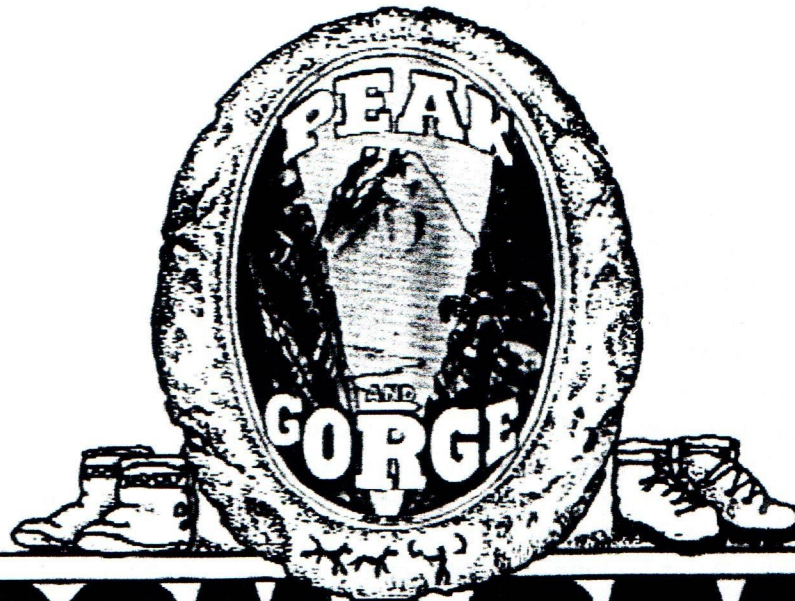


THE



BOULDER

motherlode chapter · sierra club

Issue No. 80 Jan. - Feb. 1998

The Interim Guest Corner

Greetings,

As the second guest writer in this space, permit me to welcome you to another *Boulder* Newsletter. And no, you're not confused if you recall that I was also the *first* guest writer. We just couldn't find another guest to fill this space, so, please, someone volunteer to write this for the next issue and provide some variety.

In any case, I want to thank our writers for providing some interesting articles in the last issue, Steve Richardson & Mike Ryan, Bob Sumner, and Al Gutowsky. I'd also like to again thank John Besbekos for putting together the Boulder and the Calendar, which provides a glance at many available outdoor events that could be of interest to subscribers.

For lack of anything better to write about, I'll dwell on a pastime that's so easy to fall into this time of year. What to do when hiking to the higher mountains is too much of a challenge and storms keep us off our skis — rampant consumerism, of course, made easy in this electronic age.

So, in true couch potato style, I've been shopping the Internet for climbing gear. What's available there? Well, there's my new climbing rope that came in the mail yesterday from REI. You can check out their site at "<http://www.rei.com>" and compare specs for a number of different ropes (I choose a Maxim 9.8 mm, dry, 60m rope). I just ordered a GPS receiver after reviewing specs & prices on the Net ("<http://www.garmin.com>" & "<http://www.safetracgps.com>"). An electronic query of subscribers to the Sierra Club's LOMap e-mail list also yielded some useful information on how the Garmin's 12XL, III, and newly-released Street Pilot compare for general purpose hiking and mountaineering (I decided to buy the Garmin III, which shows your position in relation to highways, rivers, and lakes).

To get back to using climbing equipment rather than deciding what's best to use, I'll put this "thread" to rest.

Bye. **John Sarna** (363-9243)

Window of opportunity

January 17 & 18, 1998

By Mike Ryan

"Mike, I really don't like the weather reports. I just got off the net and it doesn't look good." Steve's call sounded like a plea to pull out of our upcoming Pyramid Peak trip. I could tell he wasn't comfortable about heading into the Desolation Wilderness in the middle of January particularly with a major winter storm forecast. I assured him that I didn't have a problem with him backing out, hell, I was considering it myself. After a flurry of calls Steve finally decided that he would go. Realizing that I was committed and fearing I might just pull it off without him, Steve had reconsidered his position.

Steve and I had arranged to accompany a group from the Loma Prieta Peak Climbing Section for a winter ascent of Pyramid Peak. We met Palmer Dyal (leader) and the others at the ranger station in Camino. By 8:30 a.m. we were on our way to the trail head at Horsetail Falls. After packing and last minute preparations and the arrival of the last two members of our party all 11 set out for our camp at 8000ft. The snow started at the parking lot and in spite of the rain there was enough to require the use of our snowshoes.

