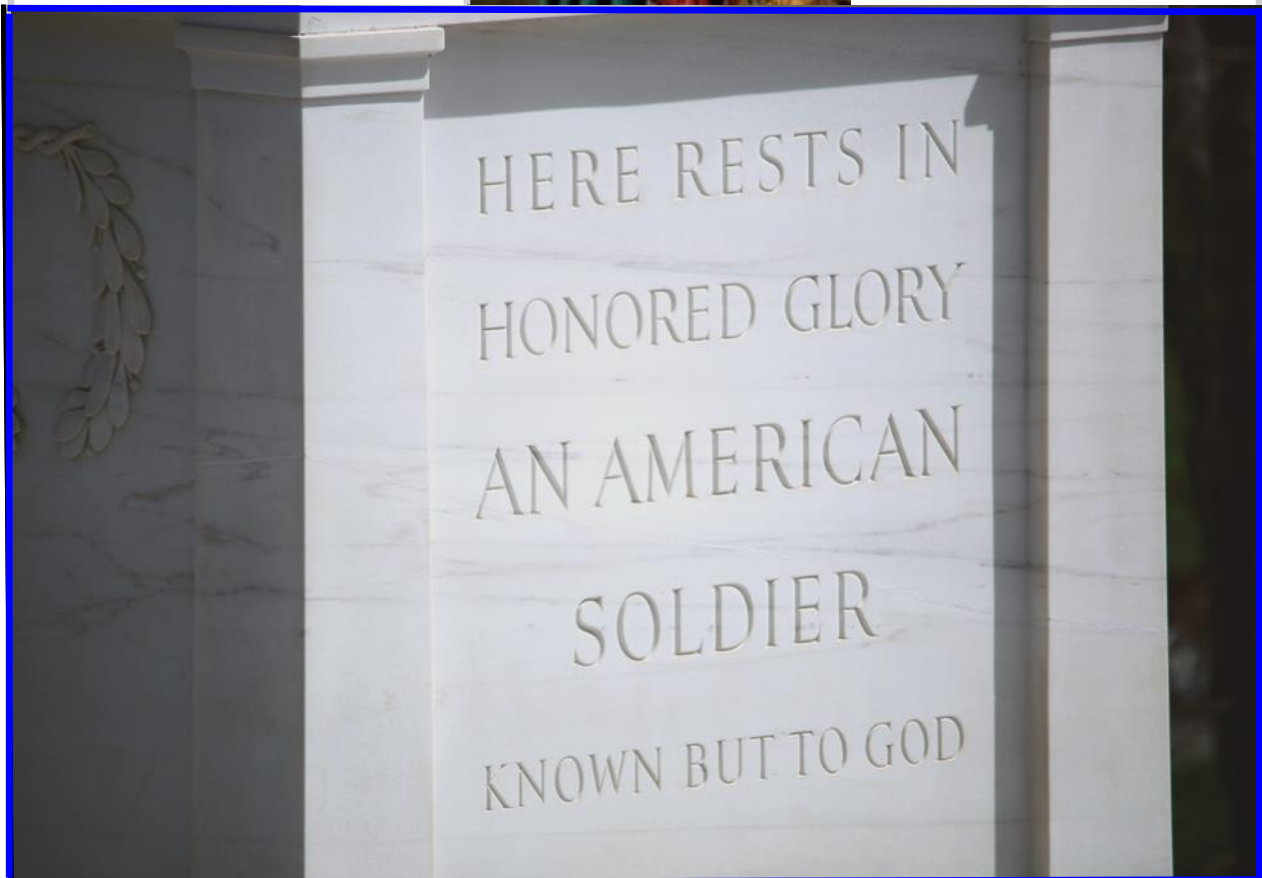


VOLUME XCV
May 2019

THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF



Submit your comments to our Editor, Jacquie Hinton, about "The Shepherd's Staff;" and, any other *thoughts* you might have about the publication that you feel will be constructive or interesting to our readers. You may do so by emailing us at: newsletter@pahrupcc.com



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Judged

Those of you utilizing PCC's 2019 Bible Reading Calendar—Traditional Plan are currently in the Old Testament book of Judges. Even if you are not reading this portion of the Scriptures right now, anyone who has read the

Bible before will recall that there is a striking theme in this book. The theme revolves around this verse:

The people... did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (Judges 2:11).

