

1975-1976 High Sierra Wilderness

Biographical Update

By the end of summer 1975 a year had passed since I left the Central Coast for the Central Valley and Fresno's summer heat and winter fog. I had completed my first year with the Diagnostic School for Neurologically Handicapped Children, and my first year of classes in the teacher education program at Fresno State University. That year I was living comfortably in a suburban Fresno home (on Buckingham Way), sharing it with two other guys who also worked at the Diagnostic School.

The purposes of the Diagnostic School were threefold. First, we provided expert diagnostic information to help school districts better educate their students with the most serious learning handicaps. Second, for the most difficult cases, we offered a residential placement of up to one year. Our school had room for 32 residents, and they were taught in four classrooms. I was a classroom teacher of the oldest group, ages 11 to 15. Thirdly, our classroom and diagnostic teams were gaining a reputation as experimenting with the most research-based, "cutting edge" practices in special education.

That year I enjoyed a few other great adventures as well. During the spring break of 1975 a friend and I drove down into Mexico. We drove through Arizona and entered Mexico at Nogales, just south of Tucson. From there we traveled down to Hermosillo and Guymas, camping at night beside my 1972 International Harvester Scout. We took the ferry across the Sea of Cortez, landing near Mulege. From there we drove up Baja on Highway 1, and then home.

In the early summer of 1975, I flew nonstop from Los Angeles to Heathrow in London, England. I was enrolled in a two-week class on Special Education at the City University of London. The first week consisted of classroom meetings. The second week was an international conference on Special Education at University of Kent, Canterbury, England. When the conference was over, I rented a car and drove all around southern England, into Wales and up into Scotland. I met some most wonderful people along the way and took dozens upon dozens of photos of castles and monuments. My time in England included a one week stay at a palatial estate, learning the philosophy of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff¹ and practicing ancient Persian dancing, sponsored by the Sherbourne Institute.

When I returned to Fresno I only wanted to immediately go back to England, because I had such a great time there. I immediately began planning a backpacking trip to enjoy before the summer ended, and I would have to return to a grueling schedule of teaching a special education class and taking classes at Fresno State.

¹ Gurdjieff was an influential early 20th-century Russian mystic, philosopher, spiritual teacher, and composer. He teaches the one great art is that of making a complete human being of oneself.

Labor Day 1975 – Dinkey Lakes Wilderness

My memory of this adventure is vague, and I have no notes or journal entries that might help explain what I did. The only real reference is to a label on my slide collection: I hiked to Mystery Lake and Island Lake in the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness. After writing this section, I did remember that this was a solo hike, and I went up and back the same day.

Getting There

The Dinkey Lakes Wilderness lies in the heart of the Sierra National Forest, due east of Shaver Lake and Huntington Lake. For the future adventurer who may want to explore this absolutely gorgeous region, I offer two possible scenarios.

The “gateway” to this region is Shaver Lake. From Fresno it is only a one-hour drive up Highway 168 to Shaver Lake. This is one of the reasons that Fresno is a great place to live: proximity to some incredible scenery and magnificent places to enjoy the outdoors.

The first possible route to Dinkey Lakes Wilderness follows the Dinkey Creek Road from Shaver Lake, up to the Cliff Lake Trailhead on Courtright Reservoir. This is a 36-mile drive on a windy mountain road, which could take an hour at least. This route results in an 11-mile hike from the trailhead (at 8,400 feet) up to Mystery Lake (at 9,200 feet) and Island Lake (at 9,800 feet).

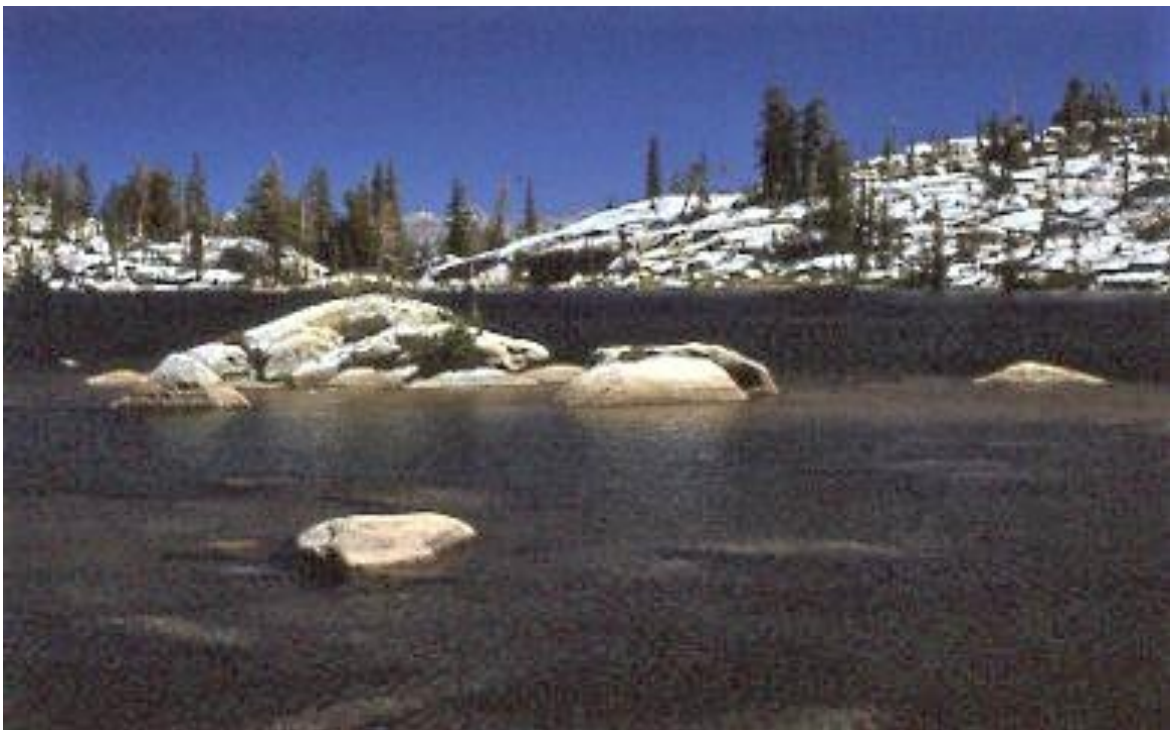
The second possible route takes the adventurer by auto to within a couple of miles of these lakes. It also follows the Dinkey Creek Road from Shaver Lake, but then turns off the main road right after Bald Mtn Summit (6,500 feet) and just before the town of Dinkey Creek. This mountain road to Dinkey Lakes Wilderness travels through forests and makes a lot of tight turns, winding its way up a couple thousand feet to the Dinkey Lakes Trailhead at 8,620 feet.

