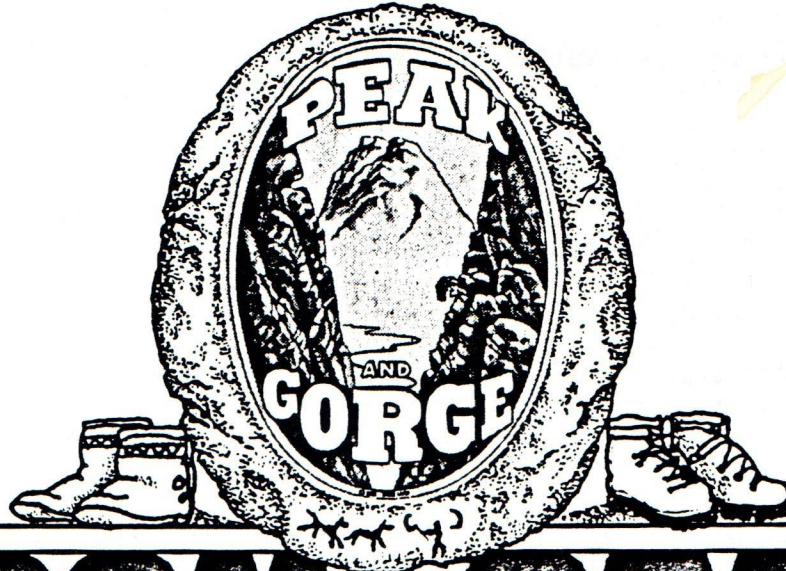


THE



BOULDER

motherlode chapter · sierra club

ISSUE #30, February 1989

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

I have one update of the insurance restrictions based on a letter I received at the November meeting: the Club's written policy forbids any trip which requires the use of an ice axe, as well as ice axe instruction. Thus, even a Class 1 or 2 peak whose approach or descent requires an axe for safe progress cannot be listed as a Club trip. It is the trip leader's responsibility to select a route which does not require any of the forbidden tools and techniques, both at the planning stage and when the trip occurs.

The plan for the meeting February 21st (at Robin Reed's) is to gather ideas for a letter to Sierra addressing the insurance restrictions. John Watters has spoken with the editor, and found he intends to keep any letters or articles about the restrictions from publication. In my view, this makes it imperative that we confront him with a letter, because until something has actually been rejected, his policy will have done no harm. We should not be so easily talked into abandoning our position, or the Sierra as a vehicle to communicate our needs to other members. Please come share your ideas.

At January's meeting, we discussed a change of Peak and Gorge's leadership. John Sarna expressed a willingness to chair the section pending completion of his doctoral dissertation (expected in April). Peak and Gorge is fundamentally democratic, so this is notice that at the April 18th meeting, the chair will be elected from among any candidates declared at that time. Any currently qualified trip leader is eligible for the chair, and self-nominations will certainly be accepted. Show your support for the section by voting.

Also, Peggy Lehman volunteered to help arrange meeting places for us. Thanks to her efforts, we have meetings planned through July now. She specifically did not volunteer to arrange programs however, and this responsibility rests with each and every one of us. Finding meeting programs is easy, really: just talk with people about mountaineering and scrambling. If something interesting comes up, try to find out if they'd be willing to share their experiences with all of us. Slides are a nice addition, but not required. Get their name, phone number, and the topic to the chair or meeting coordinator, or just bring it up at a meeting.

Remember, your efforts make this section interesting.

D. Joy

CALENDAR

2/21 7:30 pm Meeting, John Watters has volunteered to write a letter to the editor of Sierra publicizing the insurance restrictions. Hopefully, we can gain some support from a wider cross-section of the Club's membership than only those actively involved in mountaineering. In this meeting we will share our ideas for that letter with John, so he can represent us all accurately. Bring snacks for a long social hour also. At Robin Reed's, 3612 Rio Loma Way, 923-1553. Take I-5 north, exit east on W. El Camino, then left on Truxell (2nd light). At San Juan (Alberton's grocery) turn right. After 1/4 mile left on Bridgeford then jog right-left-right (on Millet, Vetch, then Rio Loma). Robin's is about 1/2 block further, a single-story.

3/3-5 Sierra Madre Exploratory, Class 2: drive to Aliso County Park Campground Fri (5-6 hr); climb Peak Mt (5843') and McPherson Mt (5749') on Sat, then Fox (5167') Sun before driving home. Moderately paced hiking, dinners out, car camping. Call leader for details: John Sarna, ~~429-8024~~; Robin Reed assisting, 923-1553.

