



The Sierra ECHO



View From Bishop Pass Towards Mt. Tom

photo by Wynne Benti - August 2012

VOLUME 56 | NUMBER IV | OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2012



*ECHOS
from the Chair*

Hello SPS Climbers,

The summer climbing season has come and gone. There is still time for another few trips this fall. Please see our schedule on the website. And thank you for the leaders which have planned and conducted these trips.

Hope to see you at the banquet in January. We still need a speaker, so please forward any ideas to the committee as soon as possible.

The SPS MC is still working on the plan to increase the number of trips lead and creating a better experience for the SPS leaders.

We have formulated a survey (online type) which we will send out to our SPS members for feedback about our ideas. Look for this in October and we will present some results in the next Echo.

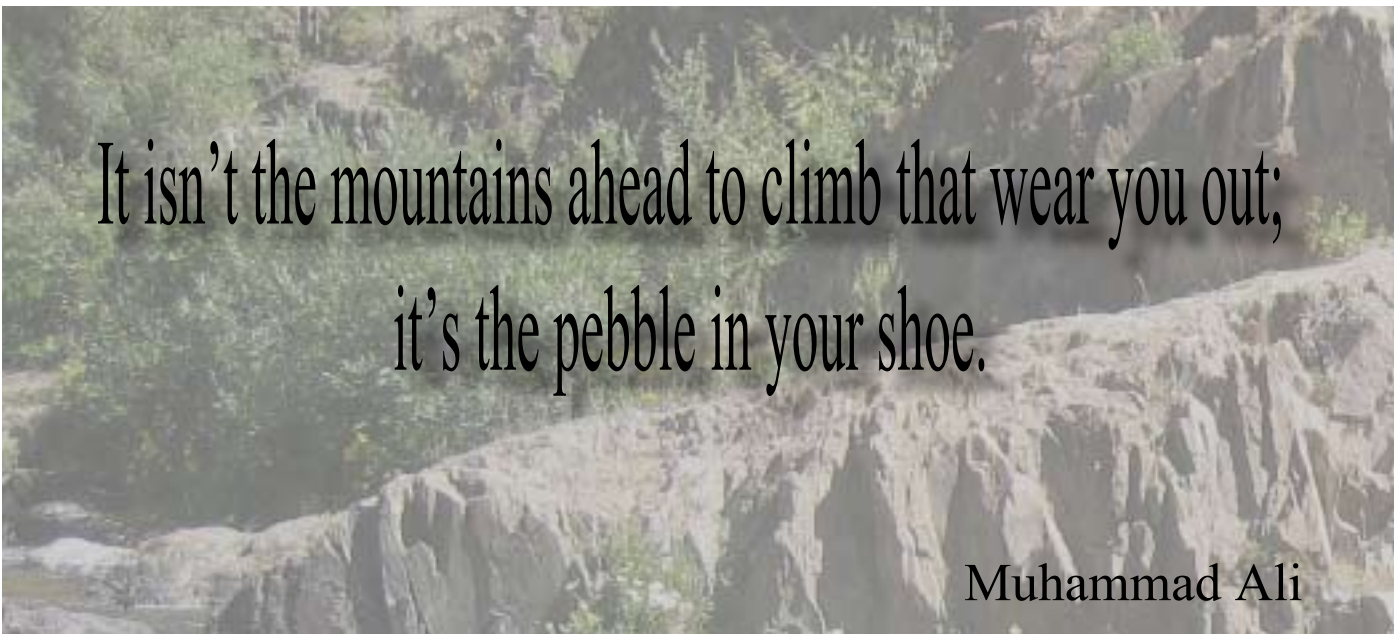
The Angeles chapter budget problems appear to be solved for now. But there is no longer a printed schedule and we will only be getting a printed schedule roster once per year. The schedule of trips and activities will only be available online. Also, the Southern Sierra will only be available online.

Our next SPS committee meeting will be in early October. We successfully met in June via a group Skype meeting. This was a new experience for us and it worked out well. Please contact me directly if you would like to attend the next meeting at chair@sierrapeaks.org.

And last, please get to the SPS website to see what is new there.

Thanks and happy, safe climbing,

Greg Mason
Chair, SPS



It isn't the mountains ahead to climb that wear you out;
it's the pebble in your shoe.

Muhammad Ali

Member Accomplishments

Submitted by Eric Scheidemantle
SPS Secretary

Barbara Lilley - Explorer's Emblem
Ron Bartell - Explorer's Emblem
Terry Flood - Explorer's Emblem
Fred Johnson - Explorer's Emblem
Jerry Keating - Explorer's Emblem

Doug Mantle - Explorer's Emblem
Shane Smith - Senior Emblem
Shane Smith - Master Emblems
Robert Ayers - Senior Emblem
Terry Flood - Geographical Emblem

You may always provide your individual comments and suggestions to us directly.

USE THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESSES:



Greg Mason, Char, chair@sierrapeaks.org



Kathy Rich, Vice-Char, vicechair@sierrapeaks.org



Eric Scheidemantle, Secretary, secretary@sierrapeaks.org



Alex Smirnoff, Treasurer, treasurer@sierrapeaks.org



Matt Hengst, Outreach, outreach@sierrapeaks.org



Sara Danta, Echo Editor, echoeditor@sierrapeaks.org

See the website for the current committee members.

<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps/management.htm>

Check out the SPS website if you have not been there in awhile.

<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps/default.htm>

Letter to Angeles Chapter Leaders

August 10, 2012

To: Angeles Chapter leaders
From: Mike Sappingfield, Angeles Chapter Finance Chair
Susan Heitman, Angeles Chapter Communications Chair

Re: Southern Sierran / Schedule of Activities

As many of you know, the Angeles Chapter has changed the format and distribution of the bi-monthly Southern Sierran newsletter and the tri-yearly Schedule of Activities.

Southern Sierran

Beginning with the July-August issue, the print version of the Southern Sierran is no longer being mailed to the entire membership, but only to those who request a mailed copy. An invitation to request the Southern Sierran by mail was enclosed in the May-June 2012 issue; to date approximately 500 people (out of a membership of 40,000) have requested printed copies.

Current plans call for mailing one issue a year to all Chapter members, with an insert containing the leader directory information now included in the Schedule of Activities (see below).

The news and announcements in the Southern Sierran are incorporated into the Chapter web site (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org>). In addition, a pdf copy of each full, printed issue will be available on the web site.

* To subscribe to Angeles Chapter E-news, send an email with the subject "E-news" to southern.sierran@sierraclub.org

* To opt in to receive print versions of the Southern Sierran, send an email with the subject "Opt-in by print" to southern.sierran@sierraclub.org and include your name and address.

Or, send a request in writing to: Subscriptions, Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, 3435 Wilshire Blvd #320, Los Angeles, CA 90010-1904

Schedule of Activities

The Schedule of Activities will no longer be produced in its current format. This was announced in the July-October 2012 issue, along with a form to request a printed, mailed list of the outings and activities portion of the Schedule. To date, approximately 300 people (out of a membership of 40,000) have requested this printed version, which will be mailed beginning in October 2012.

The outings and activities formerly printed in the Schedule are now in the online Schedule of Activities (http://angeles.sierraclub.org/find_hike_trip_event). This new system offers much more timely information on outings and activities, as well as useful functions such as maps to trailheads and easy contact with trip leaders. 2

Letter to Angeles Chapter Leaders continued

The leader directory formerly printed in the Schedule will be included in a once-a-year edition of the Southern Sierran that will be mailed to the entire membership. This is expected to be in the March-April issue.

The remainder of the information now in the Schedule is included in various sections of the chapter web site, <http://angeles.sierraclub.org>.

* To opt in to receive print versions of the Schedule of Activities Outings, send a request in writing to: Schedule of Activities Outings, Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, 3435 Wilshire Blvd #320, Los Angeles, CA 90010-1904

Why was this done?

The conversion from print/mail to electronic distribution has been under discussion for some time, primarily driven by four factors: timeliness of information, the need to reach a wider and more diverse audience, cost, and the desire to reduce our environmental footprint.

In preparation, we converted our web site into a new format that is easier to read and much easier to keep current. Working closely with the Outings Management Committee, we installed a new, online, interactive events calendar (built in a system called OARS, Online Activity Registration System, developed and maintained by the national Club and in use by chapters around the country). This events calendar – essentially the Schedule of Activities in online format – avoids the long lead time for posting outings required by a printed version; it currently has between 600 and 700 outings and events listed, with the ability to contact leaders, access maps, sort by type of trip, etc.

Why was it done so suddenly?

By April, it had become clear that the Angeles Chapter was faced with an urgent cash flow issue. After consultation with National, the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee concluded that continuing to print and send the publications to all 40,000 members, knowing that not everyone reads them, was not financially responsible.

By dramatically curtailing the circulation of the Southern Sierran and by transferring the information in the Schedule of Activities to the chapter web site – along with an aggressive fundraising push – enough money has been saved (and raised) to keep us in the black throughout this year; and the savings will be even greater in future years.

We appreciate the patience and understanding of our membership during this transition. Change is never easy, but we think that the new web site, online interactive events calendar, and electronic newsletter will help the Angeles Chapter provide better service and information for all its members!



Passages

In Memory of Dr. M. Marlin Clark by Campy Camphausen

We have missed our friend and fellow Sierra Peaks Section climber, Dr. M. Marlin Clark, since his retirement in Boise, ID and his passing there about a year and a half ago. He was “The Doctor in Trona” who joined us on Sierra Club climbs during the ‘70s to the early ‘90s. We have remained in contact with him and his wife Donetta over the years, and visited with them in Boise after Marlin contracted Parkinson’s. Donetta recently sent me a copy of his obituary. Marlin climbed with the whole bunch of SPS/DPS friends - Ron, Barbara, Joe and Betty, Duane, Mary, George, Dick, Steve, Mary Sue, myself, and many more, and some may not have gotten the work of his passing.

Below is taken from the obit provided by Donetta Clark

Merrel Marlin Clark, MD, died Tuesday, December 14, 2010 at his home in Boise ID, after a long struggle with Parkinson’s disease.

He is survived by his wife of 28 years, Donetta Collett Clark. He is also survived by his daughters by his first wife, Patricia Louise Bowden, and their families.

Dr. Clark was born November 30, 1926 in Glendale, CA. He graduated from Glendale High in 1944 and left the next morning for Pacific Union College in Northern California. He completed his degree and entered Loma Linda University Medical School obtaining his MD in 1953.

Donetta writes of her husband “I surely miss him every day”.



Misc Business

FROM THE EDITOR

The Sierra Echo is a quarterly publication of the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter. For more information, see the back of this newsletter. All questions, copy and photo submissions should be directed to **Sara Danta, Editor, The Sierra Echo**, preferably via email at echoeditor@sierrapeaks.org. Refer to the Schedule of Activities or SPS Roster for mailing address. The Echo will also be available as a PDF download at the SPS website and via a link to all SPS members opting for this method.

REGARDING E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION OF THE ECHO

Please contact this email address (newsletter@sierrapeaks.org) for any issues with hardcopy or email version distribution.

The Sierra Peaks Section maintains a website at
<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps>.

SPS List Serve

You can find the information you need as a subscriber by checking out our listserv support site. Go to this address to enroll for the SPS E-mail list service: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps/listserver.htm>.

