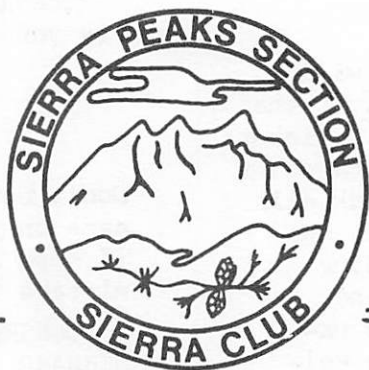


The Sierra



ECHO

VOLUME 15

NOVEMBER

1971

NO. 9



NEWS

SEE YOU THERE!

The annual banquet of the SPS will be held on Thursday, December 16, at the Smoke House Restaurant in Encino. Tickets for a fabulous steak dinner are priced at \$5.70, including tax and tip. Cocktails begin at 6:30 with dinner at 7:30. We are fortunate to have an outstanding program presented by Dick Beach and Barbara Lilley on their Mt. Logan expedition. Members and guests are welcome. Send checks, made payable to Sierra Club, SPS Section, to Carol Miller, 19261 Bernetta Pl., Tarzana 91356; telephone (213)345-1611. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

COVER PHOTO

Thanks to TOM ROSS for this striking shot of a storm coming in over University Peak, March 8, 1969. That was the winter when there was 23 feet of snow in Union Valley.

ECHO STAFF

Published ten times a year by the Sierra Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club.

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NEXT COPY DEADLINE:

December 10, 1971

CONGRATULATIONS to four new emblem holders. May you wear your emblems in the best of health!

DICK BEACH
MILOSH BENESH
ROBERT E. LOVEETT
HELEN STEFENS

Don't bother putting an asterisk by Helen's name on your roster, as it's already there. (I hope some future editor makes a similar mistake for me!)

CONGRATULATIONS also to JOYCE and RANDY BERNARD, already emblem holders, who may be using those emblems as diaper pins for young Glen Allen, who arrived on July 31. Joyce and Randy made another kind of change, as well. Note their change of address below.

A hearty WELCOME, also, to our new members this month, who are:

FASSNACHT, DENNIS, 11449 Califa St. #1,
North Hollywood 91606
FREDLAND, JUN, 1120 Embury St., Pacific
Palisades 90272
RICH, ARTHUR, 6445 Lubao Ave., Woodland
Hills 91364
RUBISSOW, GEORGE, 4 Mosswood Lane,
Berkeley 94704
SHER, RON, P.O. Box 1664, Wrightwood 92397

FOREIGN ADVENTURE

Along with the change of address noted below, DICK JALI sends the following note: "I'm teaching physics at a junior college here. Great beaches -- also some peaks. Letter later."

Word also comes from member CY KAICENER that he is leaving the country on October 5. He plans to climb Mt. Demevand (18,000'+) in Iran and then maybe visit the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan.

CLIMBERS WRITE

The October issue of SUMMIT contains two articles by SPS'ers. Past chairman DICK SYKES writes about "Kilimanjaro's Other Summit," while BOB MICHAEL tells of "A Challenging Route on Popocatepetl."

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Chairman BOB MASON recently changed his marital status as well as his address. Congratulations, Bob! He's now at 308 South Maple Dr., Beverly Hills 90212. Member JULIE MASON is also at that new address. Phone 274-4205.

BERNARD, JOYCE & RANDY, 1217 Furin Ave.,
Anaheim, CA 92805

DEE, DIANA (formerly Heiman), Reed College,
Portland, Oregon 97202

JALI, R.M., Peace Corps, Kolej, Tanjong Lobang/
Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

MacLEOD, GORDON & BARBARA, 11433 Albata St.,
Los Angeles 90049

WEDBERG, JOHN, 1374 Stradella Rd., LA 90024

ASCENTS

WALLACE & HAECKEL, October 9 - 10 Wally Henry

The trip got off on a depressed note when the trip leader, Jay Wiley, arrived at the roadhead suffering from an allergy condition to greet only two of the expected 14 participants.

Leadership duties were turned over to Wally Henry, and Jay left for home and bed. Saturday night we were joined by a late-arriving hiker.

Sunday we climbed Mt. Haeckel, then followed the crest to Mt. Wallace, then climbed unscheduled Picture Peak on the way back to our camp at Midnight Lake. We all agree with Andy Smatko that this peak is worthy of an official name.

