

# DESERT TRACKS



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SOUTHWEST CHAPTER  
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

September  
1997

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At Planning Meeting, Marie Greene shows new GPS to Kergan Bruck. Jeanne Bruck seated on far left, Tracy DeVault on far right.

Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins



## Planning Meeting

Our 1997 Planning Meeting was held July 19th in Strawberry, AZ at the mountain summer home of Rose Ann and Harlie Tompkins.

President Marie Greene presided over the meeting which went quickly as several people had already given serious thought to mapping and outings.

Rose Ann prepared a wonderful meal with smoked ham and turkey from her hometown of California, Missouri. After dinner we were treated to a slide show of mapping trips. Those who stayed overnight and slept on cots or in their RVs were privileged to have a full moon and fresh mountain air to put them to sleep.

The following morning some folks had to head home early, some stayed to study maps and photos, while others went on a short trip to the site of the Big Dry Wash battle.

Thanks to the Tompkins, plans are made for another year and a good time was had by all.

## Fall Mapping in New Mexico

We plan to finish mapping the trail between where we lost it in Jaralosa Arroyo on to Cooke's Springs. Those interested in participating in the fall mapping week on the trail should contact:

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for more information.

The tentative dates are Oct. 29 to Nov. 5. This is a week of work and involves camping, sometimes even dry camping. 4WD is often necessary. We use OCTA's "Mapping Emigrant Trails" (MET) manual along with modern and historical maps, trail diaries, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), CB radios and other aids for the work.

## Visit to the Site of Big Dry Wash

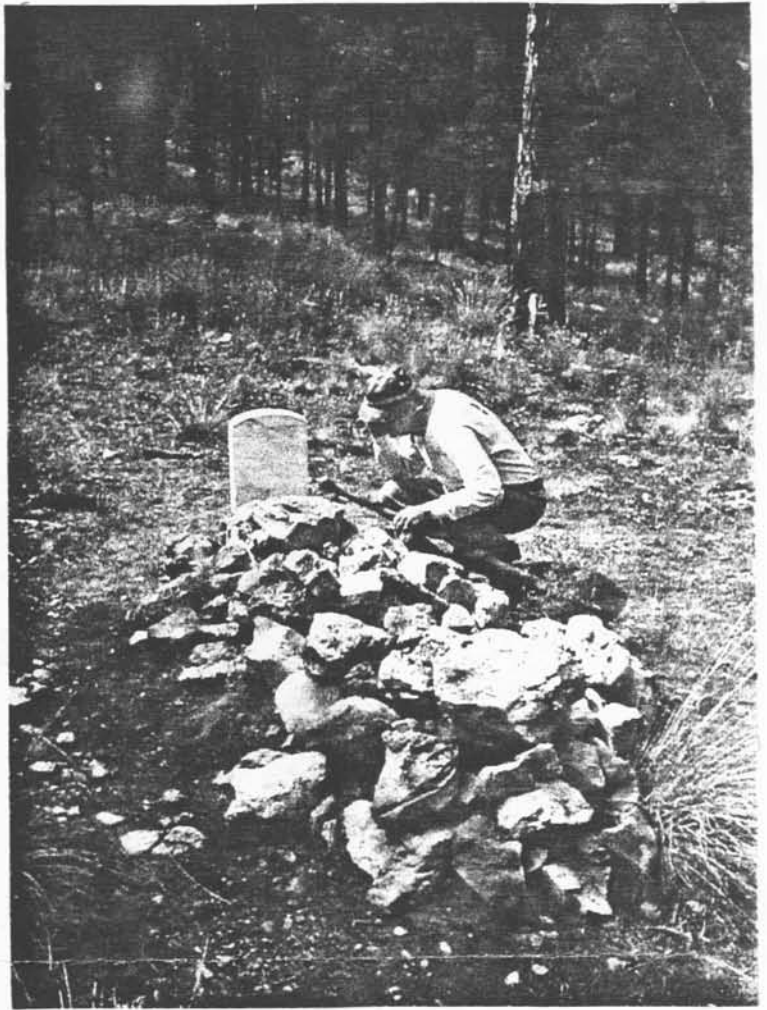
by Jack Root

On Sunday morning after the planning meeting, Tracy DeVault led a small posse consisting of Harland Tompkins, Richard Greene and me, Jack Root, to the location of this 17 July, 1882 skirmish between units of the U.S. Army and some renegade Apaches. This huge gulch over which the half day struggle occurred is now known as East Clear Creek. It is readily accessible from the General Crook Trail - if you know where to look.

