

DPC..continued

rial Valley fifth-graders to attend the two-night overnight camp during which time the Camp Coordinator and her staff teach lessons about the plants and animals of the Colorado Desert. The students sleep in Mongolian yurts, view the stars through a telescope, take a hike in Palm Canyon, uncover fossils and learn about the career of paleontologist at the Paleo Lab and have a "scavenger hunt" at the State Park visitor center.

DPC's legacy project in Imperial County is the Salton Basin Living Laboratory Field Trip Curriculum (SBLL). In 2008, DPC contracted with a desert scientist/educator to create place-based science curriculum about the geology, ecology and the human history of the Salton Basin that supplements Imperial County's 4th through 6th grade general science curriculum. The SBLL Program is a model for place-based elementary school science education, which is sadly lacking in this country. Between 2008 and 2012, more than thirty Imperial Valley teachers took our SBLL teacher-training workshops and incorporated some of our materials into their science lessons. The curriculum has been introduced to more than a thousand 4th through 6th grade students and their parents. The field trip to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is an integral part of the Salton Basin Program. The students have produced a variety of interesting reflections and projects based on the field trip experiences.

What has not changed over six decades?

The desire by corporations and interest groups to exploit the desert for its unique resources has not changed, although the type and magnitude of proposed projects have changed and, in view of the cumulative impacts from past and ongoing deleterious impacts, are much more menacing threats to what is left of the integrity of our southwest desert.

What has changed?

What stands out about the activism and ability of the early DPC to be effective was an on-the-ground intimate knowledge of the desert. Many of DPC's early members lived in desert cities, but most of them joined the Desert Protective Council because they were avid desert campers and hikers and naturalists who ventured out into the desert regularly to explore and camp out under the stars. They knew the desert from personal experience and could testify with credibility to the values of its terrain, plants and animals and unique geological features. Some of the DPC regular general meetings included a campout or a naturalist-led hike, Annual Membership meetings, held in October of each year to celebrate the DPC's anniversary, were traditionally held at some wonderful desert state park or national monument and included an overnight desert campout.

Today many sincere and committed desert activists and conservation organizations and their Board directors are urbanites. The large, well-funded national environmental organizations are mostly based in large cities, far from the desert. Too many conservation organization executive directors and staff have never spent time in the desert. Additionally, traffic patterns, work loads, information overload and technological distraction contribute to the fact that today's conservationists and would-be land protectors do not have time nor do they make time to indulge in weekend camping trips or steep themselves in the experience of wild places. This lack of direct experience of the desert and disconnection from nature in general contributes to the lack of passion and will to fight the battles to protect our irreplaceable, wondrous deserts.

In view of the above circumstances and the urgent need to educate the public and our representatives about the importance of the desert, DPC recently spearheaded a campaign to raise seed money for an educational desert documentary. By the end of 2013, the DPC had successfully raised \$25,000 seed money with which to engage award-winning filmmakers, Backcountry Pictures www.backcountrypictures.com to embark upon research and development of a desert documentary for television about the beauty, wonder and fragility of the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. The filmmakers, Sally Kaplan and David Vassar, finished initial desert scouting for filming locations this spring and are now working on the creative treatment. The next step will be to raise major funding from foundations and large donors that will be essential to the film production. This desert documentary, if picked up by PBS or the Nature Channel, could awaken a new interest in broad swaths of the nation-wide TV-viewing population.



To learn more about the Desert Protective Council and its current and past projects, or to join or donate: www.dp-cinc.org or call or email DPC's Conservation and Projects Coordinator, Terry Weiner at (619) 342-5524 or terryweiner@sbcglobal.net.