Here's a brief review of the history leading up to this point.

After 430 years in Egypt God raised up Moses to lead His people out of captivity. The deliverance was more than just remarkable—it was a miraculous demonstration of God's great power and love. Ten plagues, each compounding the troubles of the one(s) before, resulted in Pharaoh and the Egyptians urging the Hebrews to leave and giving them great wealth to take with them.

Almost immediately, the Israelites faced a scenario that, under normal circumstances, appeared to be disastrous. But these were not normal circumstances! God had already demonstrated His power and love ten times over! With the Red Sea before them and the angry Egyptian army behind them, they forgot about the God Who was over them and they cried out in anxiety and hopelessness wishing they had never left Egypt. Again, God showed them His mercy and great power as He parted the Red Sea and sent the people across in safety only to drown the Egyptian army following them.

When they came to the border of the land which God had promised to give them, they sent some scouts in and most of the scouts came back faithless and fearful. The congregation listened to the reports of the faithless and again gave in to hopelessness. It was at this point that God said that He would not let them go in until after they spent 40 years in the wilderness.

The wilderness wanderings were punctuated by God's gracious provisions and the people's disobedience and lack of faith. Nonetheless, after 40 years God did indeed lead them into the Promised Land. Under Joshua's leadership, the next few decades involved the taking of the land of Canaan.

Now we come to Judges. Moses and Joshua had been used by God to lead, teach, direct, rebuke and correct God's people... repeatedly. Now, in the absence of these two godly leaders

The people... did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

The pattern that had surfaced throughout the previous years now deepened into a predictable rut. Our God, however, is a gracious and forgiving God. The Bible tells us:

The Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of [their enemies] (Judges 2:16).

The theme: *Israel turns to sin; God brings judgment; the people cry to the Lord for help; God brings deliverance.* Repeat.

You likely know all this already. But I want you to note something. The reason the Israelites kept experiencing severe hardships is because

The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to [their enemies] (Judges 2:14).

God's anger is explicitly tied to the Israelites' disobedience to God's Word!

The Bible is replete with references to God's love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness and grace. But the Bible is also very clear on the issue of God's judgment. To say that the God of the Bible is a God of love and kindness is not to say that God does not judge disobedience and sin. When the Hebrew people confessed their sin, repented, and cried out to God in desperation, He offered forgiveness and grace. But each time they turned back to their sinful disobedience God brought disciplinary judgment to bring them to repentance.

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Our culture today has a tendency to ignore God altogether except when they argue with Christians; then they use Bible verses to suggest that God's love for everybody means He's already given His stamp of approval on an anything-goes standard of morality. One presidential candidate (who is a practicing homosexual) recently claimed "If you have a problem with who I am, your problem is not with me. Your quarrel... is with my creator." My question to this person is: *Have you ever **read** the Bible?!*

Unfortunately, it isn't just a few people using this type of argument to defend their sinful practices. Many who claim to be followers of Jesus want us to believe that the same Jesus Who didn't condemn the adulterer also condones everything in the LGBTQ alphabet. Please observe that Jesus, in His mercy, did **not** condemn the woman in question—but neither did He **condone** sinful behavior!

*Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and **from now on sin no more**" (John 8:11—emphasis mine).*

The very reason that judgment has not already fallen on our sinful culture is not because Jesus approves of sin but because He is patient with sinners wanting all to repent before death and the final judgment makes it too late for salvation!

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

In this day and age of almost unbridled wickedness, Christians should be all the more eager to exemplify God's holiness!

It is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. (1 Peter 1:16–17).

And

If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world (1 Corinthians 11:31–32).

I am eternally grateful for the mercy and grace of my Savior Jesus! But I must never forget that the same God Who desires to **show mercy** identifies Himself as the holy and **righteous Judge**.

And one final verse for good measure:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap (Galatians 6:7).

Serving the Savior,

Pastor Keith

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Some Thoughts on Weeds

There's a forest behind my house. You know the story.

I tried to tackle these pests early – after the March rains I was out there with our Hula Hoe trying to give them a run for their money. I'd spend some of my free time battling them out on a Monday or Tuesday afternoon or on a Saturday morning while Amy was cooking muffins. I'd clear a place in our dirt/rocks and feel pretty good about myself. A few days later, my freshly Hula Hoed dirt was once again rife with green shoots.

