

# THE



# BOULDER

motherlode chapter · sierra club

Issue No. 71 Jun - Jul 1996

## Chair's Corner

No, I'm not Alan Cooke. For those of you that haven't heard, Alan moved to Pennsylvania in mid-June. Before he left, Alan made a strong effort to recruit a new chairman for the Peak and Gorge section. While the effort was strong, the result was on the weak side.

Most of you don't know me and so wouldn't vote for me if this chair thing was determined by election. That is, if there was a choice. Doesn't seem like there is. I agreed to take the spot only because no one else would or could and only with the assurance that John Sarna would offer lots of help.

Let me be candid. My interest is climbing and hiking for the joy of being in the mountains. I have attended very few meetings of the section because they aren't important to me. I haven't applied for any patches, even though I'd qualify, because they aren't important to me, either. I climb for fun and only tackle objectives that are aesthetically pleasing to me, not because they are on a list. I started leading for the section last year, and used to lead for the Mazamas in Portland, because I want to share the joy I get with others who might not get out if there wasn't an organized hike available.

I tell you all that because it affects you. Meetings aren't important to me and so I'm probably not the best choice as meeting organizer. If any of you do view the meetings as important, how'd you like to volunteer to be meetings chair? Patches and lists aren't important to me so I won't put the effort into compiling and updating that others of you might. If such things are important to you, why not assume the role of section historian? I'll coordinate, act as a communication conduit, attend meetings when I'm in town, remind leaders about trip submission dates and the like. I'd also be thrilled to pass the baton very quickly to anyone who wants to do the whole chairman thing.

If you've got suggestions, comments or want to volunteer, you can reach me at 685-7164 (home), 394-4020 (work) or e-mail at [jim\\_bily@coregis.com](mailto:jim_bily@coregis.com).

Jim Bily





## Calendar



Note: The outings and events listed here are items that may be of interest to our readers. They are a mixture of private trips and events of other organizations as well as Sierra Club trips. Unless noted all area codes are (916).

