

Final Issue No. 82 Dec. 1998

The Interim Guest Corner

We publish this issue with some reluctance, as this will be the final issue of the BOULDER. The Peak and Gorge section has dwindled as key leaders and members have left the area. As the membership declined so did the viability of sustaining this publication.

The few members that had issues remaining on their paid subscriptions will find refund checks enclosed. What is left in the treasury will be handed over to John Watters to contribute to the Dan Dobbins fund. Since the refunds will be fairly small, some members have told me not to bother. For those of you who have a check and wish to cash it, please do so *before* January 1999. I will be moving to Utah in early January and will close out the account and turn the balance over to John W. sometime before I leave. Any uncashed checks will be considered donations to the Dobbins fund.

For 14 years the BOULDER served as a link for climbers and gorge scramblers. It provided an identity for the Peak and Gorge Section. Through its pages we could find out what old friends were up to and meet new ones. It served as a source for outings information and humorous adventure stories.

We are appreciative of the efforts of all the previous editors as well as the contributions of other members who submitted articles, helped with mailing, etc. I hope to stay in touch with many of you via e-mail and hopefully do some hiking or climbing when you visit Utah.

Now as Gen. McArthur put it, it's time for the BOULDER to "just fade away".

----JOHN BESBEKOS

Married on Top of Mt. Ingalls

The first question that may arise here is --- why (the heck) would anyone get married atop a nondescript peak like Ingalls? Well, Mt. Ingalls *is* the highest point in Plumas County. Moreover, as of fall of 1997, Plumas was the only county in California whose highest point I had yet to climb. The reason is not that it's a difficult climb, but that I'd "saved" it for my list-finisher party, the customary event to celebrate completing a long list of peak-climbs.

However, Mt. Ingalls reputation made it a poor choice for any such gala celebration. DinishD told me all he'd recalled of it was the long dusty drive in, only the last mile on a 4x4 road, with mundane views at the end. HowardS and TobiT, who had been married atop Mt. Shasta, were remiss to even consider such a drive-up to be a peak-climb. Even the owner of Davis Lake Cabins, when I asked him about renting out a cabin close to the peak, remarked: "why drive all the way up to Ingalls when you get better views from the nearby Smith Peak."

Ironically, their lack of enthusiasm led me to select this very peak for my wedding. It wasn't particularly appealing to "party hardy" alone while finishing the list on Ingalls. Hence, after thinking long and hard one night, I huddled with my "significant other", who'd been making noises in favor of being married out-of-doors, and convinced her that "this was the place." Then again, perhaps I implied that this was the *only* place, since it would coerce Marcia, plus a minister and two witnesses, to celebrate with me atop Ingalls? Later, as Marcia and I put our invitation list together, the converse problem arose --- how to coordinate getting so many people up the mountain. My schemes for this --- having a few 4x4s carry up the non-hikers plus lots of cake and champaign --- all came to naught.

We had optimistically chose Memorial Day for the wedding, assuming it a good bet that the winter snows would have melted by then. If not, then the south approach and summit ridge should have been clear of snow, since Ingalls is only 8372' high and on the east (rain-shadow) side of the Sierra. But El Nino played her hand, leaving a 200% above-normal snow-pack. Ingalls was still accessible at the end of May, but it would be at least 5 miles in and up 2500' on snow.

Unfortunately, such a trek wasn't a viable option for some of the people who had RSVP'd, so we phoned everyone on the list and changed the date to the last weekend in June, assuming it a sure bet that the snow would be melted by then.

Contrary to all expectations, the El Nino storms continued right into the first week of June, and the next couple weeks were unseasonable cool. Still, I thought, by late June there's never much snow in the Sierra below 8,000'. A week later, reality hit as I pulled the snow depths off the Internet. It was slowly melting in the warmer weather, but not fast enough. Sure enough, when I scouted out the west side of the peak a few days before the wedding, patches of snow lay along side the road at 6000', and I didn't think it prudent to drive onto the snow that covered the road above 6,500'.

