

The Sierra



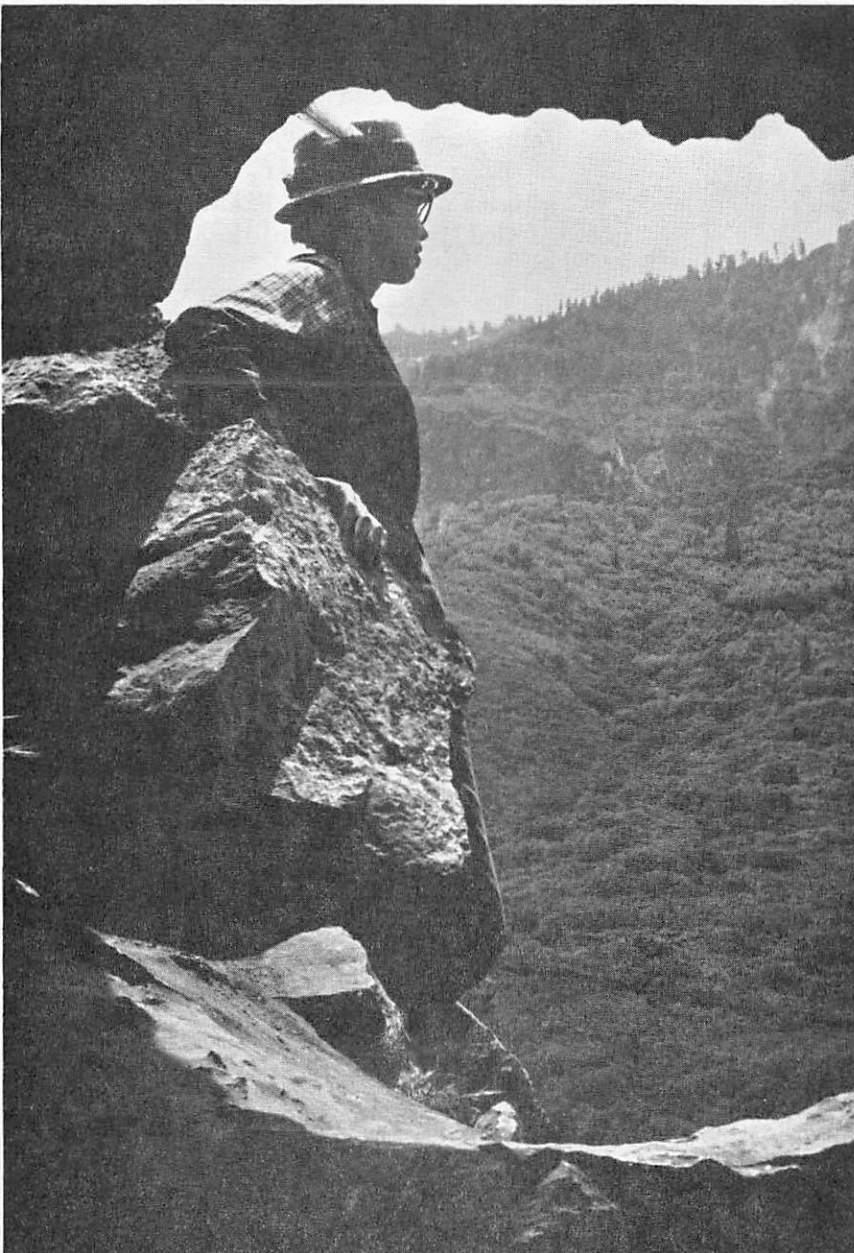
ECHO

VOLUME 14

JUNE

1970

NO. 4



Yes, Erick and Don, there really is a CLOUGH CAVE, high above the South Fork of the Kaweah River, as this 1964 photo by Fred Hoeptner taken from inside the cave proves.

As for Palmer Cave, who knows? See page 5 for the full story.

The following member IN GOOD STANDING was inadvertently left off of the membership list:

Jim Jenkins, 10846 Nestle Ave., Northridge, Calif. 91324, 363-2396

Also, honest Norm Lampman writes that he does not yet deserve the asterisk placed before his name on the membership list. Thanks, Norm!