YOSEMITE VALLEY, Ledge Trail to Glacier Point, October 2 - 3 Howard Stephens

The Yosemite Valley "Ledge Trail" was a delightful weekend of climbing, bear fighting and backpacking. Fourteen participants, including the leaders, maneuvered the slippery roads to Glacier Point late Friday night. The temperature was surprisingly mild (above freezing) considering the nearly two-inch snow cover. The wee sleeping hours of Saturday morning passed without incident save for a slight argument between Ken Ferrell and a four-footed friend for the possession of his pack. A well-aimed rock left Ken the undisputed winner.

We had intended to conceal our packs to avoid possible robbery, but Ken's experience showed us that we had more than human marauders to fear. Fortunately Kathy Bryant, doubting her ability to do the Ledge Route, volunteered to remain on guard.

The Ledge Route proved easier than expected. Altho rather massive rock slides, originating on the cliffs above, had obliterated the beginning and some parts of the old trail, vestiges of it and splashes of paint on the rocks could be found most of the way, and nothing beyond Class 2 difficulty was encountered. Growth of vegetation and trees obscured some of the old, expansive views and eased the feeling of exposure. In the couloir snow from Wednesday's storm remained to a depth of almost two inches. A beautifully clear day and the route being nearly all in shade made for pleasant and fast climbing. We made the 3200-foot climb in two-and-a-half hours.

During the long picture-, lunch- and rest-stop on Glacier Point, a black bear came limping through the area carrying a horribly swollen left front foot. Could this be Ken's friend? Now!

At two in the afternoon Dick Ramirez led the backpack down (and up) the Panorama Trail. It was a beautiful and photogenic trip, and we made Nevada Falls by 5 p.m. At this time of the year the water flow is very low, but the falls (Illouette, Nevada and Vernal) were beautiful, with a narrow ribbon of water and wide areas of colored and highly-polished rock on either side.

Camp was made upstream about a half mile at a point where the trail would be left for our projected climb of the Diving Board tomorrow. The Diving Board, a prominent point protruding from the canyon wall at the west side of Half Dome and offering spectacular views, seemed to be a suitable short climb (about 1500 feet of Class 2-3) for the second day before the long return home. From the Panorama Trail the route looked straightforward and easy. But an SPS trip without a peak on the list? At the campfire it was discovered that almost no one, including the leaders, had climbed Half Dome. The vote was unanimous for Half Dome. Tom Caidina had climbed it before and would lead us. We'd get an early start for this greater effort.

During the campfire our bear troubles started. In the near full moonlight a large black bear walked by the camp only a few feet away. Shouting and rocks hurried him away but we knew he'd be back. The trees did not seem to offer suitable limbs for all of the packs, but two large rocks in the camp area appeared unclimbable to bears. So we put all our food in stuff bags or summit packs and piled them on the largest rock, then bedded down for a peaceful sleep.

I know that in the events which followed, each one participated, and that each has a story to tell. I can only tell my own, which I believe is the most complete. I believe that in any situation, regardless of danger or discomfort, there is an element of interest or enjoyment. To me the confrontation with wild animals of nature is a rare wilderness experience, not to be sought after, but if it comes, to be enjoyed and remembered. The night was rich in such experiences.

I was sleeping lightly when I heard Jon Petitjean say to his parents, "I think there's a bear in camp." And then he exclaimed, "There is a bear up on the rock!"

I had been sleeping clothed, except for boots, with my sleeping bag unzipped and untied. I jumped up shouting and grabbing a rock to throw. The whole camp seemed to explode in shouting and rock throwing. The bear disappeared over the far side of the rock (those on that side saw him use an adjacent tree for the descent), but he was not empty-handed. As he ran he was carrying my stuffbag in his mouth. We could not make him drop it, and we never saw it again. Doug and I had no food. Then we noted two bears eating in a nearby clump of trees and recovered Tom's demolished summit pack. Tom had no food.

What to do? We moved the packs to the smaller rock (which had no tree near it), and Dick Ramirez volunteered to sleep on the rock. "I can't sleep well anyway," he said.

We also tied two packs, one was Dick's, to a high limb of the tree under which Ken was sleeping and went back to bed feeling safe. I was next awakened by Ken saying, "There's a bear at the tree."

