

LA JOLLA VALLEY LOOP
from Ray Miller Trailhead

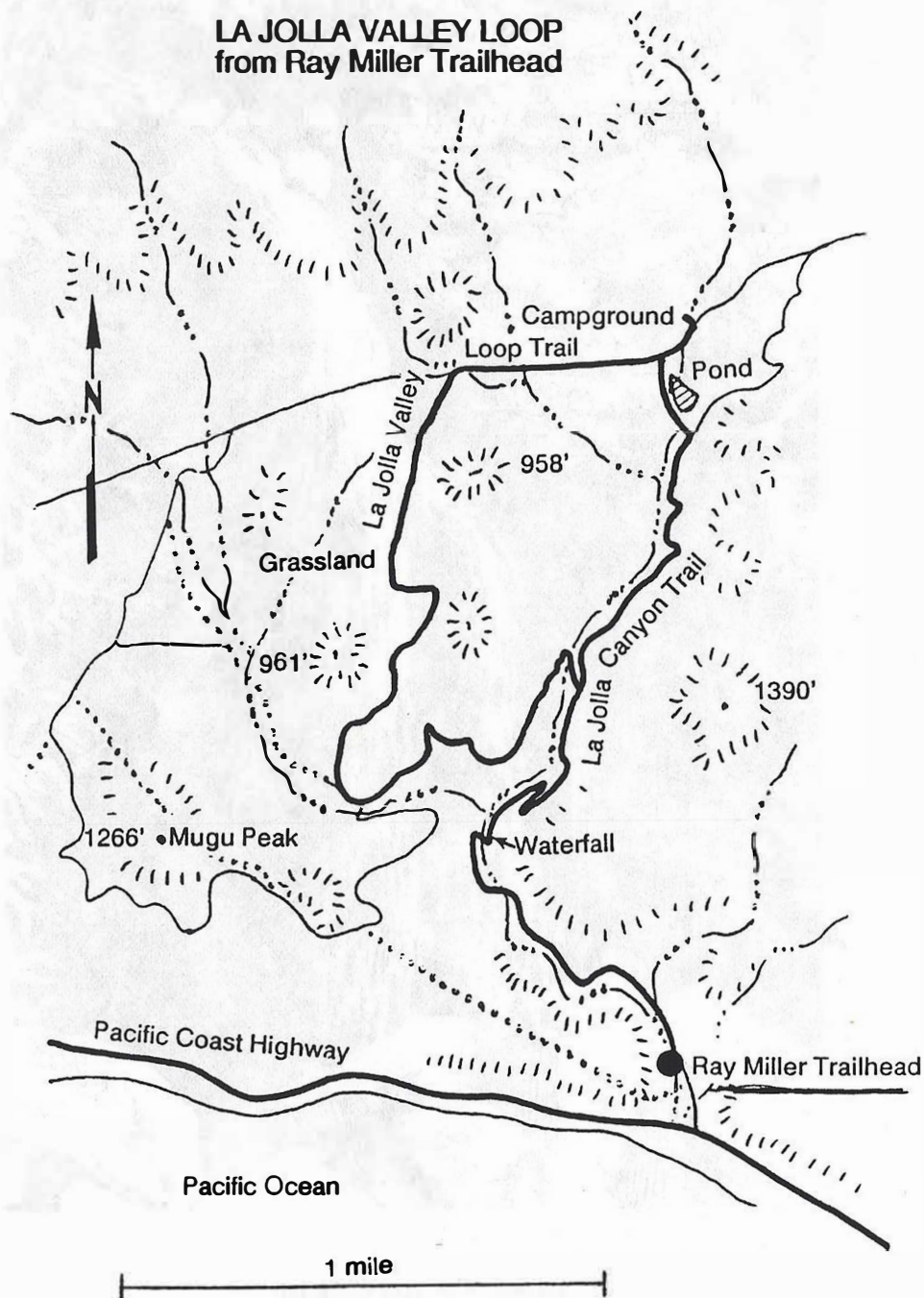
24 FEB 1993

Hike #165

G. E. TRETTEL

LA JOLLA VALLEY LOOP
from Ray Miller Trailhead

9:30 AM. -



Maps: Point Mugu, topo
Point Mugu State Park
Distance: 6½ miles roundtrip
Elevation: 1000' gain and loss
Terrain: Trail; some very steep,
some level
Time: 3 hours
Trailhead: Ray Miller Trailhead in
La Jolla Canyon

