

Local/regional

Television/Crossword/Landers/Obituaries

Sunday, May 6, 1990

Arch lovers find plenty during tour

Drew Munro
Daily Sentinel

Tishy Nugee's trip to the Parade of Arches in Rattlesnake Canyon Saturday began in London 10 years ago while she was watching an old western.

"It was entirely because I saw a rerun of 'Stagecoach'" that she fell in love with the West and began spending her annual vacations roaming it, Nugee said.

On this trip, she was accompanied by 34 other hikers who visited Rattlesnake Canyon Saturday as part of the first-ever gathering of the Natural Arch and Bridge Society. The fledgling organization is a group of about 75 arch lovers from across the United States and, with Nugee, across the Atlantic.

Danny Horowitz, president and co-founder of the society, said the organization came into being about one and a half years ago. That's when he and co-founder Jay Wilbur met and realized they had the same goal: to form an organization to promote and protect arches and natural bridges.

"It was kind of ironic," Wilbur said. "Danny started doing it, and I started doing it, and we crossed paths and joined forces."

Why form a group of arch enthusiasts?

Horowitz said it's like any other hobby. "Some people enjoy stamp collecting. Some people enjoy coins. Our fascination gravitates toward natural arches. And hey, it gets you off your duff and out into nature."

They may also try to standardize terminology. Some aficionados hold that bridges are formed by water erosion, arches by wind. Others say there is no difference.

On Saturday, they found plenty of nature — and arches — in Rattlesnake Canyon, part of the

Black Ridge Wilderness Study Area west of the Colorado National Monument. Horowitz said he selected the area for the gathering because Grand Junction had all the necessary amenities.

And, he added, "Rattlesnake Canyon was an attraction because many of our members have never been here before."

Nugee said she found her visit to Rattlesnake Canyon gratifying because it includes many of the elements that draw her back to the West time and again. "It is absolutely the most spectacular landscape in the world," she said. "There is no other place like it."

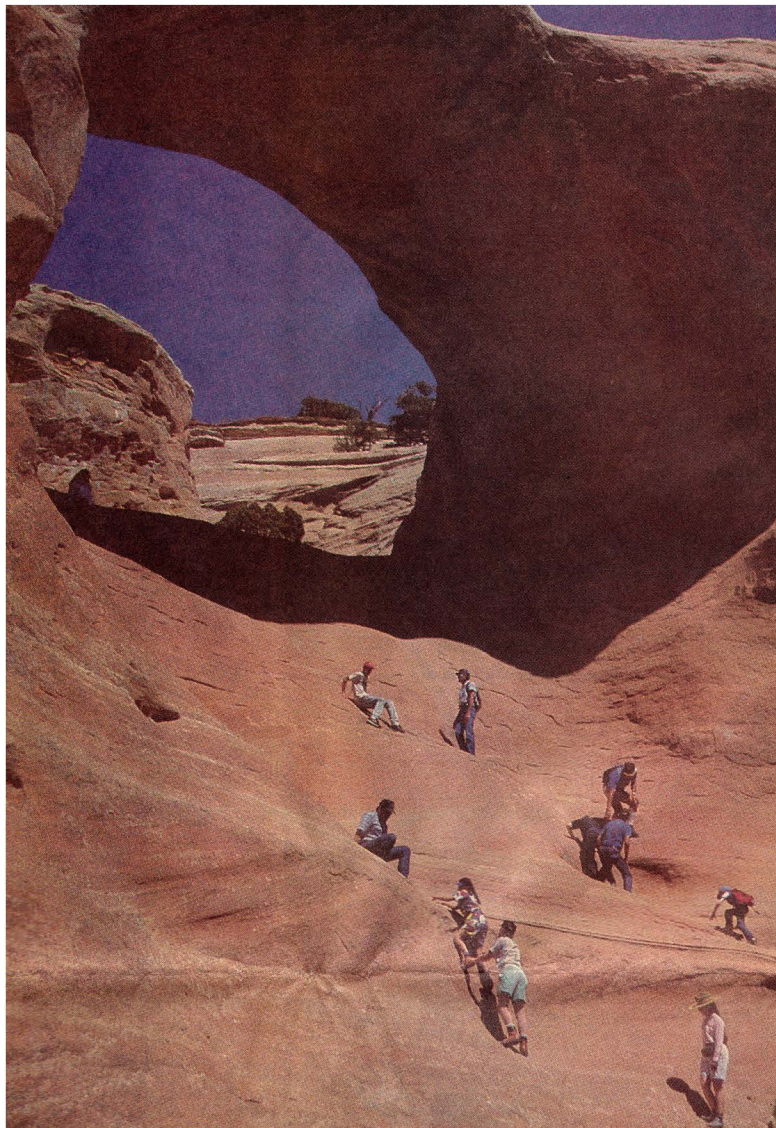
"The colors, and the space, and the clean air and the smell of juniper; probably just the aloofness of it," she said, are the main attractions. As for Rattlesnake Canyon, "It compares favorably" to the scenery in "Stagecoach" as well as that of Zion, Canyonlands, Bryce Canyon and other national parks she's visited, she said.

Nugee and the others were particularly enthralled with a part of the trail that climbs steep slickrock through Rainbow Arch.

"I liked that," said Diane Bingham, a registered nurse from Oklahoma City, Okla. "It's a ritual you have to do; you have to pass through an arch. I think the strata here, especially the dune-type strata, is terrific."

Bob Sherrill, the Grand Junction geologist who led the hike under the auspices of the Museum of Western Colorado, which co-sponsored the hike, said there are plenty of other arches in the Black Ridge to keep society members arch hunting.

In fact, he said, a recent aerial survey of the area between Rattlesnake Canyon and the Utah border spotted eight arches that haven't been catalogued.



Drew Munro/Daily Sentinel

Members of the Natural Arch and Bridge Society, a newly formed organization, are dwarfed as they visit Rainbow Arch in Rattlesnake Canyon on Saturday during the first-ever gathering of the group.