The hike to our camp started easy enough but after about ¼ mile we headed west up the ridge. The snow was heavy, wet, and deep so it was necessary to kick (stomp) steps, no easy task with snowshoes. As we worked our way up the steep slope each would take turns breaking trail. After much huffing and puffing we attained the ridge. We had gained approximately 1000 ft. and I was beginning to feel the effects, it didn't help that I was carrying most of the communal gear. The whole of Desolation Wilderness was shrouded in clouds and white with the evidence of recently passed storms. As a result of the low clouds, visibility was limited to about ¼ mile. As we climbed, Palmer would bring out his trusty GPS and proclaim the distance and direction to where we were to camp. We took a break at the bottom of second ridge we would have to climb. I took this advantage to off-load the tent to Steve, he was moving strong and I was tiring of the load. Up the next ridge we trudged, it was steep but not like the first climb. Palmer declared that we had .25 mi. to go to the camp site this bolstered our flagging spirits. We were soon dropping our packs in a snowy knoll, finally having reached camp.

For most of the climb it had been drizzling but as we reached the knoll it thankfully stopped. We stomped a pad for the tent and set up camp. I was using my newly acquired TNF single wall 4-season tent for the first time.

It sure went up easy. Steve was soon unpacking and settling in. Meanwhile I set up the stove and started melting snow for water and to cook dinner. As we ate dinner the clouds began to thin allowing the last rays of sun to cast its alpen glow through the trees. By sunset the clouds had cleared revealing the ridges and Pyramid Peak cast in the last rays of sun. We all met for a short "bull session" under a starry sky and then turned in for a long winter's night. Steve, not being tired enough, read aloud from his book of mountains. Soon all was silent, well except for Steve's snoring! I slammed some ear plugs in and drifted off to sleep.



Me and my new tent



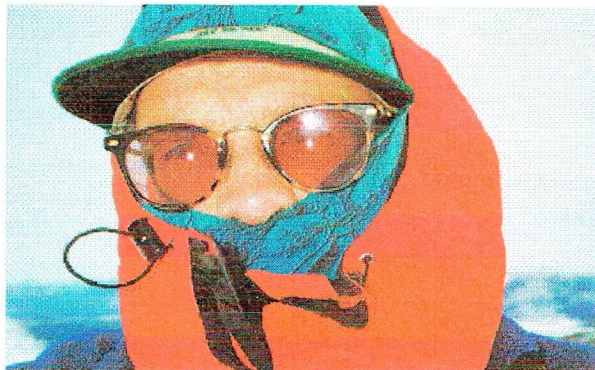
Steve surrounded by ice encrusted trees at base of Pyramid Peak



My "Hero" picture



Steve and me atop Pyramid Peak



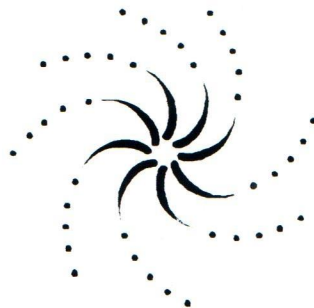
"Mike I'm really excited about our winter ascent!"

We arose to a bright sunny morning. I could hear the wind blowing up higher on the ridges indicating that the fair weather may not last long. We had decided to leave for the summit, a couple miles away, at 8:00 a.m. By 8:30 a.m. we set off, not exactly an "alpine start". It was a crisp morning and the snowshoes made barely a dent in the firm crust. As we gained the ridge above camp we were blasted by the wind. All the trees were bent over from the weight of the ice that covered their leeward side. I could see into the Pyramid Peak canyon, the falls cascading through the blanket of snow. The sky was clear and the mountains looked like snowcones above tree line. Far to the west though the clouds were building, heading our way pushed by the 40 mph winds.

Arriving at the base of the peak we found a flat spot to put on crampons and stash our snowshoes. The wind whipped us as we made our preparations. The snow was firm and wind blown, with sections of ice. The angle was such that we didn't need an ice axe, just ski poles, to negotiate the ridge. At times though, I had to lean on my poles to keep from being blown off balance by the higher wind gusts sweeping the exposed ridge. By now the wind had increased and the clouds that were over the valley only a short time before were now moving closer to us. The sun still shining was soon to be shrouded by the first thin clouds of the storms leading edge. Marching at a steady pace the summit was soon reached. All 11 of us were soon gathered on the wind swept summit. Hero pictures were taken, then a group portrait and it was time to make our exit. The winds were increasing and clouds had obliterated the sun.