July 1, Mon	<b>Outings Schedule Deadline (Sierra Club)</b> Leaders submit write-ups for the next BONANZA Outings Schedule to appropriate section chair. Covers time period from August 15 to October 15 1996.
July 4-6/7 Thu. - Sat./Sun	<b>Ansel Adams (Sierra Club)</b> This backpack and peak climb will either be 3 or 4 days depending on group. Limited to 8. Contact Al Gutowski, 457-3338.
July 4-7 Thur-Sun	<b>Marble Mountains (Maidu Group, Sierra Club)</b> Car camp with day hikes to Kings Castle, Black Mountain and Boulder Peak. Limited to 15. Contact Mark Olsen, 677-1010.
July 14, Sun.	<b>Class 3 Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> Reynolds Peak, 6 or 7 miles with cross-country. Meet CSUS Arboretum at 7 am. Leader is John Watters, 683-2748.
July 19-22, Fri. - Mon.	<b>Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> San Geronio and San Jacinto in Southern California. For details call John Sarna, 363-9243.
July 20, Sat	<b>Class 3 Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> Wrights Lake to Island Lake with a climb of Mt. Price. Contact Jim Bily, 685-7164.
July 20, Sat.	<b>Tell's Peak (Sierra Club)</b> An 8872' peak in Desolation Wilderness mostly on trail. Meet at CSUS Arboretum at 7:30am or Hazel Ave. Park & Ride at 8am. Leader: Bob Buckles, co-leader Dan Gargas, 682-1811.
July 20, Sat.	<b>4B Day Hike (Yahi Group, Sierra Club)</b> 15 mile ridge along the PCT east of La Porte. Meet 9am at Chico Park & Ride. Leader Alan Mendoza, 872-0419.
July 23, Tues.	<b>Annual Summer Picnic (Peak and Gorge) Starts at 6:30 in Swanston Park. Located on Northrop Ave between Howe and Fulton. Volleyball and net will be provided.</b> For more info contact John Sarna, 363-9243 or Jim Bily, 685-7164.
July 27-28 Sat - Sun	<b>Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> Blacktop Peak. Trailhead at Alger Creek/Silver Lake (June Lakes): Limited to 6. Call Al Gutowsky, 457-3338.
July 27, Sat.	<b>3 C Day Hike (Yahi Group, Sierra Club)</b> Butt Mountain (7900'). 11 miles and 2800' gain/loss. Meet at Chico Park & Ride. Leader Joe Dudek, 877-5647.
July 27, Sat.	<b>2B Day Hike (Sierra Club)</b> West of Carson Pass into Upper Truckee basin. Cross-country to 3 lakes. Meet CSUS Arboretum at 8am or at the Donut Shop behind McDonald's in Placerville at 9am. Leader: Wayne Luney, 383-9393.
Aug 3-11 Sat. - Sun.	<b>Backpack (Sierra Club)</b> Northern Yosemite Area. Enter Leavitt Lake off Hwy 108 and exit at Hetch Hetchy. Exploratory cross country. Contact Dan Gargas (day) 322-9950, (eve.) 682-1811.
Aug. 3, Sat.	<b>4D Day Hike (Maidu Group, Sierra Club)</b> Granite Chief, Needle & Lyon Peaks from Squaw Valley. Limited to 15 Meet at El Dorado National Forest Supervisor's Office 100 Forni Rd., Placerville. <i>You must call leader.</i> Mark Olsen, 677-1010.
Aug. 3, Sat.	<b>3C Day Hike (Maidu Group, Sierra Club)</b> Visit 6 lakes in Desolation Wilderness with rough cross country. Limited to 15. Meet at Pollock Pines. <i>You must call leader.</i> Bill Campau, 644-5339.
Aug. 3, Sat.	<b>2B Day Hike (Sierra Club)</b> Ellis Peak (8740') from Barker Pass. Meet at Roseville Square (Douglas & Harding) at 8:30am. Leader is Bob Buckles, 624-3620.
Aug 10, Sat.	<b>Level 3 Gorge Scramble (Sierra Club)</b> North Fork American River. Giant Gap by Green valley and Pickering Bar trails. Meet Roseville Square at 7:30am. Paul Platte, (209) 463-3466.
Aug 15 - 19 Thurs. - Mon.	<b>Backpack (Sierra Club)</b> Northeast Desolation Wilderness. Loop from Eagle Falls. Contact Dan Gargas (day) 322-9950, (eve.) 682-1811.
Aug. 16 - 18 Fri. - Sun.	<b>Mount Langley (Sierra Club)</b> 19 miles and 5000' gain dayhike. Class 2 climb to 14,027 foot summit. Call Mark Olsen, 677-1010.
Aug 17, Sat.	<b>Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> Phipps Peak, Desolation Wilderness. 12 to 14 miles. Contact Al Gutowsky, 457-3338.
Aug 17, Sat.	<b>Mt. Tallac (Maidu Group, Sierra Club)</b> From Lily Lake with swim in Gilmore Lake. Limited to 15 Call bill Campua, 644-5339.
Aug 17, Sat.	<b>Class 2/3 Peak Climb (Sierra Club)</b> Flapole Peak to Echo Peak ridge walk. Start at Echo Lakes. Meet at Hazel Ave Park & Ride at 8am. Jim Bily, 685-7164.
Aug 24 - 25 Sat. - Sun.	<b>Level 2 Gorge Scramble (Sierra Club)</b> Italian Bar to Humbug Bar. Overnighter in a wonderful canyon. Meet at Roseville Square at 9am. Leader Paul Plathe (209) 463-3466.



Aug 28 - Sep 2  
Wed. - Mon.

**Backpack (Sierra Club)** Ansel Adams Wilderness. Exploratory trip in the shadow of the Minarets. Call Dan Gargas, (day) 322-9950, (eve.) 682-1811.



People with modems can E-mail trip write-ups and articles to [JBDE@AOL.COM](mailto:JBDE@AOL.COM).  
No computer? No Problem! Handwritten articles will be accepted. Member volunteers will type.