MEETING INFO

The SPS Management Committee will hold meetings every quarter at a location to be determined. Please contact SPS Chair Greg Mason at chair@sierrapeaks.org for meeting times, date and place.

Sierra Peaks Section
Management Committee Meeting
June 21, 2012 - Virtual Meeting

Minutes

1. Meeting Called to Order @ 7:15 p.m.
2. In Attendance
 - a. Kathy
 - b. Dan
 - c. Matthew
 - d. Greg
 - e. Alex
 - f. Eric
3. Committee Reports
 - a. Chair
 - i. Survey Form
 1. Reviewed Dan's responses
 2. Reviewed the form
 3. Greg put in option to put in name and email
 4. Alex had question about it requiring email
 5. Greg wanted the email address as an honor system to limit one person filling out one form
 6. Kathy and Greg wish it to be anonymous
 7. Greg will make it optional
 8. Kathy suggested adding a question about how many non-SPS/private trips have you done in last X years
 9. Greg asked if five years is too much; Kathy suggested asking for last two years
 10. matt suggested an essay question to ask if you won't be climbing with sps, please give a reason
 11. Matthew suggested being very specific regarding what types of trips they want
 12. Dan mentioned that when he lists 3rd class trips he gets lots of sign-ups; people want third and fourth/fifth because they cannot do those by themselves
 13. Dan likes the idea of a lower price for the e-echo; it encourages adoption
 14. Greg counter-offered to keep the e-echo at current price and make the printed one a few dollars more
 15. We decided to get rid of question regarding whether to get e-echo or print echo
 16. We like the question about what kind of echo content people find most enjoyable
 17. We like the question about the most difficult aspect of leading trips
 18. Kathy suggested we could reimburse leaders for reservation fees not paid by participants; we need to discuss that as a general agenda item during implementation
 - ii. Aiding SPS Leaders in Leading Trips
 1. We need to think of ideas of how to help them
 2. Greg has list of SPS leaders and he wants to send an email out to them
 3. Greg will generate an email list of these rated leaders
 4. the email will be a feeler to inquire about helping them lead more trips
 5. matt suggested a listserv where you can ask for assistants or volunteer to assist
 6. it was also generally discussed during the survey review

MC Meeting Minutes continued

- b. Sierra Echo
 - i. Sara sent Greg an echo proofing and Greg ok'd it
 - ii. Kathy will review it, too, this weekend
 - iii. Kathy received a usb stick with past echo issues on it
- c. Outings
 - i. O.A.R.S Status
 - 1. Kathy has not had a chance to convert the SPS outings publications to it.
 - 2. Adrienne is a master of it and will go over it with Kathy
 - 3. We need to get Tidballs on-board; we need an expert to walk them through it
 - 4. Action item is to speak with Adrienne and the Tidballs.
- d. Treasurer
 - i. Budget & Reserve
 - 1. Greg spoke with Ron Silverman
 - 2. He went to the Chairman's meeting and wrote an article in the Echo
 - 3. Chapter going to electronic Southern Sierran and The Big Schedule
 - 4. With O.A.R.S. that is the electronic version of the schedule and once a year they'll publish a list of leaders.
 - 5. The chapter budget is in trouble and is looking for less expensive office space.
 - 6. About 3-4 years there was \$3 million surplus as endowments; they were meant to be spent, not invested for interest, and national made them spend it so now it's almost gone
 - 7. Membership is down and what chapters get from membership dues is down
 - 8. This information is in Greg's Echo article
 - 9. Ron Silverman said we need to get rid of the SPS surplus; we're not allowed to have it.
 - 10. Alex has a check for about \$10,000 that's ready to deposit into the new SPS account that Alex is opening.
 - 11. There are some bureaucratic difficulties getting the new account opened.
 - 12. Dan suggested creating a separate account just for this check so we can deposit it immediately while we wait to open a formal SPS account.
 - 13. Action item is for Alex to get that money into an account, unanimously voted upon.
- e. Banquet
 - i. We set the date to January 27th, 2013 at the last meeting.
 - ii. We think we should find someone other than Henry as the Banquet Committee, though he may be consultant.
 - iii. Greg's action item is to find a banquet committee head.
 - iv. We need to figure out a speaker.
 - v. When Greg sends out link to latest e-echo, ask for ideas for speakers.
- f. Archivist
 - i. Dan has nothing to report.
 - ii. Kathy wanted us to have a formal document to record Explorer's Emblem winners.
 - iii. Kathy wants to add a new page to the SPS site that links winners to their list of peaks.
 - iv. Action item is to publish this emblem names and peak list.
 - v. We did some updating of Explorer Emblem databases
 - vi. Kathy will send me Ron Bartel's paperwork to me.
- g. Mountain Records
 - i. no update
- 4. New Business
- 5. Old Business
 - a. ICLIMB license plate is a dead issue; she gave it to the AAC

SPS Treasurer's Report 2st Quarter 6/31/2012
(The same as 1st Quarter)

Checking Account

Income

Echo-----1665.00
 Banquet-----2800.00
 Donations-----280.00
 \$4,745.00

Expenditures

Banquet-----3210.10
 Bank Fee----- 15.00
 Printing-----188.70
 Postage-----150.00
 \$3,563.80

Balance on 12/31/2011-----8127.96
 Income-----4745.00
 12872.96
 Expenditures----- - 3563.80
 \$9,309.16

SPS TEES



Front: NORTH PAL

Back: FULL SPS LIST by geographic area with Mountaineer and Emblem Peak highlighted

M, L & XL in Sand & Ash

\$12 + \$3.50 shipping

(\$4 shipping when ordering 2 or more shirts). Send your order to

Patty Kline, 20362 Callon Drive,

Topanga, Ca 90290 & make

check payable to SPS

CST 2087766-40

Angeles Chapter Executive Meeting Minutes

26 August 2012

Chapter Elections:

- o A slate of 6 At-Large Chapter Excom candidates was approved:
Melody Anderson, Susan Heitman, Sharon Koch, Joe Phillips, Tom Politeo. Jerard Wright
- o Group Elections will also be held at the same time

Chapter Budget

- o Mike Sappingfield noted that our financial situation is improving as a result of steps taken to reduce expenses, and increased donations.

Communications:

- o A summary of changes to the Southern Sierran and the Chapter Schedule was sent to all Excom members, all entity chairs (groups, sections, committees) and a variety of other leaders. The entity chairs were requested to forward this message to our members. One hard copy of the Southern Sierran will be published and mailed annually, including the leader list that had been in the Schedule.

Fundraising

- o The August appeal brought in about \$3000.
- o Chapter Outings Fundraising activities still seem to be on target for the current years chapter income projection.

National Topics

- o Henry Schultz, our CCL delegate, reported that the CCL Board approved a resolution requesting National to reconsider and increase chapter funding.
- o The Angeles Chapter History Committee Chair, Bob Cates, received an award.
- o "Sungevity" - A company which facilitates Home Solar arrays now works with the Sierra Club. National and chapter are financially rewarded for each chapter associated installation.
- **Groups may want to request a Sungevity presentation at their Excom or Group Meetings.**

Outings

- o Outings Assembly is 3 Nov at Eaton Canyon this year, 9:30 AM to 3 PM

Angeles Chapter Political Leadership Awards

- o Took place at the LA River Center and Gardens
- o Awardees included:
Alan Lowenthal, Mike Feuer, Ed Reyes, H. David Nahal, Alan Sieroty, Jerry Patterson, Doug Stern and Michael Cacciotti

The Sierra Club's Annual Awards event was August 4th in SF, with the Francis P. Farquhar Mountaineering Award going to Tina Bowman!



Tina holding the award has Allison Chin (Sierra Club President) on the left and Michael Brune (SC Executive Director) on the right

Nomination of Tina Bowman for the Francis Farquhar Mountaineering Award for 2012

by Silvia Darie, MD, Member, Outings Management Committee, Outings Chair, leader

Qualifications:

It is easy to equate mountaineer with Tina Bowman. She is the well-rounded mountaineer

you are looking for. A brief look at her quests will tell you why. For sure, she's climbed high places: She is the second of only two mountaineers to have twice completed the three major peak climbing lists of the Angeles Chapter:

The **Sierra Peaks Section** list of 248 peaks in the

Tina - Farquhar Award continued

Sierra Nevada

The **Desert Peaks Section** list of 99 peaks in the desert Southwest

The **Hundred Peaks Section** list of 275 peaks in southern California (all of them over 5,000')

And, she completed the “**triple-double**” list finish in her unique style: climbing the final peak of each list on the same day - October 7, 2006. The last summit was Independence Peak, followed by an exuberant celebration at her second home in Independence (formerly the home of noted author Mary Austin).

Tina became the first quadruple list finisher with her completion, in 1998, of the Lower Peaks Committee list of 81 (then 58) peaks under 5,000' in southern California.

Rest assured that Tina continues to be a very popular and prolific mountaineering leader for both the SPS and DPS, leading both comparatively easy and very hard peaks. Earlier this year she was recognized by the DPS for having led more than 50 of their 99 peaks. She has also assisted on two weeklong National trips in the Sierra Nevada as a climbing leader.

Farther afield, Tina Bowman has summited the high points of Africa, Mt Kilimanjaro (19,340), and of South America, Mt Aconcagua (22,841).

Positions held:

Tina excels at educating future mountaineers and making them into leaders. She's been the Leadership Training Committee Chair (LTC) for the Angeles Chapter since 2002 (and because of LTC, she sits on the Outings Management Committee and Safety Committee). Tina has been a LTC rock and snow examiner since 1998.

Tina has been co-editor, with her husband Tom, of the Leader's Reference Book (LRB) for three editions (15th through 17th). The LRB is the primary reference and training material for Angeles

Chapter leaders, and as such under her tenure, it has helped develop many hundreds of outings leaders as well as countless mountaineers. (http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc/transfers/17th_lrb_2009.pdf)

Tina was the chair of the national Mountaineering Oversight Committee (MOC) from 2005 through 2010 (member since 1999); DPS outings chair until last year; SPS Mountain Records Chair 1994-2004 and SPS Keeper of the list; SPS vice-chair/Outings 1989; SPS treasurer 1998 and SPS Chair 1997; and Wilderness Travel Course lecturer on mountain travel and conditioning. She has also served on the Angeles Chapter's Sexual Harassment Committee, 1999-2004.

As presented, Tina's contributions to mountaineering are clear and extensive. She has definitely enhanced the Club's prestige in this field. I hope you agree.

Previous Recognition:

The Chester Versteeg Outings Award, 2004 - the Angeles Chapter's highest outings award.

The Bill T. Russell Mountaineering Award, 2012 - given by the Desert Peaks Section in recognition of her extensive mountaineering accomplishments, as well as her wider service to the Sierra Club.



