

Summer, 1974 – A Summer of Amazing Views

Biographical Update

The school year was rapidly coming to a close, and mentally I was preparing for yet another move. This time I would relocate to a place that I never thought that I would even get close to, let alone even drive through: Fresno, CA.

Earlier that spring I successfully interviewed for a teaching position in a new special school that would serve students with severe learning disabilities referred from school districts throughout the Central Valley of California. This was definitely an excellent career move for me. I would be part of a team of professionals creating this new special school “from the ground up.” Also, I was keenly interested in the challenge of learning new and better ways to help children learn. A condition for being hired was that I simultaneously enroll at Fresno State University and obtain a Special Education Teaching Credential and a Master of Arts in Special Education.

But before leaving my friends in Santa Maria and Arroyo Grande, I went on a three more backpacking trips that summer.

June – Los Padres National Forest – Santa Cruz National Recreation Trail

My hiking partner was a friend who worked at the elementary school where I taught a special education class. We wanted to view and take pictures of the wildflowers in the canyons of the Los Padres National Forest east of Highway 101 between Santa Maria and Santa Barbara.

Getting There

We drove south on Highway 101 from where I was living in Santa Maria, and turned off the freeway near Buellton to head east on Highway 154 to ***Cachuma Lake***. At the eastern end of the lake, we turned off the highway and headed toward the Los Prietos Boys Camp. We followed that road past the camp to the ***Lower Osos Gate*** (locked gate). From there we began our backpacking adventure.

The Hike

What is interesting to me now, looking back, is that this portion of the Los Padres National Forest was only about ten miles due west of that solo hike I made around San Rafael Peak, earlier that same year. The terrain in this region (Southern Los Padres) is marvelous, and I highly recommend it for future wilderness enthusiasts. The story presented here is reconstructed from my vague memories and with reference to an online map service (www.hikelospadres.com). The story is more of a guide for future hikers than it is an exact retelling of our adventures that weekend.

From the **Lower Osos Gate** we headed north on the **Santa Cruz National Recreation Trail**. Starting out at about 2,000 feet elevation, we hiked mostly along the Santa Cruz Creek with scenery consisting of pines, serpentine rocks and grasslands. The trail often wound through narrow sandstone canyons past small pools. After a hike of about seven miles, we reached **Happy Hollow Camp**, at 4,000 feet elevation, where we stayed our first night.

The next day we continued up the **Santa Cruz National Recreation Trail**. After a few miles we began to traverse a long ridge, with the Santa Cruz Creek and watershed below us to our left. At one point the trail passed along a steep sidehill called the "40 Mile Wall." This section of the trail was only two miles long, but it felt much longer as it wound in and out of side canyons.

Soon we dropped down into the confluence of two tributaries of **Santa Cruz Creek**, and came to **Santa Cruz Camp**. From there we continued our gradual uphill climb for a few more miles, past **Flores Camp**, to the confluence of the **West Fork Santa Cruz Creek** and **Coche Creek**. Here we began to follow Coche Creek to the northeast. It wasn't long before the trail began to climb steeply up into the San Rafael Mountains, so we decided to stop for our second night at **Coche Creek Camp**, at 3,350 feet elevation. By that time, we had hiked that day a total of about ten miles.

The view from this spot is what I remember most about this trip: **Hurricane Deck**, at 4,000 feet, was slightly above us and to the northwest. The sun setting over the ridge was absolutely majestic; it was breathtaking. We wished that we had the extra time and supplies to make that additional trek up to Hurricane Deck.

We would have to leave that hike for another time. On our last day we had a very long hike out, but it was mostly downhill.

July – Sequoia National Park – Twin Lakes

Several teachers in the school district where I worked had planned a fishing/backpacking trip to take place when school let out in June. They reached out to me, and I was happy to join them.

My story of this trip also is reconstructed from vague memories. I did not take notes on this trip either. Since I was not much of a fisherman back then, what I mostly did on the trip was take pictures. I am proud to present this collection of photos of some very exquisite scenery of the ***Sequoia National Park***.

