

THE



BOULDER

motherlode chapter · sierra club

Issue No. 73 Oct. - Nov. 1996

Chair's Corner

I heard on the radio this morning that chains are required between Twin Bridges and Meyers. I guess summer is over. Seems that many of us disappear once the snow flies, or confine our forays into the hills to lower elevations. I'd like to suggest that there is no more beautiful time to be in the mountains than winter. The snow adds sparkle and beauty. No bugs. Fewer people. Sure, winter travel is a bit more of a hassle, but the benefits make it worth the trouble.

Several of our leaders schedule cross country ski trips of varying difficulty. You can almost surely find a few trips that are geared to your skill level. There are also snow shoe hikes that require no experience at all. This is my personal favorite way to travel in the mountains. Great exercise and I can go just about anywhere. If you've never tried it, or only tried it on the old style shoes that required bow legs, why not give it a whirl? I'll be scheduling some snow shoe overnights after the first of the year to add the element of winter camping. It's not as grim as you might imagine!

I've mentioned section meetings several times and gotten very little response. At our share-your-summer-pictures meeting on October 29, those in attendance agreed to try a Christmas pot luck on December 13. If folks show up, we'll take that as a sign that you want some degree of social activity. We also scheduled a meeting on January 21 to trade ideas for trips for the coming season. We'd really like all leaders, and potential leaders, to come to the January meeting. We'd all benefit from hearing everyone's ideas and we might even try to coordinate some dates so we're not tripping over each other.

Call me at 394-4020 days or e-mail me a jim_bily @ coregis.com.

See you on the trails!

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).

Nov. 10, Sun.	Day Hike (Sierra Club) Old Stagecoach Route near Auburn. Grade 1A Dayhike. Meet at Roseville Square at 10am. Leader: Marilyn Jouini, 334-7293.
Nov. 16, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Maidu Group) Little Round Top Limited to 15. You <i>must</i> call leader: Bill Campau, 644-5339. Meet Pollock Pines Safeway at 8am.
Nov. 16, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Depending on snow. Meet at Roseville Square at 8am. Call leader to confirm trip, Bob Buckles 624-3620.
Nov. 23, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Meet at CSUS Arboretum at 7am. Leader: Al Gutowsky, 457-3338.
Nov. 23, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Depending on snow. Meet at Roseville Square at 8am. Call leader to confirm trip, Bob Buckles 624-3620.
Nov. 24, Sun.	2B Day Hike (Sierra Club) Tomales Point at Point Reyes. Meet CSUS Arboretum at 7:30am or 4th&C at Davis, 8am. Leader: Wayne Luney, 383-9393.
Nov. 30, Sat.	2B Day Hike (Sierra Club) Bolinas Ridge - Barnabe Mountain Loop. Hike to 1466' peak in Samuel Taylor State Park. Meet 11th&Q at 7:30am or Cheese Factory at 9:45am. Jack Bussio, 457-3794.
Dec. 7, Sat.	Beginner/Low Intermediate Ski Trip (Sierra Club) Beginner Backcountry skiers with some experience. Meet Roesville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Dec. 7, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Donner Summit area. Exploratory trip for 5 to 7 miles to scout route for Mt. Lola later in season. Meet at CSUS Arboretum at 7am. Leader: Al Gutowsky, 457-3338 or 581-2239.
Dec. 8, Sun.	2A Day Hike (Sierra Club) Muir Woods loop to Pantoll Ranger Station. Meet 11th & Q at 7:30am. Leader: Marilyn Jouini, 381-4315.
Dec. 13, Fri	Peak and Gorge Christmas Party. Potluck at Bob Buckles' house starting at 7:00 p.m., 6120 Rainier Ave., Rocklin, 624-3620.
Dec. 14, Sat.	Free Nordic Ski Lessons (Maidu Group) Limited to 2 15-person groups. For info on meeting place and equipment requirements, call Bill Campau (644-5339 or Ron Murray (644-6758).
Dec. 14, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Mt. Rose area. Elevation gain of less than 2000' and less than 10 miles round trip. Poor weather will change destination to Donner Pass. Meet CSUS arboretum at 6:30am. Leader: AL Gutowsky, 457-3338 or 581-2239.
Dec. 15, Sun.	Cross-Country Ski (Shasta Group) Mt. Shasta. Easy to Moderate. Meet 9:30am Burger King, Mt. Shasta City (central Mt. Shasta exit).Leader Steve Moore, 335-2743.
Dec. 21, Sat.	Mt. St. Helena (Sierra Club) Sonoma County's highest mountain(4,343') climb of 2,068 feet ,4.5 miles. Meet at 11th & Q Streets parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and in Davis at 2nd & C Streets at 8:30 a.m. RAIN CANCELS! Leader: Louise Soto, 624-2104 from 7-9 p.m
Dec. 21, Sat.	3B Day Hike (Sierra Club) Laguna Trail - Sky trail Loop, 10 miles with 1000' elevation gain at Point Reyes. Meet 7:30 am at 11th and Q : In Davis at 2nd and C at 8:30am. Leader: John Besbekos, 729-2725 Co-leader: Rose Russell 920-4673..
Dec. 21, Sat.	Beginner/Low Intermediate Ski Trip (Sierra Club) Beginner Backcountry skiers with some experience. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Jan. 4, Sat.	2B/3C Day Hike (Sierra Club) DEL VALLE REGIONAL PARK. 12 miles and 2000 feet elevation gain Meet at 7:30 am in Lake Crest Village at he Burger King, Florin and Greenhaven. Leader: John Sarna 363-9243.
Jan. 5, Sun.	Beginner/Low Intermediate Ski Trip (Sierra Club) Beginner Backcountry skiers with some experience. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Jan. 11, Sat.	2B Dayhike (Sierra Club) Approx. 9 mile loop around ridgetop of Mt.Tamalpais. . Meet 7:30 am at 11th and Q for directions: In Davis at 2nd and C at 8:30am. RAIN CANCELS. Leader: John Besbekos 729-2725. Co-leader: Baruch Harris 759-1072 (Davis).
Jan. 18 - 19 Sat. - Sun.	Snowshoe Overnighter (Sierra Club) between I-80 and Hwy 88. Beginning snowshoers welcome as long as you have summer backpacking experience. Call leader for more details. Jim Bily, 916-685-7164.
Jan. 26, Sun.	2A Day Hike (Sierra Club) Tennessee Valley - Muir Beach loop. Meet at 11th and Q Streets at 8:00 am; in Davis at 2nd and C Steets at 8:30 am. Leader: Marilyn Jouini 334-7293.