***The Peak and Gorge Section has Entered Cyberspace***

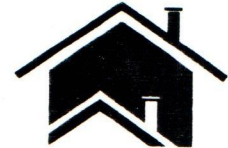
If you have a computer and are linked to the Internet, you can now visit the Peak and Gorge Homepage at:

<http://www.mother.com/~beren/pgs/pgs.htm>

Thanks to Ben Parks, it's listed under the Mother Lode Chapter Homepage at:

[http://spider.lloyd.com/~bparks/organize/sc\\_mlc.htm](http://spider.lloyd.com/~bparks/organize/sc_mlc.htm)

Any suggestions for improvement are welcome. John Sarna 916/363-9243 e-mail c/o [beren@mother.com](mailto:beren@mother.com)



**REI is sponsoring a service project on August 3rd. to Robb's Peak.**

Volunteer's are needed to sand and paint the Robb's Peak Hut as well as clear brush and upgrade trail. Volunteer's will get free camping, free dinner and free gloves. Interested people need to contact Kim Elliott at 965-4343.

**OUTINGS LIAISON:** The Mother Lode Chapter Executive Committee is looking for an active outings leader to participate as the liaison to the Executive Committee. This is a non-voting position, requiring that you attend monthly meetings of the Executive Committee (usually every 2nd Wednesday of the month in Sacramento). It is a good opportunity to represent outings interests to our Chapter decision makers. It also gives you an opportunity to become more familiar with the political and administrative side of the Sierra Club organization. For additional information call John Watters at 683-2748.

**End of the Season – Mt. Rose Ski Tour, June 9, 1996**

I will never understand the average back country skier. They spend the winter risking their lives driving in bad weather. They show up on trips where the snow is crusty, sticky, bottomless, or hard as cement. They ski in howling winds and white out conditions. Along comes the good weather and no one shows up for my trips. Get a clue people, the best skiing in the world is the Sierras in late spring and early summer. You won't get powder, but you will get the best telemarking snow that can be found. And the skiing goes on and on. In May I get in my turns at Castle Peak, Carson Pass, and the closed downhill resorts. Sugarbowl is a definite yes on my list with a climb up Mt Lincoln. I can share the entire resort with two snowboarders using a snowmobile for a ferry.

Mt. Rose area is always a good place to finish the year. After being the first place to go, it becomes the last, with guaranteed telemarking hills late into the year. This year was actually worse than average because of the heavy high elevation rains at the end of the season. But while all the lower elevations had lost their snow, Mt. Rose still came through. Terri Cuff, Barney Jones and I started out from the top of the pass (8900') and followed the ridge west, then north, skiing right from the car. I will admit that we had some tough sections since we had to stay on steep north facing slopes for much of our climb. At one point Terri and I walked after I took a slide fifty feet down the hill. As we neared point 9897', the route smoothed out enough for some great telemarking hills. I was a little short on energy so we just played around for an hour. Terri and I practiced our turns on the intermediate hills. Barney executed some beautiful jump turns shooting down a steep eastern bowl. Though we only went in a couple miles from the car, we could have gone all day if we had wanted a long tour. On the way out we ran across a photography crew trying to get some fancy snowboarder shots. At least one other group appreciated this great snow!

So next time you get hot working in the yard during May or June, take off for the afternoon. Grab your skis and your bathing suit and go for a little tour. Just don't forget the sunscreen.

**Bob Buckles, looking to ski in July.**



## Desert Trip (April 13-16) and Orange County Peak List Finish

I met Jim Pritchard and Ed Boulton in Las Vegas. They are my old Mt. McKinley pals from Seattle, Washington. We rented a 4 WD car and we were off climb around Needles, CA April 13.

I visited the Desert Tortoise Natural Area before Las Vegas but it had been cool & windy (80 mph winds clocked in California City the day before) so no tortoises were out of their burrows. I also visited Zzyzx Warm Springs near Baker, CA. A nice 76° warm lake and dozens of palm trees. Zzyzx Springs was once a private health resort but now it is part of the National Park Service.

### Turtle Mtn. 9313' 14 April 96

We left at 8 am and popped upon the summit by 11 am. It was clear and breezy. We saw some desert poppies and cactus blooms but otherwise it looked just like winter time. We needed a 4WD to cross the big wash. After the climb we went into Parker, AZ for a flashlight bulb and various goodies at Basha's Supermarket. Even Parker has an Indian Casino now!! Luckily I had the sketch of the Turtle trail head from Gene Olson (3/82).