GOOD WHILE IT LASTED

The Los Angeles Times reports that a state official commented that the recent shutdown of a Los Angeles computer firm was a "disaster for recreation-minded Californians."

The firm, Computicket, had been handling reservations for campsites and other facilities in California state parks. (See March-April ECHO.) It was put out of business by its parent company, Computer Sciences, Inc., apparently because it was losing money. The result is that thousands of would-be campers are finding the state's reservation system in a hopeless snarl. A spokesman for the state said the reservation service had been working well and that reservations made before the shutdown would be honored.

ECHO STAFF

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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$2 per year.
Subscription to the ECHO is a requirement for active membership in the SPS.

REMITTANCE:

Should be sent to the SPS Treasurer: Bob Mason
428 So. Spalding Dr.
Beverly Hills 90212

NEXT COPY DEADLINE:

June 15, 1970

NEW MEMBERS

A hearty welcome is extended to the following new members:

- Chuck Harmon, 9906 Santa Gertrudes, Whittier 90603
- Beth Henry, 10837 E. Ave. N-8, Palmdale 93550
- Ralph W. Manker, 2538 W. 225th Pl., Torrance, Calif. 90505, 326-1211
- Richard B. May, 10049 Hayvenhurst, Sepulveda, Calif. 91343
- Mary R. Kemper, 4610 Densmore, Encino, Calif. 91343

ADDRESS CHANGES

Following members have changed their addresses since the 1970 membership list:

- John Forester, 1950 Cooley Ave., Apt. 3106, Palo Alto, Calif. 96303
- Edward Stork, 131 Miami Gardens Rd., West Hollywood, Florida 33023

REINSTATED MEMBERS

- Robert Michael, P.O. Box 607, Louviers, Colorado, 80131
- Raymond H. Willems, 1803 W. Ashlan, Fresno, Calif. 93705, 209/227-8534

A S C E N T

The latest issue of ASCENT, the Sierra Club Journal of Mountaineering for 1970, is now available. Featured this year are the major desert climbs of the Four Corners area, an article on the Kichatna Spires in Alaska, and a new route on the north face of Half Dome in Yosemite. The price for this outstanding magazine is \$2.65, including California tax, and may be ordered from a book dealer or purchased directly from the club office in San Francisco.

CALLING ALL TRIP LEADERS

The Management Committee urges all trip leaders to initiate appropriate training sessions on climbing skills whenever time is available on a scheduled trip. Ice axe practice is especially important.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

A problem of great severity now faces the SPS. The potential solutions are, perhaps, easier than the potential strife that this problem may cause within the SPS. I first voiced the problem at the May meeting and was dismayed and, frankly, somewhat hurt by some of your reactions. An old-time friend stormed out of the meeting.

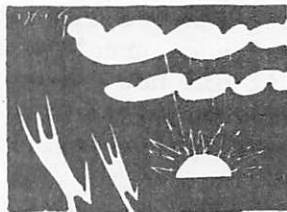
Briefly, what is before us is a conservation/ecology problem that requires us to think first as Sierra Club members and secondly as mountaineers. I have received a letter from Roger Mitchell asking that the SPS refrain or at least severely limit our climbing activities within a 14-peak area of the Sierra centered around Mt. Baxter and Mt. Williamson. He is particularly concerned about a joint trip with BMTC to Williamson, envisioning more than one hundred climbers. Roger feels that man is the major cause for a decrease in the two known remaining bighorn sheep herds in the Sierra. These animals are a unique subspecies to the Sierra and southern Cascades.

The action that your Management Committee felt needed to be taken is as follows:

1. We are temporarily relocating climbs within the areas specified by Roger. We feel that we, as Sierra Club members and conservationists, cannot take the chance of being responsible for any additional reduction in herd size.
2. I have appointed a committee headed by Art Wester to look into the problem in as much depth as possible and as soon as possible.
3. I have personally contacted the acting director of conservation education for the United States Forest Service and have offered full cooperation of the SPS to help in any way with this problem. Today I received word that many in the Forest Service in California are delighted and eager to work with a "grass roots" climbing organization. The Forest Service is considering exactly the same action that we are voluntarily undertaking.
4. When we have as much data as reasonable and with USFS cooperation, we will take final action: Possibly a bylaw change, deleting peaks, or perhaps to continue to climb in the area with or without restrictions.