Jan. 26, Sun.	Beginner/Low Intermediate Ski Trip (Sierra Club) Beginner Backcountry skiers with some experience. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Feb. 1, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Moderate trip for experienced skiers with plenty of hills. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Feb. 8, Sat.	2B Dayhike (Sierra Club) 8 mile loop in Point Reyes from Muddy Hollow trailhead up to Inverness Ridge. Meet 7:30 am at 11th and Q for directions: In Davis at 2nd and C at 8:30am. RAIN CANCELS. Leader: John Besbekos 729-2725 Co-leader: Ron Sullivan, 443-4651.
Feb. 9, Sun.	2A Day Hike (Sierra Club) Tomales Point, Point Reyes. Rain will cancel. Meet at 11th and Q Streets at 7:30 am; in Davis at 2nd and c Streets at 8:00 am. Leader: Marilyn Jouini 334-7293.
Feb. 15, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Moderate trip for experienced skiers with plenty of hills. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.
Feb. 15 - 16	Snowshoe Overnigher (Sierra Club) between I-80 and Hwy 88. Beginning snowshoers welcome as long as you have summer backpacking experience. Call leader for more details. Jim Bily, 916-685-7164.
Mar. 1, Sat.	Intermediate Ski Tour (Sierra Club) Moderate trip for experienced skiers with plenty of hills. Meet Roseville Square at 8am. Call Bob Buckles to confirm trip, 624-3620.



Articles and trips can be sent via e-mail to jbde@aol.com. Handwritten articles are also accepted as are 3.5" floppy disks in Wordperfect (DOS), WORD for Windows or ASCII

RUSSIAN PEAK (8196)

Siskiyou County

This last climbing season I had a chance to climb Russian Peak - Twice! Ordinarily, I wouldn't take on such a peak twice in one year, but there is easy access if you know where to go. Russian Peak is the highpoint of the Russian Wilderness. This wilderness is between the Marble Mountains and the Trinity Alps. It is composed of glaciated granite, and contains many fine lakes. The PCT winds its way along the length of the Russians.

Summit and Register

The summit of Russian Peak is a pleasing pile of granite boulders. There is the wooden remnant of the original survey tripod, and three benchmarks dated 1952. The register was placed by Pete Yamagata on 8-30-86 for the Climbing-Knapsack Section of the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club. Pete's climb took 4 hr 15 min from Carter Summit, a POT trailhead to the south. As of 9-21-96, 237 people have signed in, about two dozen per year, with a male:female ratio of about 2:1. In addition, there have been 13 dogs signed in by their masters. The Gonzo Tribe or Wild Tribe from Camp Unalayee account for many of the climbers. Ann Lindsay of Arcata has been signing in every year. "Here's to ten more" she writes. Another interesting entry: "U.S. Army Topographical Survey of the West. Where in tarnation is Sutter's Fort?" signed by Captain John C. Fremont.

Directions

The obscure Bingham Lake trailhead can be reached by driving west out of Callahan toward Carter Summit and Cecilville. 8.4 miles from Callahan, turn right on an unsigned dirt road. Proceed 3.6 miles to a junction and turn right on a slightly better dirt road. Go 2.8 miles and turn left. The trailhead is 1.9 miles up this road at an old log landing.