Private Joseph McLernon, the only soldier killed in this skirmish is buried there with a regular soldier's marker. A monument to this battle is inscribed with the names of those who participated, with one notable exception, Indian scout, Al Sieber, whom contemporary accounts place at the scene.

We took a good trail down to the creek level. There was a little family fishing there, probably unaware of the bloody conflict that took place at their feet 115 years ago, almost to the day.

Thank you Tracy, for showing us another part of Arizona history.



Above: Jack Root reads the inscription of the gravestone of Pvt. Joseph McLernon, only soldier killed at Big Dry Wash



Left: Richard Greene reads the monument to the Big Dry Wash skirmish.

Photos by Harland Tompkins

## 1997 Convention

by Rose Ann Tompkins

If the Fort Hall history from the fur trappers through the emigrants to the modern day Shoshone-Bannock reservation touches any of your interests, then the August, 1997 OCTA convention in Pocatello, Idaho was the place to be. After a rainy start to the week, the weather was beautiful for the actual convention days. Over 600 people registered and attended a multitude of events from the day of talks to three days of tours to the extensive bookroom to the pre- and post-convention tours.

With so many highlights, it is hard to pick some to mention. I attended the two day pre-convention archaeology workshop, visiting sites both east and west of Pocatello and enjoyed a flat tire (as a driver), being stuck in one of many mudholes (as a passenger) and end of day rainstorms (both days). The half-day tour that included a visit to the original Ft. Hall site was undoubtedly a highlight for all who went. Getting permission for OCTA participants was no easy task for convention chairman Mike Batemen, and it was very special to see the area and the trails around it. The buffalo burger lunch provided by the Shoshone-Bannock tribe at the tribal museum, complete with dancers and singers, was a real treat.

With a day of papers and two full days of other tours, it was hard to find time to visit the bookroom. One evening was given over to authors' night, and it was amazing to see how many authors we have in our midst. Business was brisk as participants bought books and then hurried to have them autographed. Chapter member Susan Badger Doyle sat with coeditor Fred Dykes, to sign the brand new book in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series, "*The 1854 Oregon Trail Diary of Winfield Scott Ebey*". All the paperbacks and most of the hard cover copies taken to the convention were sold, getting things off to a good start. OCTA Headquarters still has plenty for the rest of you to buy and details on that will be in the next *News from the Plains*.

The barbecue dinner at the Ft. Hall replica and the annual awards banquet on the last night were well attended and enjoyed. As usual it was hard to part from friends, many of whom we see only once a year. But we can look forward to next year's convention in Pendleton, Oregon. And the chapter has a plus this year: Roger Blair is the new OCTA president, and a member of SWOCTA.

Authors' night at the Convention  
SWOCTA's Susan Badger Doyle  
and Fred Dykes were present to  
sign the new ETHSS book: *The  
1854 Oregon Trail Diary of Win-  
field Scott Ebey*.

Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins





## **April Mapping**

*by Rose Ann Tompkins*

The Apache Pass Trail is an alternate route to the Southern Trail across the southwest to California. It left the main Southern Trail at Soldier's Farewell, northeast of Lordsburg, NM and rejoined it at Tucson, AZ. Our spring mapping week was to do the portion of the Apache Pass route through the pass itself.

Seven chapter members and one guest traveled to southeast Arizona met on Sunday, April 20. at the parking lot of the Fort. Bowie National Historic Site. Apache Pass is located on this historic site.

Superintendent, Larry Ludwig, soon appeared coming down the trail from the fort, and after introductions, he gave us a great tour on the mile and a half trail to the visitor center. Besides a general history of the area, he got us oriented in terms of the trails through the area. We ate our lunch in the administration area, a separate area from the visitor center and the group split up for the afternoon. Some toured the fort remains and some made the trek back to the parking lot via the upper trail. From that vantage point we could overlook the Siphon Canyon where we would begin mapping the trail the next day.

The area has no campground, but we were allowed to use a small parking lot in the administrative area as our staging area for the days we spent mapping. This made life a lot easier as there was water available, and a bathroom with a shower. Such luxury was certainly appreciated. The mappers, Marie and Richard Greene of Angel Fire, NM; Dave Hollecker of Reno, NV; Tracy DeVault of Prescott, AZ; and myself settled in. Chapter member and mentor, Don Buck, was not able to join us, so we were on our own for the first time.