He must have appeared gigantic to Ken only a few feet away. My own view will be unforgettable. Silhouetted against the brightly moonlit ridge the bear stood erect, his mouth and front paws clutching at the packs. Ken's struggle to get out of his sleeping bag and my running toward him only served to cause a frantic effort to wrest the bags from the tree. Catching the bags, the bear hung on and pulled the bags and part of the limb free. He easily outdistanced me as he ran up the ridge. I could follow the sounds of the bags being dragged and by picking up dropped items. Some of the recovered items had been bitten into. The bear was eating as he ran. As I came up searching through the undergrowth I was alerted by a loud snort and looked up into the face of the bear only a few feet away. The bravery went out of me. But the bear showed no ferocity, only surprise and an unwillingness to surrender his meal. Slowly I edged away some distance before daring to throw another rock. Then I became aware that the bear had slipped away up the rocks. He had left no food. I found a tube of vaseline and a pocketknife. Both had been in the bear's mouth.

Back in camp all was quiet. The packs atop the rock were undisturbed. But they seemed so near the edge that a large bear might be able to reach them from below. I climbed up and moved them to the center. Dick slept peacefully through it all. I piled the salvaged food (some fresh apples and pears as well as cans) near my sleeping bag and was soon asleep.

Some time later I awoke with a vague feeling that a bear was in camp. I sat up. It was dead quiet -- nothing moved. Bright moonlight drenched the rock. The packs and Dick seemed undisturbed. The edge of the rock formed a dark silhouette against the ridge. A little apart from the rock was another shadow. A tree? A rock? The bear? It didn't move, and I lay down again. I couldn't sleep. When I looked again, the shadow was gone. I arose and moved quietly up the slope so I could see around the moonlit side of the rock. I was surprised to see Dick sleeping quietly on top of the rock and directly below the great hulk of the bear reaching up from the ground. His nose pointing up was only a matter of inches below Dick's head. The great arms were outstretched and the paws nearly reached over the top.

The bear made no move -- just stood there against the rock, and I watched fascinated. I wonder how long he'd been there and what he would do. I shouted and threw a rock. Almost simultaneously Dick arose and spat a frightening yell down into the very face of the surprised beast. The bear dropped to the ground and loped up over the ridge. We saw no more of him. It was about 3 a.m. Our bear troubles were over except for the one that Tom discovered sniffing his boots in the halflight of the early morning. We had lost four summit packs and the food they contained.

Y O S E M I T E V A L L E Y , cont'd.

Morning preparations were considerably delayed due to searching (without success) for stolen packs, sharing the remaining food, repacking and putting packs out of the bears' reach. All packs were stacked atop the smaller (unclimbable to bears, we hoped) rock and all food carried. More than an hour later than planned we hit the trail for Half Dome. Tom set a good pace and in two-and-a-half hours we had covered the four miles and 2200 feet gain to the summit. Twelve of the 14 made the top. The cables were down but still hanging, which made the climb look more formidable. Actually the boots hold on the 45-degree rock, but a cable handhold is a great reassurance. The views from the top are among the most spectacular I have seen.

Back in camp we discovered that one food bag had been overlooked, and in broad daylight a bear had climbed the rock, found it, and eaten its contents. Our backpacks were undisturbed. We hurried down the dry Mist Trail. By 5:30 we were back at Camp Curry and ready for the most dangerous part of the trip -- the long drive home.

It had been a wonderful weekend due to excellent weather, fine climbing and interesting activities and especially because of a group of people who were mutually capable, compatible and who could enjoy a weekend together.

MT. STANFORD & MT. ERICSON, September 4-6 Don Anderson

Ten participants showed up at the roadhead in Kings Canyon for this climb. The backpack up Bubbs Creek was pleasant under clear skies, bringing us to Junction Meadow at noontime where we stopped for an extended lunch and rest break. Continuing on up east Lake trail brought us to Lake Reflection at about 4:30 p.m. Camp was set up about a quarter mile down trail from Lake Reflection in closer proximity to Harrison Pass trail that we would follow the next day.

The following morning Jerry Keating, Elton Fletcher and Jay Wiley started out ahead with packs to establish a new camp higher up to put them in a more favorable position for their climb of Deerhorn on Monday. The remainder of the group soon followed where we joined them at their newly-established camp. All together again, we proceeded up the Harrison Pass trail (more or less) up above the last lake and emerged onto large talus boulders. The view of Ericson Crags to the west was foreboding but nonetheless spectacular and beautiful. At this point we left the trail and headed south up a prominent quite steep and loose chute directly east of the crags and about a half mile west of the true Harrison Pass. Following this chute brought us to the Kings-Kern Divide proper where we stopped for a deserved rest and took time to marvel at the view of the Kern drainage to the south and a little of the Kings drainage to the north, which view was largely blocked by Deerhorn Mountain.