Getting There

The Twin Lakes Trail is situated in some very beautiful country, between Kings Canyon National Park to the north and Mineral King to the south; and Mt. Whitney is due east. To get there we drove 200 miles from Santa Maria over to the Central Valley to Three Rivers, east of Visalia. From Three Rivers it was just a little over an hour on a very windy mountain road, up to the trailhead of the ***Twin Lakes Trail***, near the ***Lodgepole Visitor Center*** at 6,700 feet elevation.

The Hike

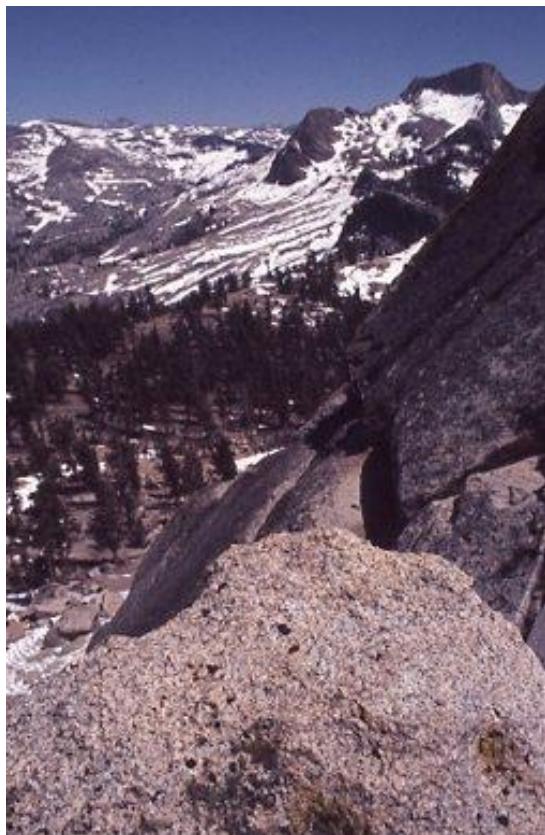
From the ***Lodgepole Campground*** we followed the trail west for a mile, then turned north. We stayed above Silliman Creek for another mile, then at about 7,500 feet elevation the main trail turned to the left (west). It was a steady climb for another three miles, up to 8,500 feet elevation at Clover Creek. We then followed Clover Creek another 2 and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles up to ***Twin Lakes*** at 9,400 feet.



This is where we camped and fished mostly.

I honestly do not recall if we stayed there at Twin Lakes for one night or two, but it was a short hike overall. We went back down the way we came, and then headed home.





For fun, another hiker and I climbed to the top of Twin Peaks. That was a short but very steep trail. In one-half mile we climbed 800 feet, to 10,200 feet elevation.



Views from Twin Peak at 10,200 feet elevation



August - Rocky Mountains / Breckenridge, Colorado - Quandry Peak

This hike was a one-night adventure. It was an excursion added onto my visit with my son Christian and his mom (Sue), who were living in Breckenridge, Colorado. I had planned to visit Chris that summer anyway, and I invited Paula Von Loewenfeldt, a friend from Morro Bay, to join me.

My visits with Chris, who was only four and one-half years old, did not take up our entire time in Breckenridge. Paula and I were eager to go on an adventure of our own, like climbing a mountain peak. We learned that there was a peak just south of Breckenridge with a short (but steep) hike up to the top, and that it had amazing views.

Between Sue and her partner (Dan McCoy) we scrounged up enough hiking and camping gear to make the trip worthwhile. For the hike we carried with us some long lengths of rope, and enough food and supplies to stay overnight one night.

Getting There

From Breckenridge, Colorado we drove about ten miles south on Highway 9 to the trailhead for **Quandry Peak**. The peak is to the west of the highway.

The Hike

The trail at first followed a dirt road, then followed a creek with water gushing down the side of this steep hill. We had to cross the creek several times as we climbed up the steep mountainside, following an old trail, and what looked like remnants of a mining operation. Finally, we entered a large bowl-shaped valley, with tall, barren peaks on three sides.



We walked through this valley to the base of what seemed to be the tallest peak on its rim. We decided to climb to the top if it was possible. As we got closer to the side of this mountain peak, the boulders became larger. There was no trail to follow, so we just scrambled up the rocks. It was a long hike and we were exhausted when we got to the top. But we made it and the views were stupendous!



Views looking West. Paula is in the photo at bottom.