On the day before the wedding, JohnK and I scouted out another approach to Ingalls, the southeast side. To my relief, we found a few small snow drifts at 6,500', but my trusty 4x4 Toyota slid over them after building up some momentum. An opportune turn on a side road brought us up a south-facing slope, which was clear of snow up to 7000'. But further progress was blocked, and the road ahead buried in a drift taller than my Toyota that angled down toward a steep slope. In fact, every view above us was loaded with white snow. Yet, the summit was still 1300' up and a couple miles away.

Ten miles below, in more populated environs, Marcia and our respective children were preparing for the wedding reception the next day. We had rented all three Lake Davis Cabins and notified the guests of our plans to convene there, hike to Ingalls for the wedding, then return to the cabins for dinner. On telling Marcia about the snow, she clearly expressed her preference --- let's just have the marriage at the cabins --- since she didn't believe many of the guests could hike two miles over snow. Knowing marriage involves a lot of give and take, I compromised and told her we could have two marriages, the first on top of the peak, the second at the cabins for those who didn't want to climb the peak.

As our guests arrived the next morning, we let them know they were invited to join us at either or both of two marriage ceremonies that day. Finally, at 11:30 a.m., after a few snacks, I announced we'd begin to caravan to the first (mountain-high) ceremony. Ten vehicles pulled in behind me, which, surprisingly, included all our guests except my dad. A few late-comers did try to follow us later, but got lost in the maze of logging roads around Ingalls. A half hour after starting, my G.P.S. indicated we'd reached the appropriate side road, where I stopped the caravan. Most parked there, and Carroll, Fred, and a couple other 4x4 drivers shuttled hikers up the side road to the base of the first major snow drift. I had been worried that some of the non-hikers might, despite my warnings, try to drive over the snow to the top, but instead, they all just saw us off and enjoyed a few leisure hours under the pines while we

slipped and slid in the snow. All in all, more than half the guests (25 in all) donned hiking gear and set off for the peak.

So it was out of the cars and onto the snow, and more continuing up the snow, and continuing up the snow, and even losing the road under the snow. A mile or so and a 1000' higher, once again, we stood on solid ground on the mile-long summit ridge. This was not your usual rocky Sierra ridge, but a weather-worn, gravelly, open area above the tree line. Leading the rear guard, I caught up to the rest of the group on a false summit overlooking Ingalls. Relieved that no one had taken a wrong turn below, I looked around at the scenery for the first time. The ill-weather that had caused me so much consternation had also changed this nondescript peak to one of serene beauty. Except for the open ridge which extended up to Ingalls, snow covered the ground below the pines in all directions. Far below, a clear line of demarcation separated the green-dotted white from the green-brown landscape below the snow line, and Lake Davis was an expanse of deep blue in the distance.

After a short rest on the false summit, our group spread out like a line of ants on that last mile of bare ridge, before converging on the summit. Once there, the mood turned to one of rest and revelry. Out of the packs came dressier clothes, crowns of flowers, boutonnieres, the ring, and a Hans-version of the good book. At last, all was ready. My daughter, Camille, led the way down an imaginary "aisle", throwing out a flagrant collection of flowers we had picked in Sierra Valley on the drive in. Marcia's daughter, Josephine, came next as the maid of honor, carrying a video camera and preparing the way for Marcia and her son, August, who gave Marcia away. As everyone gathered around us, Hans welcomed in the ceremony. The best-man, Oscar, gave me the ring, I put it on Marcia's finger, and a number of words later, Hans pronounced us "husband" and "wife". He concluded with the "Benediction of the Apache".

All 25 of those who began the hike were still with us to offer their congratulates atop Ingalls. I still recall the cameras snapping all around. Dinish organized a group shot of those "California County High-Pointers" in attendance to celebrate my concurrently finishing the list. He then presented Marcia with one of the rare, hot-pink T-Shirts that he'd designed with the entire list printed on the back. Mt. Ingalls was Marcia's eighth county high point, so she's no stranger to this "sport", though she has 46 more to go to complete the list.

It didn't take long to hike back, but it was 5 p.m. by the time we regrouped at the cars and, one by one, drove off in the direction of the cabins. My dad had already started to barbeque the ribs and chicken, and Marcia, her relatives, and even some of the guests, brought out marinated carrots, string beans, mushrooms; crackers and brie; tortilla chips, spinach dip, taco dip, baked potatoes, baked beans, etc., etc.

