

The Sierra



ECHO

VOLUME 16

DECEMBER

1972

NO 9



COVER PHOTO

This month's cover shot is of the north face of Peak 12,640'+ taken by Tom Ross on a trip into the Bear Creek Spire area. See story on page 9.

1972 SIERRA PEAKS SECTION BANQUET

As usual the SPS banquet was an instant success. During the cocktail hour everyone had a chance to see old friends as soon as they managed to edge around the large group of people clustered near the front door. Evidently this area is considered to be the summit of the room. The dinner was excellent and our afterdinner Host/Past Chairman, HORACE ORY, paid proper respects to the efforts of the outgoing management and committee members. Also he mentioned in passing that he is going to lead Four Gables again (and again).

As a clamour went up for door prizes, a hasty search was made for an honest citizen to draw the winning numbers. Several volunteers were immediately discounted and the lucky job fell to JON PETITJEAN, who did an excellent job. FRED HOEPTNER won a Primus stove from "The Mountain Store", FRAN SMITH won a Forester summit pack from "Gizmos", GEORGE TOBY won a book called "Mines of the Eastern Sierra" from La Siesta Press, GORDON MAC LEOD won a Standard Camp cook set from "Sports & Trails", ALICE RAMIREZ won a Tourist cook set from "Dan's Skiing & Mountaineering", LINDA PARKER won a Cannondale summit pack from "West Ridge Mountaineering", and last but not least BETH HENRY won a 16" x 20" color enlargement by Neko Colevin from her favorite slide with the promise she take advantage of the offer. She promised.

With the more materialistic aspects out of the way, Horace proceeded to introduce our new Chairman for 1973, PAUL LIPSOHN, who proceeded to award Horace the Past Chairman's Award. Paul, who is an excellent speaker, had a few bad moments trying to chase down a patch which had been presented to him. He was forced to remain at the speaker's table however, and announce the new management committee as the patch passed steadily on from hand to hand.

Our new committee is as follows: PAUL LIPSOHN, Chairman; ART DE GOEDE, Vice-Chairman; RON JONES, Treasurer; DIANA DEE, Secretary; and AL FOWLER, Alternate Officer - so we are off to a fine start for 1973.

The room was darkened and the feature of the evening "The Climb of Mt St Elias (in Alaska) was presented by both BARBARA LILLEY and BILL FELDMAN. In case you didn't know, Mt St Elias at 18,008 feet is the 4th highest mountain in North America, preceded only by McKinley, Logan, and Orizaba. It is always interesting to see the preparations for the trip and the method of packaging for air drops. The trip was a facinating adventure for those of us not able to be there in person. Thank you Barbara and Bill for the fine show.

Thanks are also in order for last year's Management Committee who did such a great job - and finally thanks to CAROL MILLER, Our Banquet Chairman, who worked so hard to make the banquet the success it was.

THE SIERRA ECHO is published ten times a year by the Sierra Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. EDITOR - Betty Dessert, 2231 Gladys, Rosemead, Calif 91770. MAILING - Guyneth White, 20554 Quedo Drive, Woodland Hills, Calif 91364. SUBSCRIPTIONS - \$2 per year. Subscription to the ECHO is a requirement for active membership in the SPS. Send remittance to: Ron Jones - Treasurer, 3847 Daguerre Ave, Woodland Hills, Calif 91364. COPY DEADLINE - First of every month.

