

THE



BOULDER

motherlode chapter-sierra club

MAY - JUNE, 1988

ISSUE # 27

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

While we eventually managed to discuss rope handling techniques at our April 19 meeting, we spent quite a while considering fund raising to support the section's and Outings Guidelines Committee's efforts to keep first aid kits up to date. Those present decided that it would be appropriate to request donations at the parking lot or trailhead before a trip, but these should be voluntary donations, not a fee for participating. It was also agreed that some kind of limit be placed on how long to solicit donations, either a dollar amount or a period of time. Since no specific limit was set at the meeting, I am asking trip leaders to request donations at each of their trips through June of this year. Please route any money collected directly to Boris, and indicate clearly on the check or cover letter that it is to be counted toward the first aid kit fund. At the next meeting after the collection period ends, we'll decide how to split the funds between Peak and Gorge and Outings Guidelines.

We also decided that evening that it was time to purchase a new rope, and that a lead-quality (10 to 11 mm) 150-foot dry rope was the best investment. I will shop around for a good price, but would appreciate any suggestions or help.

That's the news from this corner. I'm looking forward to seeing you all on any of the many good trips coming up.

D. Joy

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Note: contact leader about tentative trips, marked "(T)".

- 5/15 Pyramid Peak (9983', Class 3-5, NAS) via Lyons Ck & N. Face. Ice axe and scrambling skills required, beginners welcome. Approach gains 4 miles and 2500 feet. Call Preston Andrews, 758-0374 by May 12 for meeting place and equipment requirements.
- 5/17 Tues. 7:30pm Hiking and Climbing in Spain's Pyrenees, slides by Barney Jones. Bring a snack. US 50 east, north on Sunrise, left on Zinfandel (first signal). 2 blocks then right on Cobblestone; cross Bridlewood, 11008 Cobblestone is 2nd house on right in cul-de-sac. Barney, 638-2519 or Doug, 452-7126
- 5/21 Dry Traverse of Giant Gap (Scramble IV?). Expect steep and exposed areas, and class 4-5 rock. Call leader for details, meeting time and place - Jack Rankin, 457-0776.
- 5/22 Mt Fillmore (7716', Class 2, Ogul Star). Beginning climb, 1300'+ gain, but approach may vary. Call ahead for road conditions, meeting time and place, limit 15. Leader: Debbie Bulger, 454-5140.
- 5/28-30 Mt. Florence (12,561' NAS), call for details: Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 6/11-12 Peak Climb/Backpack: South Yolla Bolly (8092', Class 2) and nearby peaks in Mendocino NF. Moderate, limit 12. Rex Smith, 443-1312.
- 6/11-12 Mt Warren (12,327' NAS, near Lee Vining) details: Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 6/18-19 Mt Hanna (US 395 near Sonora Pass Rd.) Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 6/18-19 Markleeville Pk Sat (9917' NAS/Ogul), Hawkins Pk Sun (10023' NAS/Ogul); car camp for night. Terry Wenner, 444-7464; Ed Vandercook 482-0112.
- 6/21, Tues. 6:30pm Potluck and Gorge Scrambling Clinic. We'll show you what to bring and how to keep it dry, then share slides from past trips. Bring an appetizer, salad or dessert - hot dogs and drinks provided. 2717 17th Street, Sacramento. Call Fred Fischietto, 985-7587 or Barb Beddow, 444-7774 with questions.
- 6/25-26 Iron Mt (11,149' NAS, Approx 2C/Cl 3) Doug Joy, 452-7126; John Watters assisting, 383-6150
- 6/26 Snow Mt (8011' Ogul) Debbie Bulger, 454-5140
- 7/1-4 Thompson Canyon, Northern Yosemite; numerous peaks. Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 7/2 (T) Palisade Creek, Gorge II. Terry Davis, 888-0383; Helen Wauters assisting.
- 7/8-10 (T) Fri-Sun Mt Gabb via N Face, (13,711' NAS 3C/Cl 5). Doug Joy, 452-7126, Brad Brooks 443-8576
- 7/9 Freel Pk (10,811' NAS/Ogul 3C/Cl 2) via Horse Meadow, optional climb of Job's Sister (10,823' Ogul). John Sarna 429-8024, assistant Marty Maskall 967-2075.
- 7/16 Echo Pk/Crystal Range via Wright's Lake. Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 7/21-24 Thu-Sun Backpack/Cl 3 Mts. Lyell (13,114'), McClure, Florence and Amelia Erhart Pk (most NAS); off-trail hiking and glacier ascent. Limit 8. John Sarna, 429-8024, assistant John Watters 383-6150
- 7/24-30 Sun-Sat Kings Canyon/Enchanted Gorge via Echo Col & Ionian Basin. Srenuous 37 miles. Black Giant (13,330'), Charybdis, Wheel, Finger, Reinstein & Scylla (most NAS). Send SASE to Steve Thaw, 30 Woodside Dr. Moraga CA 94556
- 7/30-31 Mokelumne Pk (9332 NAS/Ogul) Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 8/18-22 Thu-Mon Seven Gables (13,075' NAS) & Hilgard (13,361' NAS) Debbie Bulger, 454-5140
- 8/20 McConnell Pk (Crystal Range 9099' Ogul) Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 9/3-5 Stanton & Virginia (12,001' NAS) via Virginia Canyon. Al Gutowsky, 457-3338
- 9/17 Rubicon Pk (9183' Ogul) in Desolation Wilderness. Al Gutowsky, 457-3338