On the return to camp we were able to use our crampons most of the way as the snow had remained firm. I started to post hole a little just as I approached camp. The once wind sheltered knoll was now being swept and snow was beginning to fall. We hurriedly broke camp and were soon headed out. As the flurries intensified we followed our tracks from the previous day. Trying to go down the ridges proved to be no easy task with snowshoes on. The steps we had kicked going up were about half the size of the snowshoes. Each step caused the snowshoes to pitch forward threatening to launch us head first down the hill. Steve and I had the longest shoes and this presented problems as we floundered down the steep slopes. At about the 6500 ft. level the snow turned to rain making things even more miserable. Soon we were back at the car, soaking wet, tired, and thankful that we got out before the storm.

"Mike I really had a good time, didn't you?" "I'm really glad I went, wasn't the peak awesome?", Steve remarked (quite a switch from before the trip). An uneventful ride home and the conclusion of yet another excellent backcountry trip. We had successfully passed through the window between storms, our "window of opportunity"!



Regional Climbing Clubs

Due to the hibernation of the Peak and Gorge, some members may want to look into joining other climbing groups. I am a member of three, any of which may suit the needs of Peak and Gorge members. The following is a brief summary. If you'd like an application form for SCMA, or information on joining for the others, call me (Nancy Palister) at (916) 852-5080 during the day or (916) 635-2829 in the evening.

Sierra Club, Sierra Peaks Section (SPS), Los Angeles Chapter

This is the mother of all peak-bagging groups. You have to be a Sierra Club member. The yearly fees are \$12.00 for the "Echo" - which is their newsletter. Many trips are pretty hard-core --- typically you will bag 2-3 peaks on a weekend and elevation gains can be as much as 10,000 feet for the weekend. They also offer some more mild climbs, but I have not been on any, so I cannot say what they are like. Many trips are out of Bishop or to the south. They do a few northern California trips each year, too. The SPS also offers extensive snow and rock training on weekends and has the insurance to do 5th class climbing within the Sierra Club. The only disadvantage I have found is that if you are a regular member, most of the trips are full by the time you get the notice of the climb. Sustaining members (more cost) get the Echo a few weeks ahead of everyone else and seem to take up most of the spaces on climbs.

CMC (California Mountaineering Club)

This is a low-key private club that only costs \$10 a year to get the newsletter. The group is quite small but they lead very good trips and are a bit more leisurely than the SPS trips. They also offer some restricted 5th class rock climbs and snow and ice climbs. You have to get to know people before most leaders will take you on a harder rock climb. For example, last year they did north arete on Matterhorn (II, 5.7) and west ridge of Conness (III,5.6). These are both long alpine routes and the climbs are usually done with several 2-person rope teams --- so you must be an experienced 5th class climber and leader for these. They also do a lot of ordinary peak bagging. Many of the members are SPS "drop-outs" who want more fun and less grunt. This group does a good mix of alpine climbing and rock area trips (Red Rocks, Joshua Tree, Pinnacles, Owen's River Gorge). They are a bit disorganized, but the trips are good.

SCMA (Southern California Mountaineering Association)

This group is a hard-core rock-climbing group. They have the most complex membership requirements, but the flip side is that, once in, you can be assured of climbing with safe and competent climbers. Most of the active members climb and lead at least 5.8 or better and lead climbing is required to be a regular member. Associate members can be less experienced. They have a beginners class (I believe about \$200 for the class, but it is all in LA area). To maintain membership, you have to attend 4 days of climbing with them each year. I have not found this a problem, because they have at least 6-10 days scheduled in Yosemite or Tuolumne Meadows each year. Another big advantage with this group is that they have reserved group camp-sites, which are tough to get, in Yosemite and at Joshua Tree (about every other weekend throughout the winter). I recently attended their 8-day Christmas to New Year event at Joshua Tree National Park. Camping fees are included in your \$35 per year membership, so that one trip alone makes the membership fee worthwhile. There are several members from the Bay Area so car-pooling is feasible. This is not a club for Northern California beginners. To be a regular member you must be evaluated on a 5-pitch climb lead climb of mid-5th class, in addition to three three-pitch climbs. Bolted routes do not count. A safety test is required and only given formally in the LA area, but you can get that waived or delayed (only if you are an experienced climber) until you take the test when attending one of their regular events in northern California.