CALENDAR

SPS 1973 SPRING SCHEDULE

Mar 3 Ice Axe Practice, Mt Baldy - Diana Dee, Jerry Keating, Horace Ory

Mar 11 Ice Axe Practice, Mt Baldy - Ron Jones, Horace Ory, Norm Rohn

Apr 7-8 Rock Climbing Practice, Joshua Tree - Al Fowler, Dan Eaton

Apr 14-15 North Maggie Mtn, Moses Mtn - Ron Jones, Norm Rohn

May 12-13 Mt Barnard, Trojan Peak - Diana Dee, Dave Gladstone

May 19-20 Mt Langley - Ron Jones, Larry Goetz

May 19-20 Black Mtn, Diamond Peak - Roy & Barbara Magnuson

May 19-20 Temple Crag, Mt Gayley - Doug Mantle, Mark Goebel

May 26-27 University Peak, Independence Peak - Horace Ory, Paul Kellow

May 26-28 Mt Williamson - Howard Stephens, George Toby, Tom Cardina

June 2-3 Four Gables - Paul Kluth, Horace Ory

June 2-3 Mt Silliman - Dick Ramirez, Jim Sinnett

June 2-3 Mt Russell, Mt Carrilon, Tunnabora Peak - Diana Dee, R J Secor

June 9-10 Olancho Peak - John Robinson, Jim Jenkins

June 9-10 Mt McAdie - Gordon MacLeod, Bill Hunt

June 9-10 Colosseum Mtn, Mt Perkins, Mt Wynne, Mt Pinchot - Dennis Lantz,
Diana Dee, Al Campbell

June 16-17 Mt Tyndall - Paul Lipsohn, George Hubbard

June 16-17 Sirretta Peak, Taylor Dome - Art de Goede, Gene Mauk

June 23-24 Half Dome, Clouds Rest - Dick Ramirez, Jim Sinnett

June 23-24 Three Sisters, Women's Backpack - Diana Dee

June 23-24 Mt Mendel - Gordon MacLeod, Harvey Hickman

June 23-25 Kern Peak, Muah Mtn, Trail Peak - Jim Jenkins, John Robinson

June 30-July 1 Cirque Peak - Jerry & Nancy Keating

June 30-July 2 Mt Brewer, N Guard, S Guard - Diana Dee, Dennis Lantz

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Another year has passed, with its bounty of joys and burden of sorrows. Let's look first at the face of tragedy. We lost two of our finest members, Wally Henry and Bob Herlihy, in mountaineering accidents, and Mary Riseley was seriously injured. None of these accidents was on an SPS trip, but any could have been, so there is little triumph in keeping our safety record intact. Beyond that, we have had some near misses on scheduled trips - members have even taken solo falls into the same berg-schrand on successive days - and survived, owing more to luck than skill. The SPS has perhaps the most vigorous safety program of any Section, but there is still too much reliance on unreliable luck. With our rapidly growing membership, the message is clear: Still more emphasis is needed on safety, and everyone must help.

For the first time this year, the SPS operated under a system of reservations and various outing impact rules. These involved some minor nuisances, but generally the consensus seems to be that the trips have been more enjoyable, and there should be continued improvement with more experience. With limited numbers on trips, and more members, the schedule seems to grow richer with each edition. There are more trips available than time to enjoy them. Trips are commonplace now that would have been thought audacious just a few years ago (a worrisome thought: maybe they are too audacious). It is plain that the future will require still more adaptation, but the SPS is good at that.

This year has been an enjoyable one for me, and the SPS has contributed a lot to that. The SPS is a rare organization, in which familiarity breeds appreciation. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as Chairman, and to work with a Management Committee that has been both capable and pleasant. Our committee chairmen deserve special gratitude, because they do most of the work, and especially the Schedule Chairman, John Robinson, and the Echo Editor, Betty Dessert. But the one with least recognition, who deserves the most, is our Echo Mailer, Guyneth White. Others have pitched in to help us out of trouble. In particular, Gordon MacLeod rounded out our schedule in time to save the deadline day. That's another characteristic of the SPS - old-timers have always been a solid source of strength. These all helped to make the year enjoyable.

--Horace Ory

ECHOS FROM THE PAST Ten Years Ago in the SPS by Ron Jones

The 1962 SPS Banquet was held at Rudi's Italian Restaurant to officially bring to a close the Section's activities for the year. The program was given by Leigh Ortenberger who showed his slides of climbing in the Himalayas with the Hillary expedition of 1961. The new 1963 Management Committee were introduced: Ted Maier, Chairman; Barbara Lilley, Vice-Chairman; Dave Evans, Secretary; Bud Bingham, Treasurer; and Tom Amneus, Alternate.