3/11 Double-digit peak bagging along the divide between the South and Silver Forks of the American. Little Round Top (or Pineapple Pk, 9595'), Buck, Cody, Station and Eagle Pks, Bald Mt and others via a long, fast ski of about 25 mi, but not as hard as some recent trips. The alpine scenery along the divide crest should be fabulous. Call leader for meeting time, place, and other details: Jack Rankin, 457-0776.

3/21 7:30 pm Meeting: John Watters will discuss the geology and ecology of the California and Nevada desert lakes, slides. At Peggy Lehman's, 1041 Delores Way, off J St at Bas-kin-Robbins; 452-5057. Bring snacks to share and a chair or cushion. *3/21 7:30 pm*

4/1 Winter Peak Climb: South Crystal Range. A long ski mountaineering jaunt including Pyramid, Agassiz, Price, Little Pyramid, and a half-dozen other summits, return via Rock-bound Pass. Great views, 16+ miles, 4800+ ft gained, **early start**. Call leader for details: Jack Rankin 457-0776, Bob Carlson assisting (965-5952).

4/18 7:30 pm Meeting: "Peak Climbs in Canada" slide presentation by Don Mank. There will also be a short business meeting to elect the new chair (there is at least one willing candidate already so you don't need to hide!) At Terry Wenner's, 2621 17th St. (one block east and one block south of the Tower Theater downtown), 444-7464. Snacks invited.

5/16 7:30 pm Meeting: "Peak Climbs in the USSR" slide presentation by Kevin Tatsugawa from his participation in an international expedition. At Al Gutowsky's, 5700 Shepard Ave (east of Carlson, north of the J St entrance to CSUS), 457-3338. Folding chairs and snacks invited.

6/9-11 Sweetwaters: Class 2, grade 3D (max) ascending East and Middle Sisters and Desert Creek Peak (Oguls). Expect moderately paced hiking and car camp base. John Sarna (429-8024) leads, John Besbekos (348-3584) assisting.

6/20 6:30 pm Meeting: Gorge Scrambling clinic - we'll show you what to bring and how to keep it dry, with an "armchair scramble" slide show. This is a potluck, so bring an appetizer, salad or dessert; hot dogs and drinks will be provided. 2727 17th St (south of Tower Theater downtown), call Fred Fischietto (983-5607) or Barb Beddow (444-7774) for details.

PRIVATE: Partner(s) wanted. I'm looking for another person, or group, to climb MT RANIER this summer. Steve Richardson, 483-8023.

Any persons interested in the desert or desert conservation may call me at (916) 444-6319. I am planning two trips in February, 1989, and perhaps a wildflower tour in March or early April, 1989.

Pete Yamagata

CLIMBING RESTRICTIONS/INSURANCE PROBLEMS

The National Office of the Sierra Club has received over 200 letters (three binder's worth), primarily from Southern California, expressing concern about the Club's climbing restrictions. This is the most letters that the Club has received on any one issue in anyone's memory, according to President Richard Cellarius. It appears that as a direct result of the outcry, Mr. Cellarius decided to appoint a Task Force on Mountaineering Program/Insurance Review. His announcement just preceded the annual meeting of the Club in late November (at which a "demonstration" of the Angeles Chapter had been planned). The Task Force is chaired by Cal French and members are: Larry Bateman (Seattle mountaineering group), Gordon Benner (Outing Com.), Andrea Bonnette (SC staff), John Cheslick (BMTC, Angeles Chapter), Richard Fiddler (Board of Directors), Bob Howell (Insurance Advisor), Bruce Knudtson (ex-BMTC Angeles Chapter; now SF Bay), Sally Reid (Board/Angeles), and myself (Mountaineering Com.).

The charge of the Task Force is as follows:

- "A. determine the facts with regard to
 - (1) the cost of insurance for various levels of mountaineering and related activities prohibited by recent action of the Board of Directors--specifically, climbs, hikes, expeditions, instruction courses, schools and similar training that involve in any manner the use of ropes, ice axes, or any form of climbing hardware--and
 - (2) the number of chapters, groups, and members affected;
- B. explore the practical options for minimizing the damage to the Sierra Club, its membership, and its programs; and
- C. recommend alternative actions for consideration by the Board of Directors."

