, Kate, Jeanie, Chris and I met in the upper valley of the Pecos River at Jacks Creek trailhead in the Pecos Wilderness. The area is rich in Spanish culture and makes me wish I had studied up on my Spanish. On the way up from the village pinion and juniper soon give way to pine, scrub oak and aspen. Steep walled canyons, long and broad mesa tops, heavily forested slopes, and rugged ridges with peaks above timberline characterize the Santa Fe Mountains of the Pecos Wilderness. Located at the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo Range (Blood of Christ), the Pecos region forms the southern extent of the Rocky Mountains, North America's longest mountain chain. Elevations range from 8,400 to over 13,000 feet. Truchas Peak (Turquoise), New Mexico's second highest point at 13,102 feet, dominates the northern

wilderness. Many of the streams of the Pecos find their headwaters here. To the West, steep walled canyons drain towards the Rio Grande. In contrast, to the east lies the relatively gentle upper Pecos river Valley, an area of broad, flat mesas and grassy meadows.

Jacks Creek trailhead starts at about 9,000 feet in elevation then quickly gains another 1,000 feet in the first two miles of switchbacks and eventually enters a lovely meadow surrounded by quaking aspens. The trail would stretch true and straight for another five miles and gain an additional 1,200 feet before this day would come to an end. Our first nights camp site would be at 11,200 feet and getting to that site took its toll on everyone. Jeanie got sick from the altitude but she never gave up and trudged on like a trooper without complaint. I admire the lady as she didn't want to hold anyone back and insisted on shouldering her own pack the entire way. Kate, Chris and I stumbled on to the shores of Pecos Lake exhausted but with enough energy left to quickly set up tents before the late afternoon showers arrived as the mountain monsoon season was in full swing. Chris and I donned rain gear and went back to check on Jeanie and Dave, who had stayed in the rear as a sweeper, collecting all who had fallen behind. We didn't have to go far, maybe a quarter of a mile, when we found them safe and dry in their tents. Considering Jeanie's sickness and Dave's recent surgery, the fact that they made it as far as they did makes them tough customers in my book.

We had two primary objectives on this trip. One was to climb Pecos Baldy and the other was Truchas Peak. Pecos Baldy rises from the shores of Pecos Lake at about 12,250 feet. There are several baldies in the area and are quite impressive as they are devoid of trees and pocked with outcroppings of rock and to me resemble giant mushrooms bulging up from the ground. The next morning the three of us scrambled up a saddle and followed a nice switchback trail to the summit and stared down at the glassy tarn radiating below our

feet as the wind fanned out on the surface of Pecos Lake. While we were on top of Pecos Baldy Dave and Jeanie had moved up and secured the prime campsite at the lake. The rest of the afternoon was open for anything and the lake beckoned so I went for a swim, Chris fished and Kate and the rest collected firewood.

Around the fire it was decided that Kate, Chris and I would continue on to our second objective of Truchas Lake and a shot at climbing Truchas Peak. Jeanie, still feeling a little puny, and Dave hurting still, would spend the next few days in camp at Pecos Lake. We would be coming back on the same trail and pick them up on the way down Thursday or Friday. But on Tuesday morning we all headed out together as Jeanie and Dave dayhiked with us to the top of Trail Riders Ridge. This ridge is a two mile flat topped, almost mesa like mountain that is open on both sides to the bottom of its timbered valleys and is truly breathtaking. Look closely and you might find yourself being watched by Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep or Elk from a distance. The forest spreads out in all directions and at these elevations the stands of timber are primarily Engelman Spruce. If you are looking for pristine forest with very little beetle kill this is the place. The wild flowers were abundant and we also saw large areas of wild iris that I've never seen anywhere else in the mountains.

At the end of the ridge Jeanie and Dave turned around and headed back while the rest of us descended to Truchas Lake Basin. This was a cruel trick of nature as we figured the lake was below us. Wrong again! It was down to the basin then back up for a distance that seemed like five miles but was closer to about two. Along the way we met a group of mule riders and I felt like grabbing a tail. The lake finally revealed itself in a pretty little basin surrounded by the peaks of Truchas. Ah yes, true wilderness area but this place can get popular fast. Fortunately there are several

large flat areas to accommodate any size groups without losing the wilderness experience. Truchas Lake sits at a lofty 11,780 feet and we found a nice spot complete with sitting logs, fire ring and a view of the mountain we were going to assault the next day. Truchas Peak is actually three peaks. Truchas Peak, Middle Truchas and North Truchas all rise above 13,000 feet and can actually be bagged in one day of good weather. We had all afternoon to study the mountain and search for the logical route up. But on our side of the mountain there was no obvious trail to saddle or ridge line. Hell, there was no saddle at all and the entire valley was ringed by boulder fields and loose scree. I knew this wasn't going to be an easy climb because as we set up camp and I blew into to my air mattress it blew back with little resistance from me.