When Amy and I left for Washington to visit my little sister and her family, we mourned the inevitable nefarious appropriation of our property by the spiky pollen-ridden fiends. As we pulled into our driveway upon returning, sure enough, we could barely see our shed at the back of our property! I exaggerate, of course, but they were everywhere! I tried to attack some of them, but I caught a bug the Friday before Palm Sunday. The weeds kept on growing, no sympathy for my sickbed.

I gradually recovered the week leading up to Resurrection Sunday (praise the Lord), but had no time for weeding because my older sister and her family were in town. As it turns out, I think the (by then) small bushes on our property had family over, too. I finally got around to clearing a narrow path through the thicket that next Tuesday so that we could pull the swamp cooler out of storage. The work is nowhere near done.

I'm sure you have your weed stories. You probably also have your preferred manner of weed removal. The owner of the house we're renting recommended his Hula Hoe and it seems to work well for our primarily dirt-covered property. With our wind and the amount of rain we've received this season, no one in the Pahrump Valley seems altogether safe. We can pick, spray, hoe, lay ground cover, or even pay someone to handle them for us, but weeds will find a way.

I don't think I could in good conscience say that I like anything about weeds (even the bright yellow or purple flowers seem but portents for future sneezes and heartache). That being said, I think the inescapable frustration of dealing with weeds can lend us opportunities for spiritual reflection. Let's consider some thoughts on weeds.

1) All those weeds are your fault. Okay, maybe a little harsh, but it's true! I would say they're not *personally* your fault, but they are. And they're my fault. You may remember Genesis 3.17-18: *"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.'" The springing forth of thorns and thistles is one of the earliest (and most explicit) curses of our sin. Adam and Eve's rebellion brought about those weeds that mock you every time you come home from the grocery store. Our relation to Adam and our choice to rebel against our loving God means that we're to blame, too.*

2) Sin is fast. While watching paint dry might be a less than riveting experience, I sometimes can't help but think that the weeds behind me are growing an inch or two even as I uproot those in front. We do indeed have all things we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1). No temptation has overtaken us that is too strong for us (1 Corinthians 10). At the same time, we are given instruction after instruction reminding us to be vigilant and to constantly fight against sin reigning in our mortal bodies (Ephesians 6 and Romans 6). How many times have you wished that incorporating spiritual disciplines like Bible reading/memorization and prayer would sprout up as quickly as short tempers, laziness, or lust? Weeds start small, but we know where they're headed. Rest assured, if you don't let God pull those weeds in your heart now, they'll get worse in a hurry.

3) Thorns aren't eternal. When I'm Hula Hoeing, I start imagining: what if every one of the tall weeds were a tulip? What if every one of the big leafed weeds were a bundle of baby's breath? What if all of those yellow allergen buds were actually daffodils? I'm no botanist so you'll have to excuse my lack of scientific info regarding these flowers. At the same time, I think that these exaggerated imaginations are theologically healthy. God inspired Isaiah to write of the day when the Redeemer comes again to make everything right: *"For you shall*

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go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 55.12-13). Do you remember Revelation 21.4? It wouldn't be wrong to add a "nor weeds" to that list. The hills alive with the sound of music, the jubilation of the trees, the vibrancy of the cypress, and the pure blossoms of the myrtle – these shall make a name for our LORD. The thorns aren't eternal. The gold and green of the new creation will be an everlasting sign of His thorough dominion. Next time you long for some wildflowers to go replace your nettles, transpose that longing into a prayer for Christ's return.

Nature isn't our mother. To take an idea of G.K. Chesterton's slightly out of context, "Nature is our sister." Though there is no sentience in the dirt between my house and our shed, the earth itself groans and longs to be freed from its weed-ridden futility (Romans 8.19-23). When you grab for the roots of that unwanted plant in your driveway, might that act not be expressing eagerness for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies? Just a thought.

