

THE



BOULDER

motherlode chapter · sierra club

Issue No. 54, May & June 1993

Chairmans Column

There will be an election for the new Peak & Gorge chair at the home of Al Gutowsky on Tuesday April 27 at 7:00 p.m. The candidates are Alan Cooke and Bob Buckles. 5700 Shepard Ave, 457-3338. 7:30 p.m.

See you on the trail.

John Watters. Chairman.

GLISSADING: COME ON IN, THE SNOW IS FINE!

"Climbing Shasta is fine, but the ride down is the best part." I don't know how accurately I'm quoting John Watters, but I embrace the idea. For me, a nice glissade is one of the most fun parts of mountaineering. Given knees that hate any tough downhill, I'll prefer even a poor glissade. I think of glissading as comparable to downhill skiing when the alternative is postholing down the slope. Like, who wants to do that?

For those not familiar with the term, what is a glissade? Simply, its when the climber slides downhill on top of a snow slope rather than walking down the slope. It is usually done with an ice axe, though some slopes can be glissaded safely without if the slope is not steep, the snow is not too fast, and there is a safe runout at the end. The purpose of the ice axe is to slow you down and, if necessary, stop. Anytime you glissade without an ice axe, you are accepting the risk that if you get going very fast, you won't be able to do much about it except keep going until you hit something or the snow slows you down. Not a very good action plan around rocks, cliffs, etc.

There are three basic types of glissades: sitting, standing and crouching. The sitting glissade is when you literally sit on the snow, facing downhill, knees bent with heels on the snow, your trusty axe at your side with the spike end down to act as your brake. For a detailed description and good illustrations, see MOUNTAINEERING: FREEDOM OF THE HILLS. This is my idea of glissading, wet pants and all. My backside makes a stable sled and I can steer pretty well with my feet. The standing glissade reminds me a bit of barefoot water skiing. Nothing to say I can't do it, I just seem to fall down awfully fast. The crouching glissade? Looking at the illustrations, I suspect that is how I look in the split second between falling from my standing glissade and returning to the sitting position.

Other important things to remember about glissading: be sure of your runout, be sure of your runout and, finally, be sure of your runout. Remember that after you have lost control of your glissade, had your ice axe ripped out of your hand, hit a few rocks you never saw, it is now a little late to notice the cliff at the end of your ice hard snow field. If you aren't absolutely confident that you can control your speed and stop long before you hit anything, don't try it!

Speaking of speed, judging conditions accurately is one of the important parts in determining if and how to conduct a glissade. You should have a good idea how firm or soft, sticky or slick the snow field is. This is often more important than steepness of slope. Be especially wary of mixed conditions such as sunlit and shadowed stretches or areas that are hardpacked due to wind and other factors. You need to reduce speed or even stop before you reach icy spots in order to stay in control.

Other typical hazards when glissading include rocks in the snow (quite common around steep peaks) and fluctuations in the snow slope itself. I found an example of the latter when descending a snow field by Banner Peak this year. There was a section where the snow had separated (perhaps due to an avalanche) resulting in a break in the 20 degree slope with a 3-4 foot vertical drop, after which the slope continued as before. Though my speed was not very fast at all, I received quite a jolt when I dumped off the upper section into the trough where I hit some very hard snow. Another hazard that you are likely to encounter when approaching a snow field late in the summer are the voids in the snow around exposed rocks. An unexpected fall thru 3-4 feet of snow to uneven rock can easily sprain or break some part of your leg.

But in spite of all the concerns listed above, glissading is great. During late spring and summer, anywhere that has permanent snow has possibilities. Shasta is probably the all time great with the Avalanche

Gulch route becoming a human toboggan course throughout the summer. From Misery Hill, through the Red Banks, down to Helen Lake and beyond is the chance for a single glissade run of over one mile and 3000' vertical feet. It makes a very quick descent after a real slog of a climb. I mentioned Banner Peak before, which has a several glaciers in the area in addition to the snow chute that we slid down. During spring and early summer, the northern slopes in Desolation and Carson Pass areas have good glissading snow. One concern for these is your runout since the snow in the flats below melt before that on the slopes.

So if you haven't glissaded before, try it. Be careful but have fun. Consult good technical sources such as FREEDOM OF THE HILLS and learn from people with experience. Who wants to just walk down a hill? Let's slide!

