

SPRING PICNIC

SAHC members do more than just hike to neat peaks, canyons and swimming holes.

We have devoured hundreds of hamburgers and tons of beans at our Winter Cookout. We have dumped gallons of mustard and bushels of onions on hot dogs at our Spring Picnic. We've relished sacks full of bagels and Oreo cookies at our President's Day Hike. And we have gulped down enough coffee, cocoa and lemonade at these annual social events to sink the Titanic.

We usually go on a hike first but afterwards we just sit, eat and talk.

Our first Social Event was held on May 17, 1959, at Hutch's Pool (we called it Pond back then) in Sabino Canyon in the Santa Catalina Mountains. The Bulletin write-up stated, "Hot dogs and other solid food will be provided out of the Club treasury by the Social Committee under Lorna Glendening. Bring your own liquids. There should be swimming."

I don't remember how many people showed up (the Bulletin didn't have a Who Went Where in 1959) but I think most of the 56 paid-up members were there because even back then, we couldn't turn down a free lunch. And I can't figure out how the Club treasury paid for all that food when we only charged \$1 for dues. I'm sure we ate at least \$56 worth of food. But we were a carefree bunch and never let minor details like money interfere with our pleasure.

The Pool looks about the same now as then: a big sandbar at the lower end; lots of tall sycamores and other shade trees (we needed them in May) and some great cliffs at the upper end for diving or jumping from. Few ever touched bottom.

For many years we elected our officers at this Spring Picnic. It was very informal.....no secret ballots. Whoever didn't show up got elected. Dick Duffield was President. Marian Sarrels was Trailscriber. We didn't have a "Chief Guide" but I had the job.

It wasn't too long before we discovered The Slide. It was a curving narrow, slick-rock slide which with spring runoff from higher in the Catalinas provided plenty of water for us to sit on our butts at the top and to be wished down to the bottom where we were dumped into a large, deep pool. There was plenty of whooping and hollering which I'm sure frightened away all the birds and other wildlife.

I don't remember any other hike or social event where we had more fun than the Spring Picnic at Hutch's Pool and The Slide.

Back in these early days, we could drive to the end of the road in Sabino Canyon. From there is was a 3½ mile hike to the Pool which was great for all of our hikers. We could start hiking at the crack of dawn to beat the heat.

When the Forest Service finally closed the road to vehicular traffic because of crowding, we fondly bid farewell to Hutch's. From the Visitor Center, it was then and is now about 7 miles one-way to the Pool.

Over the years, we have tried quite a few different places for our Spring Picnic. We hiked to Lemmon Creek in the Wilderness of Rocks. We wound our way down into Alder Canyon on the north side of the Catalinas. I think one year we went to the Romero Pools. All of these early Spring Picnics were "Hike-In": if you wanted some food and camaraderie, you had to hike in to the picnic site. Of course, a bunch of people had to carry in all the food and refreshments. But that was no problem as we had lots of hikers with big backpacks and extra-strong legs to carry it all in and out.

More recently, the group area in Rose Canyon was where we ate our filling of hot dogs and other goodies. Non-hikers could enjoy the food and socializing without hiking. Now we're getting really upscale and have settled on the Whitetail Group area off the Mount Lemmon Highway way up in the cool pines. Early picnics were free; now we pay Uncle Sam to have our fun. But the food is still free, thanks to our club treasury.

So join us for Spring Picnic No. 50 next May. See the Bulletin for more details.

Pete Cowgill

Originally printed in The Bulletin, Volume 51, Number 6