We followed up the east shoulder of Ericson over loose and broken talus to the final summit ridge where we encountered moderate Class 3 rock. There is a south gendarme on this ridge which is not the true summit. The north gendarme is the true summit and can be more easily attained by crossing over the ridge to the west and coming around the back side, but climbing up the east side of the gendarme is also feasible where the rock is more sheer and exposed. The vast panorama of the Southern Sierra right down center and the Sierra Crest on the left and Great Western Divide on the right of the Kern drainage unfolds -- truly a remarkable view.

Following lunch we rapidly moved off the peak down to the Harrison Pass saddle where we encountered a group of Scouts whose leaders was scared of the descent off Harrison Pass to the north with packs. Jerry Keating, calling upon his vast background of mountaineering experience, volunteered to show them how the pros do it.

We moved up the Class 1 southwest slopes of Stanford to Gregory's Monument where we found a register and everybody signed in. At this point one member of the group bade us farewell and headed back to camp. Following north from Gregory's Monument necessitated a traverse of a quarter-mile long knife ridge to the true summit of Stanford. A rope was used at the start which involved about a 15-foot drop off onto an exposed ledge.

From this point on the route is Class 3-4 and very exposed all the way. The traverse of the ridge took about 45 minutes and was accomplished by all without incident and without further use of the rope.

The view from Stanford was great; however, it seemed most of the conversation was centered around how to get down off this peak, as it was getting well into late afternoon.

For our descent route we decided on a chute just immediately south of the summit. This is the way Bolton took Lucy down about 70 years ago, so we philosophized that what was good enough for her certainly must be good enough for us, so down we went. The potential risk of rockfall in this steep and relatively narrow chute requires caution. After a thousand feet or so the chute abruptly terminated in a near vertical dropoff. We then traversed southward crossing several lesser chutes and gradually edging down (probably just the way Lucy did it). Frequently we moved one climber at a time due to the steepness and looseness of rock while others took refuge under large boulders. We required more than an hour-and-a-half for all members of the party to get off the mountain proper and onto talus below. Looking back at our descent route, I couldn't help but think that "that Lucy -- man, she's something else!" At this time with sundown long past and darkness near, we regrouped, and with everyone near the state of dehydration, we made fast tracks for the nearest water. Here we split up the party, with those intent on a climb of Deerhorn Monday heading toward their camp, while two others and myself moved down to our original camp near Lake Reflection (full bore, with headlights on), arriving about 9 p.m. Our other climber who left us at Gregory's Monument was back safe in camp. It turned out to be one really great, long and glorious climbing day.

We took our own sweet time getting out of the sack Monday morning but eventually managed to get underway about 8:30. Storm clouds were obviously forming, so we moved at a good, steady pace, encountering the first raindrops near the junction of the East Lake trail and Bubbs Creek. From this point on it rained steadily for nearly the whole trip back to the roadhead, but we could have cared less, having just written off our list two of the better peaks in the Sierra.

We stopped for a quick lunch at the Sphinx Lake trail junction where we "bumped" into a couple of SPS gals whose private trip went to Mt. Brewer and environs. Sitting there eating lunch and looking back at the fullscale storm in force in the area from which we had just come, we felt good about our location but also hoped for success for Keating and Co. doing a big mountain like Deerhorn in that weather.

We reached the roadhead about 1:45 p.m. and were soon underway again -- this time on wheels and not feet.



MT. WALLACE, July 31 - August 1 Horace Ory

Saturday morning there were three Sierra Club groups gathering at Lake Sabrina for various destinations. We signed up 43 likely prospects and went our way. After a splash-in at the stream crossing below Blue Lake, we discovered one of our number was a St. Bernard -- nothing else shakes dry with such a flourish. There followed a discussion of rules, mosquitoes and other hazards, and as a result the St. Bernard and five companions decided to stop at Dingleberry Lake. We then continued by a more or less direct cross-county route to a beautiful campsite just below Moonlight Lake. Judging by numerous worried looks, our arrival surprised everyone except the leader, who was confident that moonlight Lake was up there somewhere.

Clouds had been building up since early morning, and after a delay just long enough to allow setting up shelters, the rain began. Although never heavy, the showers lasted until late afternoon and prevented us from climbing Mt. Powell. Our thwarted plan involved climbing over a cruddy ridge, descending to Sunset Lake, and essentially starting

over from there by a more sensible route, with, of course, a return over the cruddy ridge. But unfortunately the rain prevented that, and we were forced to content ourselves with exploring lakes and waterfalls, collecting tasty trout and napping under tarps.