We were sitting around camp deciding which freeze dried delicacy we were going to eat when one of the mule riders came into camp and invited us to supper. Chris and I dropped our food bags and went running like hogs to a trough. Homemade chicken stew and Dutch oven cobbler make a man say grace. After a simple prayer of thanks for good food, new friends and beautiful country we sat down under a tarp as the rain gently fell. Back in our camp, dry and warm in tent and sleeping bag the rain continued for most of the night and sleep came easy.

The next morning dawned as only one in the Rocky Mountains can after a night of rain. Sky was turquoise blue and air fresh as if it were born right there. We studied the peak again and spotted an avalanche chute that looked like the only feasible way. The peak rose to a nice looking triangle and its upheaval of rock strata looked like Neapolitan ice cream or twisted taffy and gleamed on every ridge and cliff. We started up the chute in orderly military fashion but once the chute ended it was every man and woman for themselves. Sorry Kate. I used everything within my reach, grass, rock and twig to get a pull up.

Ninety feet to the ridge line and I had to stop and blow three times. Once on the ridge you simply followed it to the summit. Weather changes fast up there and soon our little peak became a cloud croft. While still on the ridge in descending, we saw Big Horn sheep appear and disappear without making a sound and Chris faded away in complete silence while the mist covered us like a blanket.

My long time hiking partner Chris, is the thinker of us two and carefully plans out every move he makes and usually makes good decisions. He would have been better off by following his own instincts down the mountain once we left the ridge but instead he followed me. That was a mistake. I am like a bull in the china shop kind of hiker, and there is a time and place for that, but this wasn't one of them. To make a long story short once safely down we looked back at the rock crevice we came sliding down and just shook our heads as it looked near impossible. Good thing Chris likes a challenge.

The mist was boiling and rising on the north side of the mountain but evaporated once it rolled over to the south side, the sunny side, and made for a beautiful morning on our side of the mountain. We sat on grassy slopes and admired the high lonesome country.

Back in camp the sun was playing hide and seek with the clouds and I timed a dip into Truchas Lake and came out with the sun still shining and bathed in its warmth as I sat on a rock, one of my favorite past times while lounging in camp. Chris was fishing when the storm came in. I laughed at him as he scrambled to get his gear put away while I sat high and dry in my tent. This was going to be a real toad strangler as plenty of thunder and lightning predicted. Then the hail came and for about an hour pelted our tents and drifted outside. Luckily this was an early afternoon storm and a couple hours' later blue skies ruled. The timberline area dried out fast and we gathered what dry wood we could find. While searching for firewood Chris started

laughing hysterically and I walked over to see what was so funny and soon found out why. While I was laughing at him in my tent as he scrambled to get his gear out of the rain, I had failed to grab my hiking pants that I had left on a rock and they were soaked. I spent the rest of the afternoon sitting by the lake drying out my pants. We also managed a good fire that night and of course nearly caught my pants on fire.

The next day, (Thursday), we headed back down the trail to re-connect with Jeanie and Dave. We came across a freshly killed elk that had obviously been discovered by the creatures of the forest. There were plenty of tracks on the trail, large and small, but were indistinguishable because of the recent rain storm. We quickly but cautiously vacated the area and put a little distance between us and the kill site. We had lunch and rested at a sunny and peaceful Pecos Lake. Jeanie and Dave had moved on that morning as evidenced by the warm rocks of their fire ring and depressions from their tents. They had made camp at Jacks Creek and we found them later that afternoon. I can't say much for Dave's choice of sites, as there were plenty in the area, but understood why as this one was right next to the trail and would be hard to miss by us as we came down looking for them. The problem with this site was the amount of horse plop that lay everywhere. Of course I stepped right in it not more than ten minutes in camp. Cowboy boots, it slides right off, hiking boots with lug soles, forget about it. You had to be particularly stealthy at night or you might get some between your toes. So every time I step in horse biscuits and have to clean my boots I will think of you Dave.

Friday was a short hike out to the vehicles, clean clothes and something to drink other than creek water. Hiking the northern area of the Pecos Wilderness was one of awesome beauty and diversity. Something about its craggy baldies, verdant meadows and pristine forest that will bring me back again sooner than the

time that had lapsed from my last visit.

To those who still hear the call I look forward to sharing a trail with you where the air trembles and the cairns are few.

BISON TOUR:

Russell Gray was the only person present for the bison tour and, along with two docents, set out at 7pm to experience the pleasure of observing these unique and beautiful animals "close up and personal". It was not to be, however, and the "prairie gods" refused to cooperate.

