

*Looking out of an adit in the Harcuvar Mountains, Arizona (photo by Bill Gardner).*

Early February has been a time for an increasing number of mine explorers to gather in the Harcuvar Mountains. Having explored the Critic and Little Giant mines, we have recovered many artifacts including flat cars, boxes, tins, and a canteen. Old timers included Dave Thorpe (Arizona), Bob Schroth (California), Dave & Linda Derrick (Wisconsin), Steve Smith & family (U.P. Michigan), Jack Purson (New Mexico), and Don Fritzges (California). New to the group was a retired California firefighter named John and his girlfriend Sandy, and their friend Billy Smith, a Texas story-teller residing in Las Vegas. Additionally, we met up with another group known as the ATV Explorers, headed by Brad Morris of 29 Palms, California. And finally, there was Siegbert "Ziggy" Secha, of Germany out for a wild west experience.

This was to be our last trip, our plan being to circumnavigate the entire western range, checking map-named mines along our course. To make such travel possible over unimproved roads and trail required experienced dirt-bike and ATV riders...and we had a bunch!

**(Photos by Don Fritzges, Brad Morris, and Bill Gardner)**





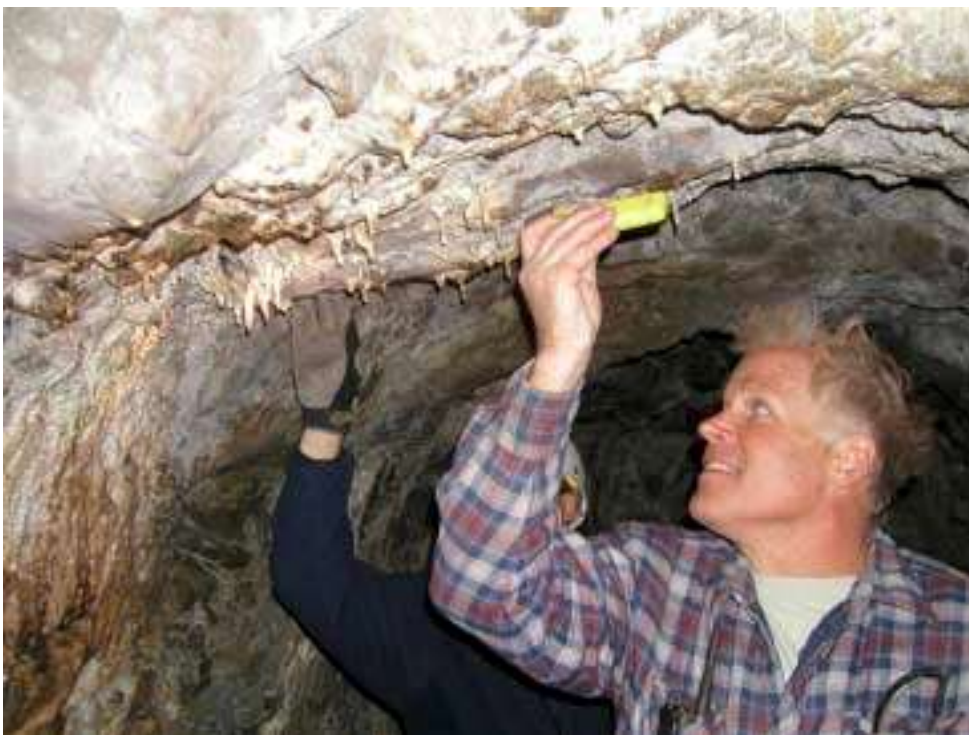
### **Cottonwood Pass: the Great Divide**

Our greatest challenge was to locate and cross Cottonwood Pass. Weather at the pass was on the windy and chilly side. Still the great views and the time of day mandated a lunch break. Nothing like sub sandwiches and diet soda after a hard ride. Looking at the road ahead was bittersweet. The Sheba Mine lay half-way down, a wooden ore hopper still standing...but the exposure and the switchbacks were treacherous. I was a tad reserved on the throttle of the Honda XR600 dirt bike.

We explored all available areas of the Sheba. The lower area was a horizontal tunnel with a number of small stalactites forming. Above was a fantastic hopper with track running out to it. We explored several tunnels here. Dave Derrick crawled deep inside a steep crawlway that was inclined at 45 degrees. I think it was an ore chute. At one point we heard a horrible sounding cave in from above. Dave did not answer, and we were already fretting about how to present the situation to his wife Linda. Fortunately, Dave emerged about 20 minutes later. He had tossed a boulder down the chute and it brought a few more tumbling down with it.



**(Above) The ore hopper at the Sheba Mine.**



**(Left) Bob Schroth examines formations on the ceiling at the lower Sheba tunnel.**



**(Above) Steve Smith of the U.P. (Michigan) points out a distant mine to Dave Thorpe from Cottonwood Pass. Jerry of the ATV Explorers is suiting up.**



**(Left) In spite of their advertising, the only restaurant in Wenden is actually a good one,. Siegbert Zecha aka "Ziggy", posed for this picture. Ziggy was visiting from Frankfurt, Germany, and got a real dose of American fun.**



### **Our camp.**

The sun sets quickly in the Harcuvars, and the temperature plummets. We bring plenty of firewood and stay up late playing guitar and listening to outrageous stories by Cap Tin Bob Schroth. This year brought a new crew in to join us from the Las Vegas area. Billy Two Guns provided plenty of red-neck humor, and fed us all well with his southern-style cooking.

On the following day we did a high-speed trail ride to the defunct mining camp of Swansea. Many shafts and foundations remained, but the area is well posted and fenced off for historic protection.

I'm sure 2005 will bring a whole new set of trails and campfire entertainment for our ever increasing crowd.