I ask you to remember that we are a part of the Sierra Club. I ask you to stay loose until this action is resolved. I encourage you for the time being to schedule your private trips elsewhere. Williamson will still be there!

-- Dick Sykes --



"The wild sheep ranks highest among the animal mountaineers of the Sierra. Possessed of keen sight and scent, and strong limbs, he dwells secure amid the loftiest summits, leaping unscathed from crag to crag, up and down the fronts of giddy precipices, crossing foaming torrents and slopes of frozen snow, exposed to the wildest storms, yet maintaining a brave, warm life, and developing from generation to generation in perfect strength and beauty." --John Muir, "The Wild Sheep," Chapter XIV, The Mountains of California, Vol. II.

ASCENTS

OWENS AND SAWTOOTH PEAK, April 4-5 Brendan Bausback

Saturday morning twenty-five climbers gathered at Homestead for the climb of Owens. After a short caravan to the rock quarry, we parked our large American cars and continued on over the six miles of rough, narrow road to the mouth of Indian Wells Canyon using small foreign cars. Upon reaching the roadhead, two of the girls on the trip decided to stay at the cars and wait for us.

The rest of us started our climb at 10:20. We climbed back up through the canyon, then up the talus slopes to the summit. The last of the group reached the top by 1 p.m. The weather was fine, the sky cloudless and blue, and the view magnificent. After eating we descended to the roadhead. From there we started our caravan over Nine Mile Canyon Road to the new Chimney Creek campground. Saturday night we were joined by two additional climbers around the campfire.

After a pleasant night's sleep we awoke at 6:30 and got underway at 7:30. We drove to the point where the main road running through the campground makes a loop. There we parked and climbed straight up out of the campground. We reached the top of Sawtooth by 11 and were greeted by another beautiful view; Owens appears to dominate the area. After lunch we started our descent to the campground. Six climbers decided to climb the symmetrical VABM marker lying between Sawtooth and Lamont to loosen up stiff joints (I suppose). They exited through Lamont Meadow and followed the road back to the campground. Everybody was back in camp by 2:30 for an early start back.

LONE PINE PEAK, April 25-26 Howard Stephens

This trip was a near miss; one day later it would have been a complete miss. One day sooner, and it could have been perfect. Saturday was a beautiful day with warm sunshine, and we were optimistic. We'd get Lone Pine today and then do Irvine and Mallory tomorrow. Or we'd ice ax practice today and go around the top of the cirque and get all three, Lone Pine, Mallory and Irvine tomorrow.

We backpacked at a moderate pace until snow on the upper half of the trail slowed us to a creep. We arrived at camp too late and too tired to attempt Lone Pine Peak with a large group. So we settled for a good ice ax practice session instead. At sunset the usual breeze arose, but after sundown it did not let up as it usually does but increased and howled all night. By our five a.m. wake-up time it was still roaring in the trees and very cold, so we decided to make our try for Lone Pine and get out before the storm hit.

The sky was clear but cold, and the wind greatly increased the chill factor. We climbed in down jackets, and all the warm clothing we could put on. The climb was on firm snow nearly all the way to the saddle. By nine a.m. we began to reach the summit, and by 11 all were on their way down. The weather on top was clear with magnificent views, but the wind was fierce and biting. Clouds poured over the Whitney Crest as we hurried down. Of the 38 starters about 30 had signed the summit register. The cloud cover thickened and a light snow fell as we returned down the trail to the cars. It was the forerunner of the storm that was to dump two feet of snow at Mammoth during the night. We considered the trip a successful adventure.

HOMER'S NOSE, May 2-3 Bob Mason

The magic words "easy spring backpack" brought 55 people to the Clough Cave roadhead, now including Kathy, a young German shepherd, and her owner, who accompanied the group on an unofficial basis. The unexpected absence of the assistant leader and guide, Harry Hayer, due to an auto breakdown, turned the trip into an "exploratory." Fortunately I and my three children had arrived early on Friday to give the younger two an afternoon of training for their first trip carrying their own packs. We lucked out and chanced on the obscure beginning of the trail after several false starts.