Continue on foot up the road and past boulders placed on the road to keep out cars. At road's end, a path continues up the slope to the ridge above Bingham Lake. For a quick trip to the top of Russian Peak, resist the temptation to drop down to the lake. Instead, go up and to the right to reach another ridge, this one dividing Bingham Lake from S. Sugar Lake. This ridge swings across the intervening saddle and right on up to the summit. The pinnacles along the ridge are not always practical for climbing. I found that the going was easier on the S. Sugar Lake side of the ridge.

The distances involved are just a mile or two. The ridge alternates between class 2 & 3. Elevation gain is about 1,000 feet. Nearby Grizzly Peak (7930) is the second highest Russian Wilderness peak, and has a class 3 route up its SE side, marked with flagging ribbon. Add in a lake or two, and you have a longer outing. Best wishes for good mountain trips.

Bill Broeckel, Yreka.

Mt. Adams, Washington

June 15 & 16, 1996. Mt. Adams is a 12,276' glacier clad volcano about 120 miles northeast of Portland. Hugh, Blair and I tried climbing it two years ago but a storm at the summit thwarted us. Last year, Hugh and Blair did make it and really enjoyed the route. This time, Hugh was leading an Intermediate School group from the Seattle climbing club, The Mountaineers.

I flew to Portland Friday night and we drove to our rendezvous with the party early Saturday morning, but not before I introduced Hugh and Blair to Noah's Bagels which had just opened in Portland the week before.

We started the climb at the 4600' Morrison Creek Horse Camp. We quickly encountered snow at around 5000' and were pretty much on snow or ice the rest of the way. I led the way and did a fair job of staying on the trail for several miles but eventually lost it. Other than a means of finding our way back to the cars after the climb, the trail wasn't much use, anyway. We had lunch on some bare boulders at around 6400' and then began the real climb. We contoured through a series of gullies and then picked one that would lead us to the Avalanche Glacier. It turned out that our gully wasn't the easiest one and we ended up doing a tiring trudge up a very steep slope in knee deep snow. With full packs, loaded with winter and climbing gear, this was work! Once on the lower glacier, we continued to encounter sun softened snow that made the fairly gentle slope to our camp at 8500' seem much longer than it actually was.

As we ascended, the wind was gradually increasing. By the time we reached our campsite, the wind was strong enough that we had to dig deep tent platforms with snow block walls to keep them from being blown off the mountain. By nightfall, the wind had abated somewhat but the sunset was made special by a sky full of horsetail clouds. Beautiful, but a bad portent of weather for our climb.

We got started the next morning right at sunrise. We ascended a ridge immediately above our camp, wearing our crampons but not yet roped up. Following the ridge up we quickly hit what turned out to be the crux of the climb. The ridge topped out as an exposed rock band capped by a knife edge snow drift some 15 feet high. Half the group chose to drop below the rock cliffs to avoid the problems on top, only to find thin snow cover over a talus field. Every few steps they would break through, making travel difficult and creating a hazard for twisted ankles, or worse.

Up above, Hugh, Eileen and I tried the knife edge. I was in the lead and discovered that the drift ended in an icy, steep slope dropping down to the rock. I didn't like the looks of that and so down-climbed the drift on good snow to reach a rock ledge bounded by the drift and the cliff. I had to ease around a boulder blocking the ledge but made it with only a few heart skips. Eileen also made it around so I continued along the ledge until I heard Hugh exclaim that he didn't like the boulder problem, followed by a sickening scraping sound and a shout from Hugh. His crampons had slipped on the rock and he had fallen! When I turned around, I saw him splayed out on the rock, one leg hanging off the edge of the cliff. Holy sh--! I rushed back to lend a hand but had trouble passing Eileen on the narrow ledge. By the time I got to the boulder, Hugh had gotten up, unaided. I was so pumped that I don't remember what happened next. I think Hugh went up onto the snow and over the boulder but I was so busy thanking the stars that he was all right and that I wouldn't have to face Dawn, his wife, that I can't say for sure. The rest of the ridge was easy, though another knife edge had to be negotiated. After Hugh's fall, the 20' or so of scooting along with one foot on each side of the drift and lots of exposure took on new significance and we proceeded cautiously.

We rejoined the rest of our party and engaged in a debate over whose route was the worst while we roped up. We were now on the White Salmon Glacier where it cascades over the steep side of the mountain, creating crevasses. We easily passed over several small crevasses by just stepping over them. At the top of one steep section, we found a crevasse that was open, wide and very deep...I couldn't see the bottom! We followed along the edge, passing up several weak looking snow bridges. Finally, the crevasse narrowed

and we found a secure bridge. Still, I asked for a tight belay as I edged across, testing its strength. It held fine but we gave a secure belay to every crosser.

Up another steep section and we found another crevasse, or, actually, a bergschrund, where the ice had separated from a cliff. This sucker was huge, far wider than the first one. The really neat thing was that neither had existed the prior year when Hugh and Blair had climbed the same route. I love the way mountains change every time you climb them! Again, we contoured the edge of the crevasse until we found a very secure snow bridge. The angle of our ascent put us below the bridge and able to see both the climbers as they crossed the bridge and the yawning chasm below. What a photo opp!