Larry Ludwig was extremely helpful through the week, showing us several locations with trail remnants and allowing us to look through his files and maps for additional documentation of the area. Monday morning we mapped Siphon Canyon from the site boundary up to the hiking trail. The trail through this canyon has been marked with posts, and that was helpful. However, in places we found parallel trails and rust marks, and Larry pointed out other features we might have missed such as a possible grave. Greenes and I saw a gila monster right in the middle of the trail at one point.

In the afternoon, we attempted to map across an open, flat area where a stage station, cemetery, etc., is located. This was a heavily used area over the years. It probably was a camping area for emigrants, and later saw a variety of uses by the military and stage lines. We decided this maze of trails could not be definitively mapped. Going west out of this flat area, a definite trail is again evident as it goes on up to Apache Pass. We had intended to map down from the pass in both directions, but did not get that done.

On Tuesday, Larry took us out onto the flats to the east of the site to show us trail traces. This was somewhat of a surprise as one can see Stein's Peak (a trail landmark on the present New Mexico/Arizona border) on the horizon easily and we had assumed the trail came straight across the valley towards Apache Pass. In talking to Larry and relooking at the documentation we have, it would appear that the early emigrants did not come by Stein's Peak and through Doubtful Canyon, but came further south, even further south than the present I-10 freeway. More research is needed here. By Butterfield stage days in the late 1850s, the trail was pretty well defined as using Doubtful Canyon.

Tuesday afternoon, I gave the group the time off. The warm days were taking their toll. While we perhaps did not get as much done, I think everyone held up better. Greenes went to town for ice and supplies. I went through Larry's files of travel accounts. I did find an 1869 diary that we had not been aware of previously. While the family had asked that the diary not be copied for others, there was a name and address and I have written asking if they will share another copy with us.

Wednesday we spent working east from the mouth of Siphon Canyon (the point where we had started up the canyon on Monday) towards the area that Larry had shown us on Tuesday morning. It was a long day of tramping around, looking and losing the trail. By the time we quit, we were all hot and tired and the wind had become increasingly worse. Trying to keep our hats on, our maps under control, and sometimes just stand up, was very tiring.

That evening we continued to fight the wind, trying to eat dinner, etc. All night the wind howled, buffeting the cars. One cooler blew over, its contents scattered over a hillside.

Thursday morning, the forecast was for the wind to get worse (!!) and continue through Friday, with possible rain. There was no way we could have

worked that day and we made the decision to leave. The group seemed to be in sort of "we are camping and doing some fun stuff at the same time" mode. I want that feeling to continue.

One of the best parts of this mapping week was to have established a good working relationship with Larry Ludwig. I think he sees us as a serious group, and we can go back to continue anytime. We gave him one of our chapter tee shirts, and it was approved to send Fort Bowie a donation from the chapter.

We plan to return to this area in the fall for our next mapping week. Hopefully, we will actually map to Apache Pass and get across the Wilcox Playa to the Dragoon Springs area. And perhaps we can solve the mystery of where the early trail came into the area from the east.

## **High Winds and Tragedy Strike SWOCTA Mappers**

*by David Hollecker*

The arrival of my *Desert Tracks* newsletter telling of the Apache Pass mapping week had me excited. Another trip to Arizona was just what I needed after a long winter. I loaded up my van and left on the 17th for a leisurely trip south. I made stops at Needles, CA where I spent my first night, and continued on to Lake Havasu City, AZ the next morning where I traveled through some unique country of jagged rocks and peaks as well as a docile Colorado River. I went to see London Bridge and wander through the various "British" shops. By late morning, I left for Casa Grande, AZ to spend the night.

As I was preparing to turn into my Casa Grande motel, my van was hit by a pickup truck on the passenger door - nothing serious, but I couldn't open the door. Did the whole thing with the cops and such and then settled down for the evening. Next morning I continued on to Tucson where I enjoyed the day at "Old Tucson", the movie studios. Sunday morning, I rendezvoused with SWOCTA members in the Fort Bowie parking lot for the hike into the fort. Ranger Larry Ludwig led members Jack Root, Rose Ann Tompkins, Tracy DeVault, Richard and Marie Greene and their friend David to the fort; stopping along the way to explain the many interesting aspects of the area.