The same trail was followed Saturday morning through luxurious wildflowers and meadows to a branch point, where a scouting party was diverted, and the main body proceeded on what appeared to be the main trail. This rapidly deteriorated in heavy brush into a maze of cow and deer paths. After many delays, many scouting excursions, and much whistling and shouting, the main body and most of the scouts were reunited at lunch time. Surprise Camp was reached shortly after, and we checked off all but four names from the sign-up list. Many of the group were located in a megalopolitan sprawl extending approximately a half-mile both up and down Bennett Creek. One of the missing four was subsequently identified as a sleeping form behind a rock. The other three were not found at Sunday morning's assembly but were eventually discovered arriving at the summit just as the main body was starting to descend. From their outpost in suburbia they had not heard the group arise or start but had followed the party's footsteps up the peak.

The route was obscure but reasonably logical and no technical difficulties were encountered. The exact number on the peak is uncertain because of overlapping arrivals and departures (all under competent escort), but approximately 45 climbers, ranging in age from nine to 53, made it. Fresh bear sign was seen on the trail, and at one point very clear paw prints, headed toward the peak, were observed in the snow. The bear was not given credit for the peak because there were no signatures since the last scheduled SPS trip in October, 1968.

The weather was extremely pleasant throughout, and an enjoyable time was had by all, except for a few poorly conditioned hikers, who will undoubtedly be in better shape on the next trip.

The water flow in Bennett Creek at Surprise Camp was substantially greater than at the point where it crossed the road. However, because of the melt of a late-season snow-fall the preceding week, this is not necessarily indicative of the relationship at other seasons.

On Saturday afternoon an exploratory party consisting of Eric Schumacher and Don Anderson made the customary search for Palmer Cave without success. They reported that, since the last three scheduled trips had made similar searches without success, and since their search had been quite thorough, Palmer Cave was probably a cartographer's myhtake. However, since our two explorers were part of the main body which tried and failed to find Clough Cave, their report is not necessarily conclusive.

Special thanks are due Bill Schuller and Gene Gail for volunteer services as assistant leaders, to Erick Schumacher and many others for scouting the route (especially to those who bothered to come back and report), and to Barney Mason for diligent search of the expanded campsite for missing persons.



A S C E N T S , cont'd.

OLANCHA PEAK, May 9-10 Frank Riseley

A mob of 66 people were on hand for the trip. Many of them were family groups and fortunately many were experienced mountaineers. There is a brand new trail now to Olancha Pass which is steep but one to two miles shorter, more scenic and with water much of the way.

Everyone made the campsite on the saddle in Brush Meadow, and Dick Beach and Bernard Hallet met us there. They climbed the peak via the 2nd and 3rd class northeast ridge starting near Cartago. There was plenty of snow at the campsite but no water. The temperature dropped to below 20°, and the wind velocity was quite high. Despite the weather, 40 people climbed the peak. Two climbers left the mountain early and missed the campsite, somehow getting completely disoriented.

At noon, I sent the women, children and most fatigued climbers down the mountain with the assistant leader, and the remainder of us spent the next four hours finding the missing hikers. They were both in good shape but wandering separately. The remainder of the party reached the cars at 7 p.m.

The cooperation of the entire party was magnificent, and I am sure their diligent efforts saved a couple of lives, as neither of the lost persons was prepared to bivouac.

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N O N S C H E D U L E D T R I P S

MT. GILBERT, April 25 - 26 Bob Boyles

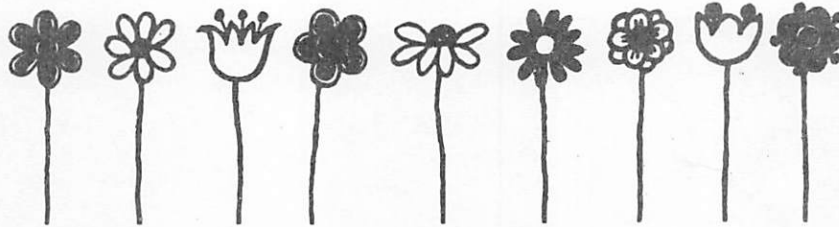
From the glowing report by Wedberg, Barbara Lilley, et al, in the March Mughlnoos, it seemed a climb of Gilbert and Johnson from Treasure Lakes above Bishop would be a fine spring climb. So on a brilliant, warm Saturday morning, Ted Maier, Roy Keenan and I set out across South Lake on a foot of ice. Noting the massive and variously tilted ice slabs left along the shoreline by the retreating lake, some 20 feet below its summer level, gave the easy walk an interesting aspect. We needed snowshoes for about half the remaining distance to Treasure Lakes. After a twenty-minute reconnaissance of the lower lakes, we found slushy water by chopping a hole through a foot of snow and ice.