Drive west on the Pacific Coast Highway, 22 miles from Malibu to the La Jolla Canyon parking lot. As you drive along, the lazy Pacific surf noses in on your left; and up ahead Mugu Peak is still shaking the morning mist from its crest. La Jolla Canyon is east of Mugu Peak.

Walk north from the parking lot at the Ray Miller Trailhead, going upstream on the La Jolla Canyon Trail. An old road, built in the '20s and used to haul rock for building the Pacific Coast Highway, goes about ¾ mile into the canyon. We can see the quarry on the left as the trail starts up to the waterfall. Stop in the shade at the waterfall and notice the red roots of willow trees growing in the water. A rocky, steep, narrow segment of the trail lies ahead for a few hundred yards so we use an added amount of caution until the tread underfoot becomes wider. The waterfall is at an elevation of about 250'; the levelling off point after the two big switchbacks is at an elevation of 500' so we will have gained one quarter of the entire hike's elevation in just a few minutes.

At this temporary high point look at the sandstone along the trail — a layer of fossil shells is exposed. These shells were imbedded in sand when the land was ocean floor. Giant Coreopsis plants are in bloom during February through April. Come here then, if for no other reason. Continue along the trail for a few minutes and reach a side trail branching left. Take the left trail and it immediately drops down to the stream in the shade of oaks before