Well into the hike, we were discovering that it was all uphill for a mile and a half to Fort Bowie, but we all made it in some 90 minutes. Hiking back to the cars was a bit much to ask of this group, so Ranger Larry gave us a ride back to the cars via the back road and we drove back to the Ranger's housing complex and to a big paved parking lot that was adjacent to a restroom with a shower. Rose Ann begged Ranger Larry to let us camp on this parking lot instead of the dirt of Siphon Canyon which had been approved for us. Ranger Larry could hardly say no to someone who was down on one knee in a prayerful pose.

All day Monday and Tuesday morning were spent mapping. Tuesday afternoon we decided a break was in order and an ice run was needed. The Greenes volunteered to go into Wilcox and get supplies. They had an ulterior motive in going - it's called "eating real food in town". They returned late in the afternoon boasting of their adventures while the rest of us had to listen until the divvied out the ice.

Wednesday morning started off as usual with everyone making breakfast. Richard decided cole slaw was appropriate for the morning meal. He managed to drop a small shaving of carrot which was soon claimed by a wandering ant. For the next half hour, we all were fascinated by the determination and strength of this ant. He had dragged this piece of carrot some fifteen feet when another ant joined him in carrying this "treasure" back to their home. For unknown reasons and despite pleadings from the group to leave them alone, Richard decided to "help" these hapless ants. He picked them up off the pavement and moved them further out into the parking lot. A nearby nesting bird had taken notice and decided to investigate. Upon seeing a small piece of carrot and two large ants, the bird quickly swooped down and ate them. Needless to say, we were all horrified at the turn of events and Richard was soundly admonished by the group for creating this tragedy. The rest of the day was a somber one.

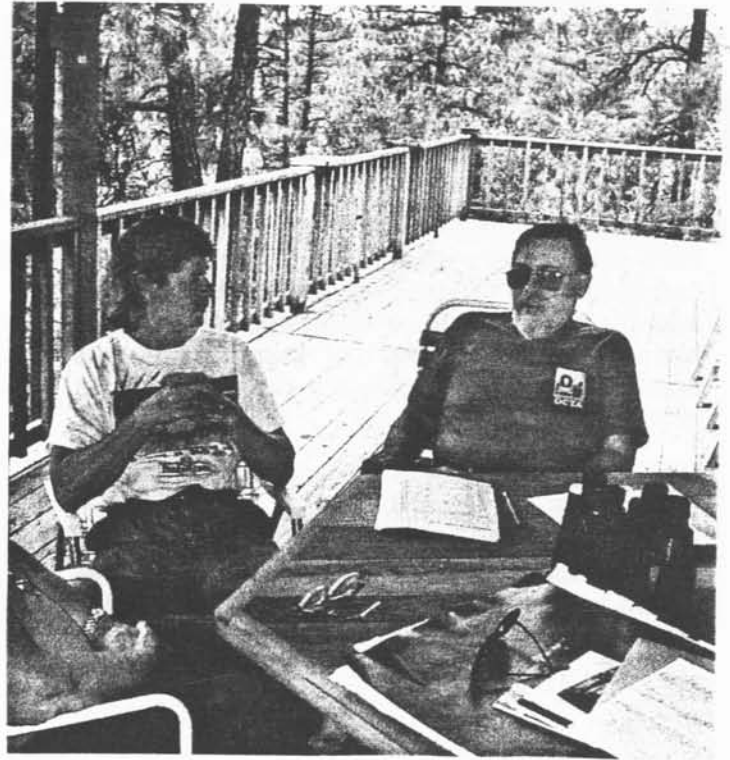
That evening as we were having our dinner the wind, which had been blowing all week, picked up in velocity and started blowing camping gear all around. Many turned in early and sleep became difficult with our vehicles rock'n and roll'n all night long. By morning, we all had enough of the high winds and it was decided to end our mapping and head for home. Other than getting lost in Phoenix for an hour and bucking strong headwinds, I got back to Reno without any problems by Friday morning.

## More Ant Watching

by Rose Ann Tompkins

The same day as the breakfast ant incident, we were having lunch on a barren hillside. We had fished out our lawnchairs and were sitting in a circle. In the middle we noticed two ant hills. One had large ants, one had very tiny ants. They seemed to coexist with no problem. A crumb got dropped from someone's sandwich and the large ants quickly pulled it into their hill. This led to other bits and morsels being dropped and our entertainment was watching these ants laboriously struggle to take larger and larger pieces into their colony. Pushing and pulling the pieces over small rocks which were in their way, they would quickly make pieces disappear. We decided the small ants were being left out so we dropped a few very small pieces close to the opening of their hill. But the large ants quickly found these pieces and spirited them off to their colony. We sat there completely engrossed in the whole drama.

