

This Newsletter is Dedicated to the Memory of

Milt McAuley

1919-2008

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



SPRING 2009

Photo courtesy of L.A. Times

Memories of Milt

Almost 20 years ago I was one of those who signed up for a hiking class through the Learning Tree, not so much because of a love of the outdoors, but because I was searching for something. I wasn't sure what, exactly; an activity, preferably healthy, to occupy my time; an opportunity to meet people socially. I found all that, and more, through Milt and Maxine McAuley.

Milt led us, with Maxine as trail sweep, on many fun filled hikes, regaling us with stories. Whether he was describing the history or geology of the land around us, or recalling stories from his childhood or from 20 years in the Air Force, he clearly enjoyed teaching and sharing his life.

In the spring Milt added wildflower walks to his classes. A self-taught botanist, Milt loved teaching others how to identify the local plants. Many of us treasure the *Wildflowers of the Santa Monica Mountains* book, as well as various trail books he wrote and published. When it was too hot to hike the Santa Monicas in the summer, Milt led us to trailheads in the San Gabriel Mountains. As one of the key holders to the Sierra Club's Mt. Baldy ski hut, he took several groups for weekend trips to the hut that included his famous chicken cacciatore supper.

Besides the pleasure Milt took from leading these hikes and any monetary compensation, he had an ulterior motive; he was recruiting volunteers for trail maintenance crews. Most of the people I worked with on trails in my early years had learned about it and had been seduced into joining by Milt. As important as his work was on the Board of Directors of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, many of us know him primarily through his hands-on leadership out on the trails. If there are no trails in heaven, Milt will flag their routes and recruit volunteers to build them.

Less well known to some of Milt's SMMTC colleagues was his involvement in the Ventura County Archaeological Society. It was through him that I became a member and made new friends. I first joined, at Milt's urging, to participate in the annual Native American Rock Art Caravan which travels to various sites in California and surrounding states to view and photograph petroglyphs and pictographs left behind by Native Americans, another of Milt's interests. My interest in archaeology began with that first trip, as I'm sure Milt intended.

For several years Milt and I carpoled to the monthly VCAS meetings, until he could no longer attend. Maxine prepared a much appreciated home cooked meal before we started out on our drive from Canoga Park to Newbury Park. The VCAS Board of Directors also benefited from Milt's service over the years.

It is safe to say that Milt led a full life. His sense of service was strong and long-standing. Whether as a 16-year-old scout leader in Oregon, a husband and father, an Air Force officer serving in Arizona, Japan and Labrador, a SMMTC and VCAS board member, or a hike and work crew leader, Milt answered the call. He knew how to enjoy life and to give back at the same time. Milt touched many lives as a teacher, guide, friend and inspiration. We will all miss him greatly.

Jon Van Gorder

Milt McAuley was born April 23, 1919 in Dunsmuir, CA, a town nestled at the foot of Mt. Shasta. At age 6 he moved to Oregon with his family and lived a small boy's dream of camping in the wilderness in a tent at the end of a railroad construction line. There, he gathered huckleber-

(Continued on page 2)

Memories of Milt (continued)

ries and learned the fine art of fishing. At 17 yrs., he and a friend took a 1000-mile bicycle trip to CA, stopping & sampling at every cheese factory along the way. In college he studied forestry, preparing to be a ranger.

World War II intervened and changed his plans. At 21 yrs. he got his private pilot's license and then joined the Army Air Corps. The day that he completed training he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant and married the love of his life, Maxine – all on the same day. Milt spent 21 yrs in the Air Corps & US Air Force, as a pilot and aeronautical engineer, stationed at various bases around the globe.

He moved to Canoga Park in 1962, and it was then that his passion for the outdoors led to his many roles in exploring the Santa Monicas - as a hiker, trailblazer, teacher, guide, trail maintenance leader, environmentalist, author and publisher of 7 hiking books, self-taught botanist, and author of Wildflowers of the SMMtns. Milt initiated the Adopt-a-trail plan, contributed to planning & promoting the Backbone Trail, and gave strong support for trail camps. Milt died in Canoga Park on December 10, 2009. This wonderful man will be missed by his family and friends.

Joe Romolo, Milt's son-in-law

After buying and using some of his books, I first met Milt when he was speaking at the SMMNRA Visitor Center. I had the privilege of hiking with Milt in his last years and learned many things from him about the mountains and the trails. We are richer in both knowledge and trails because of Milt.

Ed Stauss

Milt was a great leader.

Linda Palmer

Everyone loved Milt McAuley. How could you not love him? Milt touched so many lives in so many wonderful ways. It was not just his love of hiking and of nature that he shared, but his love of life, his wit, his humor, his enthusiasm, his joy. Milt had a way of lifting your spirit with a simple remark, of challenging your intellect with a question, of soothing your heart with a gentle smile. My life, as was many others, was enriched by his friendship; and as I once promised him, I won't dwell on the sadness of him not being here in my life, but on the joy of always keeping Milt's indomitable spirit in my heart.

Annie Salerno

Milt was a long time member of the Trails Council Board of Directors, for 15 years. He was a champion of the Backbone Trail, and he hoped the trail camps to be established along it would be started while he lived. He led several Backbone Treks, a 7-day hike along the 65-mile Backbone Trail, even when he was 83 yrs old. His books helped many people find trails.

At the Memorial for Milt, the family expressed their appreciation of everyone's friendship and companionship. There were over 200 people who attended the event. The bagpiper was a wonderful accent and enjoyed by all.