The second wedding followed the eating without further ado. It took place on a grassy knoll behind one of the cabins. Besides the location, the primary difference

between the ceremonies was that Marcia's brother gave her away this time. We also lit citronella torches, this time, to keep away the mosquitos, but it only slowed them up. I recall brushing several away from my cheek as I said "I will" for the second time. Oscar and August convinced everyone not to throw rice, explaining that birds bloat and die if they feed on it. Instead, a few people threw flowers and August blew bubbles that floated carelessly above us in the evening sky. Next were the rituals of cutting the cake and champaign toasts , which I scarcely recall after such a day. Others were probably also tired from the exertion, as the guests began to leave soon after, whereupon Marcia and I claimed one of the cabins to complete the day's pleasures.

For any guests reading this, thanks for making this day so special; and more thanks to those that brought food and other accouterments, and more thanks to those who sent us copies of pictures of the weddings. Moreover, thanks to Hans for performing two inspiring ceremonies under these adverse circumstances.

A list-finisher party and two weddings in a day. Whew! It's a day I wouldn't have missed for anything, but, that said, neither do I ever want to go through it all again.

John Sarna

Note: A copy of this narrative is on the Internet at <http://www.lanset.com/beren/john/wedding.htm>. It includes a few extra details, such as:

- A list of attendees (for both weddings)
- The "Benediction of the Apache" (read by Hans to conclude the wedding ceremony)
- Pictures (Neil Eskind's digital images of this mountain-high wedding)



Ten Lakes Basin , Yosemite (via the back way)

It was August and I had yet to take a backpack trip. Bob Buckles flew back out here from Virginia and was eager to see the Sierras. I called Don Fox and Dan Harrison to see if they were in the mood for a "leisure" backpack trip. We decided on a 3 day visit to Yosemite. None of us had ever been to the popular Ten Lake Basin off Tioga road, so that became our destination. Don did some research and found a trail that went in from the back. Since it is more than twice as long as the regular route, few hikers take it. We thought Great! No Crowds! A pleasant little jaunt!

We were going to leave one vehicle at the 10 lakes trailhead and shuttle over to Tenaya Lake and begin our trip at the May Lake trailhead. When we got to the trail parking a sign said "No overnight parking". "What is this crap?!" "Where are you supposed to leave your car?" We drove to the permit kiosk and the Ranger helper said that only meant you couldn't camp there, and by the way - *all other* trailhead quotas are full!!! So it was back to Tenaya lake. We finally got our gear on our backs and headed into the woods.

It felt great to have the ol' pack on and heading off into the wilderness and mosquitoes. It was with great relief that after about 3 miles we entered the land of the granite slabs and left the buzzing blood-suckers behind. Eventually we reached a pass on the east slope of Tuolumne Peak. A magnificent panorama lay before us. The Grand Canyon of Tuolumne and the in the foreground and Mt. Conness and adjoining crests beyond.

Here is where our adventure began. The north facing slopes below us were snow covered, obliterating the switchbacks. It was with some difficulty that we made our way down with wobbly backpacks. Good thing for me that I was using trekking poles. Several times one of us would sink through the snow and have to wallow out. Dan had a particularly difficult incident when one leg sank through to his crotch while his other remained on the surface. Imagine trying to free yourself from that while on a 45° slope.

We contoured around the steep ice slopes to a flat granite perch beside a half-frozen pond. Since it was getting near dusk we decided to make this airy perch our bivouac. We had water, flat granite, and a million-dollar view. Who could ask for more. We made dinner and watched the most spectacular alpinglo display.

The next morning we spent studying compass readings and topo maps to try and figure out where the trail should be. We were able to follow bits of the trail as it disappeared under snow and then reappeared again.

The snow faded out as we began our descent into South Fork Canyon. The bottom of the canyon was a hot, waist high sea of grass on a muddy, wet, obscure path with clouds of mosquitoes. If you stopped, you lost blood. We found to our dismay that we had to make a waist high stream crossing. We took off our boots and threw them across then hoisted our packs above our heads and waded over. Then as we sat putting our boots on we were subjected to the relentless bug attacks.