PRIVATE TRIPS

I'm hoping to organize some small groups this summer. Possibilities include: Eagle Crag (a Fifth Class pinnacle perched above Emerald Bay), the Sawtooth Ridge (Matterhorn, the Doodad, Dragtooth, or ?), Mt Conness, Mt Brewer, Bear Creek Spire, or the many possibilities in the Palisades. If you're interested, give me a call. Charlie, 454-3375.

With the arrival of daylight saving time, it is now possible, just barely, to squeeze in a quick exercise hike after work. There are several hikes in the Auburn area that are a relatively short drive, and still at least have a flavor of the outdoors. One such is the hike along the North Fork of the American River from its confluence with the middle fork up to Lake Clementine. This is about 3 miles each way, and would provide a fairly brisk 2 hour round trip. Start at the bridge over the North Fork at the confluence. Another steeper, but shorter hike from the same area starts at the highway 49 bridge between Auburn and Cool. It goes up the Cool side of the river following a firebreak up the fall line to the top of the hill, breaking down into ranching access roads at the top. I've seen many deer in this area. There is also the Western States Scenic Trail that goes almost to Cool before crossing the road and heading up the Middle Fork. I hope to get a privately sponsored trip going each Tuesday evening in this area and others. We plan to meet at 5:30 every Tuesday in the Roseville Square parking lot near the Bank of America. Hope to see you there!! Questions?: 725-8254. Roger Rollins

SPECIAL FUNDRAISING OUTING

Want to hike across the Sierra Nevada and let someone else handle the logistics? Anne Adams & Preston Andrews will lead an eight day adventure, sponsored by the Mother Lode Chapter, August 6-14. We will hike from Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon NP, up the South Fork of the Kings River, through Paradise Valley, along Woods Creek, through Sixty Lakes Basin, over Glen & Kearsarge Passes to be met by the same bus that dropped us off. Optional sidetrips planned for layover days may include second class peak ascent(s).

Round-trip transportation (from Sac) is provided, as well as all food on the trail, and lunch in the bus on the way home. The cost is \$250 for Sierra Club members, \$275 for non-members. To reserve a space (limited to 12), send a deposit of \$100 to the Chapter office, POB 1335, Sacramento 95812-1335, along with your name, address & phone #. The full cost is due by June 1. Full refunds will be made up to that date. For more information, contact Anne or Preston at 758-0374.

