

# The Highpoint

March 2007

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Go

## Adventure for Old Knees

By Karen Russo

Like most SO! members, you probably love hiking and biking, kayaking and skiing. But your knees may be screaming, "no more." Yet, if as I do, you hunger for these activities not so much for the challenge they offer as for the closeness to the wonders of nature they bring you, do not despair. I have found a way to tread where others seldom go with nary a whimper from my knees. It is the Station-to-Station 4-wheel drive trip in the South Island of New Zealand. Moreover, if you are tempted by life-on-the-edge, fasten your seat belts. This is for you.

It was for the Milford Sound Track, famed as the most beautiful walk in the world, that I first went to New Zealand eight years ago. It was indeed the most beautiful outdoor experience I have ever had. However, I have given up trying to recapture peak experiences. Besides, my hamstrings are still moaning about that last day, 131/2 miles straight down.

So when our friends Diane and Barry, who live and raise cattle on the North Island, wrote suggesting that my husband John and I join them for a week of 4-wheel driving over the sheep stations in the southern Alps of New Zealand, we said "sure." It seemed made to order for aging bodies with youthful spirits.

I had met Diane on a llama trek in Wyoming ten years earlier. Even then, she could beat me up any hill, and I have ridden on Barry's hay wagon while he baled with the vigor of a twenty year old. Still, 4-wheel driving sounded do-able. Another excuse to return to New Zealand. So in mid-January (their summer), we met in Christchurch, along with three of their friends also from farms on the north island. Once we had picked up our vehicles for the week, a Ford

Explorer and a Toyota Prada, we were on our way.

Our first stop was Ryton Station, about an hour and a half from Christchurch, in Canterbury's high country at the foot of the Southern Alps. Owners, Karen and Mike Mears, raise 8,000 Merino sheep, source of the highest grade of wool, on their 37,000 acres of craggy hillside. In addition, they administer the Station-to-Station trips.

We arrived late in the day, just in

directions for our week's accommodations, the tracks we'd drive over, and suggestions for alternative routes and excursions. We would come to be bloody glad for those alternatives.

It was the next morning that we were sent on our way, with pack lunches and a map of Ryton Station, for a glimpse of what loomed ahead. It did not take more than an hour of crossing rivers and plodding over deeply rutted narrow tracks that we were greatly relieved to be driving in tandem. It seemed to be only by the grace of God that one car or the other was not permanently impaled on some rock or stuck forever in a riverbed with its wheels spinning. More than one expletive emanated from John's mouth.

As it turned out, we did return without incident in time for a beautiful horseback ride over a more hospitable section of their station. That evening, Karen Means claimed that had we not shown up from our drive, someone would have come looking for us. Dim consolation in the face of 37,000 acres in pitch dark.

The next morning, Mike took us jet boating on a nearby river, then sent us all on our way. Before arriving at the gate of the next station, we drove along a wide river basin beneath snow-topped mountains, through flocks of sheep driven by shepherds with Border Collies, and over a large shingle (slate) fan formed by an ancient avalanche. Along the way, we stopped to picnic and snap pictures, in awe, of the scenes before us. Like most of New Zealand, it was heart-stoppingly beautiful.

By evening, we reached our next accommodation in time for dinner. Each night we stayed in the farmhouse that was on that day's station. We were the only guests. Permission to drive on a private sheep station is granted ahead, by Station to Station. Traffic can only go one way. Bear in mind, these tracks are geared to

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### GREAT NEWS!!

Four SO! club members have "stepped up to the plate" and are going to take over the newsletter Circulation Committee work! Jane Pedersen & Steve Somora will form one team, and Carroll Groeger & Lani Graham will form another team. These two teams will share in the responsibilities associated with newsletter circulation. The Board wants to welcome Jane, Steve, Carroll and Lani to the group of active club members who, through their volunteer efforts, are making sure that the Seniors Outdoors club stays strong and active!

