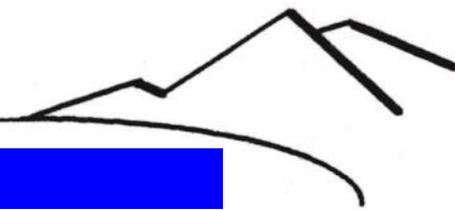


**This Newsletter is
Dedicated to the
Memory of Al Bandel**



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



FALL 2008

Remembering Al

By Pete Warden

I've known Al Bandel for many years, and was deeply saddened to hear he'd suddenly died Saturday, September 6, 2008. He was passionate about trail work, and was an incredibly hard-working volunteer on trails regularly putting in hundreds of hours a year maintaining and building paths both in the Santa Monica Mountains and the Channel Islands. He not only went to most scheduled work days, but even organized his own expeditions out to the Islands, where he was also well known and well loved.

I always looked forward to seeing him, such a live wire, always full of stories about his life both recent and as a young man. I particularly remember his tussles with big consumer firms where he was unfailingly polite but determined to get what he was promised. He never took himself seriously, and loved to tell of the day he bought some cans of Guinness. He discovered there was something rattling at the bottom of the first can he drank. Worried there was a foreign object contaminating it, he phoned their customer service line; and they explained that it was a widget that gave it an on-tap fizz. He was full of apologies once he understood, but the gal on the other end insisted on sending him a free six-pack, no doubt as charmed by him as we all were!

Al specialized in the really heavy work, never happier than when he was dragging a boulder into place for a step, or dragging a post pounder up the side of a mountain to set a sign. He built trails to last, always digging the deepest holes and finding the heaviest rocks. His specialty was creating rock walls and steps from nearby materials. He

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Appreciation of Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of every organization, and the Trails Council is living proof. When this organization was started in 1972, seven people stepped up to the plate and volunteered to save trails that were being threatened. That was way before these mountains were included in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Over the last 36 years hundreds of volunteers have invested themselves through their time, their efforts, their muscles, their money, their passion and their dedication to ensuring what we have today will pass along to the future. Volunteers come in all forms – retired people with some extra time, youth groups, individuals looking for the physical work on trails, some who just want to be outdoors working leisurely, people wanting to work on trails in the company of others, some pushing their own envelope of physical energy, some who want to work on a trail that they'll later use and know that they helped maintain it, many sending donations of money to be used for tools and other materials, some offering services that are supportive of our work, and a host of other reasons – all valid.

Volunteers give back to the community, as the saying goes, and they feel rewarded for doing so. We are fortunate to have some very dedicated people volunteering for the Trails Council. It makes us feel good knowing that we are helping in some way. Our civic duty of protecting and assisting wherever we can, whether people or resources, is important and commendable. We all must do our part to ensure a better place to enjoy – making a trail safer or longer or shorter or as a connection, fixing a trail with a great view or with nice water crossings, opening up a neglected trail – and you can add more reasons.

Your involvement as a volunteer is most appreciated and never taken for granted. It doesn't matter whether you give an hour a year or hundreds of hours or whether you give money; all that you give benefits the Trails Council. When the Trails Council benefits, so does the general public, since they use the trails that we build, repair and maintain. You are giving back so much to the community, and I thank you on behalf of them for your generosity

Ruth

Coming Events

2008

- *Public Lands Day – 27 September*
- *SMMTC Annual Meeting – 23 October*

(Al Bandel — Continued from Page 1)

was a keen-eyed and good-natured companion, always vocal, (“What did you go and do that for?”) but ready to listen and compromise.

After a hard day’s work, Al loved to crack open a bottle of wine and cook up something wonderful. He was an expert cook, and many of us had the chance to enjoy the food he generously shared on trips. Liz and I learned to pack less food for ourselves on these expeditions because Al was sure to make enough for all of us. He would roll his eyes if he saw us heating up something pre-made. “It only takes a minute to make something from scratch,” he would tell us.