Once we got moving the attacks subsided to the tolerable level, however the fun was just beginning. I counted 31 shadeless switchbacks as we labored up out of the opposite canyon wall. It was with great relief when we found ourselves looking down onto the easternmost lake of 10 Lake Basin. We found a sandy flat spot with no bugs at about 2:00pm. Our tents went up and all 4 of us crawled in for afternoon naps. The rest of the day was spent splashing in the cold water, reading and lounging.

The next morning we made our way to the other end of the basin and began to see other campers and hikers. We had another canyon wall to hike up, but this one was easier than the one we had done the previous day. At the top of the wide open pass we paused to snack and admire our last view back at the skyline behind us. The rest of the Ten Lakes trail was downhill for several miles to Tioga road. The car shuttle was performed at soon the 4 of us were headed out of the park. It was the last Yosemite trip for me as a California resident. Due to the closure of McClellan AFB, my job and Dan's will be transferred to Utah in 1999. I will miss the Sierras, but look forward to new adventures in Utah.

—John Besbekos



Pyramid Peak

I'm captivated by this peak. Every time I look eastward and can see the Sierra crest, I look for this peak. I try to summit it at least once a year, preferably during the early spring so that I can enjoy spring corn. Next year, weather permitting, I plan on skiing this peak with my oldest son and provide him with an appreciation and understanding of why this peak is so attractive.

Where is Pyramid Peak? One can view the Sierra Nevada crest if one gain a modest bit of elevation in Sacramento with an unobstructed view to the east, if one look hard enough they will notice a long gently sloping north running ridge that culminates in a sharply rising pyramid shaped peak. You are looking at the highest peak in the Desolation Wilderness, the nearly ten thousand foot Pyramid Peak. One obtains an even better view of the peak as they drive up Highway 50. From Cameron Park and Pollack Pines the peak's dominates the Crystal Range. However, as one is driving between Twin Bridges and Camp Sacramento, all one has to do is to look to the northwest to obtain a close up view of the south facing ridge that ends at the peak's summit. The ridge's steep west face drops into Rocky Canyon which drains the south faces of the peak. The east face of the ridge drops into the Pyramid Creek drainage whose flows create Horsetail Fall.

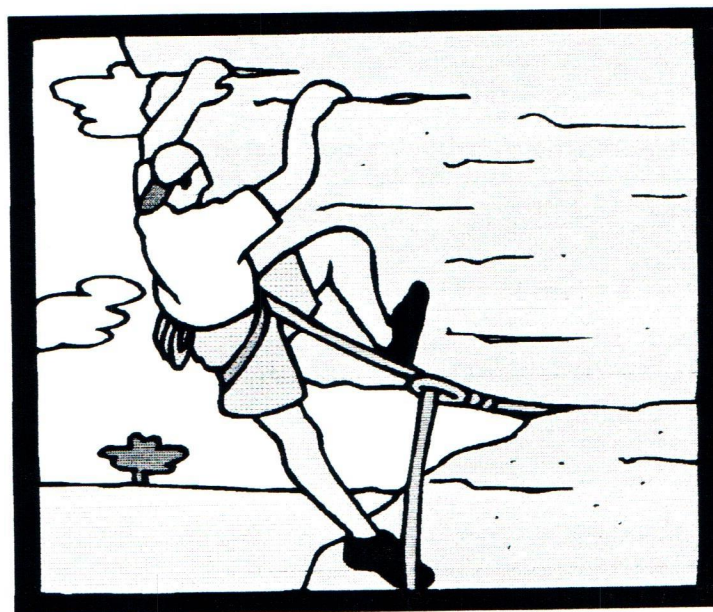
Both the Rocky Creek and Pyramid Creek drainage provide access to the peak. My first hike to the top was lead by a Sierra Club leader whose name I have long forgotten. The hike started at Twin Bridges and followed the current trail which parallels the creek. Years ago just before one started the serious climbing to gain the upper portions of the drainage one came upon the wreckage of an airplane that had crashed during a winter storm, wreckage that has long since been removed. Once the upper portions of the drainage are attained, the hike drifted in a north westerly direction. After a quarter mile or so we started to hike toward the steep east face of the main ridge leading to the summit. The hike was over talus slopes which lead to a ledge that provided access to the ridge. Once the ridge was attained, it was an easy hike over decomposed granite to gain the summit block with its aggregate of large boulders. From there is it was boulder hoping till attaining the summit.