Bob Buckles

**BASIN PEAK (9015'), DONNER PEAK (8019'), FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1, 1993
MT. JUDAH (8243')**

Getting calls from **Bill Trainor**, who had made the first winter ascent of Crestone Needle in Colorado, and the inimitable **Jerry Adams**, I was able to conduct a partial "cleanout" of the Donner Summit area peaks.

First, I picked up Bill on Sunday to ski to the top of Basin, on which we were treated to a beautiful display of snow-encrusted high altitude pines, once of which a photo of mine nearly became a Sierra Club calendar shot! We skied directly off the summit, from which we had clear views of Lassen as well as most of the North Tahoe area. Conditions were variable, and, as I had my Karhus, I crashed more times than I wanted. Grubb Hut was about three feet shy of being totally buried.

That night, after just getting out of the shower, I made arrangements with Adams to be picked up at 7:15 a.m. to introduce 5.11 climber **John Robinson** to a tour in the Donner Pass area. We left our parking near ASI Lodge to follow tracks and then up Donner Peak to enjoy sun and views. We then skied up to the top of Judah, where we de-skinned and proceeded to ski down the north side. After losing a thousand feet or so, we had lunch, then Adams and I re-skied the north side, seeing two alpine skiers making their quick jump turns down a wind-crusted, 45° section with apparent ease. We skied a lesser gradient to the east, and then thrilled to SUGAHHH snow down to where we last saw John, who had skied back to the car. We cut through the variable snow (me now with my Tuas) and reached the car by about 3:30 p.m.

We had seen many daring tracks throughout the area, with S's going down below cornices on Judah and, in general, carving up most areas with half-decent snow. Peak skiing is alive and well in the Tahoe area! PY

MT. KONOCTI (4299') MARCH 5, 1993

Rex and I left Sac at 8 a.m. to check our registers on VABM Fiske and "North Point," but found, on our arrival, that the low water bridge was inundated by fast-moving water! This prevented our crossing of Cache Creek, which is necessary to access the trail.

We decided to scout the northern highways, and then found ourselves in **Clearlake** inquiring at the Chamber of Commerce about **Konocti**, which I had done previously but had forgotten the names of the approach roads. We were connected with a person who described to me the "hard way" to do it via a fire break climbing steeply on the east side.

We found the trailhead and hiked up slowly, as it was getting warm. After about 2½ hours, we gained the lookout tower that stands atop the highpoint, and enjoyed the panoramic vista of Clear Lake and the snow-capped Coastal Ranges before us.

We retraced our route back to the car for a round trip time of 4 hours, 40 minutes. Clear Lake is well developed, making this view akin to, say that of Mt. Tamalpais or Mt. Diablo, but it was still a worthwhile sight to gain. We had fish and chips in Woodland, and were home at 8 p.m. PY

CORKSCREW PEAK 2X (5804'), PAHRUMP PT (5740'),
MOAPA PEAK (6471'), POTOSI MTN (8514'),
NEW YORK MTN (7532'), CLARK MTN (7907') 3X

APRIL 2-12, 1993

"Well, it'll be at least twelve hundred," the service rep said to me about my defunct transmission a few days after the trip. Well, for the 213,000 miles and twelve years service, and, at least making it home without a tow, it was worth it!

Rex Smith and I left early Friday morning to take beautiful U.S. 395 to Lone Pine and then to Stovepipe Wells for a pleasant night's sleep. I was worried about the heat, so we skipped breakfast and started early for a ten-years-to-the-day repeat ascent on this interesting, photogenic peak in **Death Valley National Monument**. To try and save dropping down, we got off on some steep, loose scree, but eventually joined up with the DPS route and made it to the top. The standard route was taken down for a quick return. We toured around the Visitor Center, then drove toward Death Valley Junction to discover a slow leak in one tire. We camped at one of my favorite spots, in the **Greenwater Valley**, then drove to climb **Pahrump** the next day, an especially scenic climb. We returned to catch the **Shoshone Arts and Crafts Fair**. Monday we drove to Pahrump, NV, to fix the tire and then over to NV 95 where we decided not to do Mt. Stirling due to snow and dubious roads.