Trail mapping: it has something for everyone - even the ants.



*Richard Greene and Harlie Tompkins relaxing before Planning Meeting.*

*Just married June 28th, Susan Badger Doyle and Roger Blair. Roger is OCTA's new president and Susan is the General Editor of ETHSS*

*Photos by Rose Ann Tompkins*



## Hitched

We are happy to tell you of the marriage between two SWOCTA members. On June 28 our Susan Badger Doyle married our Roger Blair. Susan was a charter member of SWOCTA and its first secretary. Roger is our new national OCTA president. They will live in Pendleton, Oregon where Roger is a radiologist. Among other pursuits, Susan will continue as OCTA's General Editor for the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series. We offer congratulations and we wish them well.



## Minutes of 1997 SWOCTA Planning Meeting

The 1997 SWOCTA planning meeting was held July 19th, 1997 at the Tompkins' home in Strawberry, AZ. Eleven chapter members attended: Harland & Rose Ann Tompkins, Richard & Marie Greene, Bob & Sheri Lee, Jeanne & Kergan Bruck, Jack & Ruth Root and Tracy DeVault.

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 PM. The secretary's report was approved as read. The treasurer's report was distributed to the members. This report had been audited by Ruth Root and Richard Greene and it was motioned and seconded to accept, motion carried.

Membership Report: Richard Greene questioned whether we should continue to send letters of invitation to OCTA members who are eligible to be SWOCTA members. It was voted to continue sending the letters. The roster handed out by Rose Ann shows we have 41 members to date.

The National Board has asked us to have a Public Relations Officer and a Preservation Officer, and would like us to nominate someone from our chapter for the National Board. This will be mentioned in the next newsletter.

Jack will have our Chapter History ready by the end of the year. A nominating committee was appointed: Jack Root, Marie Greene, Harland Tompkins and Sheri Lee.

Mapping Committee: Maps were passed around of what has been accomplished this past year. It's a continuing process. We plan to continue the mapping this year on a week in late October and again in April next year. Members are encouraged to go out and map on their own too.

Marking: Richard Greene reported on sites suggested by Reba Grandrud. She suggested Sears Pointe and Oatman Massacre sites. The February outing explored the sites and chose the Oatman Massacre site. The BLM office in Phoenix is more interested in Painted Rocks. There will be more information in the next newsletter. Richard Greene will plan an outing to plan the marker.

Outings: Marking outing - survey at Painted Rocks or Oatman Massacre or Sears Pointe. This will be scheduled sometime in February. The Old Spanish Trail Association may have a joint meeting with other trail Associations in the fall.

There was discussion on a weekend outing to show what has been mapped at Fort Bowie area. Tracy DeVault will plan an outing in late January or early February. Perhaps the Pleasant Valley War site.

The OCTA National Board has expressed interest in having its mid-year Board meeting in Phoenix next March. We discussed having a 4 wheel drive experience through the Butterfield Pass for them. Kergan Bruck moved and Richard Greene seconded a motion to have President Marie Greene call OCTA incoming President Roger Blair and invite them to Phoenix. The motion passed. Harland and Tracy moved to spend \$250 from the treasury for that meeting.

Tracy graciously invited us to come to Prescott in July 1998 for the planning meeting. He will research places to stay and we'll meet in his home.

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in September after the Convention. Harland moved and Tracy seconded that the treasury partly cover the expenses for the planning meeting.

Ruth Root, Secretary

All attendees are appreciative of the gracious hospitality extended by Harland and Rose Ann in hosting this productive planning weekend.

## Annual Treasurer's Report

The treasury of the Southwest Chapter was audited on 7/19/97 by SWOCTA members Ruth Root and Richard Greene, during the annual planning meeting. The books were found to be in order. The cash on hand at that time was \$759.87. The previous audit had been conducted on 6/8/96 with the cash on hand being \$742.92. During this time interval the treasury received \$585.16 and disbursed \$569.21.

Harland Tompkins, Treasurer

### **Minutes of the SWOCTA Meeting in Pocatello, Idaho 14 August, 1997**

Rose Ann called the meeting to order at 4:20 PM. Attending were Bob & Betty Lee, Rose Ann Tompkins, Bea Kabler, and Ruth Root. Jack Root arrived late, having been on a field trip.