After crossing the 'schrund, we had a seriously steep section of perhaps 300 vertical feet to climb before reaching the gentle summit plateau. This was hard climbing as it was too steep to easily use the French technique of cramponing where you angle your feet to put all the points of the crampon on the snow. It took some contortionist moves and occasional front pointing to make it up the slope. From there, it was smooth sailing to the small summit bump.

I led on the way down. Luckily, the snow was in excellent condition so the steep slope posed little problem to those comfortable trusting their technique. Some of the less experienced climbers weren't as sure and spent some scary moments edging down the upper slope. Once the angle eased up, it was easy going...until we hit the same crux problem on the lower ridge. Same question, same answer for each climber. Three of us chose to go back over the cliff while the rest went below. The difference was that the sun had melted the ice and the steep edge of the drift was now climbable. I went up and then scooted on my butt along the knife edge as the snow was so soft that I couldn't get good purchase and didn't feel secure walking with one foot on each side. Hugh and Eileen quickly followed suit and we were home free. Those below suffered the same problems as before, only worse, breaking through the crust on almost every step.

We got back to camp at about 2:30 after 9 hours of climbing. We rested for a bit but couldn't dawdle for long as the weather was starting to deteriorate. We took off about 3:30, again heading off on soft snow. Groan. Our tracks from the day before were easy to follow until we hit the trees. In the shade, and with the temperatures falling and no sun, the snow was hard and our tracks disappeared. There were a few anxious moments when the trail was lost but we always found it again rather quickly. We reached the cars about 7:30, tired but elated.

Making the trip very special for me was the privilege of sharing Hugh's 65th birthday with him sitting on top of a mountain.

Jim Bily

Lesson

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Despite being well-financed by the tobacco industry, the newly formed Smokers' Mountaineering Club met its doom just a few moments after leaving base camp.



Round Top via the Northwest Couloir

August 22. Oscar Balaguer suggested that we try a snow route on Round Top. It sounds intriguing - there should still be plenty of snow, and it should be well consolidated by now. Oscar recalls from his ascent with Bill Patterson on the 20th that the snow reached all the way to walkable rock at the top. I like that even better, knowing how loose the rock is. I accept, subject to my wife's okay.

August 23 and 26. My wife gives me the day off, I confirm with Oscar. I sort climbing gear and shop up food. Axe and crampons are sharp, and a pleasant surprise, my boots are still well oiled from a recent (and rare) maintenance. Dig out the polypro, wool gloves, neoprene overmitts (for August?). I expect firm snow, but want to prepare for any possibility: harness, slings, carabiniers, flukes, chocks, ice screws?, ice hammer?, rock pitons?, shovel?...what a list! I pack it all. We can lighten up after finalizing our objectives on the drive up.

August 27, 08:00-10:00. The drive up via Emigrant Trail is beautiful, the morning clear and calm. Looks like a promising start. We agree to do a technical climb but will just play with the gear if the climbing is too easy. We'll bring the lot up. The parking at Woods Lake is jammed with people out for the last weekend of summer. We end up in the overflow, which adds a quarter mile of hiking.

10:00-12:30. The temperature is in the high 50's F., the day should top out at 75 or so. We head southeast for some fifteen minutes, but backtrack once the trails run out and turn roughly southwest, cross-country, to link up with the trail. We observe the three apparent couloirs (one is hidden) as we hike. The couloirs to the right seem steeper, but no obstacles are evident in any of them. We leave the trail about a hundred feet above Round Top Lake. Another hundred feet or so higher we unship our axes to cross a few hundred feet of low angle snow. The top inch or two is firm enough to hold a step but mushy enough to break away from time to time, and the base is quite firm and slick. We stop for lunch in the last rock slide. A couple make two runs down the snowfield past us, he on a snowboard, she on skis. Oscar and I agree to attempt the rightmost, steepest couloir, which looks likely to have the most challenging climbing. We put on our harnesses and crampons, and set out with axes in hand.

12:30-17:30. Our crampons punch through the cruddy top layer, but I sometimes feel a need to stamp the soft stuff down and push the points in a bit deeper. We practice the rhythm; place axe, step, step; place axe, step, step as the grade increases from a stroll to easy climbing. We make one long traverse left to the junction of three of the couloirs. The rightmost is still the most interesting. We can now see a danger: the snow is sometimes over twenty feet deep and melted three to six feet away from the rock walls. If either of us slipped, he would have to self arrest instantly to avoid falling into a moat. We rope up about thirty feet apart and I take the lead. After another hundred feet, I have passed a point where a moat is beneath me, and place the first ice screw. I had brought only my longest tubular screws, but they are thin Salewas and they go in awfully easily - not likely to hold a fall. Might help. Maybe. We continue until Oscar reaches my fourth and last screw, then I anchor with my axe, hammer and a fluke and stamp and cut a platform to belay him up. As always, I can't dig deep enough with my axe's pick to get the fluke all the way in. I end up hammering it for the last couple of inches, and that does nothing for the cable, which tends to pop it up and out under tension. I feel insecure with my axe at the end of a sling instead of in my hand where it belongs. Your only real security on snow is to avoid screwing up. We retie about twice as far apart and pass gear so Oscar can lead through. We interchange leads for several of these pitches, using the ice screws where we must and relying on team arrest where we can for speed. The overall angle stays at about 45 degrees but nears 70 degrees for individual steps. The soft layer on even the steepest portions demands careful application of French technique or that we expend time and energy kicking steps. We both have near slips from cutting too close to the limit. Oscar gets to lead through the most thrilling sections, including two points where the snow narrows between the moats, one only four feet wide, the second closer to two. Two pitches below the top, we find an ice axe hole from a previous party. Oscar leads up to where a gap in the snow forces him onto the rock. (Above and below the gap the snow is about three feet wide and deep.) At my suggestion, he moves onto the rock on his crampons, but the rock wants slab technique, not edging, and he takes a short fall, sliding down onto the only safe landing. He anchors and belays me