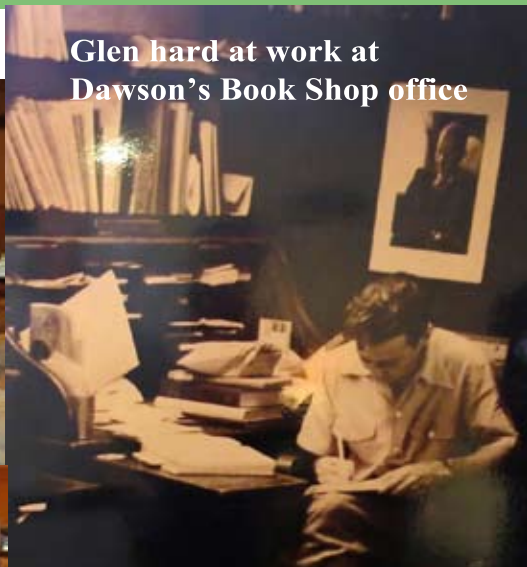
Tina and Tom Bowman

Distinguished Lifetime Sierra Club and Honorary SPS member Glen Dawson Climbs to 100!

Photos of the event, courtesy of Bill Oliver



A 100th Birthday Toast



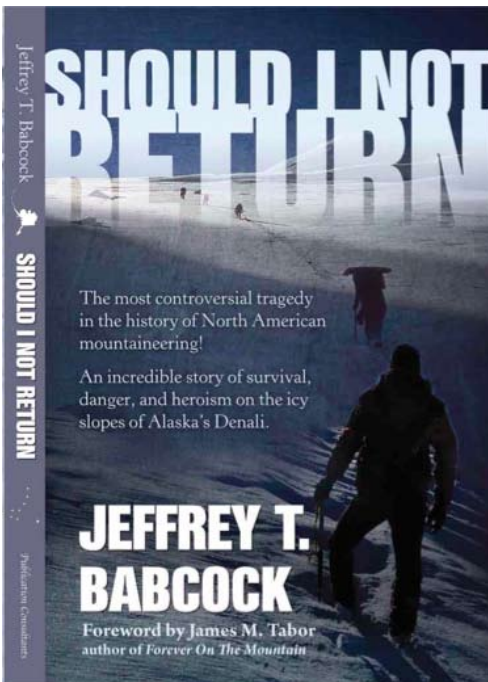
Glen hard at work at Dawson's Book Shop office



Glen, sister Fern, Louise Ashcraft and sister June



Bill O. and Glen who greatly enriched my life



Book Review

by Garnet Roehm

Jeff Babcock's book, Should I Not Return, will surely be a surprise for those of us who consider ourselves to be mountaineers or to those who have been fans of adventure books. I am one who has read most of those books and have been a weekend mountaineer for most of my life.

As James Tabor aptly states in the Foreword, this is not the standard "me-and-Joe-climbed-a-mountain" book. This is indeed the first adventure book I have come across that falls in to the genre of a "nonfictional novel." On second thought, I guess Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughter House Five, Jack Kerouac's On The Road and Truman Capote's In Cold Blood fall in to that group and those are the only

others of this type that I have read, as I am pretty much a nonfiction reader. I offer these comments not as an astute reviewer but a life long friend of Jeff's who was his assistant leader and medical person on one of his three trips on Denali.

Non-climbers and climbers alike will enjoy the character development and adventure aspect of the story Jeff Babcock spins in his first and hopefully not his last novel. The reader will be brought into the world of endless glaciers, extreme temperatures and violent winds that challenge those who seek to reach the top of North America's tallest peak. It also tells the emotional story of a young man thrown into a life changing ordeal. The basic story occurs in 1967 and has the author as the character Henry Locke, a young college student from New England joining an expedition attempting to climb Denali in Alaska. This expedition is led by Henry's older brother and as fate has it they are the highest team of climbers on the mountain behind the Wilcox Expedition which suffered incredible losses in a huge high mountain storm.

At the onset of Should I Not Return, Jeff had me running for cover at the first mention of all of the dysfunctional nature from his family's past. At times I thought I was reading excerpts from the written dialog from two or three Jerry Springer episodes. Yet, after getting more into Jeff's book, I became more intrigued. This approach of exposing ones inner fears, family weaknesses and indiscretions was something that I had not seen in the all the other mountain adventure books that I had read. Jeff, unlike the usual mountain man protagonist, never gets to put on a shining suit of armor: he bounces from one family problem to another (alcoholism, absent father, infidelity), and then to climbing teammate issues and finally to basic survival high on the mountain.

A somewhat unique aspect for me is I knew most of the characters in the book. Many of them I knew only superficially, but I got to know more about them through my long relationship with Jeff. I cringed as the still living characters (most of them renamed) may also have cringed to have some of their family foibles 'revealed' out there into the public domain. Yet, as I read on I realized that Jeff's coming of age part of the story (and thus all the family dysfunction discussion) really is the story and the adventure and tragedy on the mountain is the background for his story of personal

survival, not just his survival on the mountain. For better or worse, it is the interactions between family members, friends and everyone else that truly shaped Jeff, as it does each of us during the course of our lives.

Jeff includes great tidbits of both Alaskan history and of the pioneer climbs of Denali all throughout the book. On top of that there are numerous historical photographs of interest and even a few that I have never seen before. Readers that know mountaineering history will be interested in the part about Brad Washburn effectively apologizing to Joe Wilcox for his part in demonizing him. Jeff, (Henry in the book), has some desperately needed assistance high on the mountain from a ghost and an apparition or two. These helpers will push the book more to the novel side for many readers.

What I as many climbers of Denali can attest to is Jeff did not elaborate on the ferocity of the storms that can hit high on the mountain. The winds are simply unbelievable. I was with Jeff during one of those storms that he included in the book. We summited in mid May and the temperature on the summit at noon was minus 35 degrees. A couple of days later at the beginning of our five day wind storm, when scrambling from blown apart tents to a lifesaving igloo, the wind gusts forced us to prone positions on the hard packed snow with our ice axe picks embedded into the snow. The stronger gusts would then blow our bodies around with the ice axe pick acting as a pivot like you were a flag or a human weathervane.

Jeff's intermeshing of that storm into his big storm on his summit day infers to me one of the most important lessons to be drawn from reading this and the other books on the 1967 tragedy. I believe it was in Joe Wilcox' book White Winds, where it is directly pointed out that so many climbs and expeditions end, and are considered to be successes by the climbing community and the general public, even though 'by the luck of the draw' they may have narrowly escaped injury or death. Our Denali climb, which Jeff integrated into Should I Not Return is one such incident that could have easily turned deadly. Even though we all survived, all eight of us could have easily perished. Our team like the Wilcox group found ourselves high on the mountain when a huge storm hit. We had one last option for survival; a small igloo, which by the luck of the draw was there and built by an earlier expedition. Without that option our fates would have been very different and this book would have never been written.



Leadership Training Committee

2012 Schedule of Activities



Leadership Training Program Seminar

Oct 6, 2012 LTC Seminar Steve Botan

Wilderness First Aid <http://wildernessfirstaidcourse.org>

Oct 26 - 28 Wilderness First Aid Course Steve Schuster

Navigation Practices and Checkouts

Sept 23, 2012 I/M/E Grinnel Ridge Navigation Checkoff/Practice Robert Myers
Oct 21, 2012 I/M Indian Cove Navigation Clinic Robert Myers
Nov 10, 2012 I Local Mtns Beginning Navigation Clinic Diane Dunbar

Rock Practices and Checkouts

Oct 3, 2012 Advanced Mountaineering Program 6 - Safety Dan Richter
Oct 6, 2012 Advanced Mountaineering Program 6 - Belaying Dan Richter
Oct 13, 2012 Advanced Mountaineering Program 6 - Rappelling Dan Richter
Oct 20-21, 2012 Advanced Mountaineering Program 6- Anchors Dan Richter

Various Dates - M/E P Vertical Adventures (This is not a Sierra Club activity, but can prepare candidates for rock checkoffs.) <http://www.verticaladventures.com/>

Snow Practices and Checkouts

Snow travel, avalanche, & related training - Kurt Wedberg's Sierra Mountaineering Int'l (Not a SC activity, but can prepare candidates for snow checkoffs.) <http://sierramountaineering.com>

Environmental Awareness

Check out the LTC website which has a calendar of events sponsored by the Natural Science section & info about training not offered by the Sierra Club: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc/>

Outings

Sept 14-16 | Fri-Sun-Sun **SPS, WTC**
I: Mt. Julius Caesar (13,200'): SPS introductory trip in eastern Sierra geared to prospective SPS-ers and WTC students. Fri backpack from Pine Creek to Honeymoon Lake (10,600'), 7 mi and 3200' gain. Sat climb Mt Julius Caesar via Italy Pass, 9 mi rt., 2600' gain. Sun pack out. Legendary community happy hours both evenings. Send e-mail or SASE with recent experience. Ldr: NEAL ROBBINS, Co-Ldr: KC REID

Sept 14-16 | Fri-Sun **SPS**
O: Western Sierra Redux: Leisurely hikes to three unlisted peaks in Kings Canyon/Sequoia Nat'l Parks with car camping in Giant Sequoia Nat'l Mon. Part of an "old-timers" series, the trip is open to vintage climbers and newcomers. Long happy hours guaranteed Fri and Sat nights at USFS's Stony Creek CG (6400'). On Sat, climb Big Baldy (8209'), 4.4 miles rt/600' gain, then ample free time to ascend spectacular Buck Rock LO (8502') via its 172 airy steps. On Sun, a quick climb of Buena Vista Pk (7602'), 2 mi rt/430' gain, then plan to climb Little Baldy (8044'), 3.4 mi rt/700' gain. Or Sun, independently join a 2.5-mi trail hike in Converse Basin to view the Boole Tree, one of the world's largest trees. Ldr: MARY MCMANNES. Send sase with H&W phones and e-mail address (sase not needed for those supplying e-mail addresses) to Reservationist/Asst Ldr: JERRY KEATING.

Sept 15-16 | Sat-Sun **WTC, SPS**
I: Mt Bago (11,870'), Mt Rixford (12,887') Join us for two days and two peaks in the SEKI wilderness. Saturday we'll hoof it in over Kearsarge Pass and make camp near Charlotte Lake (7 mi, 1400') before climbing the nearby Mount Bago

(2 miles, 1200') After enjoying the view we'll return to camp for a rollicking happy hour potluck. Sunday leave camp early and enjoy an even more spectacular view from the top of Mount Rixford (3 mi, 2200') before packing out (5 mi, 1200') Priority given to WTC students. Send conditioning / experience to Ldr: MATTHEW HENGST . Co-ldr: WAYNE VOLLAIRE

Sept 19-23 | Wed-Sun **SPS, WTC**
I: Mt Pickering (13,474'), Joe Devel Peak (13,327'), Mt Newcomb (13,422'), Mt Chamberlin (13,169') Mt Guyot (12,300'); Strenuous backpack, including significant xc travel in the High Sierra. From Horseshoe Mdw, hike 12-miles on trail to Soldier Lakes (10,400'). We'll make camp and from here climb nearby peaks Thursday through Saturday. Thursday Pickering and Joe Devel (9 mi. rt. 3800' gain). Friday Guyot (16 mi, 4,200' gain), Saturday (Chamberlin and Newcomb (5 mi, rt. 2,700' gain). Sunday pack out. E-mail experience, recent conditioning, phone to Ldr: KC REID. Asst JACK KIEFFER

Sept 22 | Sat **LTC**
Deadline for Leadership Training Seminar: Last day for receipt of application and payment by LTC. Register for Oct 6 seminar. Next Seminar: Spring 2013. Contact: STEVE BOTAN.