The first meeting of the Task Force was on December 17 when we spent some time initially expressing our many concerns regarding the existing policy of prohibitions and attempting to get clarification about the policy. It appears that the initial language of the policy would have permitted Class 3 climbing, but contained some ambivalent wording which was then 'clarified' by Bob Howell, the Club's insurance advisor, to prohibit Class 3, at least if a leader wants to take a rope along. The use of an ice axe is also prohibited, which causes all sorts of problems for general mountaineering trips and most particularly in the Northwest on many of their outings. Bob Howell is now in the process of developing some "supplemental instructions" for the current policy. What does seem clear is that the insurer will not allow any activity for which a rope or ice axe or other climbing equipment would be recommended.

Bob Howell briefly reviewed the history of law suits and efforts to obtain insurance. Most suits have resulted from training trips and from non-long-term members of the Club. There was a brain-storming session about possible solutions and then a vote to determine which items we would pursue in more depth. Although no one 'solution' would be sufficient, those suggested were: further talk and negotiations with insurance companies, including some 'education' about mountaineering; buy the insurance and rehab the program; charge a per person/trip fee; charge a lump sum yearly fee to 'climbers'/'mountaineers'; charge a fee to all members; define members affected and manage this population to reduce risk and hopefully the premium; use of an affiliated national corp.; use of an independent national corp.; use of an independent local corp. and club; explore foreign insurance; lower amount of liability;

leader carries own liability insurance; obtain a higher deductible; fund a letter of credit in order to obtain a higher deductible; use of a waiver; lower liability (currently \$41 mil); look closely at training and instruction. We are dealing with two central issues: 1) how to fund the insurance, and 2) how to reduce the premiums and risk.

Following a vote, the most popular items were combined and only some of the suggested solutions are being investigated at this time. In summary they are: 1) further work with insurance companies, 2) clarification of the number of members and trips affected, 3) development of a management of risk strategy which would define a population-at-risk and include various safety measures, and 4) investigation into the use of waivers, including research of case law by Club attorney. The present intent is to prepare some material for the Board of Director's consideration at its March meeting. Unfortunately, from comments made by Board members Dick Fiddler and Sally Reid, there does not seem to be much optimism about the Club's present willingness to contribute much if anything to an increased premium for the presently prohibited activities. So I really don't know if there will be a solution in the foreseeable future with the present Board.

I found the meeting too rushed and I hope that some of the other alternatives will at some time be considered in more detail. Locally, Ed Vandercook and Doug Joy are working on trying to determine the number of members and trips that might be affected by the prohibitions in our area. They are using past sign-in sheets (you see, they are important) and Ed's collection of old Bonanza schedules.

This challenge to continuing the mountaineering tradition in the Sierra Club may be caused primarily due to the high cost of insurance, but it may be exacerbated by the Club's absence of planning in this area due to a lack of real commitment on the part of the present Board of Directors to maintaining certain "high risk", albeit traditional outings activities of the Club. Replacement Board members are normally nominated by the existing Board, however, several petitions have been circulated recently (primarily in Southern California) to nominate several new Board members.

Please send your comments to me or call me if you have suggestions or comments that you would like me to make regarding the insurance prohibitions at the next meeting of the Task Force which will be February 11.

CLIMBING RESTRICTIONS UPDATE (Feb 13, 1989)

The second Task Force meeting was held in San Francisco February 11-12. Prior to the meeting we had exchanged correspondence in response to the document drafted by Bruce Knudtson, ex-Basic Mountaineering Training Committee Chair from the Angeles Chapter. This document attempts to define "climbers" in the Club, provides for the registration of these climbers so they are 'countable', requires that a waiver be completed on an annual basis by each climber, and requires the payment of a climbing fee (amount yet undetermined). It addresses such issues as Chapter "certification", and leader and instructor certification. In order to get insurance for mountaineering or climbing of any kind, the Club has to know more about the outings, how many members participate, that members are sufficiently trained and led by qualified persons. This will soon be true for all outings.

I continue to remind some of the other Task Force members that adequate Chapter autonomy must be provided because the Angeles Chapter has needs all its own which are certainly not representative of other Chapters where leaders and instructors are known entities, and where an excess of

regimentation is not necessary. Larry Bateman (from Washington) and I are the only TF members who are primarily interested in a complete Chapter outings program. Others represent primarily training interests and the National Outings Program.