We want to thank these new Circulation Committee members, as well as others who are contributing their time and effort toward various Seniors Outdoors committee activities!

time to settle into our guest cottages, each with bath (ensuite, they call them) overlooking Lake Coleridge, the bluest lake I have seen, due to its depth we were told. After a glass of wine, we enjoyed a farm-style dinner with their family - beef stew and a delicious cake with a pudding-like sauce for dessert.

Karen Mears gave us a dossier, "The Bible," she called it, with maps and

Seniors Outdoors! is an outing and social club providing organized year-round outdoor activities and related educational opportunities

To Join Seniors Outdoors!  
Contact Anne Rendon, 884-2729  
or e-mail: TRTRendon@mydurango.net

Membership forms are available on the website: <http://www.seniorsoutdoors.org/>, at the monthly meetings, and on outings.

## Board Briefs

Treasurer's Report:  
As of January 31, 2007  
Income-----\$6,447.00  
Expenses-----\$2,314.42  
Balance-----\$5,894.67

### Board Members

Co-Presidents:  
Bill Cagle, 385-4566  
Tom Rebbin 247-0551  
Secretary: Mary Ann Bryant 259-4278  
Treasurer: Dick Reitz 375-1870  
Outings Committee Chair:  
Sharron Chambers 259-9271  
Board Meetings are OPEN to all members

### Other Positions

Circulation: Dianne Rebbin, 247-0551  
Sandy Bauman, 375-9589  
Email Message Coordinator:  
Wally Schmidt 385-1804  
Ruthanne Gartland, 884-5478  
Hospitality: Letha Cagle, 385-4566  
Aggie Owens, 247-0463  
Membership: Anne Rendon, 884-2729  
Newsletter Editor:  
Inge Siltan, 259-6881  
Outings Schedule Publisher:  
Sharon Kinton, 375-1152  
Olin Kane, 375-0060  
Phone Tree: Susan Beck-Brown,  
375-0948  
Programing Chairs:  
Tricia Bayless 375-2618  
Public Relations:  
Grace Deltscheff, 259-3040  
Trip Equipment Coordinator:  
Travis Ward, 247-1310  
Diana McMichael, 764-4190  
Website Manager:  
Lyle Hancock, 764-4531

## Seniors Outdoors! Sub-Groups

**Downhill Ski:** John Montle, 259-9469  
**Horse Riders:** Dell Manners, 382-9967  
**Single Seniors:** Carol Milliet, 259-0496

## Welcome New Members

John and Dorothy Bregar  
Robert Conner and Sara Ransom  
Paul and Maureen Maliszewski  
Richard Sullivan  
David Wright and Nancy Mead

Our total membership is now 439  
since the renewals of July 2006  
Let's keep growing!!!!

## Trip Leaders Needed

If you could spare a few hours of work once a quarter, volunteering as a trip leader would fill your time as well as give you pleasure in being with like minded outdoor enthusiasts and doing something for Seniors Outdoors! Or, if you find you have 'spur of the moment time', volunteer for an extra e-outing. Outing lists are maintained for you to choose from. The Summer Schedule runs from mid-June to late August, which is the prime time for high country hikes, car camps, fishing, wildflower, or 4-wheel expeditions.

Call Sharron Chambers at 259-9271 or anyone on the Outings Committee as listed in the Spring Schedule.



## The EXtra Mile

Many Senior Outdoors! Members go the distance in contributing the time and the expertise that is so vital in moving our group forward - SALUTE

**December Trip Leaders:** Brooks Taylor, Dell Manners, Jan Collins, Bill Cagle, Jim Beatty

**March Hosts:** Beverly Danielson, Joanna Jennings, Barb and Lyle Hancock, Susanna Jones

**March Clean-up:** Jack and Linda Murray, Joanna Jennings, Marilyn Shadid, Phyllis

Thank you, **Lyle Hancock**, for volunteering as the new Web Master of SO!

When is an Irish Potato  
not an Irish Potato?