Ice Axe Training, Apr 17th

We finally scouted, and found that the northeast ridge of Elephant's Back provides a good training area - it's steep, open and has a safe runout. The snow was quite hard on the 11th when Brad Brooks and I checked it, and I was able to do standing glissades. Although warm weather and new snow softened the slopes in the intervening week, our trainees managed to get in many fast runs. We covered safe ways to carry the axe both in hand and on one's pack as we hiked in, and practiced step kicking and placing the axe for self-belay. Once at Elephant's Back, we concentrated on self-arrest positions: head up, head down, on back, on belly, and both hands. When everyone had gained some confidence with each of these arrests, we formed rope teams and practiced team arrests. The slope proved a bit small and soft to really test this technique unless the falling climber rolled. It was a full day, but everyone learned a valuable skill. Party: D. Joy (L), P. Andrews (A), A. Adams, B. Brooks, P. Gurian, M. Jouini, E. Vandercook, E. Van Fleet, H. Whalen-Bridge, T. Wenner. (D. Joy)

CARSON PASS SNOW CAMP

Feb. 27-28, 1988

Last year's snow camping trip didn't have enough snow at the end of January, while for this year's trip we were almost out of snow at the end of February. So much for the reliability of the Sierra snowpack. The pessimism ran so high among this year's participants that no one was willing to leave their tent in the car. The hopeful leader had a hunch, though: if there was going to be sufficient snow to build snow caves it was going to be found in the north-facing bowl, one-quarter mile east of Frog Lake.



Traverse down into
north-facing bowl
--Ann Mahaney

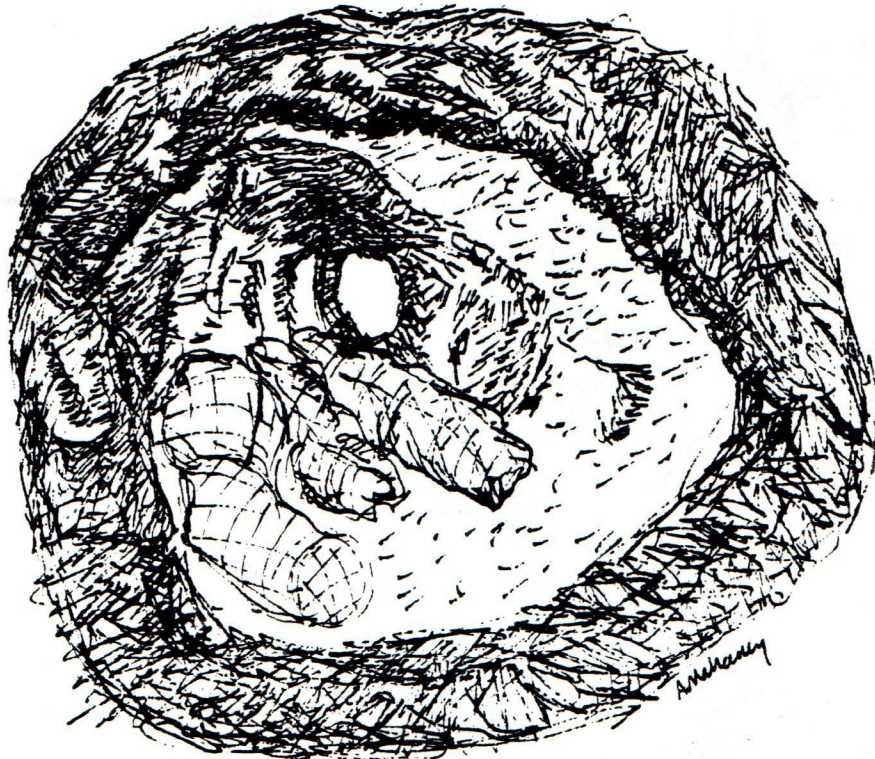
Entertainment on the ski in was provided by the sled one member was pulling, as it repeatedly flipped over and over while traversing steep slopes. It also had the bad habit of running up on the tails of its tower's skis on the downhill runs. A short, but steep slope east of Frog Lake brought us to the snow-filled bowl above Red Lake. Probing with avalanche poles we located an area with a snow depth in excess of 8 ft!

After lunch, snow-cave construction was demonstrated and the remainder of the afternoon was spent digging in the rock-hard Sierra snowpack. Pleas of "lets put up the tents and go skiing" were countered by the leader's declaration that this is supposed to be a "learning experience." But even the leader agreed that it probably isn't worth the effort to dig a snow cave for just an overnight outing. Nevertheless, three roomy caves with connecting passageways were completed to accomodate all 10 participants. The leader took time out from instructing and encouraging (or was it prodding) to construct a trench roofed with snow blocks for himself. The finishing touches were put on our shelters as dusk, and snow flurries, descended upon us.