The night was warm and pleasant, so we were well-rested for an early start Sunday morning to climb Mt. Wallace. We followed the canyon toward Echo Lake, then turned northwest and stayed high above the steep walls surrounding the lake. Stable boulders and firm snow led us to the depression in the Wallace-Haeckel saddle, and from there we proceeded directly toward the peak. There was some scrambling near the top, but soon 28 of our party were seated on the summit. Gathering clouds dispelled designs on Haeckel, so after enjoying the view, we headed down by a "shortcut" on the east side of Mt. Wallace, where scree promised a fast descent of the lower slopes. And so we found it, but only after easing our way down the very loose rock of the upper slopes. Naturally, it started raining again before we reached camp and continued while we packed out. But as they say, all's wet that ends wet.

* * * *

MT. LYELL & MACLURE PEAK, October 9-11 Dennis Lantz

It is hazardous at best to schedule Sierra trips in October, or with BMTC co-sponsorship, or as a three-day effort. You can get rotten weather, out-of-condition, ill-equipped tenderfeet, and low attendance. What we really had were unseasonably warm weather, strong participants (some with tender feet), and twelve enthusiastic climbers. The only real hazard faced was by one of the original leaders, Ken Berger, well known devotee of dangerous sports; he sprained his knee playing badminton and is out for several months.

Pre-reservation data to prospects had warned of dire weather, endless distances, scary climbs and being snowed in. As a result, lots of perverse SPS'ers wanted in, to be joined by several people "checking us out" for next season, and a few BMTC students looking for Experience Trips. (It was an experience, they later agreed.) Everyone was equipped with winter gear when we assembled in the parking lot of the High Sierra Trail Camp off the Tioga Pass Road. The current topo map is now incorrect, since a 1971 "improvement" placed a new paved road direct from the ranger station on the map to the camp; the old dirt road up to the river bridge is no more. From the parking lot, the trail for the first mile is too plain. It's usually two to five trails wandering through the brush, joining and rejoining. It then settles down to go ten miles up the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River, an endless, beautiful meadow. At the end is a 2,000-foot "gotcha," the climb up to good campgrounds at lakes from 10,400' to 11,700'. The 10,700' level suited us as a sheltered balance from low to unexplored high. This or the 11,000' level seem in retrospect the best, although two-day trippers may wish to go higher. We carried in wood for a delightful evening followed by a warm night.

Recent snow in the blue ice suncups of the Lyell Glacier made the climb up to the Lyell-Maclure saddle merely unpleasant instead of nasty. Crampons are no help in mid-season, but this late is like unto early, and they would have been needed without the new snow. A loose all-talus block route is also available this late, circling the glacier on the west to the saddle. From 300 feet east of the low point, join the ridge staying below the crest, pass the prominent false summit on the north side, then walk up the talus plateau to the summit block. Powder snow complicated the more obvious ledge systems on the ridge, leading all eleven of us up the more interesting variations. There is exposure in any case. The summit register was well filled with lengthy witticisms and dated clear back to August 15, 1971. We avid register-readers nearly refused to count the peak.

Returning to the saddle, staying north of the ridge crest, ten of us ascended Maclure. This is much easier second class than it looks from below, up to the summit ridge, which is a nice third class traverse with some exposure. The 1942 register redeemed some of the earlier frustration for the bookworms. (The hold-closed wingnut

and bolt were missing from the Sierra Club register case. If "spares" for these and a punch were available, the writer could have fixed several this summer. Anybody know the dimensions?)

Three of the strongest climbers couldn't wait to tackle the drive home, so they signed out and headed for the cars Sunday afternoon. The rest of us finished our campfire wood in another leisurely evening, slept late, and packed out on the new official Columbus Day Monday. Yes Virginia, sore feet aside, some BMTC students can find happiness with the SPS.

* * * *

NO VIRGINIA, October 2-3 Horace Ory

A meteorologist friend, on whom I rely mostly for sick humor, promised warming weather over the weekend, with the freezing level at 10,000' Friday night, rising to 12,000' Saturday night. In spite of experiences with other predictions, I exchanged wool for cotton and looked forward to an Indian Summer outing. Well, it turned out to be 11° F. at the roadhead (7100') Saturday morning, but otherwise as predicted. That is, it warmed up to 20° F. Saturday night. Nonetheless, after a hearty breakfast at the best cafe the roadhead had to offer, 11 numb-wits signed in and, after some false starts, headed up Horse Creek Canyon. Travel was slow, with the end of the line often out of sight. One person, who hadn't been in the mountains for several months, finally signed out and enjoyed a timberline camp. The rest of the group crossed Horse Creek Pass and dropped down about a hundred feet to a bleak campsite near a tiny, frozen lake.