By God's grace,
 Pastor Caleb


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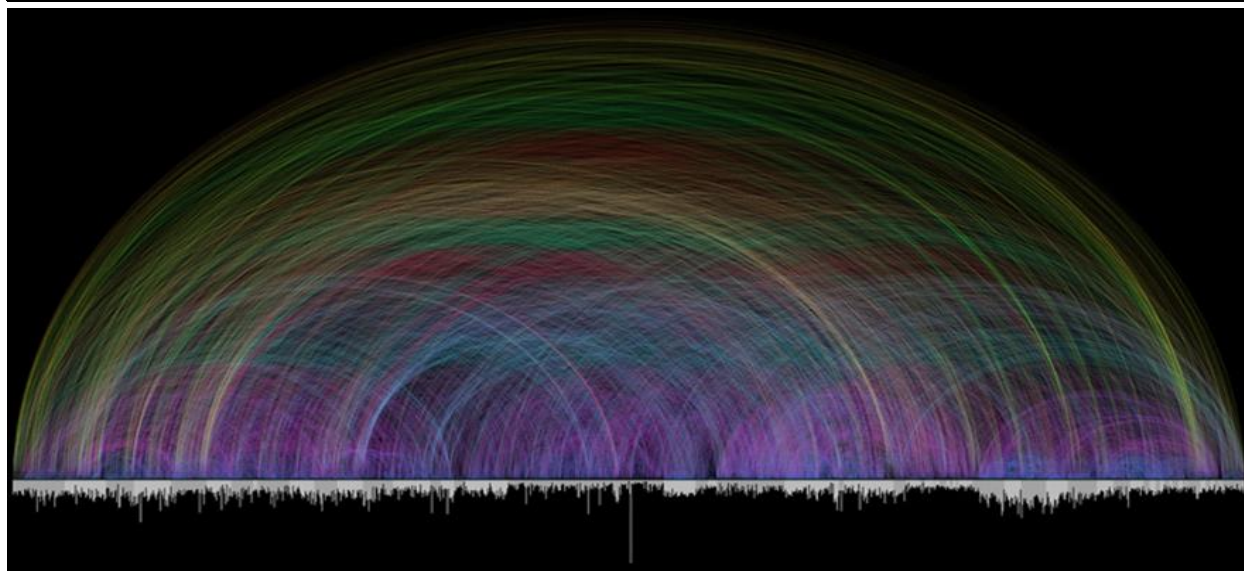


Final quarter

I like the picture above because it makes me think of looking to the horizon and what God has for each of us in the future. I never thought looking back on my life that I would be studying the Bible with the intensity I am right now but now I'm again looking to the horizon as I draw to the end of this school.

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The interconnectedness of the Bible

This picture is a good way of summing up how much my mind has been blown through the study of the Bible. It shows how every book of the Bible relates to every other book of the Bible and how intentional God was when He inspired scripture.

That seems to be how life can be sometimes. We go through life and season to season we don't see how God is orchestrating divine interconnectedness.

Perhaps you haven't given much thought to how intentional God has been in your life but He is very much alive and active in it. *Heb 4:12*

Part of God's divine working in me was that I grew up as a missionary kid in Mexico. I was a little bitter towards missions and I never thought that I would go on a missions trip ever again in my life once my family moved back to the states. But God worked on my heart and brought me full circle into a life long passion for this ministry He's called me into.

I'm sure Abraham didn't know how obeying the voice of God would lead to a nation the was set apart for God. And David when God made an eternal covenant with him to establish his throne forever probably didn't know that would lead to Jesus sitting on the throne.

And perhaps with all of us we can't see how what God is doing in us or the season of life we're in will connect with his divine plan and will. But we can trust Him that even through what we can't see He is at work in our lives.

If you have a story about how God has worked out things in your life that you didn't understand but looking back you can see God's hand tell me about it. I love to hear about how God is working and has worked in the lives of the saints.

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Studying the Bible

My week is filled with lectures and my day to day with whatever book I am studying I go over five times as I take a closer look at the text and what it means.

Titus project

This is upcoming in September-December and is both me being trained to teach the Bible and teaching the Bible.

Some details are either tentative or sensitive so if you're interested in more details email me and we can correspond about it over the phone.



Upcoming...

I will be finishing my School of Biblical studies in June and will be home over the summer for the months of July and August.

If you would like to connect while I'm in the states please reply to my email and hopefully we can work something out.

I thank God for everyone who has partnered with me in the ministry God has called me to. Without these people I would never be go on the trips I have to share the gospel and teach the Bible.

Be blessed in the in the name of Jesus.

With love in Christ,

Ben Wichaël



EASTER, 2019

Mike & Karen Kotecki
@ gmail.com
jm.kotecki & karenk52

He is not here, He is Risen! Luke

24:6

By His Resurrection, Jesus Christ conquered death. The 'emptiness' of the grave is symbolic of our emptiness without Him. Christ fills our lives with hope as we trust Him to redeem and to restore us to God.