Highlights of this second meeting are as follows:

- o Legal opinion has changed with regard to the use of waivers. Waivers will be required in the future.
- o Club President Richard Cellarius will soon inform Chapters that under current restrictions, the leader and assistant leader may take ropes or ice axes to ensure the safety of an outing in unexpected situations, such as stream crossings and rescues. They may not be used as climbing aids or on any outing where their use is recommended, since such outings are not permitted.
- o A questionnaire will soon be sent to all (57) Chapters, to be followed by phone calls by TF members. This will ask the number of participants and outings/ training for which a rope or ice axe was recommended or required. A separate questionnaire is being sent by the Club asking for the enumeration of all outings. Recent discussions with a different broker resulted in the broker presenting numerous questions about the Club's entire outings program. The Club is clearly seen as having a "control" problem.
- o Attorney Phil Berry (former Board member and husband of former President Michelle Perrault) recommended that a separate corporate subsidiary be formed, such as S. C. Outings, Inc. This would insulate the Club from liability, would have outings 'experts' over-seeing the program, and would be viewed by the carrier as having greater knowledge and control of the program. This possible future course for the Club will be very controversial. More about this later. He is in favor of seeking a higher deductible, but not lower liability.
- o No matter what the format in which outings are provided, there is a critical need for persons on the Board of Directors who are more supportive of outings. Whether a separate corporation or not, 'up-front' monies will be necessary since climbers' fees cannot buy the insurance. All Chapter outings depend on a more favorable Board. You will soon receive ballots for a National election for Board members. It is really critical that you read the statements carefully and VOTE! Come to the meeting for more details.

Jackie Stroud (916) 457-6338

GROPE (Grass Roots Outings People) Formed:

On Day 61 of the Insurance Crisis (Wed, Nov 30, 1989) a new group formed to take action. Randy Bernard met with chairs & representatives of the Sierra Peaks Section, the Desert Peaks Section, the Hundred Peaks Section, & the Southern California Mountaineering Association (rock climbing) at Sierra Club headquarters, and explained the proposals at the Mountaineering Training Committee meeting.

GROPE believes there are reasonable solutions to the insurance crisis which will allow the full Outings Program to continue, and wants to elect people to the National Board who will find those solutions. GROPE believes that many more members are affected by the decision than estimated (by the Board: 2000--ed) and also believes that lower premiums can be found with other insurance providers. GROPE leaders have also learned that a factor contributing to that decision was a \$1,500,000 deficit incurred by the Club last year. This involved such losses as \$500,000 by the Development Dept, and \$484,000 on the mail-order catalogue.

Outings people have responded by writing to the President & Board members asking for a reconsideration. The San Francisco office has received over 300 letters, more than on any other issue (eg. the Mondale endorsement), yet the insurance has not been restored. Rather, the Board has appointed a Task Force to "look into" the insurance problems, and it will report by May. But this is not enough. Feeling that the outings programs and people are at the end of their rope, Randy & others have organized a grass roots coalition to change the Constitution of the Board, and to place a referendum on the 1990 national ballot.

GROPE's goals are to regain insurance coverage for all mountaineering activities and to restore fiscal conservation & integrity to the Club. To achieve these goals, GROPE has petitioned to place three candidates on the slate for the National Board of Directors. The necessary signatures have been obtained, and GROPE will now campaign for: BRUCE KNUDTSON, BARBARA REBER, & R.J. SECOR. Other candidates will be questioned about their views on fiscal policy & the insurance crisis with a view to endorsing two other good candidates.

Finally, GROPE wants to prepare a referendum for the 1990 national ballot (the deadline for the 1989 ballot has passed) to ensure the place of mountaineering in the Sierra Club's ongoing activities. The referendum will require the Sierra Club to obtain insurance coverage for 3rd, 4th, & 5th class mountaineering, and possibly also water sports. GROPE is working on the wording for this--it will probably include provisions such as a two-thirds majority vote needed to remove such coverage and a staff position devoted to outings & insurance needs.

GROPE has one positive message: DON'T QUIT THE CLUB before voting on these issues! Remember this is not an Outings vs. Conservation issue. For information about GROPE and what you can do to forward its efforts, contact:

Randy Bernard
16311 Alora Avenue
Norwalk, CA 90650

GROPE BELIEVES THE MAJORITY OF CLUB MEMBERS WANT FULL INSURANCE & FISCAL CONSERVATION!

(the preceding was excerpted, with slight revisions, from the DPS newsletter, which was kindly forwarded by John Sarna.--ed)

Mono Lake Management Plan
Public Comment Meeting

1/7/89

On January 7th I attended a public comment meeting in Lee Vining regarding the U.S.F.S. draft Comprehensive Management Plan and draft Environmental impact statements for Mono Lake.

Although it was raining in Sacramento when I left and blizzarding at Cameron Park, by the time my brother and I reached the eastern slope of the Sierra the weather had cleared and the mountains were stunningly beautiful against crystal clear skies. We arrived in Lee Vining at 1:45 and followed directions to the American Legion Hall posted on the door of the Mono Lake visitors center. The meeting was well attended by approximately 100 people from various parts of California.