After a short rest, five of us made a late start for Virginia Peak. We contoured around toward the west, traversing on stones that will never gather moss, and losing enthusiasm with each small rockslide. The leader called a halt at 5 o'clock. The summit was only a few hundred feet away but probably would have taken an hour to reach, and descent also would have been slow on the loose rocks. So Virginia is now on our list as a GRUDGE PEAK.

Even the south slope of Whorl carried lots of snow and ice. Sunday's planned route involved ascending a gully at the east end of the mountain, traversing on steep slabs to the saddle between the north and middle peaks, then crossing to the north side until nearly to the summit (middle peak). A couple of spots, at the head of the gully and just below the summit, require care even under good conditions. With snow and ice the route is unsuitable for a general climbing group, so Whorl was cancelled by the leader's decision.

To avoid a wipeout, a climb of Matterhorn was substituted. Five of the group made a quick ascent of this emblem peak and enjoyed one of the clearest views ever. We then packed out for an early start on the lengthy drive home.

Missing Virginia and Whorl was a disappointment, especially for Diana Heiman who drove down from Portland for Whorl. We'll have to schedule these peaks again next year -- earlier.

* * * * * P R I V A T E C L I M B S * * * * *

AN ELECTRIFYING INCIDENT IN THE EVOLUTION BASIN, August 6-9 Ron Jones

Bill Hunt and I spent an enjoyable four-day weekend climbing many of the grand names of science in the Evolution Basin area. Friday, August 6, we started out from North Lake and crossed over Piute Pass and Alpine Col. We dropped our packs beyond the col and made the easy scramble up Mt. Goethe (13,240'). After returning to our packs, we hiked on into Evolution Basin and made our camp late that day near the outlet of Sapphire Lake at 10,100'.

Saturday morning we did the standard Climber's Guide route 2 approach to Mt. Goddard (13,568'). On the summit we noted the good turnout which climbed the peak on the scheduled trip the previous week. After a short stay at the top we dropped into the Ionian Basin

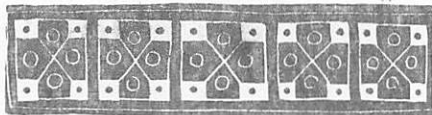
ELECTRIFYING INCIDENT, cont'd.

for an exploratory look at the route up Scylla. By the time we reached the lake to the north of Scylla it was mid-afternoon, the weather had turned threatening, and we decided to pass on a climb of the peak. Our conclusion was that Mt. Goddard and Scylla from Evolution Basin would be one long day. We proceeded across the upper reaches of the Enchanted Gorge and through Black Giant pass. At that point a thunderstorm moved in on us from the north. Amidst light rain and hail I separated from Bill and dashed up the easy slopes of Black Giant (13,330').

Sunday was scheduled as the most interesting day of our trip. We began with the climb of Mt. Haeckel (13,435') by means of route 1 in the Climber's Guide. I would add to this description that the chute one ascends to the top of the ridge is the second chute from the left as you view the peak. I would also add that the easiest access to this chute is from the south on the east side of the small lake nestled at the foot of the peak. This route avoids the loose scree one encounters by staying on the left side of the basin as suggested in the Climber's Guide. From the summit of Mt. Haeckel we traversed along the easy third class ridge to Mt. Wallace (13,377'). We then descended to the upper lake in the small basin between Mt. Wallace and Mt. Fiske.

After eating lunch we eyed the thunderclouds gathering to the north and started up the Climber's Guide route 2 for Mt. Fiske (13,524'). By three in the afternoon we had reached about 13,200'. The sky had become completely overcast, the thunderclaps began and the hail started to fall. We descended a hundred feet on the west side of the ridge and found a small overhanging ledge to huddle beneath. From our location we could see a panorama of peaks and valleys from Mt. Darwin in the north, Evolution Valley, the Hermit, Mt. McGee and Mt. Huxley. We watched the lightning strike in various places and timed the interval to estimate the distance away from us. At one point Bill and I both were looking toward the summit of Fiske when suddenly a bolt of lightning zapped into the side of the peak, 300 feet below the summit, at the same elevation we were at. Activated by reflex, my eyes glanced at my watch, but I had no time to count, because instantly there was a terrific clap of thunder. Bill and I confessed afterwards we were both shaken and somewhat frightened by the noise. We estimated the bolt struck 150 to 200 yards away. It made us uneasy to realize the lightning passed by a lot of exposed rock in order to strike a point uncomfortably close to us. In the next hour three or four additional bolts struck rather close. When the storm subsided, we continued upward over rocks covered with two inches of hail to the summit, which we traversed by descending the Climber's Guide route 3.