Remember what Milt always said after doing trail maintenance, "Look back down the road... that's where you've been. Doesn't that make you feel proud?"

Ruth Gerson



Coming Events

2009

- *SMM Trail Days – April 24-26*
- *Backbone Trek – May 2-9*
- *National Trails Day – June 6*
- *Public Lands Day – September 26*
- *SMMTC Annual Meeting – October 22*



**Help the Trails Council
Buy at REI**

Make your purchases online by starting at

www.smmtc.org

Then select the REI automatic donation link

Every \$100 worth of shopping through our website's REI link, sends \$7 to SMMTC.

Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days, April 24-26, 2009

Volunteers are invited to a day or a full weekend to help improve trails during the 28th annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days on April 24-26, 2009. The rare opportunity of camping under the sycamores and oaks at Danielson Ranch in the heart of Point Mugu State Park is free to volunteers on Friday and Saturday nights. Volunteers may also enjoy a free barbeque dinner on Saturday evening. Trail users have the opportunity to build and restore trails that they and others enjoy.

Held only once a year, Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days is organized by a committee of citizens who love trails. The event is partnered by California State Parks, Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, California Native Plant Society, Concerned Off-road Bicyclist Association, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains Natural History Association, Temescal Canyon Association and Conejo Sierra Club.

Experience in trail building is not required, and there are jobs for everyone no matter what your ability. Along with trail work, a special crew will restore native plants. Bring your own lunch, snacks and water. Tools and Saturday evening dinner will be provided.

During the 27th Annual Trail Days in April 2008, which was co-sponsored by Trails Council at Point Mugu State Park, six trail miles were repaired with 142 volunteers providing 650 labor hours.

For more information and for camping reservations, call the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, 818-222-4531. or click on http://www.smmtc.org/TrailDays_2009.pdf



Trail Maintenance Report

Volunteers from Trails Council and other organizations perform trail maintenance every Saturday and occasional Wednesdays.

For the 12-month period ending September 30, 2008, maintenance activity organized by the Trails Council improved 39 trail miles with 731 volunteers providing 4,016 hours of volunteer labor. Work was performed on Santa Cruz Island and throughout the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area on land owned or managed by National Park Service, California State

Trail Maintenance Report (Continued)

Parks, Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County and Conejo Recreation and Parks.

Four SMMTC crew leaders contributed well over 200 hours each last year: Burt Elliott, Jerry Mitcham, Dave Edwards and Norm Simmonds.
Report compiled by Linda Palmer



Volunteers Invited to Help on National Trails Day, June 6, 2009

No experience needed! Volunteers are invited to work in Circle X Ranch beginning at 8:30 am on Saturday, June 6, for the 2009 National Trails Day. Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council is partnering with the Sierra Club Task Force for this year's event.

Volunteers are asked to bring their own lunch or snack and water. Also recommended are hat, sunscreen, long pants and gloves. Trail-working tools will be provided. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. No reservation is necessary. For more information, call 805-498-2475.



Backbone Trek, May 2-9, 2009

Hike the 65-mile long Backbone Trail from La Jolla Campground in Point Mugu State Park to Will Rogers State Historic Park. This is a moderate to strenuous hike with limited participants. Camp along the way from Saturday to Saturday. Carry just your lunch in a daypack, while volunteers shuttle your gear to the campsites and prepare your dinners. Organized by Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council and Coastwalk. The fee is \$550.

Information Sources:

- www.smmtc.org and click on Backbone Trek
- Contact Jerry Mitcham at 818-406-1269
- email to backbonetrek2009@roadrunner.com
- www.coastwalk.org/Hikes/09walks/Backbone_Trek.htm or just use www.coastwalk.org, then click on Coastwalks and find Santa Monica Backbone Trek



Trails Council on the Web

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

www.smmtc.org

SMMNRA Visitor Center Partially Funded

A Federal grant of \$2.6 million has been made toward development of SMMNRA's Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch. Matching funds are expected to be received toward the total project cost estimated at \$8.4 Million.



ANNUAL MEETING

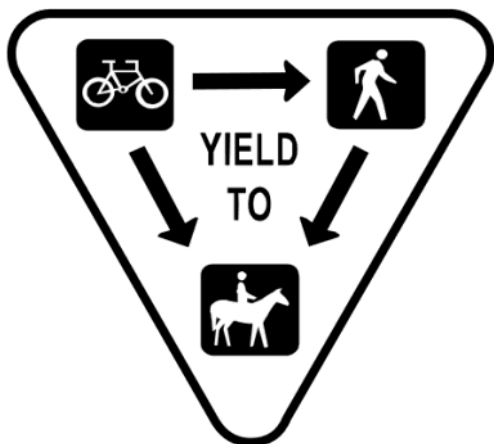
The Trails Council Annual Dinner Meeting will be held

Thursday, October 22, 2009

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. The complimentary 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, October 19, to facilitate meal planning. Call Ruth at 818-991-1236 and leave your name, phone number and how many are in your group. The Gerson's home, Wolf Creek Ranch, is at 3450 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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 or you may use your credit card with PayPal, www.paypal.com

Thank you for your continued support.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual Memberships

Annual Membership — \$35

Life Membership — \$360*

Business Memberships

Supporter — \$100

Patron — \$250

Benefactor — \$500

Donation \$ _____

* Life membership may be paid in three annual payments of \$120.

SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501 (c) (3)

Let's Fix Trail Problems

Please report issues and situations that need attention such as signage repair, vandalism, trails overgrown, eroded, or dangerous and other issues. Call 818-222-4531 or email to mail@smmtc.org.



CONTACTS

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