Sept 23 | Sun **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**
I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navi Noodle in San Bernardino NF for checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navi requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, nav experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Ldr: ROBERT MYERS. Asst: PHIL WHEELER

Oct 3 | Wed **LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC**
Workshop: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP6) – Basic Safety System: First of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today's indoor evening workshop of 4 hours reviewing ropes, knots, harnesses, helmets, and basic climbing gear will take place in Pasadena. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Ldr: DAN RICHTER . Asst: PAT MCKUSKY

Oct 6 | Sat **LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC**
M/E R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP6)–Belaying: 2nd of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on belaying and principles of anchor building. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Ldr: DAN RICHTER . Asst: PAT MCKUSKY

Oct 6 | Sat **LTC**
Leadership Training Seminar: Become a qualified Sierra Club leader. For info, see LTC web page. Deadline for receipt of application and payment is Sep 22. No registration after this date or at door. Next seminar: Spring 2013. Contact: STEVE BOTAN.

Oct 13 | Sat **LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC**
M/E R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP6) – Rappelling: 3rd of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. Today at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, focus is on rappelling. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Ldr: DAN RICHTER . Asst: PAT MCKUSKY

Oct 20-21 | Sat - Sun **LTC, SPS, DPS, WTC**
M/E R: Advanced Mountaineering Program (AMP6) – Rock Climbing Techniques and Anchors: 4th of 4 climbing workshops open to SC members with prior roped climbing experience. This weekend completes the series of AMP workshops at Joshua Tree National Park and focuses on climbing and anchors. As space is limited priority will be given to participants who commit to all four workshops. Send e-mail with SC#, resume, phones to Ldr: DAN RICHTER . Asst: PAT MCKUSKY

Oct 21 | Sun **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**
I: Indian Cove Navigation: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Ldr: ROBERT MYERS. Asst: PHIL WHEELER

Oct 26 - 28 | Fri – Sun **LTC, Harwood Lodge, WTCC: Wilderness First Aid Course:** Runs from 7:30 am Fri to 5:00 pm Sun. Fee includes lodging, meals and practice first aid kit. Proof of CPR within previous 4 years required to enroll. Fee \$210 (full refund through Sept 21). For application send e-mail to Ldr: STEVE SCHUSTER.

Nov 10 | Sat **LTC, WTC, HPS**
I: Beginning Navigation Clinic: Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 mi, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, \$25 deposit (Sierra Club, refunded at trailhead) to Ldr: DIANE DUNBAR. Co-Ldr: RICHARD BOARDMAN

MT. WHITNEY FOLLOWING JOHN MUIR



by Hal Browder

Early on in my mountain days in that wonderful Sierra Nevada that John Muir called the Range Of Light, I was quite taken by some of Muir's accounts of his rambles in his beloved mountains. He did not write extensively about his climbs but more times he would just vividly describe the flora, fauna and the geologic phenomena that surrounded him. We do know that he very often took off on foot with only a blanket roll, some hard sheepherder bread, and a cup for tea. Most of the time he was, as you might say, walking off the map into uncharted territory.

With interest, I read accounts of his climb of Mt. Whitney. His first attempt to climb the highest point in the range ended in the climb of Mt. Langley a fourteen thousand foot peak to the south, which he mistook, as did Clarence King earlier, for Mt. Whitney. From this summit he could see to the north a summit that was definitely higher.

A few days later he hurried over to the base of the true Mt. Whitney. Since his west side campsite was devoid of any firewood, he decided to push on up to the top of the peak. This climb, at night, resulted in another failure to reach the top and he described the cold and hunger in which he feared dropping off to sleep lest he might not awaken. In his diary he stated, "I danced all night to keep from freezing."



Two years later he returned to the area this time to attempt Whitney from the uncharted east side. His description of this climb, understates that he started on foot from the town of Independence and camped in the sage that night. The next day he made his way up the north fork of Lone Pine Creek and camped at timberline.

The following day, he recorded in his notes, "I arrive at the summit at 8am." He sketched the view and recorded the objects he found from previous climbers but does not sign the register that was on top. His description of the objects previously left on the summit leaves no doubt that he indeed did climb the mountain by a new route. This route is now called the Mountaineer's Route.

This first ascent was a feat to marvel at since he had no

map, guidebook or modern equipment we have today. It's doubtful today that many would or do start their climb to the summit from the floor of Owens Valley.

On the weekend following Labor Day 1954, my climbing buddy, Len, and I decided to climb Mt. Whitney by Muir's Mountaineer's Route. We drove up from Los Angeles and bedded down at the trailhead to get a few hours sleep before an early start to do the peak.

Whitney Portal, the starting point, lies at an elevation of 8,600 ft. and the summit of Whitney is 14,495 ft. so we had a lot of vertical to gain to reach our goal. At first light we were up and hoisted our packs and up the main Whitney trail we went.

At the point where the main trail crosses the north fork of Lone Pine Creek, we left the trail and followed the creek up toward Clyde Meadow. We didn't know that the usual route was to ascend to some ledges above so we struggled up through the thick underbrush of willows, which was quite exhausting before finally reaching Clyde's Meadow above from which flowed the north fork of Lone Pine Creek.

The meadow was golden from the effects of early season frost and we were greeted by warning whistles of marmots perched on their lookouts in the talus fields above. We passed Lower and Upper Boy Scout Lakes and saw many trout rising to feed on the latest insect hatch.

We finally reached our destination, late in the day, which was at East Face Lake or Iceberg Lake. This is a cold isolated place and the lake still had a large iceberg floating in its waters, which gave it its name. We had no stove or firewood so for dinner we ate a can of cold Dinty Moore Stew and went to bed under a most spectacular starry night. The night sky was most awesome and reminded me of The Van Gogh painting Starry Night. Venus appeared so close you felt like you could just reach out and touch it! The night was very cold and it seemed like forever for sleep to come.

We were up at dawn and wolfed down a can of cold

peaches and packed our gear in our packs. My pack was a model called a Trapper Nelson, which I had borrowed from a Boy Scout neighbor, and my partner, Len, carried a World War II army rucksack. As we gazed at the brilliantly illuminated precipitous east face, we marveled at the boldness of Muir when he first climbed the peak from this side.

Our chute, which we were to ascend, still had a tongue of very hard snow in its center, so we had to climb the rocks off to one side [left] to avoid this obstacle since we had no ice axe or crampons. Loaded with all our gear made the going very slow but we finally reached the Col, which then leads up some icy ledges to the final summit plateau.

Eventually we came to a large cairn, which marks the summit plateau and soon saw the summit research building constructed in the 1920's. We signed in at the summit register and noted some dark clouds rapidly approaching from the west.

We were alone on the summit this day, which would be a rarity today. Our only company was a few curious rosy finches, which showed an interest in our lunch sacks. Soon the storm clouds arrived overhead and a light snow began to dust the surrounding rocks on the summit plateau, so we decided it was time to head down the main trail to reach the car some ten miles distant. After traversing two miles down the ridge and then up to Trail Crest, we hurried down the 97 plus switchbacks to Trail Camp, which was unoccupied.

From there, the trail descended past Mirror Lake, Outpost Camp and the Lone Pine Lake side trail. Continuing on down trail, we finally made it back to the trailhead at Whitney Portal and our car just as the last light began to fade marking the end of a most spectacular trip. This mountain experience only heightened our appreciation for John Muir's feat those many years ago.

Since that first time on top of Whitney I have revisited the summit several more times by different routes. I still consider that first ascent exp by the John Muir's route the best! Berg Heil! Hal Browder

Coyote Peak & Angora Mountain

TRIP REPORT

June 1-3, 2012



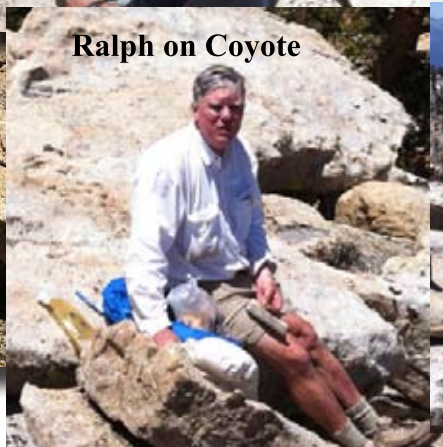
Tina on Coyote



Alex on Coyote



Francesca on Coyote



Ralph on Coyote



Ban on Coyote

by Beth Epstein

It took three attempts over 8 years for me to make this trip go. Thank God it only took one attempt to make it go successfully once it was underway. Knee surgeries and heavy snow led to cancellations in previous years, and even though this year my co-leader, Tina Bowman, tried to bail by scheduling a climb of Denali which conflicted with the originally published date, miraculously we found a date 3 weeks earlier which would work and almost everyone who had signed up was free. Earlier was better – we had good water in a very low snow year, moderate temps, and Tina got to go to Denali AND climb Coyote and Angora.

So on Friday, June 1, the eight folks who hung in despite it all met at the Jerkey Meadows trailhead: leaders Tina Bowman and Beth Epstein (me), along with Alexander Smirnoff, Steve Donmeyer, Francesca Marcus, Ban Uong, Asher Waxman and Ralph Wright. After my stern warnings to pack light, Tina brought a scale and most everyone had relatively light packs, but Ralph at 18 pounds took

the prize. Fortunately for all of us the weather was beautiful all weekend.

There is a fair bit of reference published about this area for which I was quite grateful: the SPS archives included reports from Sara Danta and Igor Mamedelian, whose wry touch I appreciated more in retrospect. (Tina was actually on his 1990 outing.) Bob Burd dayhiked it and had much good information on his website, including a map. The Summitpost report and map were especially useful. Because of them all, what many reported as a “maze” of trails was mostly straightforward.

From Jerkey Meadows trailhead, we used the new, less direct (i.e. steep) trail circumventing Jerkey Meadows, then took a south fork from the 6700' level down to Jug Springs and the bridge over the Little Kern. We paused briefly at that cool and lovely spot, vowing a longer break on the return. After crossing the bridge, we left the trail where it seemed sensible and ascended the slope north to 6162', a

cross-country shortcut through open forest mapped by Summitpost, saving about two miles. We made an inadvertent variation, following open terrain and returning to the main trail at approximately 6400', half mile east of Deep Creek. When we hit the trail I was somewhat puzzled about our actual location but fortunately everyone else seemed to know where we were. We had lunch at noon at the pools of the Deep Creek crossing and enjoyed the sound of small falls and the shade of the trees.

Continuing west across Deep Creek, we stumbled upon the Coyote Lakes Trail and turned north. As the Summitpost map suggested, it was a faint intersection, and it was one of several signs we propped up along the way. One of my favorite downed signs was resting against a charred red fir at Jug Springs, which called it a "good place to have a smoke," but more on that later.

Did I miss something in previous write-ups? It was clear that the trail up Deep Creek was unmaintained from the Harrison maps. Some previous reporters made it sound like a sylvan jaunt up to the White Mountain saddle. But the last few years have not been kind to the Coyote Lakes trail and it was an adventure for most of its length. The red fir forests were lovely, but the trail hasn't been cleared in some time and following it required some concentration and good log-clambering skills. In the last mile to our camp the trail shot up 800 feet through sand and loose rocks so that at 4:30, when we arrived at the meadow at a point between two flowing streams at 7700', it was a heavenly ray short of ordained that we'd stop, though Tina and I felt obligated to explore the next few hundred feet above it since most other groups seemed to camp higher. But the water above looked a little slower and shallower, so we returned to our happy band resting streamside and chose a campsite among rocks with a large pile of bear scat centrally located as a reminder.