After a futile hour and a half effort, we finally spotted a herd on the west border of the property... barely viewable through binoculars. Maybe next year?!

MOONLIGHT HIKE:

Nineteen adventurous individuals showed up at 9pm on an unseasonably cool night for the moonlight hike.

After conquering the introductory "two shakey bridges" and steep climb, a beautiful orange moon appeared on the eastern horizon. A welcome breeze also became evident on the high ridge by the radio tower. Also noticeable were the high prairie grasses that nearly obscured the rock strewn trail in some areas.

We welcomed several new and prospective members on this fine evening in the Flint Hills and hope that they will have fond memories of this virgin excursion and partake of other activities in the Prairie Packer arsenal.

Submitted by Richard Johnson

KS Prairie Packer – Michigan Valley camp out

Rosemary Ware joined the group for dinner and a camp fire.

Mike and Shari LaRue hosted the camp out August 22 – 24th at Lake Pamona in the Michigan Valley camp area. The sites were shady and very nice. John and Teresa Stambaugh, Ray and Patty Jordan and daughter Janelle, Alona Palmer and Steve Stumbaugh all brought travel trailers for the camp out. Linda Hardie and Dave Jones joined the festivities on Saturday when Ray took most of the group out on the lake in his boat. While Linda and Dave did some kayaking and fishing, the rest of the group did a hike on Saturday to check out some of the other camp grounds and hike a short nature trail. Saturday evening Jon and

On Sunday the 23rd, Ray, John and Teresa, Alona, Mike and Shari did a bike ride to some of the other camp grounds. The area has some nice rolling hills to conquer on your bike and provides some very nice vistas of the lake.

The August camp out provided the most unusual moderate temperatures. The days were pleasant and sunny and the evenings had a chill that made most of us put on a jacket for additional warmth. Who would have thought that August in KS would give us such a beautiful week-end for camping?



Jon Ware at work in the kids playground.

Sunday morning pancake breakfast. Patty, Janelle, Teresa, Shari, Alona, John.



Treasurer's Report

Treasurers Report for

Aug treasurer report:

Income - dues \$0.00

Paid out - Newsletter. \$22.55

Balance 5/25/09 - \$1414.02

Membership

70—Paid members

53—Emailed newsletters

17—Mailed newsletters

11—Comps

The Membership Committee would like to challenge you to contact 5 or more people to inform them of the benefits of belonging to the Prairie Packers. Tell them the reasons they should join—love of the outdoors, health reasons, social connections, being around a great group of people! Use email, telephone, word of mouth, cards, etc. to spread the news to all your contacts!

There will be a fabulous prize at the end of the year for the current member that has recruited the most new members. Be sure to tell your recruits when they pay their membership dues to let Dave Dunford know who referred them to join.

Welcome New Members

We are always happy to hear of new members to the Prairie Packers. Welcome! We are glad to have you. Soon you will know what a great group of people we have in Prairie Packers.

We hope you will enjoy making new friends as you participate in our outdoor activities. We would like to remind all Prairie Packers to continue to invite people to come to an activity so they too can experience the fun we have together.

Officers and Committee Chairs

President Denise Myers 986-6626
dmmopp@yahoo.com

Vice President Mary Glanville 234.4667
mglanville@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer Dave Dunford 234.4667
davedunford@sbcglobal.net

Programs Olivia Boyd 554.5559
beba_55_2008@hotmail.com

Activities Shari LaRue 836.3167
shari@rockytopacres.org

Membership Patty Jordan
Jan & Terese Hamilton
Teresa Stambaugh

Social Events Judy Shipman 228.3655
Mary Flin 741.2989

Newsletter Editor/Web Page
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Richard Johnson 587.8731

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Terese Hamilton 633.9122

Kate Sieverson 817.7080

John Stambaugh 862.6621

Teresa Stambaugh 862.6621

Jon Ware 266.2144

Rosemary Ware 266.2144

Deadline for Oct newsletter submissions—**24 Sep.**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Outdoor Interests _____

Circle your membership level and send check to:

Dave Dunford
2115 Harrison St
Topeka, KS 66611-1127

Join the Prairie Packer listserve? Yes No

Referred by: _____

Membership levels:

New members joining Jan thru Jun:

\$25.00 for mailed newsletter

\$20.00 for e-mailed newsletter

New member joining Jul thru Dec:

\$12.50 for mailed newsletter

\$10.00 for e-mailed newsletter

Renewals due **prior** to January 1.

\$25.00 for mailed newsletter

\$20.00 for e-mailed newsletter

Prairie Packers Basecamp
11300 S Stanley Rd
Overbrook, KS 66524



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