### Mopah, 3514' 15 April 96

We had a nice camp near the end of the Mopah road. We left at 7:45am and it was hot already. It took us 4 hours to get to the top because of route finding problems. We finally found the correct "cave" the guidebook was talking about. The 3rd class pitch above the cave was easy but very exposed. The 2nd class slot was easy but very tight at the top. But the last so-called 3rd class pitch was really 4th class and very exposed. We roped up in 2 places.

The view from the top was spectacular - especially down to the Mopah Palm Trees at Mopah Springs. We saw lots of mountain sheep droppings all over the mountain. The hike out was long and hot. I used up 3 Qts. - it seemed forever to get back to the cars near the stone corral. The desert heat was scintillating. The register went back to 1954! Round trip took us almost 8 hours. A great desert day.

### Needles, CA 16 April 96

I wanted to shower at the Golf Course in Needles -- free but illegal... I got voted down and Ed Boulton got a motel for us to clean up in. I camped out near the "Snaggle Tooth" south of Needles. The next day I toured the old R.R. station and Needles museum. The Needles museum had a great big mural of Mopah. I also visited the Ward Valley anti-nuclear people. Then we all went to Mitchell Caverns and camped out near Colton Well.

### Edgar Pk - Providence Mtns. 17 April 96

Edgar Pk (7162') is the highest point in the Providence Mtns. We got up early at Colton Well and left the visitor center at 7am. We hiked along the Mary Beal Nature Trail and headed up the canyon... Hold it -- I said - That's the wrong canyon! We re-read our guidebook and sure enough we had to cross the desert about 1/2 mile N/NW to get into the correct canyon. The immediate canyon goes to Crystal Spring and Fountain Pk. This is not it. The correct canyon has mining trailings long the northerly side. When we left there were clouds way down on the peak and it was cool. By 8am we only climbed 600'. The terrain is very rough and very slow going. - heavy cactus & shrubs. At 5200' we took a right fork and at 5300' a right fork and by 10:30am we were at the saddle



(6700'). Now the ducks appeared to show us the way around the pinnacles and brush. I was on top at 11:15am- after a tedious climb through cactus, rocks, shrub oak - we all agreed this has been a very rough climb. Up on top I could hear and see the RR trains winding through the desert way below near the Kelso dunes. We left the top at 12 noon as more clouds moved in - at the cars by 3:30pm. My climbing boot ripped 6" along the seam on the way down so it was not possible to do Mitchell Pk. tomorrow (this gives me 75 desert peaks). So Jim and Eddie climbed Spirit on 18 April. After Spirit we went to a nice Hot Spring near Littlefield, AZ. along the Virgin River.

### **Little Jamaica Hot Springs 18 April 96**

This is a fantasy like pool above the Virgin River. A cool waterfall feeds the pool from above and a hot spring feeds the side of the 20'X40' pool. Great for a swim on a hot day. It was windy and cool when we were there but the warm water was great. 80°F water, very smooth and mineral laden. We camped out south of the hot spring and had a buffet the next day in Mesquite, Nevada. At one time Mesquite was a real nice town - but now there are 5 casinos and all the franchises.

### **Sitton Peak (3273') Santa Ana Mtns. 22 April 96**

I climbed Sitton Peak alone. I took lots of wire in case my boots fell apart. Last June 95 I turned back on Sitton Pk. in the Santa Ana mountains due to excessive clouds of gnats and deer flies. Today it was good hiking. Dry and hot. I left the Ortega highway at 7am. Clear, cool and no bugs. At 8am I was at the junction of the Verdugo Truck Trail. At 8:10am I was at Pidgeon Spring and my boots held up OK. At 8:25am I was at the Four Corners. By 9am I was on the false summit. I could see the actual high point so I dropped down and took the Sitton Peak Truck Trail to the base of the summit block. I saw some ducks and a very brushy trail to the summit. By 10am I was on the actual summit where there is a pole and 2 bench marks. Great views straight down to the Ortega highway, Mt San Jacinto, Santiago Peak and the Pacific Ocean. I scared a big rattlesnake on the way down. Soon I was passing blue and white lilac bushes in full bloom and back to the cars by 1pm. This is my last peak for the Orange County list. To receive OCG Peaks and Trails Award Certificate 12 peaks have to be completed.