Despite my pack weight cautions, a shocking amount of happy hour food appeared. I had been puzzled about Ban's pack weight, but since he looked like a strapping young guy I didn't worry. The answer was clear when 4 perfect avocados emerged from

his bear canister. Asher seemed to have an endless supply of cold cuts and I think Tina brought all the remaining Halloween candy in her house, which always appeared when needed on the trail and at camp. We had a bright moon, which seemed to keep the birds singing much of the night.

The alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. and we were bound for the peaks by 5:30. There was a suspicious smell of smoke on the breeze as we left camp.

We decided to go for Angora first should anyone choose the better part of valor after one summit, and in case we were all too beat up after Coyote to muster the gumption to leave the trail again. I turned the baton over to Tina at the 9400' switchback indicated on the Summitpost map, and off we headed, angling east and up to the saddle under her expert leadership. We were atop Angora by 8:20. From there, we could see as well as smell smoke, though it was hard to determine the origin other than the Kern basin to the south. By the time we topped Coyote the source was more clear and disturbing.

From Angora, Tina led us back northwest along the ridgeline, avoiding unnecessary gain, until we intersected the Coyote Lakes trail at the 9720' saddle north of point 10,064. We continued our northward cross-country traverse below the intervening summits, hitting the trail again at 10,494'. (This saved us 2 miles and 1000' round trip.) Back on the trail, we crossed the plateau of point 10,900' and dropped down to the junction at 10,550'. Once again Tina led us on a cross-country traverse to the saddle east of Coyote. Alexander (who was hornswoggled onto the trip after offering to co-lead when I thought Tina might be unavailable) took us up the talus to the summit, where we had lunch at 12:40. The last register entries on both peaks were the WTC/SPS group dated 7/2/11. Here Francesca qualified to join the SPS, and finished her WTC requirements, at the tip of the Great Western Divide. Both she and Ban were strong hikers who will be great additions to SPS trips.

From the summit of Coyote it was obvious that the most intense smoke from the fire to the south was



The George Fire reaches Castle Peak

coming from the drainage where we had parked our cars. There wasn't much we could do from our present location, and I comforted myself with the hopeful assumption that the Forest Service knew where we were and would tell us to get out if we needed to. So we finished the trip as planned, except for the nagging thought that we might need to reconsider our actual exit.

We more or less retraced our route to the junction at 9720' and were back in camp by 5:30 via the

trail, a long (13 mi, 5000+' gain) day. We were accompanied by bear tracks for most of our time on the trail, and at the last stream crossing before camp there was a fresh, perfect impression in the mud. We never saw our ursine amigo, but a Mountain King Snake welcomed us back to camp. I was so tired I couldn't get out "King Snake," only the more primal "Red & yellow, kill a fellow!"

The following morning we left camp at 6:00 am and reversed our route to the trailhead. By this time, our

"Yes, the cars were still intact, with notes on the windshields that there was a fire nearby. Quite nearby. The flames were cresting a ridge on Castle Rock a mile away."



Group shot taken by Ban Uong on the summit of Angora

obstacle course training complete, I ceased looking for bypass routes and the whole team was vaulting over downed trees with full packs. I struggled to stay on the Coyote Lakes Trail on the descent (Bob Burd also noted that odd reversal of the truism that routefinding is easier going down, but he had already been hiking 25 miles and it was dark) but everyone contributed to helping us stay on the route. We took a pleasant break at the Little Kern, and arriving at the cars about 12:30.

Yes, the cars were still intact, with notes on the windshields that there was a fire nearby. Quite nearby. The flames were cresting a ridge on Castle Rock a mile away. As we drove out, a couple of dozen trucks and hotshot crews were putting out the earlier flames along the road a mile from the trailhead. The fire originated 2.5 miles from our parking lot, at the George HW Bush Tree in the Freeman Grove, and was thus named "The George Fire". It burned 1800 acres, was still burning a week later, and required 400 firefighters to contain it. As we drove past the crews I saw one fireman in full regalia smoking a cigarette by the side of the road. I guess the sign at Jug Spring was right after all!

I have three route choice regrets. On the return, the northern branch of the trail from Jug Spring might have been less exposed to the sun. Also, I think the old trail through Jerkey meadows would have saved time on the descent. And from the trail junction at 10,550' it might be just as easy to go over the last bump to the base of Coyote. But all in all the traveling was good going in raw country.

This was a fun trip to a beautiful and remote area, an area I hope doesn't burn any time soon. The group made it a great 3 days -- everyone was tough and cheerful and helpful throughout. Thanks to them all, and especially to Tina for her leadership and candy!



Steve and Tina photographing the George Fire

Davis, but not Rodgers, Electra, and Foerster

TRIP REPORT

August 17, 2012

by Tina Bowman

A group of five gathered at the High Trail/PCT trailhead in Agnew Meadows, Monday, August 13th, at 5:30 a.m. After signing in, stowing food in the bear boxes, and listening to Rudy Fleck's trailhead talk, we were on our way towards Thousand Island Lake. Sandwiched between Rudy and me were Brent Crookham, Jim Dunn, and John Ide. Rudy had me lead much of the trail to the lake, which guaranteed that we were all together, chatting as we went,

enjoying the views as they opened up along the trail. We made good time and were at the lake before 10:00. Following the often deeply-rutted use trail around the lake, we came to the Mule Pack Section group led by Sandy and Peter Lara camped about half-way around the lake. We had a nice visit with them and enjoyed the shade of their tarp for a few minutes after they took off for a hike towards Garnet Lake. We had had a little rain during the night; they had had a lot of rain the previous afternoon and some excitement generated by a bear's managing to open one of the bear box panniers the packer supplied. So much for all of that food.

photo by Rudy Fleck



Looking toward North Glacier Pass from the east side of it

On we pressed around the lake and up a use trail towards North Glacier Pass, eventually getting into talus as we got close to the pass. Once over it, made our way around Lake Catherine and had lunch in a lovely spot. The clouds, however, were building, and the 40% prediction of rain and thunderstorms had us keeping an eye on the sky all day.

Many people come up to the pass from Thousand Island Lake to climb Banner, Ritter, or Davis. Few, however, continue on to the North Fork of the San Joaquin River, which was our intention. We found only several ducks as we worked our way down cliff bands, shelves, and benches. We had reached the area where the outlet stream from the Ritter Lakes joined the stream from Lake Catherine and were stymied.

Exploring, John and Brent found two large cairns atop a cliff; Rudy found a cliff beside the stream. The cairns surely marked the spot, but by now it was raining solidly, making for slippery rock and very tricky going with full backpacks. Fortunately, we were also on a very nice, large bench and had an excellent area to camp in. Setting up camp in a downpour wasn't a whole lot of fun, but it was good to be snuggled into our tents as the lightning flashed and rain came down until about 7:30.

Our plan had been to camp at Twin Island Lakes, climb Rodgers and Electra from there on Tuesday, Foerster on Wednesday, and out on Thursday, snagging Davis along the way. Because we hadn't made it to the lakes, all the plans were off kilter.



photo by Tina Bowman

Mt Banner

photo by Rudy Fleck



Mt. Davis- high point on the right end of the plateau

So back we went. We also knew that the forecast called for a 30% chance of rain and thunderstorms for Tuesday, and we woke to clouds (perhaps smoke as well?) to the west. We retraced our route back to Lake Catherine and left packs beside and on top of a big boulder, heading off with daypacks to Mt Davis, reaching the summit in under two hours. Having enjoyed the views of the peaks we didn't climb, down we went. After a snack at the packs, we pressed on around the lake, over the pass, and down

the talus and a patch of snow. A group with helmets had come to Lake Catherine, apparently to practice some ice climbing on the glacier. At the pass we met an Australian couple following our route on their way to Tuolumne. Good luck!

John Ide signed out and hustled on to Agnew Meadows. The four of us had a break at the end of the talus before moving pretty quickly down the use trail to Thousand Island Lake, getting there about 2:15.

*“Lightning was flashing above us near Banner,
thunder booming and rolling away.”*

The clouds were threatening, but we managed to get our tents up before the very serious rain began, though a few raindrops started falling about 2:30. Lightning was flashing above us near Banner, thunder booming and rolling away. We had a respite, and I was able to dry out some things that had gotten wet. Much to my unpleasant surprise, I had discovered that the fly on my tent wasn't up to heavy rain anymore. Years of use and sun had taken their toll. During the lull, I checked out Brent's Tarptent Moment and Rudy's Big Agnes Seedhouse SL 1. Cool gear! Sandy and then Peter came by our camp on their way back from Mt. Banner.

Wednesday we were on the use trail by 6:20, on our way out around the lake. Once we were past the junction with the John Muir Trail, we went down the River Trail for a change in scenery, taking one snack break when we had about five miles left to go. Brent and Jim were botanizing a fair amount along the way. We were back to the trailhead about 10:30 and soon on our way home. It wasn't the trip we had planned, but we managed to bag one peak and have a good time. Thanks to Rudy for planning and leading the outing. He posted a short video on youtube at rfleck3 channel.



photo by Rudy Fleck

*Temporarily dry Group photo on Mt Davis
L to R: Brent Crookhan, John Ide (in back), Tina Bowman, Jim Dunn*

High Living in the High Sierra

by Ron Campbell



Ron Campbell (left) and Ed Cottone toast the 10th annual Gourmet Backpack at Cliff Lake in Sierra National Forest with Dom Perignon champagne.

The skies were gloomy but spirits were high as seven of us left the Cliff Lake Trailhead near Courtright Reservoir for the 10th Annual Gourmet Backpack. Along the way, co-leader Ed Cottone and I traded stories of past Decadent Wilderness Weekends. Despite our heavy loads – wine, brass candlesticks and fresh produce – we reached our camp at Cliff Lake before noon.

After a relaxing afternoon, interrupted by occasional rain, we began serving appetizers promptly at 5 p.m. on a tablecloth-covered granite countertop. As tradition dictates, pink flamingoes lined the path from the cooking area to the dining room.

Ed started the festivities with an extravagant bow to our 10th anniversary – a bottle of Dom Perignon champagne: delicious! Margy Sperry and Mark Petersen offered dueling bruschettas. Margy whipped up a concoction of grapes, glazed in a balsamic sauce

and served atop prosciutto and cheese. Mark countered with strawberries sauteed in balsamic, served with goat cheese. Lauren Cheung offered freshly baked pita with a spicy hummus. Den Cline served crab salad with pasta shells and feta cheese. And I served French onion soup gratinee with an extra dollop of brandy to fortify everyone for the evening.

Suitably prepared, we dove into the main courses.

Daniel Bleiberg was first up, offering orzo with sun-dried tomatoes with roasted pine nuts. Next came Den's contribution: shrimp with marinara sauce. Margy contributed green curried coconut chicken. Ed came in with chicken fajitas with caramelized onions. Lauren brought out freshly rolled sushi.

Mark, meanwhile, had been really quiet – sitting off to the side with a 2-foot-high aluminum contraption that managed to awe even me: a semi-portable, 2-lb.