This is me at the top of Quandry Peak, at 14,241 feet elevation.

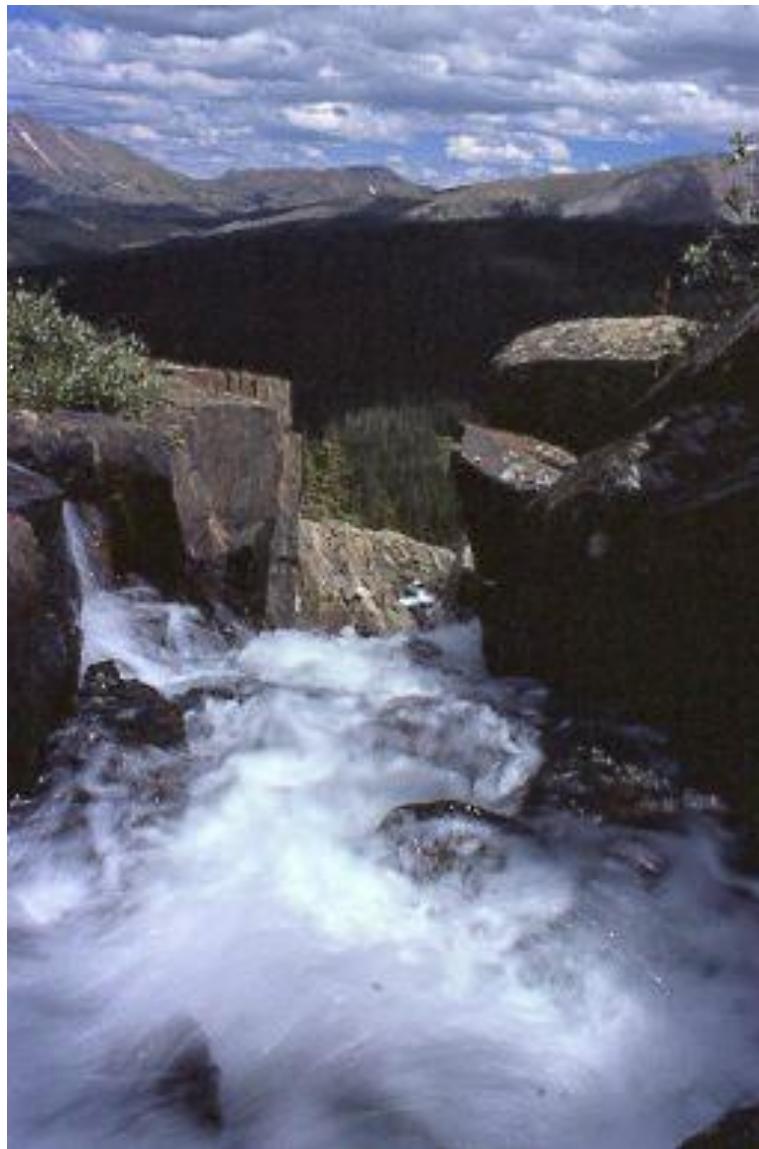
As we were enjoying the sights from the top of the peak, we noticed that a storm was coming from the west. Huge, gray clouds were amassing on the other side of the peaks to the west, and it looked like a fierce wind was pushing this cloud layer into and over the crest of the peaks. We realized they would soon descend upon the little valley where we planned to camp for the night.

We made our way back down hill, and searched the hillside at the base of Quandry Peak, looking for some type of shelter for the night. Eventually we found a shallow cave on the side of the mountain, surrounded by huge rocks and boulders. Just then we felt a few raindrops starting to land on us. The air was cold, and the wind made it colder. We realized we would have to work quickly to get ourselves settled in our little niche.

I cut several branches off of some young fir trees near the base of the mountain, to serve as "bedding." We then spread out our blankets and jackets on the tree branches, to make our

bed for the night. As we ate whatever it was we brought for a dinner, we watched the rain fall in torrents outside the opening of our shelter.

The next day, the weather cooperated. It had stopped raining, and the sun was shining brightly, although the air was still pretty cold. After eating a light meal, drying out our clothing and gear, and cleaning up a bit, we headed back down the mountain.



View from top of the trail, above the creek, as we started our descent.