Monday morning we climbed Mt. Huxley (13,177'), a very nice, moderate third class climb from our camp. We did not find a rope necessary for this climb. Incidentally, the brass cannister acting as a register box should be replaced. We spent the afternoon hiking out over Lamarck Col through our third successive day of thundershowers.



Mt. LYELL, A Different Approach, August 21-22 Dave Hammond

My climbing partner thought of a new approach to this rather inaccessible emblem peak. He had the view that the mountain was nearer June Lake, and this starting point would save driving time. To me, there seemed little in it, a 1000-foot or so more gain from the June Lake Highway, but the same distance as from the Section's usual starting point, Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite Park, and so he was driving this time

Starting from Silver Lake at the public campsite Saturday afternoon, we hiked by the curious cable car railway which takes the Southern California Edison Co. employees up to work on the dam at Lake Agnew. As we climbed past this lake, another shorter railroad could be seen going up to the next dam at Gem Lake. At the far end of Gem Lake we joined a dirt road used by the Edison Co. to reach their upper dam at Lake Waugh. We camped at the far end of this lake.

Next morning we soon joined the Muir Trail and hiked up over Donohue Pass (11,056'), then traversed toward Mt. Lyell. We had to drop about 500 feet to the uppermost of the small lakes at the head of Lyell Canyon, then up the broad sweep of the granite slopes to the moraine and on to the Lyell Glacier. We were glad we stopped to put our crampons on, as the glacier was beginning to show patches of ice which were slippery in the warm sun. Below the rocky peak we dumped our ice axes and crampons and took to the rocks. My partner took a Class 3+ route which I gave up on, but scouting around I found the correct ducked route up the nearby Class 2 - 3 ledges up to the easy, bouldered summit ridge. I claimed this emblem peak at around 12:30 p.m.

The route back was the same way out over Donohue Pass, reaching the campsite by about 4:30 p.m. The backpacking was arduous past the upper two lakes, and we (at least myself) did not reach the car till after dusk.

Yes, I do think the section takes the easier route after all, though the distances proved to be exactly the same to Donohue Pass by either route.

* * * *

MT. BAXTER, ANDRODECTES, DIAMOND, BAGO, TOM & SOUTH BASIN LOOP TRIP. . . . Cy kaicener
(July 21-28)

Thursday, July 21, at 4:30 p.m. saw Herb Sabin and myself at the Oak Creek roadhead (5500') ready for a peak and a pass per day. This signals a strenuous backpack over Baxter Pass (12,050') on a pretty good trail. We camped at about 9,000' four hours later, about 1,400 feet below Summit Meadow. Next morning we packed over Baxter Pass and set up camp at Baxter Lakes. In the afternoon I climbed recently-named Androectes (2,800' gain) which is a delightful, rocky climb. There I found Jerry Keating's clippings on the history of the peak and recent geographic developments; i.e., its recent naming addressed to Andy Smatko, whom I presume suggested the name of the peak after crickets found on the peak. The night at Baxter Lakes was spent doing calisthenics due to swarms of mosquitos. On Saturday we climbed Baxter (13,125') and backpacked to Rae Lakes (10,800') which must rank as one of the most beautiful areas in the Sierras. The so-called trail from Baxter Lakes to Rae Lakes is practically nonexistent and is marked by a series of ducks. A fair amount of ups and downs are encountered en route. Before reaching Rae Lakes, however, we joined with the John Muir Trail and people.

Next morning before sunrise we climbed Diamond Peak (13,126') and then packed over Glen Pass to Charlotte Lakes (10,370'). The ranger informed us that Bullfrog Lakes were out of bounds to camping and issued us a permit for Charlotte Lakes. Next morning found us on Bago, which afforded us a view of Fresno valley. A distinct gray-brown layer of smog hung over Fresno. We now packed over Kearsarge Pass to Onion Valley, and although it was a Monday, counted almost a hundred people that we passed on the trail. Thank goodness we weren't coming across on a Sunday. The loop-trip took us four days, included four peaks, three passes and involved a total elevation gain of about 20,000'. Herb remarked that in the Sierra just like the city you need a pass before you can accomplish anything.