The Hike

My best guess is that I did this trip solo, and most likely I made the drive all the way up to the Dinkey Lakes Trailhead instead of hiking up the hill from Courtright Reservoir. Here's the reason: I do have a recollection of doing this kind of thing one day while living in Fresno. It was an outing by myself, and into the high country. While I was driving, on my way home, and listening to a Carole King audio tape, I was feeling elated about how close I was now living to these amazing mountains and this incredible scenic beauty. I realized that it would be possible to easily make future trips up into the mountains.



Mystery Lake



Island Lake

Dinkey Lakes Wilderness Views from about 10,000 Feet Elevation



June 1976 – John Muir Wilderness

Biographical Update

In the early spring of 1976, I bought my first house. I took advantage of the fact that my employer, the California Department of Education, gave employees the option of two different retirement plans: PERS or STRS. I had first enrolled in PERS. But after 18 months of employment, I was able to switch to STRS if I chose to. I made the switch and, in the process, I cashed out my retirement in PERS to use as a down payment on my house.

That school year I began dating a talented young woman named Erin, and it wasn't long before she moved in with me, into my new house in Clovis (just east of Fresno). Erin and I had planned to go backpacking in the Sierras, so she purchased two kits for making down-filled sleeping bags. She made both of ours.

Getting There

From Clovis, we drove an hour and a half up Highway 168 to Huntington Lake. We continued past Huntington Lake for about 25 miles on a very rough and windy mountain road, which took us about another hour and a half. We found the Mono Creek trailhead at the west end of Lake Edison, very close to the Vermillion Campground. This is where we began our adventure into the wilderness.

Overview of the Hike

My description of this hike is based upon studying a current topographical map and by referring to my photos from this hike (which fortunately were stored in a slide tray in the same order as they were taken). Unfortunately, I do not have notes that tell exactly where we hiked nor how many days we were out on the trail. But my photos and references to the map helped me to activate my memory of where we hiked.

What is certain is that we hiked in a large loop, starting at the Mono Creek trailhead, hiking along the north shore of Lake Edison to the east, then onto the John Muir/Pacific Crest Trail. Then we climbed north up to Silver Pass and Goodale Pass, at the eastern end of the Silver Divide, a region with 11,000-foot peaks and magnificent views. Finally, we headed back down to the west end of Lake Edison, and to the trailhead. I calculate that to be a total of about 27 miles.

Note about Photographs

Several photos of the first half of our hike begin on the next page. The next chapter of this book is dedicated to some spectacular photos from the top of Silver Pass.

The Hike

We began our hike at the ***Mono Creek Trailhead***, elevation 7,600 feet. We followed a well-used trail beside ***Lake Edison***, a gradual incline, 5 miles to the eastern end of the lake.

Just beyond Lake Edison was ***Quail Meadows*** at 8,000 feet, at the base of the ***Vermillion Cliffs***. About three miles from Lake Edison, we joined the ***John Muir Trail/Pacific Crest Trail***, and began our climb up to ***Silver Pass***.

In two miles the trail went through ***Pocket Meadow***, then in two more miles we passed by ***Silver Pass Lake***. In another mile or so we reached ***Silver Pass***, at 10,895 feet. From Lake Edison we made an elevation gain of about 3,000 feet in seven miles.

We were now on the eastern end of ***The Silver Divide***, a region has several small, very beautiful lakes. From this height we saw some terrific, long-distance views in all directions.

Just 3 miles from ***Silver Pass*** was ***Goodale Pass***, at 11,000 feet. We were delighted to find snow covering some of the peaks still, and there was an occasional snow drift on the trail.

From there we looked up at the peaks of the ***Silver Divide*** to the west; rocky and barren, it was an imposing sight. We gazed in awe at ***Silver Peak*** at 11,900 feet, and ***Graveyard Peak*** at 11,500 feet. Directly to our south were the ***Vermillion Cliffs***, just this side of Lake Edison.

From ***Goodale Pass*** we dropped down 1,000 feet in only 3 miles to ***Upper Graveyard Meadow*** (10,000 feet). From there we hiked 5 ½ miles mostly downhill following ***Cold Creek*** to ***Graveyard Meadows*** (9,000 feet). Then it was only 3 ½ miles back to the trailhead.