#### The 12 Orange County Peaks

Sierra Peak (3045')	Trabuco Peak (4604')
Pleasants Peak (4007')	Los Pinos Peak (4610')
Bedford Peak (3639')	Sugar Loaf (3227')
Bald Peak (3947')	Sitton Peak (3273')
Modjeska Peak (5496')	Elsinore Peak (3575')
Santiago Peak (5687')	Margarita Peak (3189')

-----**Bill Hauser**

#### **Howard Steidtmann & Tobi Tyler tie the knot on Shasta**

They climbed the mountain separately  
before their paths crossed.  
Now, after climbing many a peak together,  
Tobi and Howard were married on top of Mt. Shasta  
on June 16, 1996.



## Obscure Objectives: Alternative Climbs in the Sierra

(Sawmill Pt, Timosea Pk, Owens Pt, Wonoga Pk, Reversed Pk, and Lookout Pt)

By Bob Sumner

Through the winter and early spring of 1996, Erik Siering and I made ascents of several Eastern Sierra peaks. We weren't seeking listed peaks or popular climbs; instead we sought both accessibility and obscurity to continue enjoying the Sierra during the off-season. We weren't disappointed with what we found.

**Sawmill Point**, 9416'. There wasn't much snow below 10,000' in early January which allowed for a dry ascent. This peak is accessed using the Sawmill Pass Trail, which we followed to elevation 7000'. From here go up the east ridge to about 9000' where the first steep rock is encountered. Here we contoured on to the brushy south slopes, choosing the left edge of the south buttress to go up. This yielded a loose class 3-4 zigzag route up ledges which ultimately led to ridgeline. Here a short scramble along the rocky ridge put us on top of this worthy point. The views of the higher snowy peaks and Owens Valley were superb. For descent, we took the gully just east of the summit which gave a short class 3 friction downclimb. A steep 1800' sand run dropped us southward to the Sawmill Pass Trail where it runs next to the North Fork of Sawmill Creek. *Stats: 7 miles rt, 5000' gain.*

**Timosea Peak**, 8625'. Having banged our heads against the wall the previous day doing an exploratory route on Keynot Peak, we opted for this pleasant surprise of a peak. We drove as follows: south of Lone Pine, leave Hwy 395 and go west on the Cottonwood Power Plant road for 0.1 mile, veer right and cross the aqueduct in another 0.1. Now follow the dirt power line road north for 1.5+ miles to a paved road on the left. Follow this to its end at 6000' at a microwave relay facility. Hike west straight up brushy/sandy slopes, eventually emerging onto a gentler rock and pinyon sprinkled ridge. Continue west until you get to a N/S running ridge; hang a left and go southwest to the top. On this warm March day, we were treated to superb views down into the Cottonwood Creek drainage. The long north ridge of Timosea leading to the Horseshoe Meadow Road beckoned us to return someday. The register was truly ancient - the first entry by Chester Versteeg in 1940. Sitting here looking across the valley to the Inyos, perhaps that was the day he pondered giving them a try. A year later he did, an event leading to the formation of the Desert Peaks Section. The next entry was not until the early sixties. For such an easy, accessible, enjoyable peak, it is quite surprising that it doesn't receive more visits - some years none, other years only a couple. We ran down the sand slopes back to the cars reaching them a scant 20 minutes after leaving the top. *Stats: 3 miles rt, 2600' gain.*

**Owens Point**, 11,411'. The consolidating snows of early April led to my ascent of this excellent peak. The north couloir is a tranquilized Southern Sierra version of San Jacinto's *Snow Creek*, and is visible from as far north as Big Pine. To get to the trailhead drive as follows: From Lone Pine, go up the Whitney Portal Road, then turn south on the Horseshoe Meadows Road. From the junction with the Lubkin Canyon Road, continue south another 0.9 miles to a dirt road on the right (this is just before the Horseshoe Meadow road veers to the left). Take this dirt road to its end at 6000'; any high-clearance vehicle should be able to



make it. For the peak, go west along the left side of the North Fork of Lubkin Creek eventually contouring up and southwest through pinyon groves to the north gully of Owens. Continue south up the rocky gully until you get to the snow tongue. Then its several thousand feet of snow climbing straight up towards the summit. The snow level during the first week of April was 7500' which gave 4000 feet of snow climbing. At around 10,000', you encounter a rock rib coming down from the summit which splits the couloir into left and right forks. For steep exposed climbing, which included some dicey mixed terrain, I chose the right chute. For a safer saner experience, go up the left chute to within 600 feet of the top, then cut left on any of several class 2-3 rock ribs that put you on ridgeline. Great views of the many Sierra peaks in the Whitney area. Descend the left chute route and then enjoy a big glissade! *Stats: 5 miles rt, 5500' gain.*