"If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

"...In his mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3



Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26

**Your partnership empowers us to proclaim Christ, to help others to know Him and to make Him known.
Thank You.**



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We live near Kaiserslautern

Mike and Karen Kotecki are Navigator Missionaries our PCC family supports

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<div>The Awesomeness of God Sharon Ankrum</div> <div></div> <div><p>This week, I had trouble sleeping so I took a blanket about 4:00 AM and my coffee and sat on my daughters patio with my buddy, Radar. As I sat there, looking at the stars, thinking about how very vast is our universe! It was so still and quiet, just the sound of water recycling in the pool and what a soothing sound that was. Every once in a while Radar would raise his head listening for motorcycles or other dogs, then quietly put his head back on his paws and sigh. As the hour past, the stars started to fade and the sky became lighter. I couldn't help but think how foolish man is to think that changing the clocks each spring and fall we control anything God has already determined, such as the breaking of dawn. <i>Job 38:12, God asks His creation, Job, "have you commanded the mornings since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place".</i> Who is in control here?</p><p>As the dawn continued to break on the horizon, the stars started fading, but one bright star shown in the eastern sky above McCarren airport. At first I thought it might be a plane, but it stayed and as the earth rotated it moved higher in the sky. I thought how Jesus said in <i>Revelation 22:16</i> <i>"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."</i> That was the only star still shining as day began to</p></div> <tr><td colspan="3"></td><td>CONTINUED ON PAGE 11</td></tr>							CONTINUED ON PAGE 11
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break. Who places the stars and calls them by name? Surely man can't be foolish enough to think he had anything to do with that creation!

Soon the sky became pink, as the sun slowly peaked on the horizon. The birds started singing, cars started up and down streets, things started to come to life. Once again, a new day was dawning and soon the reverie of the stillness and quietness would be broken with dogs barking, traffic moving, people walking before the heat settled on Las Vegas and another busy day began.

I thought how the skeptics question God's existence and power, but as God answered Job, "where were you when I created everything for you to enjoy and give thanks?" Oh, the Audacity of us to claim even one iota of a thing God has done, and can we ever change the tides, or moon phases, the beautiful song of the morning birds? This wonderful, loving Father, who loves us so much, that he gave all of His creation to the one He created to enjoy it all, WHAT AN AWESOME GOD WE HAVE. Come and taste and see that He is good! I can't wait to get to heaven to thank Him, for not only saving me, but for giving me, eyes, ears, and a nose to smell, all things created for me. Thank you Jesus!

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Mojave Road, California

By Bob Jacobs

This famous road is one of the early routes that brought American pioneers to California. This road is unique in that for most of its 138.8 mile stretch is in much the same condition as the pioneers would have found it, and a lot of the road passes through country that is virtually unchanged since prehistoric times. The road bisects the Mojave Preserve, wandering from waterhole to waterhole, and is mostly a 4-wheel drive road. The road stretches from Fort Mojave on the Colorado River to Fort Cady just east of Barstow, California.

NOTE: It took us six or seven days to drive the entire length of the Mojave road. I mean we would drive a section of the road then return home to Pahrump and drive another section of the road a few days later and repeat this procedure until we drove the entire length of the road. Because of the roads condition it would be impossible to drive the entire length of the road in one day. There are sections of the road that are **VERY, VERY ROUGH**. If you are even considering driving this road you will definitely need a **HIGH CLEARANCE 4-WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLE AND EXCELLENT OFF ROAD DRIVING EXPERIENCE**. Remember that this is a dangerous road and I would recommend purchasing the book and map shown at the end of this article before you tackle this adventure. Also please remember that this road passes through very desolate and remote terrain where a vehicle breakdown could be catastrophic.

The Mojave road was a main wagon road for only a relatively short time, approximately for two decades after the civil war. When the railroads came, they created an easier and more efficient route. While it was used, the Mojave Road was a route plagued by hostile Indians, a lack of water, long stretches of sand and rough terrain. For travelers and a handful of soldiers, it was a proving ground that brought out the best and the worst of them.