up. The rock pitch above may require all of our rope. I assess whether we can descend our snow route in the dark.

17:30-19:30. Oscar volunteers for the hard part again, but after all, he was the one who claimed to have seen an easy exit. I anchor to the snow and stand in a chimney position with my back against the rock and front points in the snow while Oscar stands on the tiny snow ledge (one foot at a time!) to remove and stow his crampons. Once my belay is ready he moves confidently onto the rock. As with most wild routes and volcanic peaks, every ledge is loaded with missiles and many likely-looking holds fail at a touch. With skillful climbing, he dislodges only tiny pebbles, but I duck at every rattle. Tired, inactive, in the shade and in close contact with cold rock and snow, I can feel my body lose heat. Oscar goes up about forty feet before he finds reliable protection. Another ten feet puts him on a ledge, but the next one is farther away than the remaining rope; forty feet of it is still in my pack! It's a good ledge, so he stands for a few minutes while I dig out the coil and retie. With the last of the rope he reaches a good ledge where he can sit, brace his feet, and anchor to two chocks and a piton. By the time his belay is ready, I have stowed my crampons and all but my axe and a sling. Another rattle - I look up and dodge a large rock, a killer, set off by the rope. Too close! With a top belay from a sound anchor and waning daylight, I climb quickly. I don't follow Oscar's route exactly, but judge the difficulty to be about 5.1 for a few feet off the snow, then relenting to class 3 and 4. Oscar had been able to place only a single runner about half way through the pitch. Just above the class 5, the rope sets off a small cobble which strikes me square on the crown of my head, no warning. I stop to assess; no damage this time, so onward. I climb about fifteen feet past Oscar and over the summit ridge to set a hasty (unanchored) belay braced below the ridge. The wind is fierce on this side of the ridge, funneled through the cleft I just crossed it is steady at about 40 mph; it chills me again. While Oscar takes down his anchor, I dig out my windbreaker. We shake hands when he arrives, then shake tail, packing up in a flurry. One hour to sundown and a long way to go.

19:00-21:00. Our scamper down off the peak is uneventful. We descend the hiker's route to the saddle, then turn north and east onto the snowfield where we drop to within a hundred feet of Round Top Lake in three long sitting glissades. Full dark overtakes us about half way from there to Woods Lake but we both have lights. We keep them off however, and appreciate the rare view of the stars in a moonless darkness. A beautiful end for a satisfying day.

Afterthoughts and conclusions. (1) We should have worn helmets. Volcanic rock justifies a helmet, so does an untravelled (wild) route, making two good reasons for and none against. It was only luck that I was hit by the smaller rock. (2) While it was within our objectives to utilize the hardware we had brought, the ice screws in particular were probably marginal to worthless in such soft snow. We did not test their holding power, instead placing them but not trusting them. It would have been difficult to test the screws conclusively. (3) Our snow fluke anchors would have been improved with deeper placements. As we were driving home, I realized that the correct tool for this is a snow saw, which is twice as long as an ice axe pick and can cut a T-shaped slot for the fluke without disturbing the surrounding snow. This is critical for the cable's slot. I strongly recommend that you carry a saw with your flukes. Hammering a fluke a few times destroys it. (4) I believe that I saved energy several times by kicking steps and platforms lightly. I took several swings using the weight of my boots and my sharp crampon points to saw into the snow. It was certainly more efficient than chopping with my axe. (5) We may have been able to take advantage of the last bit of snow above the gap mentioned earlier by performing a mixed snow-rock chimney. It never really occurred to me. Neither Oscar nor I have much experience on mixed ground, so we applied only pure snow technique, then switched completely to rock. Our mindsets limited our approach. It was not a time to try new techniques on the other hand, since we were high, on dangerous ground, and running out of daylight. A snow climb was our primary objective. Setting that assumption aside, we could have avoided the risk of falling in the moats by entering one and climbing (probably a mixed route) within it. This would have given us occasional rock anchors, but exposed us to greater rockfall hazard and more slabby rock.