**Wonoga Peak**, 10,371'. An easy saunter from the Horseshoe Meadow Road. Drive up the road to about 9200' where there is a small parking area on the right (north) side of the road. Here pick up an old trail that follows Little Cottonwood Creek and go north for a third of a mile to a prominent drainage coming in on the right. From here head northeast up brushy slopes to the rocky summit. Impressive view of Owens Lake. *Stats: 2 miles rt, 1200' gain.*

**Reversed Peak**, 9473'. When viewed from the north, this conical shaped peak overlooking June Lake appears quite impressive. It can be done from just about any side since it is circled by roads, but when snow is present the best bet is to do it from the south. From June Lake Junction, drive south to just past the ski area where a dirt powerline road is on the right. Drive or hike in about a half mile, then go north up brushy slopes, sometimes picking up use trails (when snow-free), to a high plateau with a sometimes frozen lake. Head north toward the summit, either moving to the left to run along a rocky/snowy ridge or staying right through a pine grove to eventually scramble up the bouldery apex. When we did this in early April, much of the snow had already melted. Good views of Banner, Davis, and the Minarets. *Stats: 6 miles rt, 1800' gain.*

**Lookout Point**, 10,144'. This peak was another unexpected pleasure. If you like Cartago from the aqueduct, then you'll like this one. Drive as follows: From Hwy 395 between Big Pine and Independence, go west 0.8 miles on the Black Rock Springs Road. Then turn south and go 1.3 miles on the old Hwy 395. Turn right (west) on a dirt road just before a cattle guard. Go a half mile to an old corral and turn right on another dirt road, which is then followed for about 2 miles to another old corral near Harry Birch Springs. This is a nice place to camp. A high clearance 4WD is probably necessary for these last 2 miles. Hike: From the old corral camp spot, continue up the deteriorating road 1/4 mile, then go x-c southwest straight up a broad sand gully. After 2000' or so, get on top of the rocky/brushy northeast ridge of Lookout and follow it to the top. In mid-April, we had about 1500' feet of snow climbing along the ridge. We had great views of Indian Rock and Colosseum, but unfortunately found no register on Lookout's summit. While this steep ascent took us five hours up, we did not tarry in descent. We plunged-stepped and glissaded the snowy sections, then cut to the south a bit and ran down 3000+ feet of sand, returning to the cars just 1 hour 15 minutes after leaving the top. *Stats: 6 miles rt, 5500' gain.*



## Punta Velluda, Patagonian Andes

I went on a trip last year to the Fitzroy/Cerro Torre area with the American Alpine Institute of Bellevue, WA. Patagonia is famous for its terrible weather but I called on some karma I'd saved up and we had two weeks of mostly beautiful blue skies. Actually, I sometimes wonder about the reputation the area has because I was down there a few years ago doing the Paine Circuit and also had good weather.

Fitzroy, Cerro Torre and the neighboring peaks form the most beautiful, awe inspiring mountain setting I have ever seen. The massif rises out of the Argentina pampas, shooting up over 10,000' in a very few miles. On the day we arrived in the park, there was cloud cover over the Patagonian Ice Cap and its bordering row of peaks but the Fitzroy group stands just east of that ridge and was cloud free. I can't describe the excitement we all felt at seeing this magnificent mountain. We all had the fear that we'd get there during a bad weather spell and spend two weeks in the wind and rain with never a glimpse of the peaks we came to see. It was a great relief to see the mountain and to have it be everything we had hoped for.

The objective of the trip was to hike in the park, climb a few peaks and possibly do a circuit around Fitzroy. While we were all experienced climbers, we were definitely not skilled enough to tackle one of the "name" mountains. Our first objective was Pta. Velluda. If you've seen the two page ad in many outdoor magazines of the sun reddened granite towers with glacier skirts, that's Fitzroy. Velluda is just off the page to the right in the forefront, though you can see its glacier covered flanks.