Chef Cliff Lake

EVENING MENU

APPETIZERS & SALADS

Dueling bruschettas
Grapes, glazed in balsamic w/prosciutto & cheese
Strawberries sauteed in balsamic w/goat cheese
Freshly baked pita w/spicy hummus
Crab salad w/pasta shells & feta cheese
French onion soup gratinee w/dollop of brandy

ENTREES

Orzo w/sun-dried tomatoes & roasted pine nuts
Shrimp with marinara sauce
Green curried coconut chicken
Chicken fajitas w/caramelized onions
Rolled sushi
Freshly baked spicy Mufaletta pizza

DESSERT

Bananas Foster

WINE & BEVERAGES

(2009) Cabernet
Dom Perignon champagne
(2007) Santa Margherita Chianti
White Truck Sauvignon Blanc

saleswoman at Trader Joe's that my crazy co-leader was bringing Dom P. She pointed me to a Cabernet I'd never heard of, C (2009), assured me it was marked down from \$64 to a price I could afford, \$20, and I had bought it on the spot. Very nice. Mark brought Santa Margherita Chianti (2007). Den contributed a White Truck Sauvignon Blanc.

For dessert, Ed whipped up Bananas Foster, igniting the rum just before serving. He hauled up dry ice to keep the vanilla ice cream more or less cold.

Just before serving dessert, the threatening skies finally let loose. We ate hurriedly, did a minimal cleanup, stuffed the leftovers in our bulging bear canisters and headed to bed.

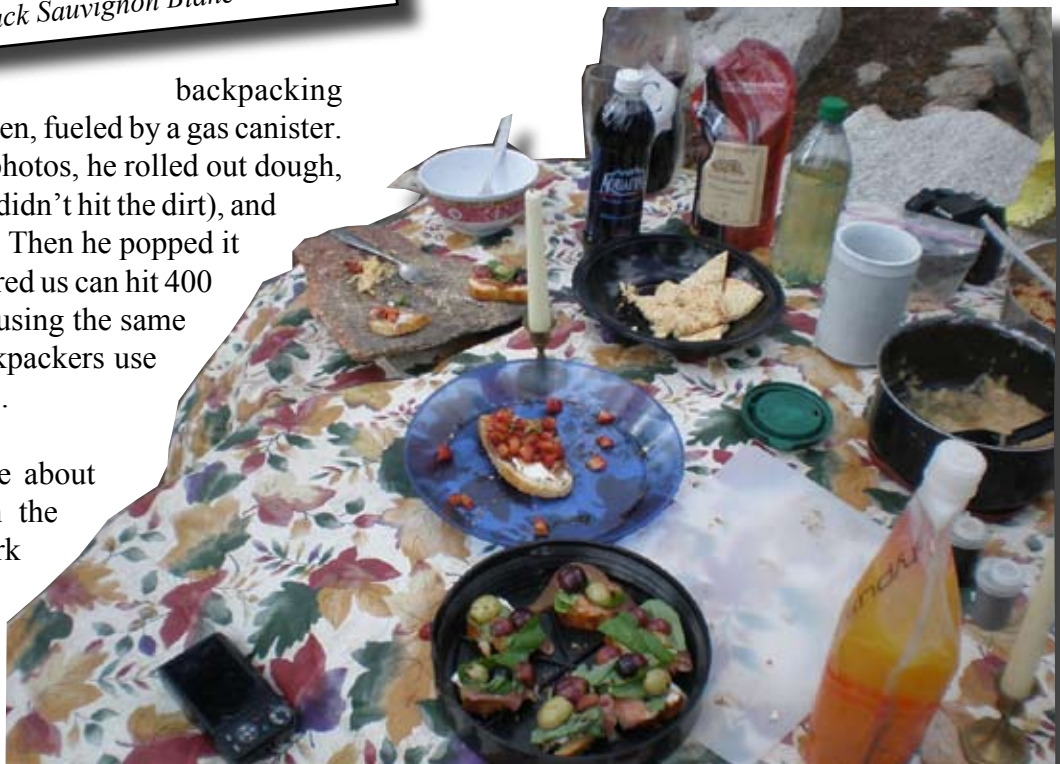
We woke to beautifully clear skies.

I cooked Hangtown Fry and served a dessert left over from the night before: blackberries and raspberries mixed with crème Fraiche. Mark fired up his oven and made blueberry muffins.

backpacking
oven, fueled by a gas canister.
As we watched and took photos, he rolled out dough, flipped it in the air (no – it didn't hit the dirt), and rolled it again. And again. Then he popped it in the oven, which he assured us can hit 400 degrees in a few minutes using the same type of canister most backpackers use to make oatmeal or coffee.

When the rest of us were about ready to roll away from the granite countertop, Mark walked over bearing gifts: , with a crust to die for.

This being the Gourmet Backpack, we had a selection of wines. I'd carefully explained to a



The table at the Gourmet Backpack features two kinds of bruschetta, several wines, and French onion soup gratinee.



Mark Petersen flips pizza dough at the Gourmet Backpack before cooking it in his backpacker oven (at left).

Thus fortified, we turned to our official objective, Three Sisters – a mountain so small that virtually every serious peak-bagger does it as a day-trip from the trailhead (though I seriously doubt if they have as much fun!).

From our camp near the southeast shore of Cliff Lake, the easiest route is to cross the outlet. During high-water years this may pose an obstacle. Once across the creek, keep away from the cliffs that give the lake its name. We proceeded generally west, gradually rising to the 9600-ft. contour. About this point, the ground flattens, and one can turn north-northeast,



Courtright Reservoir dominates the view from the summit of Three Sisters.

BREAKFAST MENU

*Hangtown Fry
Blackberries and raspberries mixed with crème Fraiche
Homemade blueberry muffins*

eventually reaching the saddle between the “big” Sister (10,612’) and Peak 10,196’. After you reach the saddle, you’ll spot a small lake. The chute leading to the big Sister is a short distance north of the lake and is quite obvious from below.

Although Three Sisters is a small peak by High Sierra standards, the views are wonderful. It commands a wide sweep of terrain, including the Coast Range and much of the Sierra, north and south. I could clearly make out Humphreys and Goddard. A more experienced climber could spend an hour on Three Sisters identifying favorite summits.

After returning to our cars, we had one last gastronomic mission: a drive to Shaver Lake for ice cream, the perfect end to a gourmet weekend.

My thanks to Ed for a great co-lead and to our participants for their wonderful food and their enthusiasm.



Margy Sperry (from left), Mark Petersen and Lauren Cheung (rear) approach summit block of Three Sisters. Island Lake is in background.

Granite Peak, No Rope Required

(Montana State High Point)

17-20 Jul 2012 - by Steve Eckert

Peaks: Cairn Mtn 12200, Granite Pk 12799
 Trailhead: Lady of the Lake near Cooke City MT
 Difficulty: class 3, ice axe, crampons



Granite From Cairn

Everyone I know who has considered or done Granite says you have to approach from Froze to Death Plateau and there's a Class 4-5 section with a rap on the way down. I wanted to do it solo so I kept looking for another way. See <http://climber.org/reports/2012/1809.html> for a more detailed report with waypoints, maps, pictures, and links to other reports I found useful. Grizzlies have killed several people near Cooke City in recent years, so pack that bear spray!

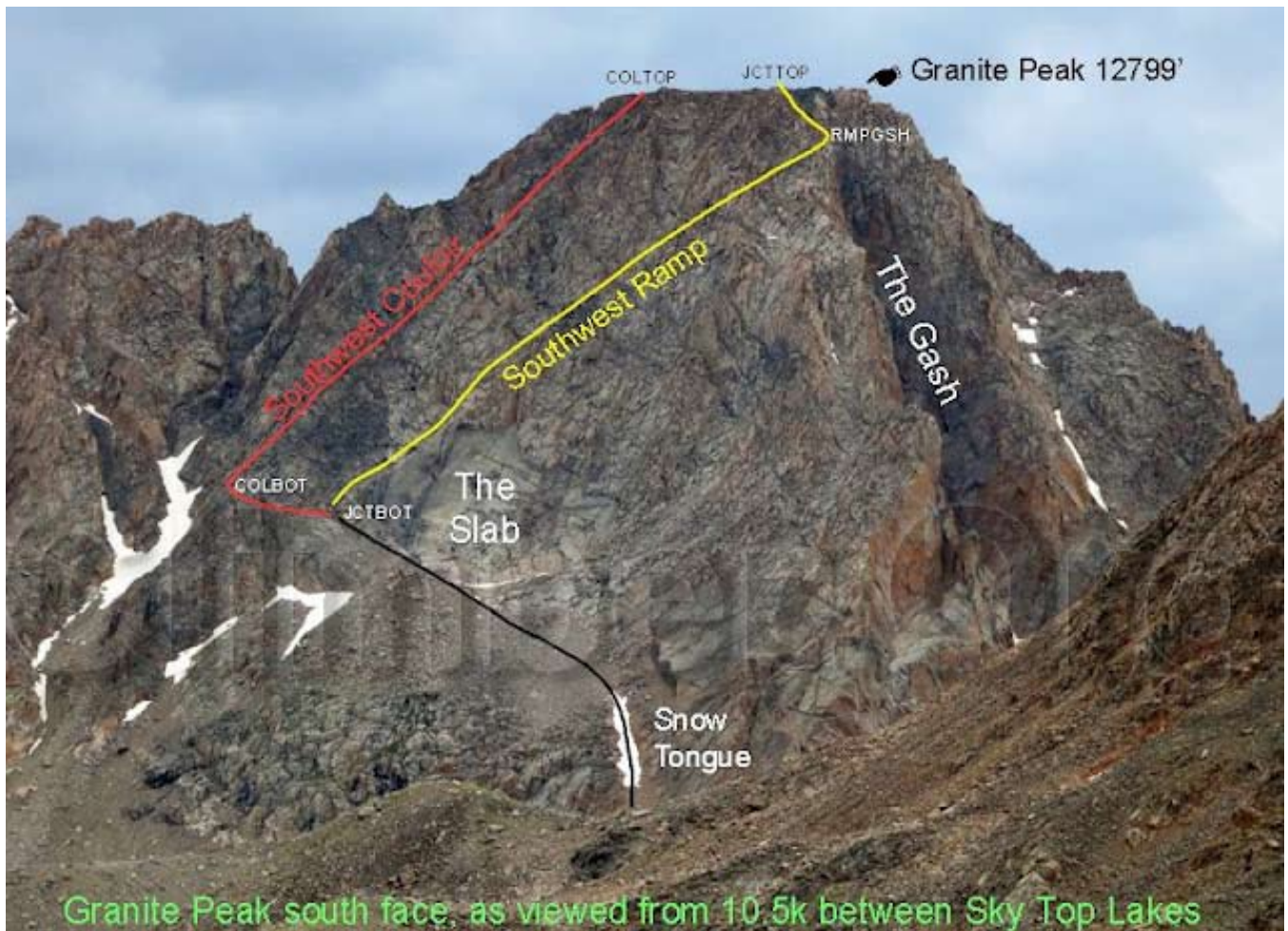
The well-marked turnoff to Lulu Pass is 2 miles east of Cooke City on Hwy 212. This is an excellent dirt road, suitable for any vehicle and only a 15 minute drive from the highway to the trailhead. The turn to the official Lady of the Lake trailhead is NOT marked, and the trailhead sign is barely visible from the main road, but it's just under 2 miles from the pavement. Turn right and drive slightly downhill toward Fisher Creek.