I’m going to miss him a lot - always friendly, full of life, vivacious, passionate about his work in the wilderness – embodied with strong determination, laughter, and a spirit of fun. Life was never dull when Al was nearby, and everyone who knew him loved him. He leaves behind many friends he made through his love of the outdoors. We’ll really miss you, Al, but your work will live on for decades in the trails you saved.

Goodbye, Al, we’ll miss you.

Pete Warden

His family suggested that anyone who wants to give something in remembrance may do so through SMMTC. You can donate in memory of Al online using your credit card on PayPal at <http://www.smmtc.org/albandel.htm>. Alternately, you may send a check to SMMTC, P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. Please note on the check that the donation is in memory of Al Bandel. SMMTC is a volunteer, tax deductible, nonprofit 501 (C) (3) charitable organization. A memorial page is on the Trails Council website: <http://www.smmtc.org/albandel.htm>.



Learn Trail Maintenance Techniques

Frank Padilla, Jr., will conduct a Basic Trail Maintenance Workshop at Malibu Creek State Park on 24 January 2009. Anyone willing to help SMMTC’s trail maintenance effort is invited to attend. The Trails Council will provide lunch during the all-day session which includes classroom in the morning and trailside demonstration in the afternoon. For more information or to register, please call Burt Elliott, 805-498-2475, or Jerry Mitcham, 805-492-6522.



BioBliz Finds Over 1,664 Species

A 24-hour species inventory, BioBlitz, was conducted in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area on May 30 and 31, 2008, as teams of scientists, naturalists and volunteers combed through 150,000 acres, observing and recording as many plant and animal species as possible. At the end of the inventory, 1,664 species had been identified. Over the coming months, analyses will continue to identify even more species from the data.

BioBlitz was organized for communities to learn about the biological diversity of local parks and to better understand how to protect them. Adults and children were able to join biologists in the field, participate in bona fide research expeditions, and learn about biodiversity.

This was the second of 10 annual BioBlitzes to be held at urban national park units around the country, leading up to the Park Service's centennial in 2016. The first was held last year at Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. The next annual National Geographic / National Park Service BioBlitz partnership takes place in 2009 at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The Santa Monica Mountains BioBlitz was presented and sponsored by National Geographic and the National Park Service in collaboration with Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and California State Parks.



TC Members Mugged by Humpback Whales

Enroute to Santa Cruz Island on June 10 for their annual outing, Trails Council members and friends were mugged by three humpback whales for 45 minutes. Not one person complained at the rare, closeup whale sighting. Crew members on the Island Packers’ ferry were equally enthralled by the adventure.

Federal laws prevent a boat from maneuvering while an endangered species is close. The whales seemed to be as fascinated with the boat as all passengers were of the experience.

After the whales allowed it to resume, the boat continued to the Prisoners Harbor landing on Santa Cruz Island where approximately 25 Trails Council members enjoyed an interesting day of exploration, picnics, relaxing and camaraderie.

About 20 miles off the coast, the island is part of Channel Islands National Park.



21 Hikers Complete BBT Trek 2008

A total of twenty-one hikers, one from Oregon and the rest Californians, participated in the 7th Annual Backbone Trail Trek over a seven-day period, May 3-10, 2008, in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. About 20 volunteers coordinated the hiking portion and prepared the evening meals.

The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council and Coastwalk joined together for the BBT Trek 2008. As in years past, this was an effective team, resulting in a highly successful event.

The hike began at the western terminus of the Backbone Trail in Point Mugu State Park and ended 65 miles later at the eastern terminus in Will Rogers State Historic Park. Participants hiked about ten miles each day and camped each night in a nearby campground. When necessary, a vehicle shuttle was provided to and from the campgrounds. Personal camping equipment and a "chuck wagon" were transported between campgrounds by volunteers.

As the trekkers hiked over ridges and into canyons, some of the out-of-area hikers were surprised and delighted at the diversity of the Santa Monica Mountains. The group was treated with an abundance of wildflowers; and hike-leader Burt Elliott counted a total of 152 blooming species during the week. A persistent marine layer resulted in fog and low clouds, which restricted the usual spectacular views, but the hikers benefited from the resulting cool temperatures.