## Mesa Verde Volunteers The Next Hundred Years

Cheryl & Chuck Carson

Mesa Verde's Centennial celebration ended with a glow - the annual luminaria-lighted open house on December 9. Those who attended experienced one unique sight they expected, the special lighting of Cliff Palace, and one they probably didn't notice, the important role of community volunteers. Volunteers were everywhere: creating and running the education programs for kids; organizing, performing, and MC'ing the entertainment at two venues; folding, filling, lighting and cleaning up the luminarias; handling traffic and guest parking; and hosting the food and bus service. We extend the park's thanks and congratulations to the many volunteers, including numerous SO! members, who made it all happen. It was a community celebration!

The thousands of hours donated by volunteers to the Centennial celebrations throughout 2006 were only part of the year's volunteer effort. Volunteers also helped visitors at the park Visitor Center and at Cliff Palace; others worked on maintenance projects, in the museum shop, in the library, and in landscaping. Many of the centennial initiatives will endure in the park - education programs, new tours and displays, and special events - but none is more important than the community volunteer program. In fact, the success of the partnership between the park and its community volunteers has led the park's leadership to consider expanding the roles that volunteers can play in park programs. Last year's volunteers found working with the Mesa Verde visitors and staff rewarding and enjoyable; and plans for this year are taking shape now - new possibilities include volunteer-led hikes in the park; a museum, trail, or site docent program; and education programs for children. To make all of these happen, we'll need more volunteers; the limits on the program will be determined by the number of volunteers, their interests, and the time they have available. If you're interested in joining the VIP (Volunteers-in-Parks) team, please contact volunteer coordinators Cheryl and Chuck Carson at 259-2599 or cccarson@aol.com. Park staff will conduct training for new and continuing volunteers in April including special, detailed tours of the public sites and an insider's view of park operations.

(Knees continued from page 1)

the needs of the farmers, not the public, with minimal attention to safety. In case of accident, the government merely pays the costs of damages and hospitalization. I do not know about funerals.

It was the third day that we found ourselves driving along another twisting, deeply rutted track, barely the width of our car. It overlooked a magnificent gorge below, but with a 500-foot drop and no guardrail. Barry led the way, getting out frequently to assess the next blind curve. My heart pounding, my palms sweaty, there was no turning back.

Once onto a safer stretch, we would tumble out of our cars in relief, and again stare in awe at the beauty. It was not until dinner that evening that John admitted his fear. "One tiny slip on the gas pedal, one tiny spin-out of our back wheels, it would have been over the cliff for us."

Not being ones to covet living quite that close to the edge, from then on we drilled our evening's hosts about the rigors of the next day's sheep station track. New Zealanders are tough cookies. Our friends invariably chose the more arduous route. When it sounded too harrowing for us (six hours to travel 15 miles,) we chose the alternative off-station route. This enabled us to take short tramps through lush, fern laden rain forests, and to picnic on the banks of Lake Pukaki, as pretty a turquoise as I have ever seen. Sparkling snow-capped Mount Cook towered above and there was not another soul in sight. Another day we drove to the prehistoric-looking rock formations where *Lord of the Rings* was filmed. In the South Island you can drive all day long without passing another car.

All our hosts were friendly and hospitable, eager to hear about our day while joining us for a glass of wine. Each provided appetizers, a substantial dinner, breakfast and a box lunch for the next day with luscious home baked cookies. In New Zealand, there are no pretensions. Dress is casual. Faces friendly and discussions lively.

There are many ways to see New Zealand - motor coach or self-drive tours, farm stays, backpacking and biking. For us, Station-to-Station was high adventure, offering us a glimpse of life behind the scenes in New Zealand, all without badgering our knees.

