

## Mojave National Preserve / Fountain Peak (6,988')

Feb. 28 – Mar. 1, 2009

by Terry Flood

Returning to the Providence Mountains for the first time in many years, I pretty much had forgotten how really rugged they are, but I was quickly brought up to speed by the end of the weekend. With the assistance of Karla Westphal and Shane Smith (the son of CMC member Steve Smith), both of whom I had done desert peaks with previously, we took off on the trail to Crystal Spring behind the Mitchell Caverns Park Visitor Center around 8AM. After the trail ended we fought our way up the canyon and adjoining ridgelines strictly cross-country, which included hand-to-hand combat with cholla, agave, yucca, etc., and also lots of very steep and unstable terrain until we finally reached a saddle on the main ridgeline, south of the summit. From



there it was painstaking power-contouring around several false summits with some tough navigation just to keep it to class 3. After attaining the summit and taking some pictures, checking the register etc. (maybe two people a year signed in), we went for the best way down the canyon, and eventually it started getting dark as the days are still fairly short, and we ended up doing some bush-whacking until we recovered the trail at Crystal Spring. A very full day but thanks to Karla we all enjoyed a Fat Tire beer very well earned at the Hole-in-the-Wall campground.



The next day Shane went off on his own to go after Tortoise Shell Mtn., while Karla and I did a nice moderate ridgeline up to the highpoint of the Woods Mtns. (5,589') and returned via an adjoining one back to the car. I will return to Hole-in-the-Wall soon as several other prominences are calling my name out there in the Mojave, including Providence Benchmark, Columbia Mtn., Table Top, and more.