I hiked this route a couple of times sometimes making the top, other times not. However, on one such trip as we approached the summit block we ran into two hikers who were descending. They had ascended the peak via the Rocky Creek drainage. Since then, I have climbed or skied the peak at least once a year via Rocky Creek. However, there

is a bit of adventure at the start since the trail(s) is hard to find. The trail begins a couple of a hundred feet east of the where Rocky Creek crosses Highway 50. However, don't be disappointed if you don't find the trail immediately, after you a gain a few hundred feet the trail will become evident to you. The trail climbs steeply upward before veering westward before again turning northward steeply ascending the drainage. Below the trial now one can view and hear the descending waters of Rocky Creek. After awhile the trail moves away from the creek and ascends steeply toward the first open bench area which lies about 1000 feet above the highway. It is here during the early spring that one puts on their skis and skins. For the hiker, the bench means one has to cross the creek since the trail is now on the west side of the creek. The trail follows the creek before disappearing when it attains a second high bench. However, the route to the peak is obvious since the peak's summit is visible.

While there are other hiking or skiing routes to the summit, for example, from the Wright Lake Road or from Lake Aloha, the above routes are the easiest and most direct to access this Sierra summit. Regardless of which route one take there is much delight in attaining this summit. The delight is both physical and aesthetic. Conditioning and stamina are necessary as one pace's oneself, putting one foot ahead of the other for 4000 feet. However, the physical hardness of the ascent is offset by a hike's comradery and the enjoyment one experiences while enjoying the ruggedness and artwork of nature. The joy and hardship of high places were put succinctly by John Muir when he remarked "to be a mountaineer."

-Al Gutowsky



Thoughts on Living in the Northwest

Hard for me to believe, but today is my one year anniversary of living in Seattle. Seems like just yesterday that I was hiking in the Desolation Wilderness. Since this is the last issue of the Boulder, I thought I'd share some random comparisons between the Northwest and the Central Valley/Sierra.

The Mountains

The Cascades are more vertical than the Sierra. While the Sierra typically have a sharp eastern escarpment and a gentler western slope, the Cascades are steep on both sides. Except for valleys, any hiking goes up and right now, no pussyfooting around.

Yes, it does rain a lot up here. The average yearly rainfall in Seattle is over 35", double what Sacramento gets. The mountains attract more moisture so the precipitation totals increase as you move east until you pass the crest of the mountains and get into the rain shadow.

A lot more rain means more vegetation. On the wetter western side, the trees and underbrush are so thick that offtrail hiking is very difficult. However, the treeline is a lot lower than the Sierra. There are many ridges in the 4-5000' range that are above the trees, though there may be brush.

Glaciers and permanent snowfields abound. I personally think that a mountain dripping with glaciers is aesthetically very pleasing. Snow is also a delightful medium for climbing, making some of those vertical slopes much easier to ascend.

While Rainier is over 14,000', most of the mountains are much lower in elevation than the Sierra. Other than the volcanoes, none of the Cascades are over 10,000'. But, they start at lower elevations, have the lower treeline and the verticality. They are not wussy mountains.

Seattle is incredibly close to great alpine country. I live in Redmond and can be at Snoqualmie Pass on I-90 in 45 minutes. From there, I've found at least five hikes that are just breath-taking.

The volcanoes, Rainier, Adams, Baker, St. Helens, are substantially rotten rock covered with ice and snow. The other Cascades are a mix, but there's lots of granite, some limestone, basalt and mish-mash.

The City

What can I say? Seattle is big and crowded. Traffic is a hassle, especially on the two bridges crossing Lake Washington, a 20 mile lake that divides the area. But, it's lush, green, lots of hills, several lakes. Even stuck in traffic, there is often something pretty to look at.