In the great westward migration to California, the Mojave Road was not an important player. Most travelers went north across Donner Pass. The road was primarily a supply route, not an immigration trail, used by soldiers and freighters. It is a more important player now, 150 years later, as it is a piece of history, a memorial to those early days. Its 138.8 miles of dust, ruts and boulders are pretty much the same as they were then. Thanks to the efforts of Dennis Casebier and the Friends of the Mojave Road, the road is pretty much as it was when the wagons rolled over it in the 1860's.

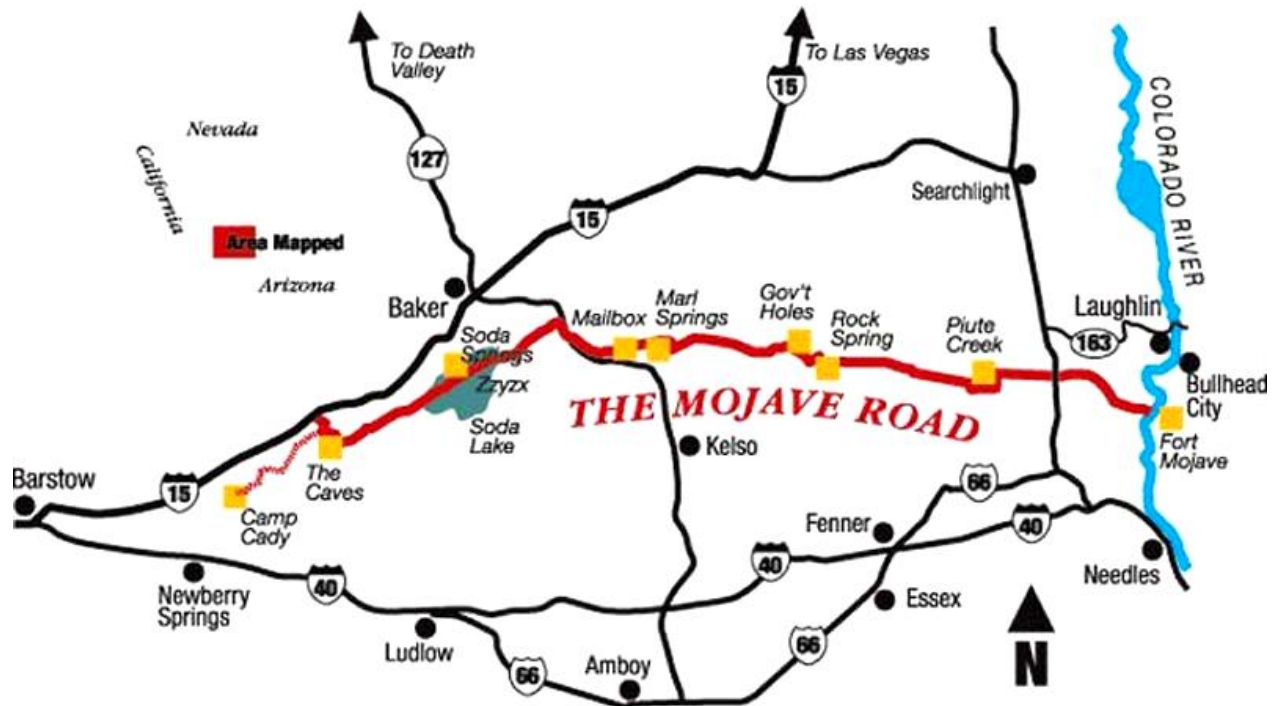
Water is everything in the desert, and the locations of watering holes determined the route of the road. Water was found at the end of each day's drive (about every 20 to 30 miles, depending upon the terrain). These springs were a favorite ambush site to the Indians, so each location had to be defended by the US Army and they were hard pressed to do it. So the Army established forts, outposts or military camps sometime consisting of just two or three men. The Army felt it had to be done, by controlling the water, they controlled the road. It was lonely, hard duty, and some of them died doing it while others deserted. Like most trails and even today's superhighways, the Mojave Road was first an Indian path, used as a trade route. The Mohave Indians, who lived along the Colorado River, would travel to the coast, following the path that guaranteed them water. The first European to use the Mojave Trail was probably Father Francisco Garces in 1776. When the Americans began pushing westward, Jedediah Smith, Kit Carson, John Fremont and others came this way to reach the pueblos on the coast. When gold was discovered in '49, most of the Prospectors took the northern route, but thousands followed the southern route and took the Mojave Road.