Enjoying the **Las Vegas Museum**, we got a nice room at the head of "**Glitter Gulch** (downtown Vegas, Fremont Street)," and feasted at buffets and bargain breakfasts (as we always did when we were in town). Tuesday, we traveled 60 miles east to do **Moapa**, a class 3 routefinding challenge that is touted as "a favorite of local climbers," in the guidebook "**Hiking the Great Basin**," by **John Hart**. We saw a bighorn and calf, which prompted me to shoot a dozen slides with my telephoto lens, getting nice poses with the snow-covered **Virgin Mtns.** in the background. The class 3 "knife-edge" was easy, but we almost turned the climb into a bivvy due to losing the route on the way down! We carcamped near the **Valley of Fire State Park** road.

After breakfast in Vegas (\$1.99 rib-eye steak and eggs), we toured **Red Rock Canyon BLM Conservation Area** and watched rock climbers in what seemed to me the desert equivalent of Yosemite Valley! We got a room again, and Thursday, climbed **Potosi**, a short ways out of town. Spring is a bad time for desert dirt roads, as winter rains wash them out, and this year, the BLM road budget is pretty small to be fixing them. Back to our hotel/casino, we awakened early to drive south for an attempt on **Spirit Mtn.** Some hairy reconnoitering led us to the route where we decided to turn around and enjoy the museum in **Searchlight, NV**. We drove west on the Joshua Tree Highway (NV 164) to Nipton, and then to our car-camp at the DPS meeting place next to the train tracks, where about 8 trains roared by during the night!

We joined the weekend DPS trip led by **Greg Roach**, and climbed **New York Mtn.**, via **Keystone Canyon**, getting a short ride in participants 4WDs. I finally got this peak after getting to 30' of the top and turning around (we were way off route) back in 1990. On leaving the group to drive to Stateline, NV, and Whiskey Pete's, I saw a desert tortoise crossing the road, and took pictures and hailed the group caravan to stop and watch.

After our \$4.99 buffet dinner, we rejoined the group at Clark Mtn. campground. I did **Clark** over the same class 3 cliff for my third ascent! We drove to Barstow after the climb, after visiting the **Calico Early Man Site**, to camp at **Owl Canyon BLM** campground. Monday, we stopped by the **Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve**, then made our long drive home.

There were good wildflowers, wildlife, scenery, with 15 rolls (36 exp.) shot for which many people would pay hundreds (if you leave out the peaks, that is!). Stats for the peaks and hikes were about 19,000' gain over 45 miles with 1850 miles driven. Thanks, Rex, for the company and cooperation!

This has been a great spring for skiing with many trips scheduled and generally good weather and snow. On February 28 I led my first official ski trip to Big Bend. Though I had only skied there once before, everyone was sick of Castle Peak and decided to risk my navigation skills. With no trouble we got to Loch Leven Lakes and point 7136'. The snow was a little heavy, the day warm and sunny. There were eight in our party. Total time out 7 hours including almost taking a nap on a sunny hillside at lunch. A very pleasant trip.

On March 6 I went on Al Gutowsky's trip from Hwy 89 up Willow Creek drainage. I wasn't doing real well and had to push to keep up with the group as we climbed to a hilltop just south of Freel Peak. The downhill run was tough in steep, fast, heavy snow. I executed a face plant about every other turn. As I ended the 7 hour trip with a final crash, I was cheered to know I could sleep in the car since someone else had volunteered to drive.

March 20 I led a beginner trip with ten people to Castle Peak area. A quick look at the group showed that turning skills were very weak. Several appeared to have not had any instruction on how to snow plow. I risked boring some of the skiers by hanging out on an easy hill, practicing downhill runs with them. I also noted that two skiers had been given poles with small baskets for their rental equipment, totally unsuitable for backcountry skiing.

March 27 Fred Fischietto led a trip to the Sagehen Hills area, Hwy 89 about 7 miles north of Truckee. There were about ten of us on this 6 hour trip. Much of it was spent practicing turns on a north facing slope with a view of Mt. Lola. The snow was very firm and fast, weather moderate and overcast. Everyone skied until they were tired, then had a bit of lunch. We then skied up the Hills where the snow was too heavy for good turns. We finished with a follow the leader run through the trees. We got a few rain sprinkles as we loaded up the cars.