One of the highlights of the trek occurred on Tuesday evening, an "all you can eat" BBQ dinner at the popular Calamigos Ranch. Another evening they were entertained by a National Park Ranger who gave an informative presentation on the local mountain lion tracking program. The trek concluded on Saturday, May 10th as the somewhat tired but proud hikers marched into Will Rogers State Historic Park.

This year's success is attributed to having twenty-one cheerful, conditioned and congenial hikers supported by several dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. Many are looking forward to BBT Trek 2009.



Trails Council on the Web

This paper won't self-update, but our website will.

www.smmtc.org

Let's Fix Trail Problems

A reporting system for all trail problems is being established. Members of the Trails Council and their friends and associates are requested to report issues regarding signage, trails and other, situations that need repair.

Signs

New sign request

Repair/correction request

Trails

Brushing needed

Tread repair needed

Erosion correction

Removal of dangerous situation

Trailheads

Access improvement needed

Problems may be reported to 818-222-4531 or via email, mail@smmtc.org.



Over 2300 Trail Maintenance Hours Volunteered

SMMTC's 2008 February-July work season consisted of 47 work days — every Saturday during the period plus one Wednesday per month and extra days as volunteered by several school and business groups. The result of this effort is 18 trail miles in the Santa Monica Mountains restored to good condition.

Several segments of the Backbone Trail were maintained, including Musch, Ray Miller, Fossil Ridge, Old Boney, Chamberlain Rock and Saddle Creek. Also included in the totals were four trips to Santa Cruz Island, yielding a total of 16 work days.



ANNUAL MEETING

The Trails Council Annual Dinner Meeting will be held

Thursday, October 23, 2008

at the home of Ruth and Grant Gerson, providing an opportunity to meet people who share an interest in trails. Members and trail enthusiasts are invited to bring their spouse and friends. Dinner is hosted by the Trails Council.

The social hour will begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 and meeting at 7:45.

Please RSVP by Monday, 20 October, to facilitate meal planning. Call Ruth at 818-991-1236 and leave your name, telephone number and how many are in your group. The Gerson's home, Wolf Creek Ranch, is at 3450 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.



Business Sponsorships Welcomed

In the coming months we will roll-out a more formal approach to acquiring new business memberships. An updated brochure will educate sponsors on our mission, goals, vision and the work efforts we have made to preserve trails. We will have an array of contribution levels with accompanying recognition certificates and plaques to honor their businesses and to display their support for the Trails Council to their patrons and employees.

The Trails Council already has a broad membership of concerned individuals and businesses that believe in our mission to preserve and maintain trails in the Santa Monica Mountains. Although individual membership has been the focus of the Trails Council, businesses have been valuable contributors as noted by the list of supporters on our web site, <http://smmtc.org/supporters.htm>. Contributions from these supporters are much appreciated, and the Trails Council has put their dollars to work by improving the condition of trails, raising awareness, and acting on issues with the potential to jeopardize trails.

If you have a business or know of one which has the orientation to partner with the Trails Council, please have them contact us at mail@smmtc.org, and we will share with them the benefits of sponsorship.



Trails Council and REI Host National Public Lands Day at Reagan Ranch

Trails Council will join with REI for National Public Lands Day at the Reagan Ranch in Malibu Creek State Park on September 27. A flyer providing directions and other information can be found on the SMMTC web-site, www.smmtc.org/NPLD_2008_Flyer.htm.



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PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2009

Payments in October and later are credited to the following year. Dues are on a calendar year basis. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. *Thank you for your continued support.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP _____

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Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual Memberships

Annual Membership — \$35

Life Membership — \$350*

Business Memberships

Supporter — \$100

Patron — \$250

Benefactor — \$500

Donation \$ _____

* Life membership may be paid in three annual payments of \$150, \$100 and \$100
SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501 (c) (3)

**Bikers, please don't startle
hikers or horses.**

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