



Photo by Dick Prentice

# Trails

## Get ready for Mott Creek!

The club will be headed to Mott Creek Ranch in the Texas panhandle on the weekend of June 20-22. We have been on this trip before and everyone had a blast. We'll be camping at our cars and day hiking all over the ranch....we'll have campfires, smores (if somebody will bring the fixings), archeology, nature, .....all of the outdoorsy stuff....and since we will be having a Region 18 teacher's workshop there on Monday and Tuesday after the club goes home, weather permitting, I will be bringing a large telescope for your astronomical viewing pleasure. The last time that we went to Mott Creek we went arrowhead hunting and collected interesting rocks, did a lot of nature

photography and generally had a great relaxing weekend. Marisue Potts, the ranch owner is a sweetheart and regaled us with stories of the history of the ranch at our Saturday evening campfire. I don't know if Marisue will be at the ranch on this weekend but if she is, you'll meet one of the nicest people this side

B & B at the ranch for the group following up the club and I'm sure that we can use the restrooms for those of you that don't see the "romance" of an outhouse. The weather should be great, if not a bit warm and the company... well....need I say more.



of the Red River. Again, the camping will be at a very nice campsite complete with outhouses and we have rented the

Marisue asks a small camping fee to help maintain her camping area but with the costs of entrance to state and national parks, it's minimal. I will email everyone that fee when we find out how much it is. A shallow stream runs near the campsite and kids enjoy playing in it. The ranch is vast and there's lot to explore so make every effort to make this trip.

## Star Party

I will be taking my telescope to Mott Creek for a star party for teachers in Region 17 and 18 (a workshop that we are doing on Monday and Tuesday after the club goes home) so we will have it handy if any of you are

interested in doing a little telescopic stargazing. We've also discussed having a star party closer to home sometime this summer.....so....if you want to have a little time at the eyepiece either the weekend of June 20th or

are interested in a later star party, let me know. Summer is always a good time for star parties in that the Milky Way and many of the really pretty nebulae, galaxies, and star clusters are visible....and it doesn't hurt that the weather is nice!

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- *Plan for the June Mott Creek Ranch trip!*
- *Star Parties*
- *Chama's Cumbres-Toltec Railroad trip chilly but a great success*

## Chama Report by Michael W. Nickell



The Cumbres-Toltec Railroad is America's longest and highest narrow gauge railroad and is also a railroad museum designated as both a National and State Registered Historic Site and National Civil Engineering Landmark.

Those PBOC members who chose to travel to Chama, New Mexico for the May trip were not disappointed. The ten inches of new snow that fell in the mountains the night before the trip made an exquisite "winter wonderland." The trip had its glitches though. Due to a computer problem with the railroad's system our tickets were not ready and had to be filled out by hand that morning. A thanks goes to Joyce Reaves for graciously expediting the process from an already stressed ticket agent. But all worked out well in plenty of time.

It was the opening day for the 2008 season for the Cumbres-Toltec Railroad as well as the Memorial Day weekend. A beautiful and heart-felt opening ceremony paid due tribute to all our nation's service men and women who have made that ultimate sacrifice for all of us, and may we never forget that our liberty has always carried a tremendous price. The opening ceremony included the raising of the flag, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of our national anthem. A stirring tribute was made for the military and a gun and train whistle salute was given for each of the five branches of the armed forces. The ceremony concluded with a scripture reading and blessing for the train. The mayor of Chama then gave a big welcome in behalf of the entire town and officially opened the season with a ribbon cutting. There were about 150 passengers on board the train for this first trip of the season. PBOC members included Rick, Teresa, and Olivia Gray of San Antonio, Texas. Other members included Dick and Betty Ann Prentice, Shirley Stephenson, Ruth Shields, Anna Maynard, Mary Zamora, Joyce Reaves, and Michael and Lynette Nickell.

As the train rolled out from the Chama Station a line of well wishers waved to give us a *bon voyage*. The ride was slow and bumpy, but no one seemed to mind...the scenery was well worth it! As we climbed in elevation the snow became deeper until the train was unable to continue forward unless the crew got off and physically shoveled snow and spread sand. Eventually that was not effective, so the engineer made the decision to uncouple the passenger cars from the engine. Blocks were placed behind the wheels of the last passenger car to prevent us from coasting downhill back into Chama. The engine went ahead to clear snow all the way to Cumbres Pass. As the billowing smoke from the engine disappeared into the distance thoughts of the Donner Party came to our collective mind...hummm...It turned out that we were stranded for only about an hour. I'm sure that next year as the tale is told that the snow will be deeper, the cold more bitter, and the wait more desperate and grim. Because of the inconvenience, the railroad gave passengers the option to disembark at Cumbres Pass and be bussed back to Chama for a trip later in the season. I am pleased to report that all PBOC members opted to stay and enjoy the remainder of the trip. Cumbres Pass was the highest point on the railroad at 10,015 feet.

Everyone got off the train at Osier Station for a wonderful meal. There were plans to get a group photograph at this time, but because of the crowd and different people opting for different meals in different lines, the photo session never materialized. After the meal we boarded a second train to continue our winding trip through the mountains of Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

Passengers had a high degree of freedom to move about the train during the trip. One car was an open gondola specifically for photographers who did not mind the cold to get that optimal shot. As the train passed through the Rock Tunnel a large piece of ice fell narrowly missing Teresa Gray's head landing near her feet. Thankfully no one was hurt.

It was very obvious that winter still had its grip on the mountains on the western side of Osier Station, but

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Somehow all of the club members managed to find one another on the train! - photo by Dick Prentice



Brrrr..... photo by Dick Prentice



Teresa and Olivia Gray—photo by Rick Gray

*"Sometimes the answer to morale problems is just to fire all of the unhappy people."*



Choo choo—photo by Rick Gray



photo by Michael Nickell



photo by—Michael Nickell

*"If a cute quote is all that it takes to motivate you, you probably have a very easy job. The kind robots will be doing soon."*

June Club Meeting

The June 17th meeting of the PBOC will be held at 6:30 p.m. at Casa Lopez Restaurant at 4111 W. Illinois. At the last meeting they had 6 tables set up for 4 of us.....embarrassing..... Please come to the next meeting so Bill Bentley will have someone to talk to.....oh.....and we'll be discussing the June 20th trip to Mott Creek Ranch.

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PERMIAN  
BASIN OUTING CLUB**

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photos by Michael Nickell

## (Chama Trip Report Continued)

as we continued to descend on the eastern side it was spring with the absence of snow and the aspens in leaf. The train was about two hours late arriving in Antonito, Colorado for the bus trip back to Chama. We were further treated with sightings of elk, mule deer, and a black bear. In spite of a few minor inconveniences, the trip was fantastic! The only improvement I could possibly imagine is to repeat the trip again in late September when the aspens turn to gold.

The hospitality and knowledge of the employees and docents of the Cumbres-Toltec Railroad was excellent. Likewise, the businesses and citizens of Chama, New Mexico made us foreigners from Texas welcome.