MORE TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

On Saturday, Oct. 5th I met Bob Buckles at the Hazel Park and Ride. He and Don Fox arrived in Bob's 4X4 vehicle. I joined them and after a second stop in Placerville we had a total of ten people heading for a climb of Round Top, the dominant peak at Carson Pass: John Pierson, Barry Bolden, Marianne Richards, Lorraine Holden, Jack Jonas, Dave Willmott, John Besbekos, Don Fox, and Mark Hosonbake, lead by Bob Buckles.

I was expecting this to be my 6th routine climb of this particular peak. However, this outing would turn out to be a bit more adventuresome. For starters, instead of using the trailhead right at Carson Pass, Bob took us up a jeep road to Forestdale divide. We parked the vehicle at a turnout on the pass. This was very scenic wide open country and we were soon on the Pacific Crest Trail heading towards Frog Lake.

We dipped down into a canyon and then steadily climbed up. We reached Frog Lake, then Winnemucca, and finally Round Top Lake. I decided to give my knees a rest and lounged at the lake while the rest of the group did the scramble up to the summit of Round Top. The lake was a popular crossroads that day as several hiking groups and a couple equestrian groups passed by.

When the others descended, we discussed which way we would return. Would we head back the way we came or circumnavigate the peak? It was decided to take the long way home. We continued around and down to 4th of July Lake. We regrouped there and then continued further down into Summit City Canyon.

It was here where the group began to string out. We had a 1600' climb to get back to the ridgetop where the vehicles were parked. The sun began to set and we were in the trees, therefore it began to get dark and I wondered how old the batteries were in my headlamp. Soon the sun went down behind us and it really got dark. There was no moon and we could barely make out the trail as a barely perceptible light or dark streak in the ground ahead of us. At long last we began the switchbacks which meant we were nearing the top of the divide.

We eventually crested and I pulled out the light to read the signpost. It indicated the trailhead to be straight ahead at this 4 way junction. A 100 yards later we were at the parking area. Only problem was, that no one else was around. The fast group had taken a wrong turn at the top and ended up doing an extra mile or so. The slower group was still meandering up from the blackness of the canyon. After a lot of shouting and waving of flashlights everyone was rounded up. By 8:30pm we were driving back down to the highway.

We stopped for dinner at St. Pauli's at about 10pm. It was Oktoberfest celebration, so we were treated to an oompa band and dancing as we feasted. It was quite late by the time we returned to Sacramento, but in retrospect an enjoyable adventure.

----- **John Besbekos**

Desolation Wilderness Ridge Scramble

On Sunday, Oct. 20 Jim Bily led an outing in Desolation Wilderness. The group consisted of John Besbekos, Ted Lenzic, Wayne Monson, Dave Willmott, Don Fox, Chris Fox, Marianne Richards, and Larry Cetti.

We started at the parking area on the west side of Wrights Lake near Dark Lake. Passing by Beauty Lake we took the Tyler Lake Trail towards Gertrude and Tyler Lakes. As the trail climbed up to approximately the 7800' elevation, we headed on an easterly cross-country ramble. For a while it was mostly easy class 2 climbing with short brush and open granite. There were patches of ice which we had to watch out for all day long. Our immediate goal was peak 8925 which separates Tyler to the north and Twin Lakes to the south.

As we neared the summit we experienced a little "airy exposure" but nothing extreme. Everyone found their way to the top and we relaxed a while enjoying lunch and the great vistas. Jim next led us further east along the ridge until it overlooked Island Lake. Due to the steep drop offs on the south ridge, we had to travel on the north side where more patches of ice made the footing more interesting.

We next made our way down the slopes to the polished granite around Tyler Lake. After resting and regrouping we continued over to Gertrude Lake where we picked up the trail. We ran into another party of hikers and decided on a joint quest to find the Tyler grave site (where a local ranch hand froze to death in a November 1882 snowstorm while rounding up cattle). A side use trail took us into a clump of trees and to the small marble marker of "William W. Tyler, 4th California Infantry".

The easy trail brought us swiftly back to the cars. Our good timing was soon to be lost in horrific traffic on Hwy 50 which was bumper to bumper from Placerville all the way to the Hazel Avenue exit! Still everyone had a great time and appreciated Jim leading this fun outing.

-----**John Besbekos**

Hoover wilderness back pack and Matterhorn peak climb

After picking up our wilderness permits at the Bridgeport ranger station, my partner Pete Becker and I drove the 13 mile long twin lakes road which heads south from Bridgeport and dead ends at upper twin lake. It is here, at upper twin lake, that the Robinson creek trailhead is located, and it is here where Pete and I will begin our excursion.

The actual start to the trail can be a little difficult to find. First, you must hike through a public campground with the usual scenario of gigantic gents, large campers and people with massive pot bellies sitting in lounge chairs stuffing their faces full of junk food. After clearing this highly congested area, you finally reach a sign that says "Barney T lake". This is actually the Robinson creek trailhead. It didn't take Pete and I long to hike the first four miles to Barney lake, since the climb was rather gradual. After a short break at this very scenic lake, we continued on another four miles to Peeler lake. These second four miles were much steeper than the first and Pete and I did not arrive at Peeler lake until just before dark. Setting up camp and looking for a decent bear tree was a definite challenge but we finally got things under control and actually ate a half decent dinner with moonlite Peeler lake in the background.