April 4 Fred led another trip, this time in a bit of bad weather. Concerned about rain, we headed to Mt Rose. A quick check of 30-40 mph winds and blowing snow was enough to send us back down to Brockway Summit (Hwy 267 past Northstar.) We parked just west of the summit at a pullout for an unplowed road leading to Martis Peak. The heavily treed forest protected us as we along the road up the ridge. It snowed off and on for the first hour. We ate lunch in the trees then practiced turns on an open hillside looking down on Lake Tahoe. The lake was covered by black storm clouds. Later we reached Martis Peak, very windy and icy on the exposed top. Getting back in the trees, we had some nice skiing back down the hill. But about half way down, we began to hit soft pockets in the snow. One moment you were skiing on top, then suddenly you fell thru 6-18". We eventually gave up and returned to the road to finish the run out.

April 17 I decided to lead my trip in spite of the snow storm which had hung around longer than expected. Only three others showed up and we headed off to the Castle Peak area, again hoping to avoid rain. No trouble at all. During the three hours we were skiing, my car got four inches of new snow on it. Though the base was solid ice, we quickly got a nice layer of powder while we skied around Andesite Ridge. I had planned to go on to Peter Grubb Hut but turned back when one skier fell a couple times on the start of the downhill traverse to the hut. We had blasting wind, blowing snow and poor visibility. It wasn't the kind of day for pushing anyone. We finished early and ate lunch in the car. We also took a little time to enjoy the Ski Museum at Boreal before coming home. For those who have not been to the museum, it has skis from before the turn of the century, including a pair belonging to Snowshoe Thompson. Also included are one of the earliest pairs of quick release alpine bindings, some titanium shell boots, and a pair of aluminum skis which look like used aircraft parts. Admission is free, supported by the

Auburn Ski Club, one of the early organized groups for downhill skiing.

With this latest storm, there continues to be plenty of snow for many weeks of skiing. I am also still looking for people interested in a snow camp trip 30 April-2 May to climb Shastina. If interested give me a call at 624-3620.

Bob Buckles

ALOHA LAKE SKI TOUR

10 Apr 93

I laughed to myself as I continued to drive down the road beside Fallen Leaf Lake. Al Gutowsky had told me park at the unplowed road going in to the lake or follow it in if it was partially plowed. Except for a bit of ice from snow melt, the road was clear. There were also so many bare patches that any attempt to ski out by the road would have been a struggle. When I reached the end of the road at the southeast end of the lake, I was afraid I might have gone too far. After all, Al hadn't told me where we would be coming down. I backtracked a bit and met the other two cars in our shuttle. Monty and Barney were pretty sure that the intention was to come down the drainage for Glen Alpine Creek which entered the lake at the point where the road ended. We parked two cars and started back out to Echo Lakes. It was almost 10:00 when I got my skis on. Pretty late start given a 6:00 AM start time in Sacramento.

After a quick climb to the store at lake side, we began to ski up "Runny Nose Flat." This is the area with the howling winds and hard packed snow formerly known as Echo Lakes. Fighting a 15-20 mph head wind, it seemed to take forever as we tried to catch up to the rest of the group. Al had let the rest of the party start almost an hour before those of us doing the car shuttle. After over 2 miles of continuous kick and glide (or skating for those who could do it) we reached the end of the lake where the rest of the party was waiting. Pleasant surprise, we had covered the distance in about an hour. We then began the climb to Lake Aloha. At least I guess that ice cube tray was Lake Aloha. There was no sign of water, open or frozen. Only the general flatness of the terrain and a few dead trees suggested the location of the lake.

It was about 1:00 as we stopped for lunch, sitting on a rock outcropping off the snow. In spite of some shelter from the granite slab, we soon got cold in the wind, encouraging us to get moving. The scenery was fantastic: snowy mountains ringing us on every side, clouds skidding across a deep blue sky, hills within the bowl made fuzzy as snow blew across the surface. We turned our backs to the wind, crossing over hard packed snow to the ice of Heather Lake. As we dropped below Heather, conditions quickly improved. The wind diminished and the snow softened, providing some excellent telemarking hills. Conditions continued good until the last mile out to Fallen Leaf Lake. There we ran into very poor conditions with steep humps of snow between trees and boulders where all the snow had melted. I ended up taking off my skis a couple times to cross rocks and open road. The group also got split up and we had a delay trying to link up with the rest of the party. Everyone finally got out to the car about 4:30.