It's a great trail as you climb over a bump and drop to Lady of the Lake. Trail junctions here don't have signs and aren't always where the map shows them. Bear right at the junction beyond the lake and cross the inlet stream before climbing over a low saddle to the critical but unmarked trail junction before the confluence of Star and Zimmer Creek, where the Broadwater River starts at 9k elevation. In 2012

there were sticks across the right trail fork, indicating you should bear left and go to Aero Lake. Ah, but that's NOT the easy way to Sky Top Lakes!! Step over those sticks, go straight north to the Broadwater River, and wade across to the north side. Find the use trail which descends to the east along the north side of Broadwater and continues all the way to Lone Elk Lake with none of the infamous Aero Lake boulder-hopping!

Just over a mile from Broadwater is the first tough stream crossing. Descend slightly to where the side stream from Aero Lake braids into 6 branches and start wading. Now you're in the main Sky Top drainage but still less than 5 miles from your car. The use trail hugs the north side of the river, with a few minor obstacles like scrambling through some pine trees or hopping 100' of boulders.

Feeling the altitude, knowing the weather would improve, and not being pushed by a group, I camped just after crossing the outlet of Shelter Lake on a cool bench with good backrest rocks and a light breeze to keep the mosquitoes away. I had walked about 6.5 miles in 5 hours (not counting the rain shower). Rather leisurely! Others have camped at Lone Elk Lake (less than half a mile from where I camped) and done the peak from there, but I wanted to camp high and be off the peak before noon.



The use trail basically vanished at Lone Elk Lake, but stay west of the lake and cross the direct outlet of Rough Lake. There is a second (indirect) outlet of Rough Lake further east, and that's the really rough crossing (pun intended). On the way in I followed ducks to the outlet of the small lake which is only slightly detached from Rough Lake, and found a dangerous channel. On the way out I ignored the ducks and crossed at the inlet of the next lower lake where the wading was simple.

Close to the Rough Lake inlet the outlet of Sky Top Lakes is wide and tame, and I managed to cross it without getting my feet wet. There were large snow patches here (at 10.2k) and no trees. Bypass the lowest Sky Top Lake on the west by climbing the second gully left of the stream. Follow the west edge of the Sky Top Lakes, then hop large flat boulders across the drainage at the outlet of the highest real lake. The good campsites are up on the east side of

the valley, which keeps the sun a little bit longer and avoids ice and rock falling from The Spires.

I set up camp at 10.6k on idyllic grass dotted with wildflowers. A pair of ground-nesting birds kept vigil over me the whole time and the mice and marmots left my stuff alone. With plenty of daylight left (it was only noon) and no desire to be stuck on Granite in a late afternoon shower, I opted to climb the talus pile called Cairn Mtn. There was no register, but a huge dropoff on the back side was spectacular.

I left camp around 6am, walking mostly on snow all the way from the lakes. I angled over to The Saddle south of Granite, above which are huge boulders, an unstable talus field, a chute which often has a Snow Tongue, a more stable talus field, and finally The Slab which marks the start of both routes described below: the Southwest Couloir and the Southwest Ramp. (I made up the "Ramp" name to reduce confusion,

since the report links below describe two completely different routes but call it the same thing. I went up one of them and came down the other.)

Refer to the picture above for the south face of Granite. This was taken from the inlet of highest Sky Top Lake, a good place to get your bearings. The lines are about right, but only intended to give you a feel for where you'll be on the face. Use my GPS waypoints and descriptions below to follow the routes described, or check out the interactive map link in my full report for a 3D view of the actual waypoints in Google Earth.

The Southwest Ramp turns left at the edge of The Gash and tops out just left of the black patch on summit ridge. The Southwest Couloir hits the summit ridge west of the Ramp route, but it's an easy scramble to the summit. The high point is the light patch on the extreme right of summit ridge, maybe not where you'd expect it!

There is often a Snow Tongue in the chute below the slab. When I was there part of it could be climbed on the rocks to climber's left, but the lower point was easier (for me) front-pointing in crampons. It was steep and hard, so I'd suggest you leave those aluminum crampons and lightweight axes at home. Above the Snow Tongue chute, the talus gets more stable, then a use trail appears right along the base of The Slab, and finally you end up walking on a bedrock ramp at the base of The Slab. A right-ascending ramp is formed by the left upper edge of the slab. I did not think this was the right route because it had been described as a hidden gully or couloir, and this was really just a ramp. I went past the ramp and ended up on a harder route. Oops! But it turned out to be a happy accident because I descended the easy route after climbing the hard one. Hopefully these two descriptions will help future climbers find and stay on whichever route they choose! Note that each route follows a defect that's visible in the topo lines if you zoom in far enough.

There is a critical junction here (just below 12k)



Rough Lake

where what I'm calling the Southwest Ramp and the Southwest Couloir diverge. The ducks and the defect at the base of The Slab both continued past this unmarked junction, although the ramp dips slightly before going around a corner into a very distinct chute.

“The Real Southwest Couloir” (harder than the Southwest Ramp)

Continue almost level on the ramp beyond The Slab, going through black rocks and turning right in a chute you can't see at all from The Saddle or anywhere else. This chute is near the huge and prominent snow filled gully that leads to a saddle in the west summit ridge. Go steeply up and right in dark rock which is very different from the rock that forms the slab. The 3rd class starts right away, and it might be dangerously icy earlier in the season. Just above 12.2k there was a vague fork in the chute where I stayed right in unavoidable water ice.

The right fork worked out but it didn't look inviting at the time. Real crampons and a real ice axe were absolutely required due to very steep hard water ice. The sides of the chute were narrow steep Class 4-5, smoothed by falling rocks. Even with sharpened steel points I sometimes had to kick twice or swing the axe several times to get a good bite. The chute got less steep around 12.5k but this was not the end of the hard stuff. There was more thin ice mixed with rock but it felt better because the chute wasn't as narrow and it was not as exposed. I was quite happy when I reached the summit ridge roughly 100 yards from the high point.

“The Southwest Ramp” (easier than the Southwest Couloir)

Turn up at big piles of rocks immediately after you pass under The Slab. The defect under the slab levels and continues into darker rock for the SW Col, but you want to look up right at the left (west) edge of The Slab for the SW Ramp. From here the route does not look like a chute at all, much less a couloir. Go up the ramp formed by the left upper edge of The Slab. You'll end up in a broad rubble-filled chute that soon narrows, where I found ice still hard enough to require crampons and an ice axe but not as steep as the SW Col. The narrowest section (around 12.3k) features polished bedrock, probably from continual rockfall. This bit would be tricky if wet or icy.

The polished narrow section is the hardest part. Get through that and you're back in unstable talus and boulders. Drift right in this chute, choosing the easiest terrain, until you end up on the rib (at 12.5k) which forms its right (southeast) edge. There was a pile of rocks at this crossing and more ducks above it, but no ducks below it. Take note of this rib crossing for your return, because going further down the upper chute will cliff you out!

Once across the rib, you are near the upper end of another broad chute. Traverse right onto the improbably easy edge of The Gash which also forms the right (east) edge of this upper chute, less than 50 yards from the rib crossing. From here you can look across The Gash to the dark summit face. Once you see this black summit face it's time to traverse left. Follow the edge of The Gash or traverse on the west side, but continue north until you reach the main ridge before turning right (east) to the summit.

“The Summit Ridge”

The high point is at the far east end of the summit ridge, a light colored patch of rock to the east of a dark patch. When viewed from the Sky Top drainage, these color variations should help you believe it's really that far over. I reached the summit at 1030am, where my my GPS said the elevation was only 12060', a huge error from the 12799' shown on the map. I wonder if the map elevations are accurate in

this area.

I had the top to myself until a pika showed up in search of salt. I soaked up the sun for a long time before my thoughts turned to the descent. I know, I know, it's bad to descend a different way than you climbed, but the wind had stopped and the clouds had cleared and it was still before noon. I had 10 hours of daylight left, plenty of time to climb back up and go the other way if I cliffed out.

I found ducks leading down onto the rib at the edge of The Gash, which is closer to the summit than where I hit the ridge, and decided I'd give it a go. This turned out to be far easier than the Real SW Col, more of a broad chute and/or a ramp than a couloir... so I'm calling it the Southwest Ramp! I got back to camp at 230pm after spending half an hour on the summit and wasting time finding routes in both directions. Now that I know the easy route (SW Ramp) and assuming no crampon use, I could easily shave a couple hours off my 6-hour climb.

Rather than hiking down into bug and bear territory, I relaxed all afternoon, taking a dip in the lake, reading, napping, and thinking about climbing Mt Villard the next day. Almost no mosquitoes, a very gentle breeze, warm temps, a few early morning and late afternoon clouds drifting by, wildflowers, ground-nesting birds guarding unseen offspring, water cascading off The Spires... it was a very idyllic setting that I was loathe to leave. I'm sure things would have been different had I been with a group.

That was summit day. A perfect day.

The next morning I awoke to rain on the tent before first light and ditched my vague plan to bag Villard. The rain let up long enough for the tent to dry while I packed and had breakfast, then a light drizzle started under really threatening skies as I started the hike out at 630am. Just before noon I parked my pack under a tree and ate lunch hoping the rain would stop. It did! Then it was hot and there were more mosquitoes. It took 9 hours to hike all the way back to my car from Upper Sky Top, including several long breaks. I met only 3 people on the way out, none at all on the way in.

IN HIGH PLACES, CARIBBEAN ISLANDS, PART 11

by Burton “Flagging” Falk

I helped Jo into the backseat of the taxi, walked around to get in on the driver’s side, but before I could jump in the cab lurched forward, pinning the toes of my right foot under the back tire. %\$#@!!

That was at the Ft. Lauderdale airport, the night before we embarked on a two-week Southern Caribbean cruise. Was it to be an omen of things to come?

ARUBA Early on the morning of January 31, following two sea days of dedicated dining, the Celebrity Constellation docked at Oranjestad, Aruba’s capital city. Disembarking at 10 a.m., I walked to the end of the pier where I met my guide—prearranged via the internet—Marshall Stamper of ABC Aruba Tours.



As we drove through town in his 4X4 truck, Marshall told me that his Dutch roots in Aruba extended back three centuries. Spain originally claimed the island in 1499, but, due to the arid climate and the lack of water, little or no settlement took place. In 1636, the 20-mile long island became a Dutch possession and it remained so, as part of the Netherlands Antilles, until 1986, when Aruba became an autonomous entity within the Netherlands. Indeed, Arubans are citizens of the Netherlands.

Marshall also informed me that the road to the high point of Aruba, 617’ Mt. Jamanota, was closed due to recent flooding. “Don’t worry,” he assured me. “This baby will get us there.”

Continuing east for 20 minutes or so, we arrived at the entrance to Arikok National Park in which Mt. Jamanota is located. We paid our fee, had paper bands attached around our wrists and continued along a road comprised of two approximately 18” wide parallel concrete strips, until we came to the closed, flood-damaged road leading to our mountain.

Marshall didn’t hesitate a moment. We rocked, rolled, bounced, pitched and yawed another half mile or so to a



Mt. Jamanota, Aruba

locked gate at the base of the service road leading to the cluster of antennae on top of Jamanota.