We gathered during the evening in the community kitchen to cook our dinners, tell stories of winter horrors past, and sip brandy. (Alcohol is not recommended in a real survival situation because it causes blood vessels to dilate, thus robbing warmth from the body's core.) All during the night the wind blew and the snow flew, but all was calm and cozy in our snow shelters.

Dawn broke crystal clear, revealing several inches of fresh snow. Foremost in our minds, of course, was to carve turns in the new powder. So we telemarked all through our bowl and also in the one over the ridge to the south. Fears of collapsing snow caves during the night were allayed when in ski-proofing them we discovered we could jump up and down on the roofs without any hint of weakening. After lunch we skied back up the slope to Frog Lake and joined the Winnemucca Lake day skiers returning to the highway. We finally did come to appreciate the utility of the sled also, which hauled a sleeping bag and pad which had unknowingly come untied from one member's pack.

Everyone agreed that despite the general scarcity of snow we had done all right on this year's snow camp. Trip participants included Brad Brooks, Charlie Smith, Trent Levinson, Ann Mahaney, Jim Bulger, Sheila Ward, Ben Fleming, Ed Vandercook, Peggy Lehman and Dave Rumler.



Inside the snow caves
--Ann Mahaney

JOSHUA TREE ROCKCLIMBING--25 March-3 April 1988

The bizarre desert granite formations of Joshua Tree National Monument offer a wonderful place to prepare for the summer climbing season. Though the routes are short, there's a lot of 'em (the guidebook lists almost 1500!), there's a wide variety (face, crack, lieback, chimney), and there is a larger number of easy-moderate (5.0-5.6) difficulty routes than most climbing areas offer. The climbs are spread out, so that despite our being there over spring break, it never felt overrun by climbers. The campgrounds were supposedly "FULL" Thursday-Sunday, but the park rangers don't have any way to keep accurate tabs on the situation (campsites are free & there is no registration), so it's best to ignore the signs and investigate carefully--people seem to move around a lot mid-mornings.

Though rock-climbing was the main focus, the four of us (Anne Adams, Preston Andrews, Ed Vandercook, & myself) certainly enjoyed this fantastic landscape with its abundant floral displays. I tallied 25 climbs. Preston led the more difficult ones, though I managed to get in 12 leads and Anne also got to lead a number. Terry Wenner arrived Thursday afternoon just in time to see me come too close to taking my first leader fall on a strenuous off-width route named "Deflowered" (5.6). My virginity barely intact, those who followed assured me it wasn't nearly as difficult as I made it seem.

Some favorite climbs included: 2 face routes on Echo Rock, "Double Dip" (5.6) & "Black Tide" (5.7); 2 vertical cracks on Dairy Queen Wall which has dikes and chickenheads reminiscent of the rock at Lover's Leap, "Frosty Cone" & "Scrumdilishus" (both 5.7); "Mental Physics" (5.7+), a straight-in sustained crack in The Wonderland of Rocks (an area as inviting as its name--well worth backpacking into); "Walk On The Wild Side" (5.7+), 3 pitches of face-climbing on Saddle Rock; and finally the SW corner of The Headstone (5.6+), an exposed outside corner on a seemingly precariously perched boulder. All in all, it was a good week's worth of climbing--and a great way to improve our skills and confidence--just ask Ed.



BUILDING A
SNOWCAVE

Building a snowcave
--Ann Mahaney

I believe it is a bad precedent to request so-called "voluntary" donations on our trips. It's a fine line between donation & fee, and once established, it's but a small step to collecting fees as a fundraising policy (which idea recently floated out of the Outings Guidelines Committee.) While the Committee is to be commended for finally taking first-aid concerns seriously, this seems a poorly thought-out, knee-jerk response. The Committee has a budget of \$500, most of which is apparently spent renting space & copying materials for the leadership training sessions. The donation of someone's living-room would certainly free up some of these \$, and potential leaders could be charged the cost of materials. Trip participants who truly cannot afford "voluntary" donations are bound to feel uncomfortable. Collecting, accounting for, and submitting money provides an added burden on volunteer leaders. It's also somewhat dishonest to ask for money when it's not clear where it's going--to Outings Guidelines, MLC office, or Peak & Gorge? Who decides? Does the Chapter have a policy yet? Needless to say, this is merely my personal opinion; I hope it serves as fuel for thought.