I ended up with eight of the 13 skiers in my Trooper as we headed off to dinner. After a nice meal at Tres Hombres, we loaded up again to climb up the hill to Echo Lakes Sno-Park. I dropped everyone else off and ended up driving home alone. It had been another great ski trip. Thank you Al.

Bob Buckles

MT. DIABLO 18 APRIL 1993

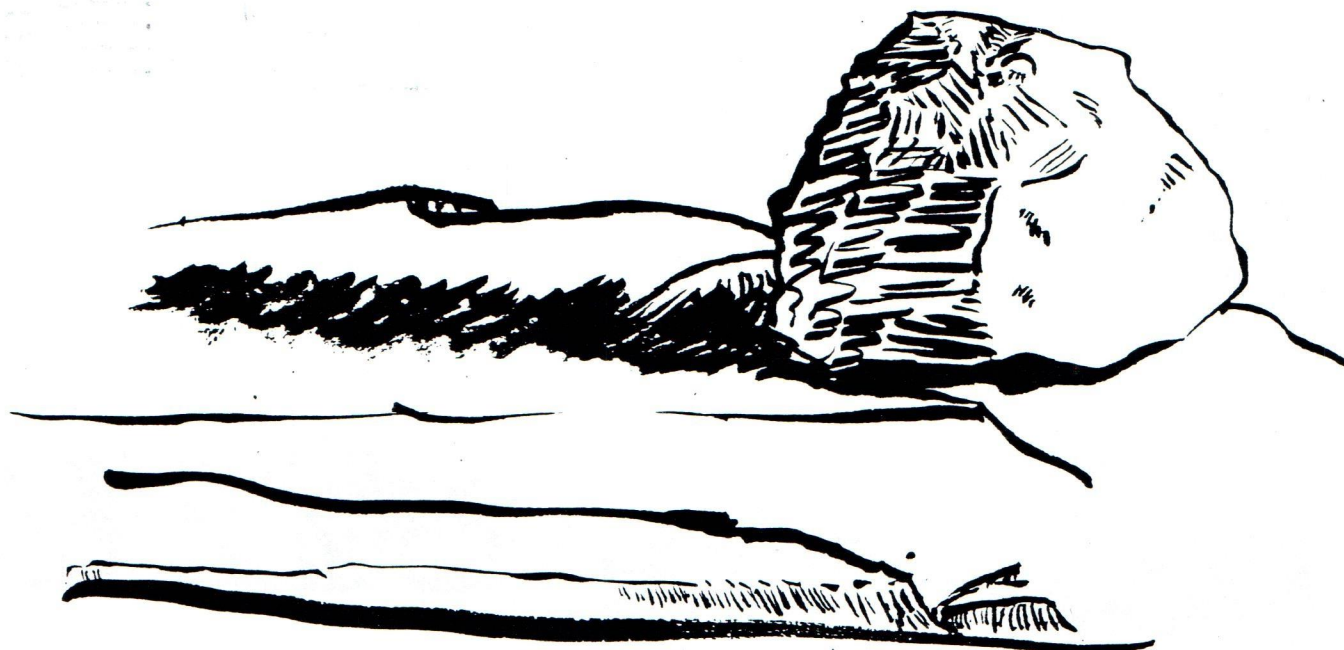
Pat Purcell led a 13 mile loop hike to the summit of this 3849' coastal peak. The trip began at about the 400' elevation level. The trailhead was at the end of a residential street in suburban neighborhood of the town of Clayton (on the northeast border of Mt. Diablo State Park).

A group of 18 hikers set out on the Back Creek Trail, as the grade got steeper the group began to spread apart. By the time everyone regrouped at a major trail junction at the 2200' level, a 30 minute gap between the front runners and the stragglers had developed. It was here that it became clear that one individual was in over his abilities. Pat explained to him that the going was much tougher ahead. He and 2 others turned back leaving 15 to continue the trek.

A few miles later we reached the 3000' elevation and the Juniper Campground for lunch. This grassy knoll provided splended vistas and we were entertained by a group of parasailers floating up and landing onto the hillside. After our lunch break we continued contouring around and up towards the summit. The spring wildflowers were in bloom and on the lower slopes there were immense poison oak forests.

As we crossed the 3500' elevation mark and the microwave towers we came to a hillside that was hosting hang-gliders. We regrouped one last time before heading up the road and dodging the Sunday traffic at the summit parking lot and observation deck.