The 1962 season had 22 scheduled trips with a turnout of 442 climbers for an average of just over 20 participants per trip. The most popular trip was San Joaquin Peak with 39 participants, followed by 33 on Agassiz-Goode and 31 on both Matterhorn and Williamson. The smallest turnout was 8 climbers on a trip over Taboose Pass - 6 persons bagged Arrow and 2 got Ruskin.

An early 1963 season climb was made on January 27 of Morris Peak. Three groups of SPSers totaling 24 persons converged on this peak northeast of Walker Pass from 1-Indian Wells Canyon, 2-Walker's Well, 3-Walker Pass. There is a scenically interesting approach to the peak from Walker's Well through a beautiful forest of Joshua trees. A winter climb of this hill has not been scheduled since.

ASCENTS

SPS ROCK CLIMB, November 11-12 Dennis Lantz

SPS Rock Climbs at Joshua Tree are always such a social and technical success that we all look forward to them, right? So naturally I had a make-up class session set for the Saturday morning of the climb. (The only other Saturday class of the year was just placed in the middle of the January SPS Rock Climb.) So Saturday after class we loaded ropes and children in the VW bus and rolled east. It's a great excuse to stop at Griswolds Smorgasborg in Redlands - and with my tribe, they can't raise the price high enough on weekends for the restaurant to come out ahead.

As we pulled into Site #1 at Sheep Pass Group Campground, all we found were wet tire tracks and a windblown reservation slip on the marker post. The headlights showed "Al Fowler" on the paper, but no cars, no people anywhere. In the bus, we unfolded all the clever German hinges and trick slings which turn a car into a bedroom and were soon asleep. If you were wakeful, you could feel the wind gusts rocking the bus gently until near morning.

In a lazy late dawn, (why else do you think we schedule rock climbs later?) we twisted all the Teutonic gadgets in the bus back to the "dining room-kitchen" position and started breakfast. Shortly an official ranger pick-up truck appeared and Smokey the Bear wandered over. "You're in a group campground," he announced somberly, looking skeptically at 5 people in a VW bus. I explained that we were the group and that all the others had apparently been chased out by the cold wind and wet the previous day. "Sure was cold, windy, and wet yesterday," he echoed mournfully. We finally dropped enough SPS names and rock climb terms for Smokey to decide we were legitimate. As he drove away, three cars motored up looking for the SPS group, thereby forming one.

We had used Sheep Pass as a BMTC rock climb site in 1971, so the areas were well scouted and we soon had anchors set, ropes strung and climbers scattered over the rock. There were some good beginner pitches, reasonable faces, neat vertical rappel walls and a great chimney crack. Everyone was smiling after the climbs, so it must have been a success.

It may not be fair to come along and take over a weekend climb on a Sunday morning, just because everyone got snowed and blowed off the rock on Saturday. Better luck for the next one, Al. You'll be pleased to know that we raised a glass to the success of future climbs over dinner at the San Gorgonio Inn. That's the neat thing about SPS trips outside of the Sierra - the food is better, and you don't have to carry the wine so far.

PRIVATE CLIMBS

MT TAMALPIAS (25,240), May 14, 1972 Dick May

I remember what seems like so long ago when I lived down in LA and used to journey into the Eastern Sierra every weekend with the SPS. We would climb the rugged peaks summer and winter, good weather or bad, and, yes, on the list or not. On a few of these trips we would run across displaced individuals from San Francisco and the Bay Region and they would marvel at the ruggedness of the Eastern Sierra. I would ask what they thought of my rugged range, for I was proud of it also and nearly without exception they would bow down and pay homage, sometimes kissing my feet, but more often just chanting something to the effect that they only wished that their Western side had half the glory of my Eastern.

Of course this made me proud but for some reason that for a long time remained unclear to me I was not able to obtain the 100% satisfaction that one requires when he selfishly gloats over

MT TAMALPIAS continued

something he has that another has not. It was as if they had something too, and they weren't telling me about it. Then slowly over the months and even years it became apparent to me. It was Mt Tamalpias. They had it and they knew it. I had heard it mentioned before but always thought that it was some vicious peak far away hidden in some obscure part of Tibet, but when I realized that I only heard its name mentioned around the campfire talks by San Franciscans, I began to wonder.