-----Submitted by Nancy Palister

Yosemite campground and tour reservations can be made up to 3 months in advance by calling (800) 436-7275. A new company, Biospherics Inc. has taken over the service as of March 15. Reservations at other national parks in California will be available through (800) 365-2267. Reservations for CA state parks are through Park Net, (800) 444-7275 8 am to 5 pm .

Hanakauhi: Maui's Desert Peak

Standing tall on the far side of a vast volcanic wasteland, **Hanakauhi** is a fine "desert" peak rising high above the tropic beauties of **Maui**. It provides peakseekers with a reasonable objective within **Haleakala National Park**, and takes one well away from the tourist-filled confines of the West Rim.

Most people start their visit to Haleakala in the dark pre-dawn hours with a common objective- viewing sunrise from the rim. If one doesn't mind sharing the spectacular morning sun with hundreds of others, then its well worth getting up for. And fits right in with an early start for the peak.

Getting to Haleakala is easy: from Maui's largest town, Kahului, follow Hwy 37 southeast, then 377 and 378 the rest of the way up. This route is well signed. You'll drive from sea level to just over 10,000' in less than two hours from Kahului. The 10,023' highpoint of the island, **Red Hill**, is a driveup and a popular sunrise viewing location.

The hike to Hanakauhi begins just below this, at the Sliding Sands trailhead and Visitor Center. The **Sliding Sands Trail** curves around behind **White Hill** (a short hike from the parking lot) to the edge of the crater rim. Here the innards of Haleakala are revealed: the remains of a massive crater ten miles across, with its rim blown out on the northwestern and southeastern sides.

The trail plunges down into a seemingly brushless desert, but soon the silversword plants are found, clinging to life in the rubbly soil. After two miles and 1200' loss, a half-mile trail spurs off to the left to an old cinder cone. Ignore this and continue down for another 1.8 miles to elevation 7400'. Here fork left across some very jagged lava flows, rising upward around a tall cinder cone to come to another junction in 1.3 miles. Go straight and in 0.4 you'll arrive at the **Bottomless Pit**, a popular hiking destination even though it's only 65 feet deep and not really bottomless.

At the Pit you intersect the **Halemau'u Trail** and head east. Shortly you see an "unmaintained trail" sign on the left. Ignore this and go another 0.3 to a second "unmaintained trail" sign just before a signed intersection. Take this rocky trail and quickly veer right to go uphill. This starts you up the south ridge of the peak but fades away as you get higher.

From here on up its classic desert cross-country: rubble, sand, and dirt with some low scrub brush. While some class 3 can be found on the ridge, it can all be avoided. Hanakauhi's 8907' summit offers superb views: shining ocean in several directions, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa looming to the south on the Big Island, and near at hand a unique perspective of Haleakala's lunar landscape.

Return the way you came. Be aware that you've done eight miles and 1700' gain getting to the top - now you have another 2500+ feet to get back to the parking lot. This can be quite warm on a sunny day. And you'll find out why its called the Sliding Sands trail. Another option would be to approach Hanakauhi via the Halemau'u Trail, which is more miles but probably less gain.

This is but one Haleakala adventure. There are several other trails available that can be used to make nice loops in the crater. There are 3 cabins in the crater that can be reserved for overnight use. Recommended: the Trails Illustrated topo map of Haleakala National Park, available at the Visitor Center.

Statistics: Hanakauhi, 16 miles rt, 4500' gain, class 2.

Bob Sumner

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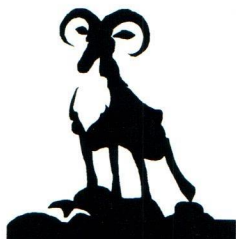
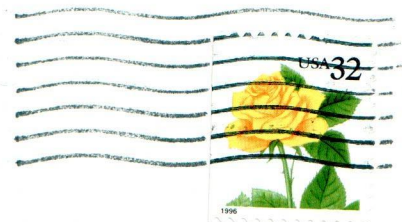
SUBSCRIPTIONS: Dues are \$6.00 per year (6 issues). Address labels will note what issue will be your last unless you renew. Send checks (payable to "Peak and Gorge") to the Section's Treasurer: John Besbekos, P.O. Box 417415, Sacramento, CA 95841.



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: 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. Articles by e-mail to jbde@aol.com (put BOULDER as subject).

DEADLINE: About the third week every other month.
The next deadline is: *20 Apr. 1998*

Boulder Editorial Committee
C/O John Besbekos
P.O. Box 417415
Sacramento, CA 95841



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John Sarna
9556 Appalachian Drive
Sacramento, CA 95827-1109