Today, few remains are left of this legendary time, and exploring the Mojave Road brings us back to this era and all the hardships that the old timers had to endure.

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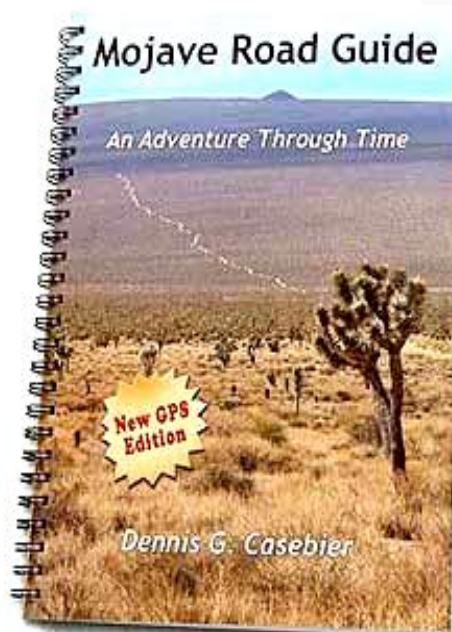


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If you are considering exploring the Mojave Road I would highly recommend that you purchase the book and map that are shown. The information that it contains on this area is priceless.

NOTE: The majority of the information in this article came from the www.desertusa.com website.





MY COMPASSION CHILD



Jhon Huanca Ali

LIVES IN: BOLIVIA

AGE: 10

SPONSOR: JACQUIE HINTON

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HAVE COMPASSION!!

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May Celebrations

In preparation for the upcoming celebrations/memorials during this month of May, I underwent an amazing discovery. This month we celebrate two sets of heroes – our valent service personnel and our mothers.

The cover of this newsletter is from the memorial in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia – a very sacred place to me. I have visited it many times and it was visual to me when I worked in the Pentagon. I would often hear “taps” played as I walked to my car after work or when out for “fresh air” when I had to work late into the night there. Or, when I had to visit Fort Meyer for reasons related to my work.

It is a spiritual feeling to hear that “burgle” as it releases the day into the night. It is a somber but spirit filling feeling with the knowledge of where and when and why this refrain is being played. When I think of that somber serviceman selected to perform that task, I thank God for all our military personnel who serve to maintain our country’s freedom and independence. I thank God that He provided us with such memorable leaders of our country who are buried there. **OUR HEROES – OUR LEADERS – OUR MARTYRS; and, that one *known only to God.***

I also think of the mothers who gave life to those buried there. They are heroes also and should be celebrated as heroes. I am a mother and I realize the trauma of the death of a child. I have experienced it three times. I don’t consider that as being a “hero”, but I do consider it a bond of “comradeship” with those who have also experienced this loss.

When you walk around in Arlington Cemetery, there is such a feeling of peace. It is as though God is saying “all is well with their souls.” As I look around the many headstones there, I pray that people will leave their ideologies, biases and prejudices outside before they walk in. Those who are buried there are “known only to God” regardless of whether their names are on the headstones are not. **God** is the only one who REALLY knows us, our hearts, our bodies and our souls. So, just be at peace as those beneath the headstones are at peace and thank God for His mercy on and dedication to our country.

I am dedicated to remaining loyal to the ethics and Constitution of our great nation. I do not believe that God gave us this country to **not** disagree with each other but to disagree with others in peace. God granted me the privilege of being raised in our Nation’s Capital and its surrounding history – from the thirteen original colonies to the 50 states that make this country what it is. And, most of all to be a country where disagreement is inevitable, but peace is possible.

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God had provided me with fabulous people in my life! And, some have not been so fabulous but, yet they have played an intricate part of who I am. God has also placed memorable people in my life. For example, my father is the most memorable treasure in my life. When he died and I had been unable to see him for years, I was devastated. But I was pacified as he received a three-rifle volley at his gravesite. And, imagine this – God has placed someone in my life that is so much like my dad, that I know he is my gift from God to bless my waning years. So, you see that person is my HERO! And, I will celebrate this Memorial Day with One Hero and One Blessing!

Who has God blessed you with? Who has God given to you to be both a hero and a blessing? It may be your mom or someone who raised you! It may even be a dad who raised you. **BUT** whether male or female, they are heroes. So, celebrate them on “Mothers’ Day” and if they are deceased then remember them on “Memorial Day” because they are both memorable and a blessing.



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