From our base camp, we followed a climbers' trail up to Lago de los 3. In order to get around the lake and begin our climb in earnest, we had to do a fourth class traverse of a cliff rising from the lake. At that point, we learned that one party member was not an experienced climber and was not at all comfortable on rock. She and her traveling companion decided to pass on the climb and just hang out at the lake. That left four of us to tackle the peak.

After the cliff, we were on glacier for most of the climb, roped up because of the many crevasses. While reasonably straight forward, we did have to do quite a bit zigging and zagging as we got nearer the top to get around the crevasses. One particularly steep section bordering a yawning crevasse would have been less scary if we'd had two ice tools each instead of just an ice axe and crampons but that part was short and we all made it. After reaching the top of the lower glacier, we took off our crampons to climb a rock band. Lots of loose crud but not particularly difficult. When we got past that, the guide suggested that the summit snow field was easy and that we should leave our packs and crampons behind and just make a dash for the summit. Yeah, right. The snow field proved to be pretty icy and steep and I sure wished I had the crampons.

The summit view was incredible. To the west, the 4500' face of Fitzroy and its attendant towers filled the view. If I just say, "omigod", can you let your imagination do the rest? I don't have words. Below us on three sides were glaciers, one filling a valley, wrapping around and



disappearing over an ice fall. Wow. Off in the distance was a pyramid shaped peak illuminated by a shaft of sunlight breaking through a high cloud cover.

The descent of the summit snow field was just slightly awful without crampons. We quickly abandoned the effort and down climbed a rock rib that ran parallel to the snow. Not bad.

The rest of the descent was fine except for one spot. We rappelled down a particularly steep section of the glacier. I was in the lead and the second pitch of the rappel ended in a blind drop over...what? We couldn't tell what was going to happen. We could see that the rappel went over the upper lip of a crevasse but weren't sure what was next. A snow bridge? Or a gaping chasm? I couldn't even tell standing at the top of the lip. It was only after I went over that I could see a snow bridge just over to the side a bit. No problem. It wasn't that the rappel was dangerous, I just dreaded the thought of climbing back up and trying to find another route.

The round trip took about seven hours and the elevation gain was something on the order of 4000'

I'll save the story of our second climb and first glimpse of the Cerro Torre needle for another time.

Jim Bily

## Devils Peak

June 16, 1996

Just for grins I decided to take a run up Devils Peak. The last time I was up here I did not get around to bagging Devils Peak, and it has been several year since I did this little peak.

Rather than starting from the Palisade Creek Trailhead, near Soda Springs, I decided to use the dirt road that departs from the drain of Lower Cascade Lake and follow the dirt roads to the base of the peak. I thought that would be faster than the trail. The last time I was here, it also seemed to be an okay route.

This time out, I saw a No Trespassing sign on the gate immediately past the dam. I would swear there was no sign there two years ago. Undeterred, I went on anyway. From history, I knew the jeep trail I was currently walking along would intersect a forest service road shortly, whereupon I would be okay.

When I got to the forest service road, I saw the road was blocked at the intersection by a tree that had been cut down specifically to block the road. I hoofed it south. Shortly I encountered an intersection that I clearly remembered from two years ago. Back then, the fork to the right (which I took then as I was heading up Snow Mountain) was signed No Trespassing, but the fork to the left was not. This year, the left fork was also signed with No Trespassing signs. My route took me to the left -- the east side of Devils Peak -- so I continued the trespass.

I continued walking along the road and soon started seeing Forest Service Location Markers indicating I was on public land. After passing the Devils Peak summit block, I worked my way up a major gully that culminates right at the southern tip of the summit block. I circled around to the west face, and summited in the usual fashion.

I returned via the Palisade Creek trail. It looks like the Palisade Creek trail is now the only legal approach. Maybe this should become a charter member of the Sneak Peak Section peak list.

Oh, by the way, a sign at the Palisade Creek trailhead indicates some areas are closed except with permits. It is possible that one can get a permit at the Truckee Ranger Station to do Snow Mountain via the direct route, but I did not call to ask.

Yoko Mocho



Long Shot: Pyramid Peak's North West Face.

by Pete Becker

June 8th.