Extremes and records have always captured the fancy of many persons, and the sport of mountaineering provides us with many of these. Of course, we are familiar with height and distance records, extremes of weather, and other criteria used to judge the worthiness of a climb.

On a Desert Peaks Section outing led by Randy Bernard, a long-time peak climber in the Angeles Chapter, many others and I had the opportunity to tackle the peak rated higher than any other peak on any known list as far as technical difficulty. Little Picacho, or more exactly Picacho Peak (1947') is rated class 6 on the DPS list. It is the only peak rated class 6, although events on our particular climb may cause a re-rating of some note.

After climbs of Kofa Peak and Castle Dome in Arizona, the remainder of persons wishing to complete the weekend's itinerary car-caravanned to a spot near the peak. Picacho Peak also qualifies with the longest drive necessary to climb any California peak from Sacramento. Arising with the first rays of the sun, we parked on the side of the dirt road that continues on to a state park on the Colorado River. Our group of about 19 proceeded up Little Picacho Wash carrying a few ropes and gear and hiked the few miles under the large 1800+' east face. Scare stories had abounded that weekend to thin our numbers (started with 42 climbers). Nervous talk about a step-across varied with descriptions ranging from two to five feet. But, we were in the good hands of Tom Jeter and Jim Kaminsky, 5.9 and 5.11 climbers respectively. I was introduced as a 5.7 assistant, although my experience lay deep in the past.

Tom spoke to reassure the uncertain, and urged efficiency and precision in our actions to expedite the climbing. Then we headed for the notch on the far side of the peak (class 2) and proceeded up ramps and ledges to the first difficulty, an overhanging drop-off of about 12 feet. Tom led and muttered, "a good 5.0" on attaining the lip. I followed and protested while being pulled up the section due to Tom's strong belay. I called for slack and climbed the volcanic agglomerate with some pleasure. Everyone seemed eager to give this section a try. After a few of us made the ledge, the next difficulty was the dreaded "step-across." About 100' exposure led all of us to move, belayed with some caution. I made a short whooping jump for the benefit of the leader's running video camcorder. From here the route proceeds upwards through a zig-zag maze of class 1 ramps and ledges, all spaciouly wide.

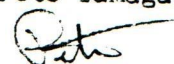
I arrived with others to the class 6 portion where an Explorers group was in the process of climbing. Youthful rockmen declined attempting the rated 5.9 bypass of the 15 foot ladder. The trip leader, Randy showed his fearless style in off-handedly climbing the overhanging wall unroped. I chose the ladder, but others in our party also tried the wall with Randy's upper belay, as we were forced to delay due to the other group ahead of us. One strong young female declared the moves 5.7 at most.

After a long wait watching the group ahead of us, Randy found a bypass of the plug that sat between us and the summit. A short rappel (one didn't want to think of the exposure here) led to a rubbly ramp that led to the top. Normally, the plug is climbed (class 4) with a rappel on the summit side. On my return, I helped people on the 20 foot etrier (easier than prussicking a rope), and declined climbing back up our rappel route (5.7?), choosing the easier practice of another rappel down the lower side of the plug. Most had mechanical rappel devices (which I like to avoid) requiring lengthy amounts of time to prepare and then execute.

All belayed points were again belayed for everyone on the descent. Aside from these, one must remember that if it is exposed, it's off route. I was directed to lead a few back to the notch and to our staging area away and down from the peak. We waited to regroup, and headed back to the cars in the dimming twilight. Randy suggested that we had set a record for the most people on top in one day, as well as forcing a five route to the summit and back.