We parked, got out, stepped around the gate, and began the steep, maybe 200 yard long, climb to the summit. Once on the top we had a sweeping view of the entire island, including the oil refineries to the south—which process crude oil from Mexico—and the desalinization plant, which supplies the dry island with most of its water. Marshall remarked that on a clear day (it was a little hazy on the day of our visit) you could see the coast of Venezuela, a mere 12 miles away.

Arikok National Park offers a variety of trails for those interested in serious hiking. The trails are essential because the thick vegetation covering the park’s rolling hills is comprised primarily of a thorny bush akin to our mesquite, an acacia-like plant with inch long needles, and several species of cactus, two of which are similar in appearance to the Organ Pipe cactus of the Sonoran

Desert. They're all species that, given half a chance, would love to rip off your clothes

Our next stop was at Aruba's second highest point, the name of which I didn't record, but on which a large radar installation serving the nearby airport is located.

Continuing, we visited the Casiberi Rock Formations, located mid-island, where, after climbing through a maze of huge rocks, we made our way, via a narrow, hand-railed foot path to the summit. From there we could see our next destination, 541' Hooiberg, Aruba's third highest point.

Loosely translated as "Haystack," Hooiberg is a small but prominent peak often confused as Aruba's highest point. Wikipedia's description of Jamanota, in fact, mistakenly illustrates the true high point with a photo of Hooiberg. If I can figure out how to do so, I intend to correct this misinformation.

After descending Casiberi, we made the short drive to the base of Hooiberg, the summit of which can be reached via a 562-step concrete staircase. Attempting to impress Marshall with my climbing prowess, I decided to trot up the stairs without stopping. Alas, too many big breakfasts, testing too many selections at lunch, inhaling prime rib and duck a l'orange for dinner, and scarfing down an assortment of delicious but otherwise deadly desserts did me in. I had to stop for two sessions of serious panting. I'm pretty sure, however, that all that wine had nothing whatsoever to do with my weakened condition.

The climbing part of the trip was then over, and during our last hour and a half, Marshall and I drove to the desolate east coast where one of the island's most famous landmarks, the natural bridge, had stood before collapsing into the sea. Walking along the rise overlooking the bridge's remains, Marshall informed me that his island is home to both a species of rattlesnake (now endangered) and a small boa constrictor.

We finished off the trip with a visit to the ruins of a gold ore stamp mill, a short stop at the historic Chapel of Alto



Steps Leading to Top of Hooiberg, Aruba

Vista at the north end of the island, and a ride down the west coast, past the big resort hotels.

And to add to my most excellent day, I got back to the ship in time for a late lunch.



CURACAO The following day, February 1, Jo and I awakened to find the Constellation docked in Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao.

The largest of the ABC Islands (B is for Bonaire), Curaçao is about 2-1/2 times the size of Aruba and was also first claimed by the Spanish in 1499. In 1634, however, two years earlier than the case of Aruba, the Dutch West India Company took possession of Curaçao.

With the help of the Constellation's on-board concierge, I had reserved a rental car at the Avis office conveniently located at the end of the pier. Equipped with a map and, of course, having downed a full breakfast, I drove northwest, along the spine of the 20 mile-long island, taking an hour to reach the headquarters of Christoffel National Park, the home of Curaçao's highest point, 1,230 ft. Mt. Christoffel.

Upon paying a \$10 entrance fee, I received a token with which to open the gate on the opposite, western side of the highway. There, a one-way loop road led me through a dense jungle comprised of brush similar to that found on Aruba (thorny trees and cacti, but more lush) until I arrived at the Mt. Christoffel trailhead on the north side of the peak.

Hefting my pack almost exactly at 11 a.m., I started out on the fairly level, well-marked trail. Perhaps 15 minutes into the hike, the gain increased and the quality of the trail decreased. The last 10 minutes of my hour-long ascent consisted of climbing steep rock, making use of the

multiple encroaching tree limbs for hand holds.

I reached the summit at almost noon, just in time for it to began to rain. The probable great vista was occluded. I was reminded of the taxi running over my toes in Ft. Lauderdale.

And because the rain had turned the rocks slippery, it took me as long to descend the peak as it did to climb it. I reached my car about 1 p.m., drove back to the ship, and, after a hearty lunch, took Jo on a shopping foray in the cluster of tony shops located nearby.

Feeling smug about bagging two new country highpoints (and adding two new flags for my highpoint collection) and also feeling a bit guilty about leaving her for two days, I purchased my wife of 55 years a gold pendant—a key to her heart—an early Valentine’s Day present.

Still later that afternoon, I discovered that the ship served pizza all day long.

GRENADA After a sea day spent cruising east along the north coast of South America, we arrived in St. George’s, Grenada’s capital city. I knew before leaving California that climbing the country’s highpoint, 2750’ Mt. St. Catherine, would be problematic. It takes an hour to drive from St. George’s to the St. Catherine trailhead, a minimum of seven hours to climb the peak, plus another hour to get back to the ship—9 hours in all, which, considering that our ship was only going to be in port nine hours, seemed cutting it too close. In spite of the new gold key to her heart, Jo would not be a happy person if I failed to make it back to the ship that afternoon. And you know me: “A happy wife is a happy life,” are words I live by.



I did learn how to climb the peak, however. In a series of pre-cruise emails with Grenada Sunstation Tours, I was informed that there was a guide, Telfor Bedeau, now 72 years of age, who had climbed Mt. St. Catherine well over 150 times. The climb itself was described as a jungle slog—probably similar to my ascents of Mt. Victoria, Fiji’s highpoint, or Mt. Lata, American Samoa’s tallest, several years ago. The price of the adventure, including Mr. Bedeau’s services, transportation and one bottle of water, would have been \$120. As an alternative, the tour company suggested I consider a climb of Mt. QuaQua which would take only 3-1/2 hours and cost \$90 per

person.

I turned the QuaQua option down, however. Since Jo and I had never been on Grenada, we decided to take an afternoon tour, which included a stop at a gleaming white sand beach where I downed a bottle of Caribe, an excellent local beer, then a stop at a rum distillery where samples of that noteworthy island libation were offered in several flavors—coconut being my favorite.

Later, back on the ship, we discovered that the Constellation serves hot dogs, hamburgers and awesome ship-made ice cream all afternoon long. Sort of an appetizer for the upcoming dinner, you know.

B A R B A D O S
Because I had already ascended Barbados’ highpoint, Jo and I, on the morning of February 4, signed on for a day-long tour of the island. The plan



was to bus north out of Bridgetown, the nation’s capital, pass the west coast’s ritzy resorts, turn east across the top of the island, and then descend to the beaches on the east coast—Barclays Park, Martin’s Bay, Bath Beach, etc.

About an hour into the tour, I realized that we were nearing the spot which, in 1992, my taxi driver told me was the summit of 340 meter Mt. Hillaby, the island’s highpoint. I mentioned that fact to our bus tour guide who stunned (shocked, disheartened, disappointed, upset, et al.) me by telling me that we weren’t on the high point, and that he would show me the true high point at an upcoming stop.

And he did. It turns out that in 1992 I had missed the top of flat Mt. Hillaby by at least a half a mile.

Two flags up; one flag down.

Did I mention that a taxi ran over my toes in Ft. Lauderdale?

ST. LUCIA Just after 8 a.m. on the morning of February 5, while visiting the tourist information center located at the end of the pier in Castries, St. Lucia’s capital, I discovered that I had a decent chance of climbing 2,619’ Gros Piton, the nation’s high point.



The personnel at the Center told me that it would take two hours to drive south along the island's west coast to reach the base of Gros Piton, 4 hours to climb and descend the peak, plus another two hours for the return drive—8 hours in total. Okay, I thought, the ship is here in Castries until 5 p.m.—nine hours. It's worth a try.

I paid my \$80 fare, jumped in the cab, and soon we were driving through lush green mountains, dipping into prosperous valleys (acres of bananas), and viewing coves bejeweled with white sand beaches. When at last Gros Piton came into sight, I thought I was seeing double. Indeed, situated in front of Gros Piton was a similar, slightly smaller peak, 2,461' Petit Piton. Together they appeared similar to a pair of upside-down ice cream cones. Take a look at the St. Lucian flag above. I suspect it may represent the islands most notable geologic features.

Nearing the peak, we found that the road to Fond Gene Libre, the small community tucked under the south side of Gros Piton, had been washed out by a flood, and that we had to take a detour, adding maybe 10 or 15 minutes to the ride each way. And then while checking in at the Gros Piton Tours Interpretive Center, it was discovered that a twenty dollar bill I had received in change at the Castries Visitor Center may have been counterfeit. The guide's fee was \$30, and I didn't have enough other bills to cover the cost and they didn't take credit cards.

Phone calls were made. Finally, probably feeling sorry for me, the decision was made to accept the bill. Another 10 or 15 minutes down the drain.

My guide—a mandatory requirement for climbing Gros Piton—Robert and I started out on the relatively easy trail at 10:10 a.m. Robert was thin, twenty-something, and probably climbed the peak daily.

Soon the grade became steeper, and as I slowed, Robert floated ever more effortlessly up the rocky trail. I'm pretty sure the 50 year difference in our ages—not the Beef Wellington, cabernet sauvignon and cherries jubilee I polished off the night before—accounted for disparity in our climbing speeds.

When we reached the bench situated three-quarter up the peak, it was 12:10 p.m. and I was bushed. Robert said that at my speed it would take another half an hour to reach the summit—12:40. Add two hours of down climbing, two hours of travel back to Castries, and—you do the math—back at the ship at 4:40 p.m. If anything went wrong, Jo and the Constellation would be sailing for Antigua at 5 p.m., and I would be left in St. Lucia without a passport.

"We better start down," I told Robert.

Ft. Lauderdale and my sore toes again came to mind.

Well, we were stopped by an accident while returning to Castries. A pickup truck had run off into one of the unprotected drainage ditches that characterize St. Lucia's highway system. The ditch was so deep that only the roof of the pick up was visible. Fortunately, however, our delay was minimal, only 10 or 15 minutes.

The upshot is I need to go back to St. Lucia and climb Gros Piton. The island is so beautiful that I won't mind a return visit.

ANTIGUA &
BARBUDA By
the time the
Constellation
reached St. John's,
Antigua, the capital
of the two island



nation, I admit I was a tad out of shape. The night before, my cummerbund snapped open, nearly leveling a tablemate; my thighs created so much friction while walking that I was deemed a fire hazard; strangers poked at me in the belly as if I were the Pillsbury Dough Boy.

Feeling somewhat lethargic, Jo and I decided to take an afternoon tour of the island, during which our tour guide mentioned that the 1,309' high point of country was an easy walk up, and that its name had recently been changed from Boggy Peak to Mt. Obama.

What did this mean to me? Well, besides sadly realizing I could have/should have bagged it, on the bright side, it meant that I could return to California possessing a fact that would seriously annoy my conservative friends, that's what.

Our cruise finished up with visits to St. Martin and St. Thomas, the highpoints of which I already bagged. On our last night at sea, lobster with melted butter and the traditional parade of flaming Baked Alaska were served. By the end of dinner, I felt like the guy, Mr. Creosote, in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* who exploded after eating a final "wafer-thin" mint.

We're back home now. My diet consists of kale and alfalfa pellets and I'm drinking organic spring water (2008 was a good year). I need to get in shape for my certain return to the lovely islands of the Caribbean.

The Sierra Echo

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