On my first day at work, the skies were blue and the air clear. My office was on a hill on Mercer Island, a big island in the middle of Lake Washington. Out one window was Rainier, out the other was Baker. The lake was below, the Cascade Range filled the eastern horizon. And then two eagles flew by. Lordy, welcome to the Northwest.

Another scene. I got out of a meeting at the Mountaineers club house downtown. The western sky was red and orange over the Olympic Range across Puget Sound. The downtown high rises, many glass walled, reflected the sunset and so were also red and orange. The eastern sky was black from a big rainstorm that had blown through and there was a vivid rainbow arching over the hills, forming the tallest rainbow I have ever seen. I literally ended up in tears because the vision was so beautiful no matter which direction I looked.

The traffic sucks, the housing is expensive but so what?

The People

How should I put this? Many of the folks here are extremely parochial and self-centered about the area, almost elitist. If it isn't about Seattle, it doesn't matter. The business section ignores the rest of the world and concentrates on Boeing and Microsoft. The sports is all Seattle or Washington teams. The Huskies and Cougars are the only two college teams that count.

But, the folks are mostly friendly and polite. Even on the roads, just about everyone will let you into the traffic flow. I am constantly amazed at how easy it is to merge or to enter a clogged road from a parking lot. People just stop and wave you in.

The Mountaineers

I've climbed with the Mazamas in Portland, the Sierra Club in California and now the Mountaineers. With all due respect to the others, the Mountaineers are serious about their climbing. I've been climbing for 20 years but I had to pass a written test and a whole day field test before becoming eligible to go on one of their climbs. Even after that, I have to take Mountaineering Oriented First Aid, a 36 hour class, and perform one day of conservation service before I can climb with them. They have sections for snowshoing and non-technical scrambles, and both of them have classes or test requirements as well as the MOFA and day of service before a member can participate. At first blush, it would seem that the stiff requirements keep a lot of people out, but they also ensure that everyone that participates is qualified. I grumbled a bit to my wife about not being able to climb this past summer because of the MOFA, but I'm mostly comforted by the screening process.

Oh, and there are no climbing restrictions caused by insurance problems. The scramble section does what the Sierra Club does in California, though with ice axes and crampons. The climbing section does full-fledged technical climbing.

I spent far too much time this past year working instead of enjoying this fantastic place but I recommitted myself to the mountains in about July and have been out almost every weekend since. I love the mountains and the beauty here. But, you know what? The Sierra still calls to me. I miss Twin and Island Lakes and the rest of the Desolation. I miss Yosemite. What you all have is special. The Boulder may be dead and the Peak & Gorge may be dormant, but the country is still there. Take advantage! Love it and use it.

---**Jim Bily**

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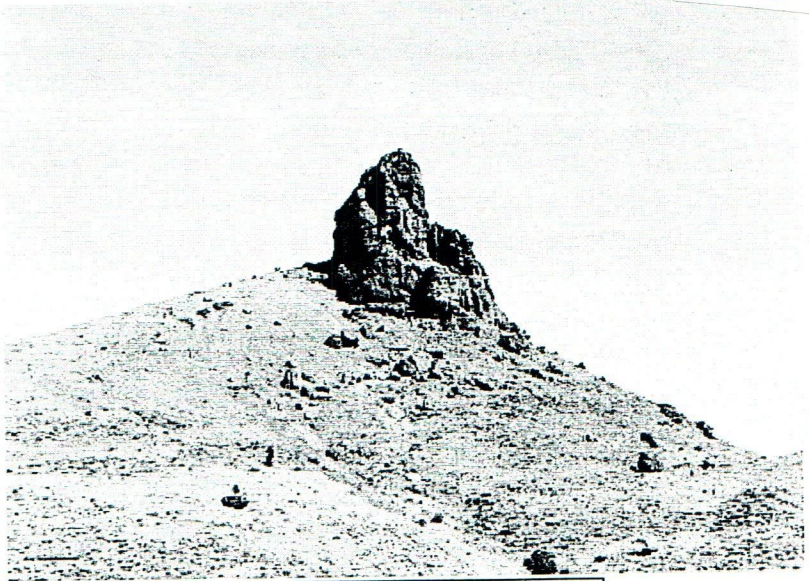
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