

Mono Basin Journal

A Roundup of Quiet Happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



GEOFF MCQUILKIN

That the weather is most likely calm as you read this newsletter does not negate the fact that I write these words while thinly sheltered from a raging winter snowstorm of 80-mile-per-hour winds, just returned from snowshoeing across fencetops, the eaves of my house at waist level as I pushed across deeply stacked and drifted snow.

Indeed, what better time to write? One could not travel for any reason; tonight the highway is closed from Bishop to Nevada. Town, but seven miles away, is as remote as Hawaii; word is that in whiteout conditions the plows can no longer find the road and there is simply no traversing the route that I so casually drive on other days. The doors rattle, mysterious thumps come from the roof, and I wonder how quickly the

room would fill with snow should a window break open.

When morning arrives the air, exhausted by the night's exertions, is totally calm. We venture outside to see what work the wind has achieved. Houses nearby have retained their rooftops, happily, but all that blowing snow must have gone somewhere. Then we find it: the street is shoulder deep in wind packed snow, as solid as a sand dune and contoured to match. A block away, dogs run above the tops of cars and children slide down the snow-dune slopes. Later, the plows will come and be defeated by the dense drifts. For now, we skip over snowstakes to visit neighbors, reminded of the simple, ultimately unbeatable, power of wind and water. ❖



BARISHE MILLER

Poconip shrouds the islands as sunshine breaks through winter storms to reveal a landscape of snow.