I was greatly relieved, after the stories, to find that it wasn't so bad. One person complained of being "stressed out" after the stories and anticipation.. Earlier that weekend, as we were driving east on I-10. I thought of a story that Randy had told me about his workweek. As a funeral attendant he stood by while the ashes of a young man were released from a helicopter into the Pacific Ocean as his friends watched weeping and sobbing. As the helicopter had taken off, the deceased's favorite music was played. There had been a number of climbing deaths in the Angeles Chapter in the five years previous, and I wondered, "Did they do something terribly foolish or wrong, or have I been just lucky?" Prompted by that sad account, I thought about life and death for much of the weekend. I felt lucky that probably most of my more difficult and possibly dangerous ascents were now behind me, although I sincerely hope that life will continue with more good adventures.

Pete Yamagata 4-8-88



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Charlie:

Regarding the comment in the last Boulder as to why "Dragtooth was excluded from the NAS list for reasons only its compilers would understand," I would like to give a response.

Dragtooth has never been on any list--NAS, SPS or any other. In 1985 when the latest NAS revision was being developed, a full copy was printed in the Boulder with a comment period that lasted 8 months. Three comments said not to change the list. A number of climbers had previously climbed Dragtooth and no comment was received from them or anyone else. Dragtooth is not listed on the USGS 15' topographic map Matterhorn quad.

One should understand that certainly there are thousands of high points that would easily qualify as "peaks" in the NAS range. The list philosophy requires that the number and quality of the peaks selected remain finite with the prominent, or notable peaks in each area chosen. The previous list states: "There might be some criticism of the rating of certain peaks and gorges, or I may have left off some that an individual wants on. But all and all, I think it is a good list and will provide reasonable goals for mountain hikers, climbers, and scramblers."--Gene Markley.

Sincerely,



Pete Yamagata

Pete,

The point of my comment was simply to suggest that it is worthwhile to look beyond the lists, as there are many excellent climbs (such as the NE Buttress of Dragtooth) which are excluded. Your response doesn't really "explain" much. There are climbers who are more interested in the quality of the routes they do ("gotta climb the hardest I can") than in the quantity ("gotta climb the most I can"). Both are equally valid (& silly) pursuits; there's certainly room for both attitudes in our section. Gene indeed predicted criticism; I'm not the first & undoubtedly won't be the last. Perhaps you can take some solace in the fact that I don't care if Dragtooth is included on a list or not.

CS

PEAK-BAGGER'S LAMENT

The rain begins,
And I feel the summit recede.
What must I do now to reach the top?
My legs know too well;
Untold, they beat harder against the earth.

Entering a world of stunted trees
And thick-stemmed bushes,
I walk bent and sometimes crawl
The slight paths shaped by cattle
And other less-fragile creatures of the wild.

Worse is endured when these paths end;
Only where tenacious roots cannot penetrate,
Are left narrow avenues of smooth granite,
Mottled with pools of slick wet leaves,
And fenced by clinging wet branches.

The way turns steeper, footing less secure,
As I scramble onto ledges of broken rock,
And break through thorny brambles
To reach yet other ledges, over other avenues,
Up and over, on and on, up and up.

One slip sends me tumbling, clutching air,
Crashing square onto a scrub oak,
A bed of pointy leaves and hard branches,
More welcome than the rocks below,
Less doubtful than the path ahead.

So there I lie, cold and wet,
Muscles quivering, heart fearing,
Skin scratched to bleeding,
Hearing whispers to continue on,
However the path, whatever the cost.

But the rhythm of the rain is stronger;
With sudden resolve, I acquiesce
And begin the downward flight,
Flailing through the reticent brush
With a newborn downhill momentum.

Mocking my choice, the rain subsides,
Allowing the seeds of regret to grow,
And the whispers to begin anew,
"Next time, next time the top!"
Ah, "but for the rain, but for the rain."

John Sarna

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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$5.00 per year (6 issues). Address labels will note when it is "Time to RENEW!" Send checks, payable to "Peak and Gorge," to Boris Nahlovsky, 3276 Amethyst Lane, Cameron Park, CA 95682.

SUBMISSIONS:

We are looking for articles, letters, fiction, poetry, and artwork that would be of interest to the Peak and Gorge Section. Copy should be typed, single-spaced on 8½ x 11" paper. Materials will not be returned unless accompanied by SASE.

DEADLINE:

One week prior to the first of odd-numbered months. The next deadline is June 24.

THE BOULDER

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Roundtop, Carson Pass Country
--Ann Mahaney