The next morning found us hiking around the north side of the lake and then down into Kerrick meadow. After a couple of miles we came to the Rock Island pass trail which heads East. After four or so miles on this trail, we crested Rock Island pass 10,200' and then caught our first view of Snow lake. Decided to camp at Snow lake that night but it was dam cold. The third day saw us climb over Mule pass which is about 10,400'. We then dropped into Piute canyon with the jagged Sawtooth ridge to the left and finger peaks to the right.

It should be noted that it is not necessary to take the route Pete and I took to get to Piute canyon and Matterhorn peak which by the way, is at the southern end of Sawtooth Ridge. Halfway between Barney and Peeler *lakes there is a side trail which runs into the Robinson creek trail. This side trail which is marked with a sign saying "Mule pass" cuts several miles off the trip if your main motivation is to climb Matterhorn peak. This trail first passes a pair of small marshy lakes then climbs up to Crown lake. From Crown lake, the trail intersects with the Rock Island pass trail (the one Pete and I were on) and then continues on over mule pass.

Anyway, once we were in Piute canyon, we found a good campsite along Piute creek at about the 9000' mark. The next morning at around 8:00 a.m. we struck out for Matterhorn peak. To get to the base of the mountain, continue southeast on the same trail for 2 to 3 miles until you get to the top of Burro pass 10,600'.

The best way to the summit is to head directly east from Burro pass on a low ridge. Stay on the ridge until you come to a large relatively flat area about 500 to 750 feet below Matterhorn's summit. You then scramble up a long chute to a ridge just below the summit. You then have about a 150 foot class 3 rock scramble to the actual summit.

The views from Matterhorn peak 12,225', are fantastic of course. However, on this particular day, heavy smoke from various sierra fires partially blocked our view. (you musn't play with matches children). Anyway, back to Matterhorn, there are several ways in which you can climb this mountain, one being a 5.5 rated technical climb up the northwest face. Because this was our first time up this peak, we were directed by other climbers to descend about 200 yards down the other side of burro pass, then cross country to a green grassy slope then climb up from there. Since we didn't know any better, we did just that which was not at all necessary. Besides the unnecessary altitude drop, this route added some distance to the climb. On our downclimb we took the originally mentioned ridge route which proved much better.

Anyway, got back to our camp about 4:00 p.m. and crashed out by 8:00 p.m. The next morning, I hiked the 12 miles back to upper twin lakes and headed for home. Pete, however, had an extra day so he took a cross country trip out through Malby lake and Little Slide Canyon which is another way back to twin lakes (and yes, we drove up in seperate vehicles).

Dave Swedberg

A Side Trip to Haskell Peak after Work

Everyone knows that Haskell Peak is a long, long drive from Sacramento. Fortunately, I sometimes travel in that direction for meetings. So, on 8-2-96, after attending a meeting of the California Water Commission in Truckee, which is more than half way there, I decided to extend my journey a bit and visit Haskell.

Since the area around this peak is covered with logging roads, the first trick is finding one with a good approach. Dirt-road driving not being one of my favorite pastimes, I only tried a few on the north side of Haskell, those past Chapman Saddle just west of Yuba Pass. I eventually found a good one that ended about 0.6 miles north and 800 feet in elevation below the summit, and that's where I parked. The climb from there wasn't noteworthy. There were occasional brushy areas to avoid, and the carpet of pine needles made trekking up the steep slope a bit tricky; however, it was nothing a 5-year old couldn't do.

Once on top, I found three registers stuffed in a double-can arrangement, which was somewhat of a surprise for me, since, when I last did the peak in 1989, I'd sacrificed one of my wide-mouth water bottles to hold the then exposed register book. It must have worked well, as the 1989 book was the earliest one in the can. In a note left a few years later, I found a remark by PeteY that he'd replaced the bottle with the cans. I wonder if he's also been taking down all the tupperware containers that BorisN left to hold registers in the late 80s.

In any case, the ride home was actually much more eventful than the ride in. Taking a chance on a short-cut dirt-road, it took me to a mine but no further as huge trees had fallen across and were blocking the road. Later, I stopped at a nice 250' cascade waterfall, called Frazier Falls. Then I drove to the Lookout atop Mills Peak and stayed nearby until it became dark enough to look for some anticipated meteor showers. Three "meteors" later. I called it a night. Coincidentally, when I looked back after seeing the first one, I startled a deer that had walked up only a few feet behind me. The last meteor was spectacular, almost worth the 1 am arrival back in Sacramento as a result of these side trips.