When the meeting came to order there were twelve people registered to speak although three more arrived later making a total of fifteen presentations. The speakers included many of the local towns people as well as farmers and sheep ranchers of the surrounding areas. Representatives of the Mono Lake Committee, the Sierra Club and San Francisco Friends of Mono Lake were among the speakers. In addition several biologists, water management professionals and members of snow mobiling clubs gave presentations.

All of the speakers had personal concerns which they believed required consideration such as protecting grazing rights, off road vehical rights, protecting wildlife and solitude. However, despite the vary different backgrounds and concerns represented by the speakers, overwhelmingly the two major concerns were maintaining the lake level and limiting the development or over-development of Mono Lake as a recreation facility. Specifically this referred to the expansion of interpretive sites around the lake, the construction of campgrounds near the lake and the development of a new museum/visitors center near the lake. The concensus of opinion clearly indicated that the speakers were in favor of preserving Mono Lake without subjecting its fragile ecosystems and delicate geologic features to the kind of high impact recreational conditions that exist for example in Yosemite.

The preceeding comments and opinions translated into support for the AMN or ammenities alternative as outlined in the U.S.F.S. draft Comprehensive Management Plan and the alternative supported by the Mono Lake Committee. Many of the speakers offered specific modifications to this alternative that must now be reviewed by the forest service before the completion of its final plan. The public comment period for the draft management and draft environmental impact statements ends at 4:00 pm January 19th.

John Watters

P.S. The Basque dinner was terrific!

THE RACE FOR KING

Luckily, contact with SPS climbers from Santa Barbara enabled a private trip to be set in conjunction with a regularly scheduled SPS outing to climb Clarence King and Fin Dome. Upon my arrival at Onion Valley trailhead, I learned that the regular SPS'ers had taken off at 6:30 a.m. and I thought that perhaps a slow group could be caught despite our 8:00 a.m. departure.

Well, we did catch them on Glen Pass, but not after the group had climbed Rixford in a kind of list-finishing mania. Taking the shortcut to Sixty Lakes Basin, we passed their group which had stopped to camp at the first lake. We pressed on about another half-hour in an attempt to secure a first lead on the climb on the next day. At 7 a.m. the next morning, the SPS regulars led by Larry Tidball with Steve Thaw and others passed our camp as we made our preparations for the climb. We alternately caught the group and rested on the way to the saddle to the south of King.

Some fine route-finding led all of us to the difficulties on the last 50 feet. I tried the Keyhole (way too small) and struggled up the jam crack and squeeze chimney while the others climbed a more direct route to the summit block. A few difficulties and a short hop to the top despite the guidebook's distortions gave me a full hour to peruse the register, **where** the signatures of Andy Sawyer and Bill Wolverton were found. After group photos and the sound of thunder, we hurried off the mountain with an enjoyable rappel for most.

I packed out the next day while the two I had come in with climbed Cotter with a few in the SPS group attempting Fin Dome. King can certainly be done with a single 120' 9mm rope although two ropes would facilitate things for a large group.

Pete Yamagata
11-9-88

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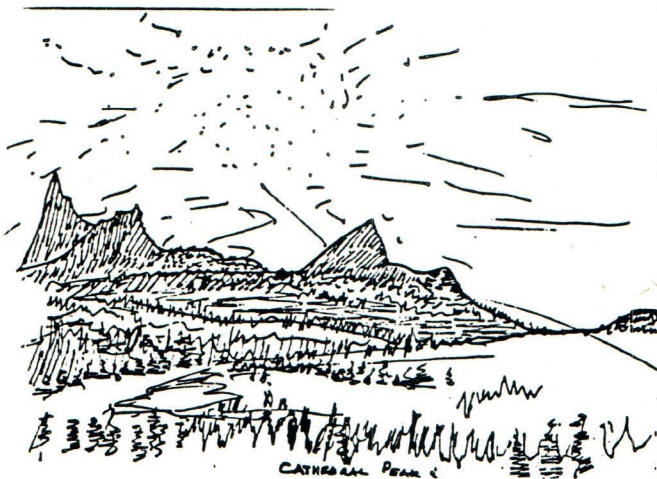
We are interested in articles, letters, fiction, poetry, and artwork that would be of interest to the Peak and Gorge Section. Copy should be typed, single-spaced on 8½ x 11" paper. Materials will not be returned unless accompanied by SASE.

DEADLINE:

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

THE BOULDER

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