The secretary read the minutes of the planning meeting. Rose Ann reported that we now have 43 paid memberships.

Rose Ann also reported that Reba Grandrud researched and reported we can host the Mid-year OCTA National Board meeting in late March at the Arizona Historical Society building in Phoenix. We discussed details of having a Friday night dessert/social hour at the Tompkins' home. We discussed offering 4 wheel drive trip over Butterfield Pass to our guests.

Reba Grandrud also may be able to get the mapping group into Guadalupe Canyon for mapping. Rose Ann read from a Southern Trail diary by John Forsythe in 1849 in Guadalupe Canyon.

Bob Lee moved to adjourn, seconded by Ruth Root, at 5:05 PM.

The next mapping trip will not be at Fort Bowie, but back to Cooke's Springs in New Mexico.

Ruth Root, Secretary



*SWOCTA Chapter Meeting in Pocatello, Idaho  
Bob Lee, Rose Ann Tompkins, Bea Kabler and Ruth Root*

*Photo by Betty Lee*



# SOUTHWEST CHAPTER - OCTA MEMBERSHIP ROSTER - 1997

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## SWOCTA Schedule

### Outings

Late Jan - early Feb: Pleasant Valley Wars Site

Feb, 1998 Painted Rocks or Oatman Massacre to finalize details for an OCTA marker.

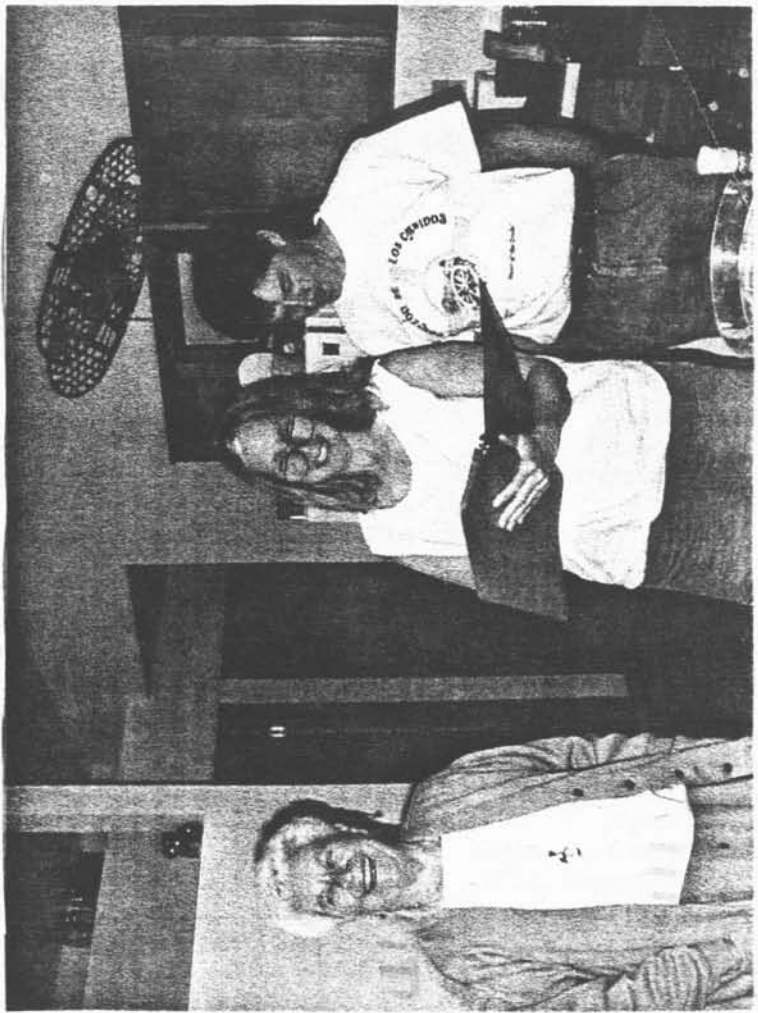
Mar 28, 1998 Host Mid-year Board Meeting in Phoenix

### Mapping

Oct 29 - Nov. 5, 1997 Cooke's Springs, New Mexico

April 1998 Ft. Bowie to Wilcox Playa, Arizona

*Ruth Root, Marie and Richard Greene share a laugh at the Planning Meeting  
Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins*



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