When Jim Bily told me he had the time and inclination to make this trip, my adrenalin level went up just a little bit. My curiosity about the steep and sometimes vertical wall of snow that is Pyramid's NW face had been percolating for years. From the easier routes I had looked down upon this permanent snow field. From the tiny lakes below I had wondered what it would take to get up it. This time I wanted to get close, take in some gear and if possible climb it.

A line drawn from the NW face through the 2 glacial tarns in the bowl between Pyramid and Mt Agassiz is about 312 NW. This is the center of the Crystal Mountain range, sort of mini grandeur at its finest. To the North is Mt Price at 9975. then roughly SE along the crest which scribes the bowl is Agassiz at 9967, then Peak 9686, and finally the crown jewel, Pyramid Peak at elevation 9983.

With Jim Bily along I had experience as my partner. Ice and snow are his thing. He's climbed and traveled on glaciers throughout the northwest and several times in South America's harsh Patagonia region. I've done 1 class 3 winter climb but I'm mostly a fair weather back packer and rock scrambler. I'd never used an ice ax or had crampons on in my life. Now I own them. I reviewed the dos and don'ts and the hows and whys of ice axe and crampon use in the excellent book Mountaineering: The Freedom Of The Hills and Jim added a few pointers while on the mountain.

A grandmotherly ranger in Camino had warned of prodigious amounts of snow with the Wrights Lake road open just to the Lyons Creek trail head. Jim provided the snow shoes and Saturday around noon we were ready to attack the 5 mile trek into our base camp at about 8400 ft. There was a lot of snow but not for the first 2.5 miles. In fact, we never did use the snow shoes. It was boiling hot and tough going through the mud and snow. The whole mountain range was on the rinse cycle and there were torrents of water everywhere running under, along side of, and creating huge holes in the snow. Before you reached the snow at about 7200 ft there were gobs of mud. Near Lake Sylvia and above it was a winter scene though the snow caps on the peaks around the bowl had melted. We camped on snow near some trees about 100 yds from the stream that flows out of the tarns. The stream was exposed so we didn't have to melt water and there was a large flat rock next to it that we could use to get off the snow and rest and cook on.



Sunday morning with crampons and ice axe we set off for the face. Moving up about 400 yards on a 40 degree slope facing west, we crossed over to the NW side and traversed and climbed another few hundred yards until we were at the base of the exposure. The face is only about 700 yards and is in two parts like a steep two part slide. The slide ends in a pile of rocks, passively awaiting your 40 mph arrival should you slip and fail to self arrest with the ice axe. The bottom part of the slide is maybe 50 degrees. The inbetween part we couldn't see so it probably wasn't too steep. The top part is very steep and capped by a massive cornice, a vertical overhang perhaps 30 feet high. At one point along the cornice is a protrusion or nose, very steep, which appears to be a way to the top and onto the ridge without scaling the cornice. We now had moved up the lower part of the slide to a rock outcropping where we paused to discuss the situation. From the moment Jim had seen the face from base camp he had his doubts. It looked like no way. But all morning we kept moving up and closer. We had said probably not but in our hearts we were saying yes. Now we were close and could really see it. Ropes and anchors were called for. It was risky enough trying to go up without protection. If we were unable to move up the nose and onto the ridge it would be doubly dangerous to be forced to downclimb without aid. From our perspective the cornice seemed to pass behind the nose possibly leaving an unbridgeable gap between the top of the nose and the ridge leading to the summit. The only way out other than down climbing would be to rock climb the western exposure. What we could see of it was class 5? so it didn't offer much encouragement. Reluctantly we agreed that this time we should pass. We had made a good reconnaissance and now we knew what it would take to scale it.

Since Jim and I had both climbed Pyramid peak many times we decided not to take a different route to the top but instead to traverse the snow field and climb peak 9686 for the first time. The views are good, snow was still on most of the lakes in Desolation Valley but only for a couple more weeks.

Glissading when possible, we reached base camp quickly. It was a hot wet slog out to the car but only 3 hours worth.

It was another trip, another experience in the mountains, this time with something left unfinished to return to.



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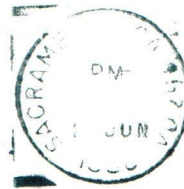
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