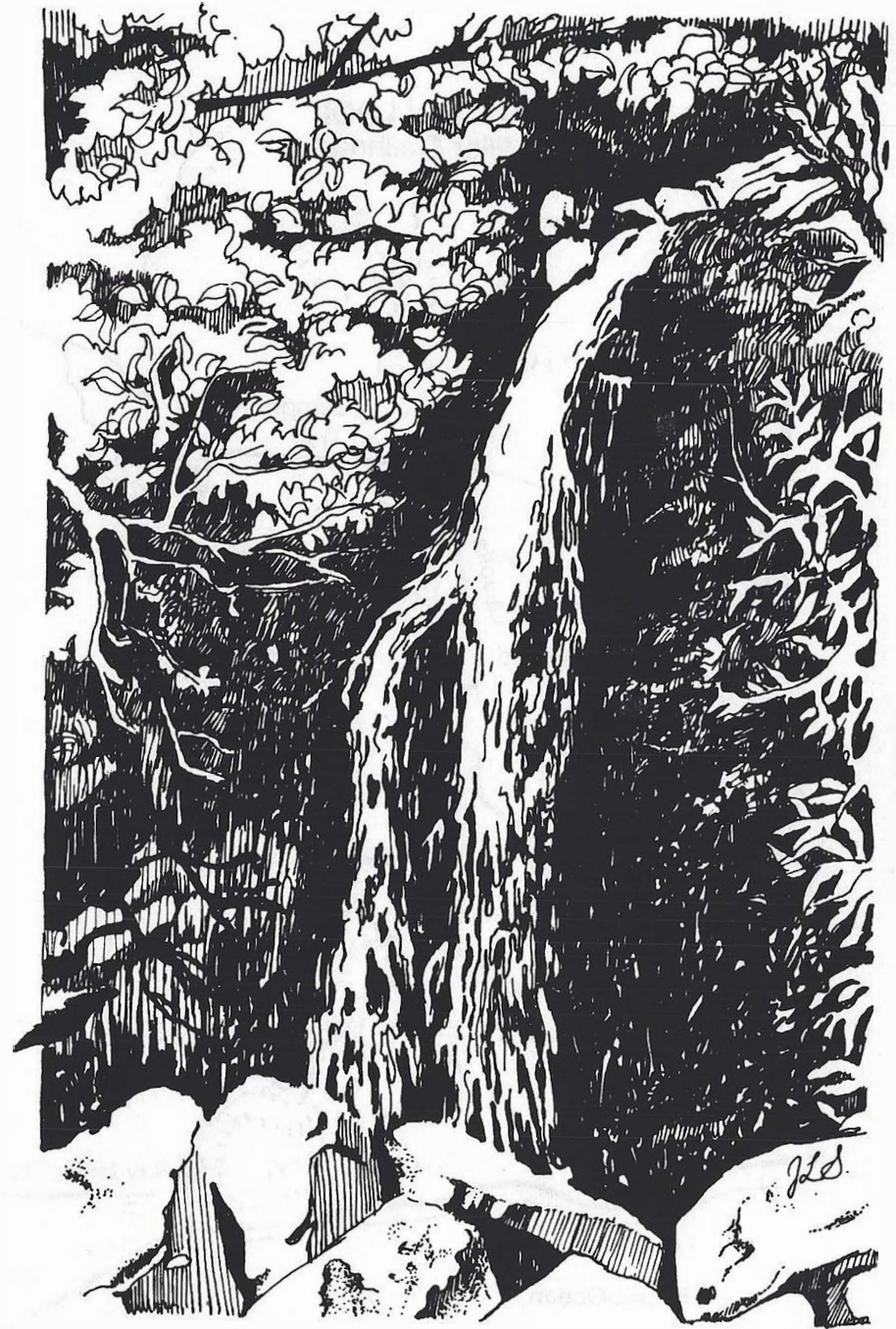
making a left turn to climb along the shoulder of the mountain. A viewing spot lets us look down on the trail we came on earlier, and on a clear day an exceptional view of the ocean. On the uphill side of the trail look for a Cholla cactus – a rarity in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The trail heads west toward the approach to Mugu Peak, then turns north for an uphill climb to La Jolla Valley. Our first view of the upper valley is astonishing. The Valley Grassland plant community that we see is included in the Inventory of California Natural Areas, and is one of the best existing relict stands of native California grassland, anywhere. Chumash Indians lived here for thousands of years, then it became part of a provisional Mexican land grant to Isabel Maria Yorba in 1836. The official grant of 30,594 acres, called Rancho Guadalupe, was awarded in 1846. In 1871 Isabel Yorba sold 22,000 acres of the Rancho to a land company that resold to William R. Broome in 1873. Under the Broome family, Rancho Guadalupe has functioned as a ranch into the present. Part of the ranch, including La Jolla Valley, sold to the State of California in 1966 for recreational use. In February 1971 the State Park and Recreation Commission classified the land as Point Mugu State Park, and adopted a use plan that has kept La Jolla grassland in its pristine state.

One of our favorite lunch spots is on a knoll east of the trail, and if anyone out there leaves so much as an orange peel, I will regret telling this secret. Continue north on the trail and we are on the eastern edge of the grassland. Not all of the vegetation is native; we will recognize introduced grasses mixed with the natives, and in springtime might even taste the waist high Mustard flowers. For the first ten seconds or so they have a slightly sweet taste – then hot!

Our trail intersects a west to east trail that comes from the saddle north of Mugu Peak. Turn right and follow this trail – more a road – until reaching a walk-in campground on the left. Restrooms, water, and shade under the oaks are available. If the sun was too hot to have lunch back along the trail, this is a good spot for eating.

To return we walk about 150 yards back on the trail we came on, then turn left onto a narrow trail and stay left until we pass by the pond, then angle right and meet the main trail down into La Jolla Canyon. A brisk 45 minute walk takes us back to our cars.



La Jolla Canyon Waterfall