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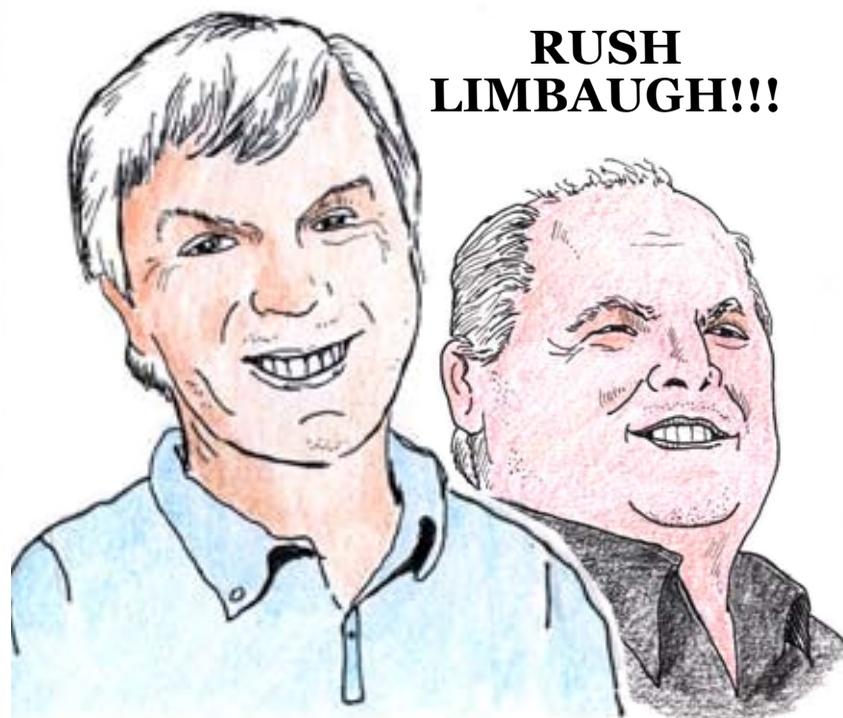
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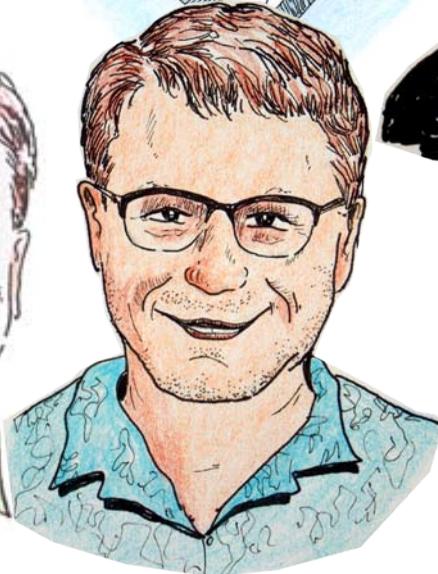
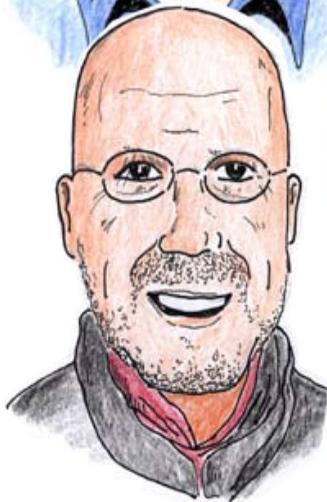
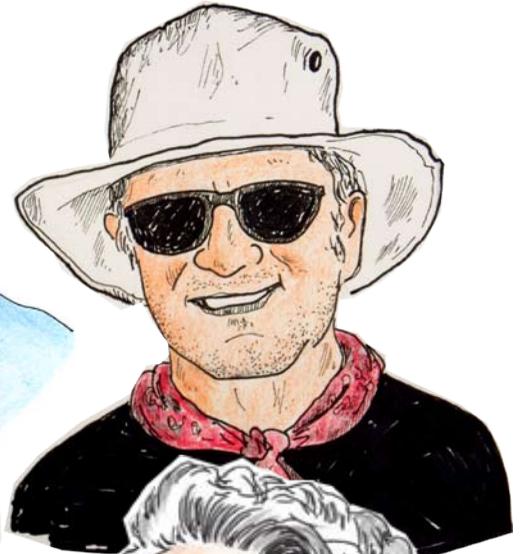
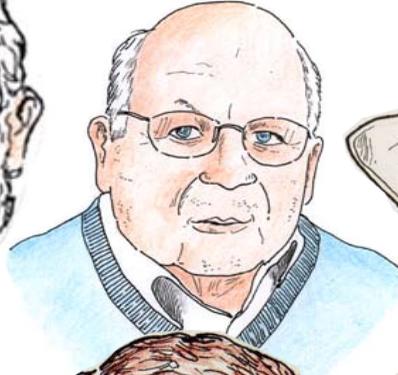
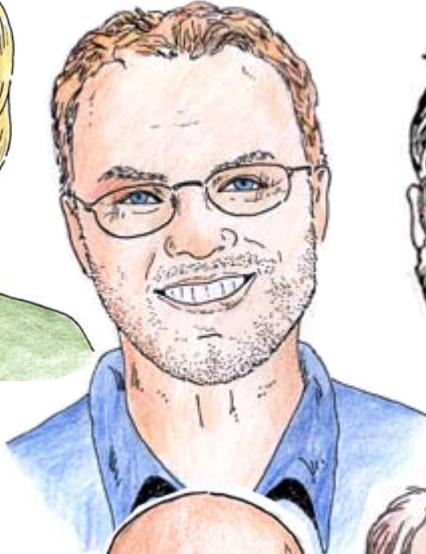
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