To Email Karen and Mike Mears at Station to Station, ryton@xtra.co.nz, Their web site is www.ryton.co.nz

## Devil's Tower

By Inge Silton

"A dark mist lay over the Black Hills, and the land was like iron," N. Scott Momaday wrote. "At the top of the ridge I caught sight of Devil's Tower upthrust against the gray sky as if in the birth of time the core of the earth had broken through its crust and the motion of the world was begun. There are things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devil's Tower is one of them."

This is indeed true, as Jack and I stood in quiet awe at foot of Devil's Tower last July. Slowly we walked around the base, quietly contemplating this wonder of nature while several groups of climbers were attempting the ascent and a short distance away, Native Americans practiced their religious beliefs.

The tower stands 867 feet from its base and was formed about 60 million years ago when molten magma was forced into sedimentary rock above it and cooled underground. As it cooled it contracted and fractured into columns and over millions of years, erosion of the sedimentary rock exposed Devil's Tower.



Two ranchers first climbed this tower in 1893 and climbing has been a major draw to the monument ever since. About 50,000 people have reached the summit on more than 200 routes. Records of tower climbs have been kept since 1937 and approximately 5,000 climbers come here every year from all over the world to climb on the massive columns.

Yet the tower is key to the religious beliefs and practice of more than 20 Plains Indian tribes. For decades it has been a place where Native Americans make prayer offerings, hold sweat lodge ceremonies

and vision quests, and participate in the annual Sun Dance. Devils Tower figures into legends of culture heroes, the origins of certain ceremonies and the histories of sacred objects. The Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, and Lakota all have a similar sacred legend about the origins of Devil's Tower. The Kiowa people say:

"Seven sisters and their brother were at play when the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run on his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters, terrified, ran, with the bear chasing them, when they came to the stump of a tree. The tree spoke to them and bade them climb upon it. As they did, the tree rose into the air and they were out of reach of the bear, who had come to kill them. It reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper." "Bear Lodge" is one of many American Indian names for the Tower.



Taking into account the perspectives of both climbers and Native Americans, the National Park Service in 1995 implemented a Climbing Management Plan that stipulates a voluntary climbing closure during the month of June, when tribes conduct ceremonies at the tower. Jim Cheatham, chief of resource management at the monument, believes that three quarters of climbers adhered to the policy in 2005.

*Quotation from N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain, The University of New Mexico Press*

### DISCOUNTS

SO! members receive a 10% discount on regularly priced merchandise at Gardenswartz, Backcountry, Brown's Shoe Fit for hiking products, and Brown's Sport Shoe on hiking and athletic products.. At Pine Needle you will be able to purchase their \$15 discount card for \$5. Cut out this article and present it to the clerk checking you out.

For more information contact  
John Montle 259-9469.



An aging man lived alone in Ireland. His only son was in Long Kesh Prison, and he didn't know anyone who would spade up his potato garden. The old man wrote to his son about it, and received this reply, "For HEAVENS SAKE, don't dig up that garden, that's where I buried the GUNS!!!!!"

At 4 A.M. the next morning, a dozen British soldiers showed up and dug up the entire garden, but didn't find any guns. Confused, the man wrote to his son telling him what happened and asking him what to do next.

His son's reply was: "Just plant your potatoes."



### EASY

**Get the newsletter on the Web**  
**[www.seniorsoutdoors.org](http://www.seniorsoutdoors.org)**

Contact Anne Rendon at 884-2729  
to have your name removed from the mailing list.

**Next Meeting**  
**April 10, 2007**

***Durango Senior Center***

GPS Orienteering and Survival Skills in the Outdoors presented by Brad Buckly, a wildlife biologist currently working in Colorado with the lynx reintroduction program.

**NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING PLACE**

Did you forget to bring a non-perishable item to the Pot Luck for the Manna Soup Kitchen? It is never too late to donate.



When it's a French fry



**Colorado Outdoor Search and Rescue cards**  
**for sale by your co-presidents**

every month at SO! meetings  
\$3 for one year or \$12 for 5 years  
This entitles you to free rescue service where as other-wise you will be charged for this service. This does not include ambulance service.



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