For those who wish to climb Haskell, I suggest checking out a couple other sights along the way. Try this for an itinerary:

From Hwy 49 east of Downieville, take Gold Lake Road north 6.7 miles to turn right for side trip to Red Fir Nature Trail (2 miles) and a drive-up/short-climb of Mills Peak (3 miles) for good views of Gold Lake; after arriving back at Gold Lake road, continue .3 miles further to take another right turn for side trip to Frazier Falls, a 250' cascade visible only after a half mile walk in; on arriving back at Gold Lake Road, continue 3.3 miles further past second turnoff to Frazier Falls on right. If you're still in the mood to climb the peak, continue 10.6 miles further to turn right on side road (paved); continue 4.2 miles further to turn right onto dirt road signed Kelly's mine, Gold Lake, and Mills Peak LO; continue 2.5 miles further proceed straight past road TN55Y on right; continue .4 miles further to turn right at fork avoiding the road signed to Chapman Saddle; continue .4 miles further avoiding a right turn to dead end; continue 3.8 miles further, avoiding several dirt roads going up to the right, and turn right doubling back on this higher road; continue .4 miles to nearly the end of the road at 7300'; park and climb about 800 feet up and .6 miles due south to the top of Haskell.

John Sarna

High Point, New Jersey (1,803) **(or, how to change a drive-up into a sundown special)**

Pam Coleman, Annie Coledog, and I climbed the high point in New Jersey -- the appropriately named High Point, New Jersey. High Point is a drive-up. Regrettably you must get out of your car to bag the peak but even from the farthest reaches of the parking lot the unpleasant walking segment is under 200 yards and 50 feet of elevation gain.

You can make High Point quasi-aerobic if you also bag the man-made structure on the peak. On the summit is a tower -- reportedly a replica of a tower commemorating Bunker Hill but I have not independently verified the veracity of this claim. If you pay the State Park Department a \$1 fee you can climb the tower. Two hundred ninety one stairs later your reward is views in three directions through small (roughly two foot square) plexiglass windows. I figure it would take seven trips up and down the stairs to turn this into a 1C dayhike.

If, like me, you are too stupid to get back into your car and drive away you can transform this outing from a drive-up to a sundown special by hiking some of the 50 or so miles of trail in High Point State Park. Here's my secret. First, head downhill on the trail leaving the summit monument in a westerly direction. Within a quarter mile the trail intersects the Appalachian Trail.

When you hit the AT, I suggest you head east because doing so will quickly put you into territory not covered by the map of High Point State Park. That's what we did although we did so by mistake. Rather than leaving the mapped territory, we hiked just far enough east to find the turnoff for High Point Lean-To. (Check out the latest edition of *Backpacker* magazine for an amusing tale of "trail names" and AT shelters.) From the Lean-To, for a little sport and rather than backtracking, we tried to follow the non-trail back to the west-bound Appalachian Trail. We ultimately stumbled onto a dirt road that doesn't exist (according to the map) and ended up on Route 23 just south of the Park Ranger Station. In the process we encountered a wild turkey -- that I didn't let Annie chase -- thereby making the exercise worthwhile.

Heading north to the Ranger Station we rejoined the westbound Appalachian Trail. Shortly we reached an intersection with two trails -- the "Red" trail and the "Yellow" trail. (Trails out here are marked with blazes painted on trees in different colors.) We took the Red trail. It drops downhill to about 1,400 foot elevation and journeys through a scrub oak and brush woodland somewhat akin to the coastal forest of California. It passes a nice little lake and several good dog wallows that Annie took advantage of (just when you thought it was safe to go back into the mud.....) About three miles out we reconnected with the Appalachian Trail and almost retraced our steps to the summit. We were running so late we covered the last mile on paved road rather than hiking the rocky AT. We got back to our car nearly an hour after sundown, but were tough and did not use our headlamps.

Follow these easy instructions and, with a little luck you will have transformed a drive-up into a ten-mile, 1,000 foot elevation gain trip. If you start at 2:00 pm on October 5, you have the makings of a real sundown special.

Alan Cooke

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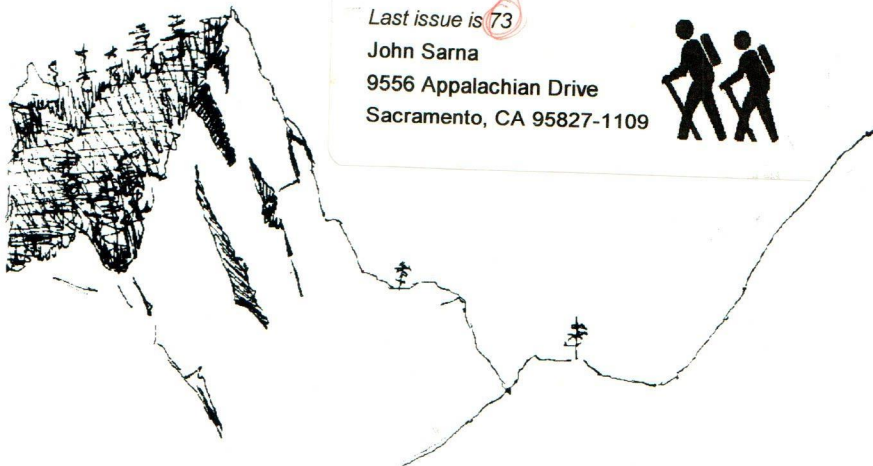
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Lover's Leap
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