All afternoon the wind increased until by dinner we had to crouch around our stove behind a tarp to keep heat on the pot. But we each knew that come sundown the wind would abate. By midnight, it was pretty clear that the wind was with us for keeps and getting stronger all the time -- though the sky was clear.

Sun-up was ominous with wind and the beginnings of dark clouds. Undaunted, we headed up over the small ridge just west of the lake and into the long curving bowl leading southwest and up to the Gilbert-Johnson ridge at the end. The snow was ankle-to knee-deep, the wind strong and soon filled with snow flurries, the visibility decreasing and the temperature in the low 20's as we plowed along. The very steep climb up the coulior to the notch on the ridge at 12,400 feet left us panting and jumbled in the rocks just below the ridgetop, with the wind howling over our heads. The crossing to the western side of the ridge put us in the full brunt of the storm. I haven't had much experience with high wind, but it must have been on the order of 40 to 50 miles per hours and it sliced through all our layers of clothing not protected with windproof covers. The driving snow stung like hail and turned what should have been an easy climb along the ridge into a half-blind stumble. There was nowhere to hide from the wind.

After a few hundred yards, it was agreed in a hurried huddle that we ran too high a risk of getting lost or frostbitten and reluctantly headed back. It seemed the right decision, for our angle into the wind was even worse going back to the notch; all the downhill from there was in the relative calm of the eastern slope. In three hours we were luxuriating in the Bishop sun and stuffing ourselves with hot burgers.

We never did see our mountain, but we got a fair dose of adverse winter mountain climbing.



SIERRA

CONSERVATION

NEWS

Congressman Jerome Waldie and nine co-sponsors introduced HR 15019 on November 26, 1969, to classify the corridor between the John Muir and Dana Minarets Wilderness Areas as the San Joaquin Wilderness Area. Thereby a uniquely charming region of rushing trout water, rugged granite bluffs, tranquil meadows and red-fir-covered ridges may be added to the wilderness system.

Theoretically, the legislative progress should be swift, for there are no competing uses. In fact, the bill will be hotly opposed by the promoters of a trans-Sierra highway over Minaret Summit.

This plan for a trans-Sierra highway is supported chiefly by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, a few persons whose real estate may escalate in value, and a very few responsible citizens whose judgments were formed and who made public commitments before all the facts were known. Thirteen years ago the Bureau of Public Roads pronounced the route feasible from an engineering and economic viewpoint. Since this same report conceded that the pass was not an all-weather route, and that there was then insufficient traffic data to calculate a cost-benefit ratio, their conclusions had to be based on extrasensory perception.

Since that time the California Highway Department has twice studied the route, alternatively for a high-speed or a forest highway type road. Both times the department recommended against the inclusion of the route in the state highway system. The reasons: excessive costs of construction, maintenance and snow removal, little need, and absence of potential traffic. Letters from PIE and Delta Trucking companies corroborated that the route would not be used even if the highway were built.

There are no solid reasons for not classifying the San Joaquin Wilderness. You can encourage this by writing to Congressman Harold Johnson, in whose district this area lies, and to your own congressman, letting him know your views on adding this piece of the Sierras to our wilderness system.

Granite Chief Decision Upheld:

J. W. Deinema, regional forester for the national forests of California, has announced that the Forest Service is turning down a request by the Sierra Club to reverse a Forest Supervisor's decision on the future management of the Granite Chief area in the Tahoe National Forest. "I am upholding the decision made by Forest Supervisor Hank Branagh to manage the northern portion of the Granite Chief area for backcountry recreation and the southern portion for full resource use," Deinema said. At hearings in October the Sierra Club had urged establishment of a 35,500-acre Granite Chief wilderness.

THE SIERRA ECHO
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"to explore, enjoy, preserve"

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