We spent some leisure time enjoying the sunny day at the top along with a 100 other tourists, as we rested from our 9 mile ascent. The trip down was by a more direct 4 mile route. A good time was had by all and the day was capped off by with dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Fairfield. -- JOHN BESBEKOS



SHADOW TROWN BY A
ROCK AT 6:00 5/7/89
Ellen Van Fleet

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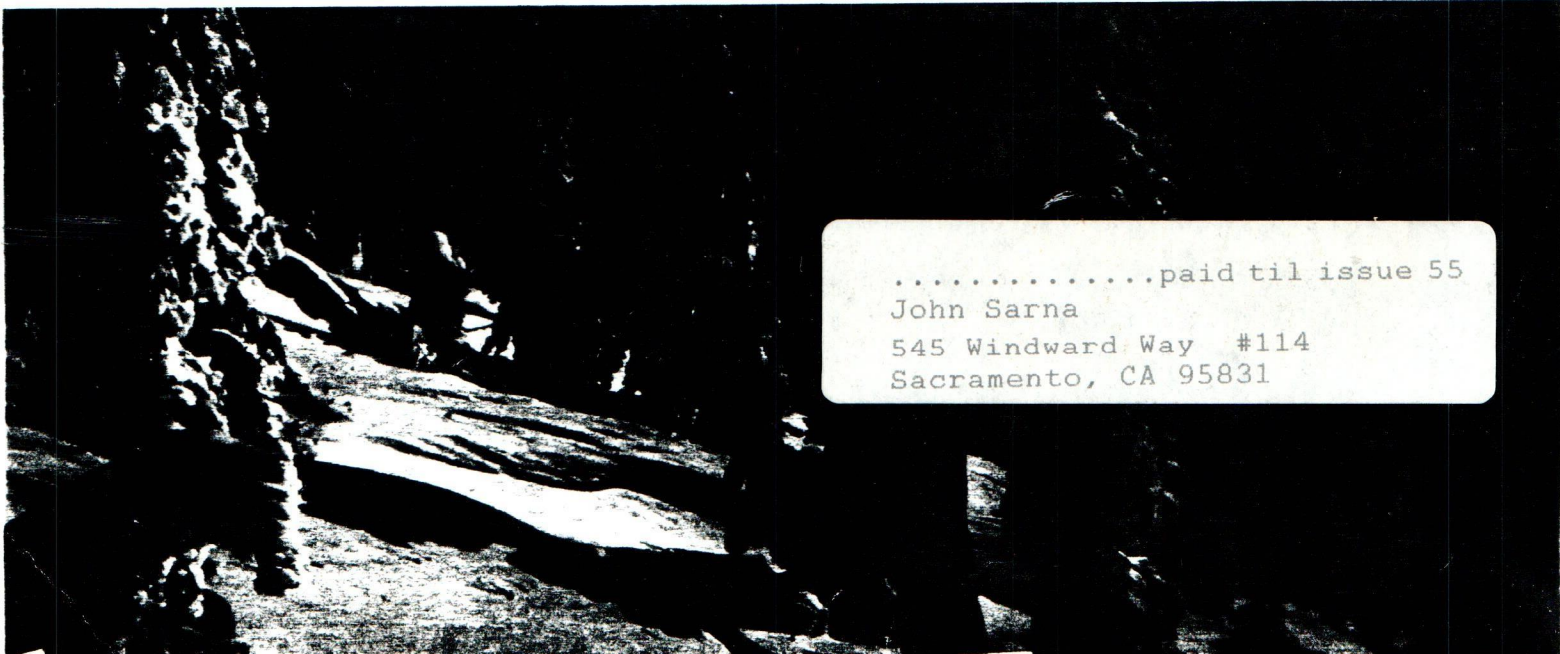
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Submittals: We encourage you to submit copy for publication. Articles,
letters, fiction, poetry, and artwork that would be of interest to
the Peak and Gorge Section are welcome. Copy should be typed
single-spaced on 8.5 x 11" paper with half-to one-inch margins,
and sent to: Boulder Editorial Committee; C/O John Besbekos;
P.O. Box 417415, Sacramento, CA 95841; phone 729-2725.
Submittals will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-
addressed stamped envelope.

DEADLINE: About a week before social meetings on even-numbered months.
The next deadline is: 14 JUNE 1993

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now-encrusted trees on Basin Peak Feb. 28, 1993 PY