

GILBERT JIMENEZ

Gilbert Jimenez is a long-time member and guide in the SAHC. He joined the club in 1960 (he thinks) and has been active as a hiker and guide since that time. He guided mostly great "B" hikes from the 1970's into the late 1990's. He still guides winter "C" hikes in the Tucson Mountains.

He led some tough hikes. Some of them were rope climbs and others should have been. Tabletooth, East and West Thimble, Finger Rock, Baboquivari, Helen's Dome, Cathedral Rock, Mount Wrightson to name a few. He also guided on many club trips. Yosemite National Park, where the big attraction was to climb Half Dome whether the cables were up or down. Glacier Point was another favorite destination. We always went to the top of Yosemite Falls and sometimes beyond.

One year we took a two-week trip to Glacier National Park, one week on each side of the mountain. A trip to Waterman National Park in Canada was an exciting day too. We saw a grizzly bear at a distance.

Another favorite hike was to the Old Stone House. There are long and short ways to do this on day hikes, and one moonlight hike there is worth special mention. On that hike with 25 attending, someone carried a boom box for dancing later. We had a fine fire going to roast hot dogs and marshmallows and drinks other than water in some bottles. The county park police objected to us building our fire in the fireplace of the Old Stone House. It seems the police had seen Gilbert gathering wood along the trail the day before the hike and decided to follow up and see what he was up to. That was the last moonlight hike Gilbert led.

In October, 1990, Gilbert led a hike of 25 or more up Baboquivari. The preparations were extensive. Those with no prior rope experience were required to attend a session in the Catalina Mountains the week before to qualify on top rope and rappel. We met at 0430 on a Saturday morning and headed for Riggs Ranch on the east side of Babo (turn west at MP 16 on Route 286). The hike up to the saddle was uneventful and then we headed round the northeast side to the first pitch. John Montgomery did the free climb and put down the top rope. He seemed forever but we all got up and headed for the second pitch. Mike Coltrin did the free climb and worked the rope. We could see everything from this pitch so we watched those ahead to find the best route when it was our turn. The third pitch was the longest but probably no more difficult than the first two. Jody Ross was the lead climber this time and his two brothers'-in-law went up with him to help throw back the rope after each climber got to the top. The last ones up this pitch climbed in the dark. Fortunately they were the most experienced climbers in the group. Another half-mile by flashlight and we were on top. We had a big camp fire – the wood was from the long abandoned and disassembled fire lookout tower. Most of us brought a gift for Itoi. The next morning we were all up early to see the pyramid shadow that Babo cast to the west as the sun came up. The original plan was to descend via Lion's Ledge but that was abandoned because we had too many inexperienced climbers. We returned by the same three pitches we had ascended the day before. It was a great hike that many of us will never forget.

Gilbert had knee surgery 13 years ago and he continues to hike and guide, but does the less difficult ones. Recently he has guided winter hikes to the Arrastra and Dusty Falls, Mile-Wide Mine, over and around Brown Mountain, and down part of King's Canyon. The last peak he climbed was Wasson Peak, one he'd done many time before.

He earned the Tucson 83 plaque and patch early on. He also has cooked on many winter Cookouts and Spring Picnics. As a guide Gilbert's greatest joy was to help someone bag a peak or make a difficult hike that the person previously thought not possible. A great big group hug was always a part of Gilbert's hikes.

Gilbert still hikes and one day he'll hike the big one and his friends will scatter his ashes along the Trail.

Joe Spitler

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