A preacher gave us a ride (and a lecture) back to our cars from Onion Valley, whence we drove to the roadhead for the Horton Lakes north of Bishop. Next day we climbed Mt. Tom, which must rank as the toughest Class 1 peak I have come across. The night was spent at Horton Lakes where a bed with springs was found in a deserted cabin and much appreciated. We found out, however, that mice also appreciate this basin. Next day we set out to climb Basin Mountain and ended up climbing South Basin, which is 16 feet lower. A register was found on the peak, however, placed by Andy Smatko. We encountered a little class 3 and were rewarded with a magnificent view of Humphreys.

It was now Friday, and we packed out to meet the Sierra Singles at Lake Sabrina to relax and recuperate. In seven days we had accumulated a total of 30,000 feet elevation gain (13,000 feet with packs), six peaks and a few blisters.



LETTERS

(These letters, reprinted from the October LONA PRIETAN, are in response to other letters concerning that paper's article on the Memorial Day Mt. Ritter tragedy. Presumably these will be the last words on the subject. All of this has been published here in the hope that each of us might re-evaluate his gear and his capabilities before every climb. -- The Editor.)

Editor:

The letters of comment by Jim Lawless and Bruce Johnson about my Mt. Ritter article demonstrate that they both have read into the article statements I did not make, and because of this, they have made assumptions as to the cause of the deaths not supported by fact.

Mr. Laeless makes the assertion, "The statement that the party was adequately clothed is in error." If he will re-read the article he will find I only said, "the five climbers started out equipped as well as most climbing parties considering their objectives and the time of the year." Obviously, they were not adequately clothed for the conditions they encountered or the outcome of the climb would have been far different.

Mr. Johnson believes that I was not as critical of the party as I should have been. Why should I have been critical? The article was meant to serve an educational purpose -- not to find fault -- and except for one point, I could not fault their climb. After all, who of us is always prepared for every contingency? On the same day as the Ritter tragedy, I was on top of Mt. Kennedy -- in shorts -- experiencing the same storm. We were not prepared for every contingency, but we did have sufficient clothing in case of injury, and we could have made a very fast retreat in zero visibility had it been necessary.

Mr. Johnson also states, "Two points lead me to the conclusion that the climbing party was not 'strong,' but weak." I did not say or imply in the article that this was a "strong" climbing party. I did say, "Their experience was also typical of a well-led climbing party and all were very strong hikers." In my experience, a "typical" climbing party includes both skilled and unskilled climbers.

He also makes the judgment that the party was deficient in route-finding ability. Has Mr. Johnson ever found his way in a white-out and storm severe enough to blind? I for one would not like to be dependent upon his leadership if he has the temerity to believe he could find a route under the conditions that the Ritter climbers faced. In my judgment they were doing a good job in finding their way. They were off course in the storm, but they were not hopelessly lost. Also, I did not find it "astonishing that, after the tragedy, the survivor tramped westward rather than to Ediza Lake." In my judgment, under the conditions he faced, Mike is alive today because he traveled west.

It is easy to criticize those who get into trouble in the wilderness, and sometimes it may be justifiable, but of the many times I can remember aiding another climber or knapsacker, it has always been because of an accident or sickness and not because "Far too many people are dashing euphorically into the wilderness with no sense of what it may demand of them." Also, my unscientific memory of accidents in past years leads me to the opinion that traveling to and from the mountains is far more unsafe than the hike or climb itself.

--Gordon Peterson--

Editor:

The Memorial Day tragedy on Mt. Ritter is attributed by Bruce Johnson to "the current backpacking and mountaineering craze triggered by the ecology movement." He also criticizes the "route-finding ability" of the climbing party because they did not descent to Lake Ediza from the Ritter-Banner notch.

Neither of these points appears valid. Route-finding ability can be greatly diminished in a severe storm; hikers have frozen to death in the summer on Mt. Washington, New Hampshire, on a route that is almost as difficult as the average trail on Mt. Tamalpais. Farmers on the Canadian prairies have died of exposure between the house and barn during

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blizzards. The descent to Ejiza from the notch is much steeper than the slope in the opposite direction, and it is likely that a beleaguered party would follow an easier descent.

There is no indication that mountain-climbers are becoming more careless as a result of the "ecology movement." It is true that there are far more people climbing mountains. The statistics (Accidnets in North American Mountaineering American Alpine Club, 1971) for the past 20 years show an increase in accidents which is considerably less than one would expect in view of the great increase in mountaineering, especially in high-angle climbing. Proper training and safety precautions should be given continued emphasis, of course, as recommended by Bruce Johnson.

As a matter of fact, the first climber to get into trouble on the ascent of Mt. Ritter was John Muir, in 1872, who was scarcely there as a result of the "current backpacking craze." Incidentally, John Muir used the same route as described by Johnson.

--Tom Jukes--

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