Oh! I knew fully well the treachery and dangers of Tam, though I must admit not in detail, but rather by the hints I was quick to pick up when others talked of it. Someone would ask of the San Franciscans "Have you climbed Mt Tam?" (They always said Mt Tam, no doubt too afraid to utter the full name.) The reply might be "Yes, and we bivouaced on the summit" or "No, but after a few more Sierra peaks for conditioning I'm going to give it a try". One even said, "I've been trying for weeks but haven't been able to find room in the parking lot". I knew this must be the latest mountaineering jargon concerning avalanche hazards and bivouac sites. All of the people making these replies did so with a smile or even a laugh but I knew what hardships and hazards they must have really gone through. Smothered by those smiles and uncontrolled laughter must be the grimaced and taut faces that have seen it all and experienced it too - on Mt Tam.

This I knew but exactly where the peak was I didn't until... Until I was looking over a map of the Bay Area and vicinity one day last year to see how I was going to get to the lowly western Sierra with all of the other lowly San Franciscans once I moved up there. By chance alone my eye drifted northward on the map, as it often does, and landed upon - Mt Tamalpias. Of course I was shocked. When I recovered however, I looked again and found that my eye had not deceived me. Mt Tam was there in my own backyard to be. Immediately I knew I must climb it, and so slowly the expedition evolved.

I moved to Hayward, in the Bay Area, later that year and knew that I would quickly have to start preparing for the climb. Reconnaissance, learning the local weather conditions, the usual mountain of logistics, choosing the right climbing team, and just general psyching of the peak would all take time.

Almost before I knew it winter had come and gone, and I hadn't done a thing. I had made the mistake that has to be considered the most serious threat to expeditions of this caliber - I forgot about it. So I had to work fast while there was still time. The monsoon had ended weeks ago and soon the climbing season would be over. The pressure was on and I was getting nowhere. I could see "The Mountain" from a nearby hill which only made matters worse. There it was - so close - and yet so far away. The snow plume cast from its summit almost looked like fog. I took this as a subtle warning not to discount the seriousness of my plans.

But what plans? I was still getting nowhere. Didn't even have a climbing partner, and I thought not the slightest chance of finding one. Then completely without warning and almost out of the blue all of the problems were solved. By sheer luck I discovered that a girl in my bird watching class at Cal State was a mountaineer. Not any ordinary mountaineer either. She had been on Mt Tam before. I knew this would prove to be invaluable.

Betty (her name was Betty) had grown up in the Bay Area. She knew the local languages and was familiar with the highways. Everything was working out perfectly. Immediately we got together to make plans. Food- she would provide sandwiches and peaches, Documentation- we would take our cameras, Specialized Equipment- Field Guide to the Western Birds and binoculars, Transportation- my car, Communication- we would talk. It was all going so well, yes, almost too well. Then the blow hit. Examining the map our eyes fell upon the elevation of the peak - 25,240'. We were stunned. I knew it was high but nearly 8000 meters! And we would be without oxygen! Betty assured me that the map was correct though. Of course I wanted to abandon the climb. I was already well aware of its other dangers. Route finding, the fog, troll eggs, crepuscular chill factors lurking around corners, and of course, the parking lot. But at altitude these could prove insurmountable. But it was too late in the game to chuck it all now and the following Sunday morning we found ourselves in a state of bewilderment, unable to grasp the gravity of the situation in all the rush, heading for the peak.

MT TAMALPIAS continued

The approach presented only minor difficulties not worth mentioning here but soon we found ourselves driving around in circles at the eastern base of The Mountain - lost in a tract of houses! We penetrated this barrier in good shape though, but within minutes were stopped at a road block. A young man came out bearing a State Park uniform demanding money for us to drive past. Unwilling to push the already soaring cost of the expedition any higher we parked here and continued on foot, carrying our loads on our backs!

Right away things began to get tough. The road ascended a hill. Gritting teeth and clenching fists we ascended this one and many more too in the next three miles. It was there, at a park full of picnickers and fishermen, that the pavement ran out and we were forced to take a dirt fire trail. Right off the bat it ascended another hill which we took in stride for we had become accustomed to such things by now, but the road went right down the other side, losing all of that hard won elevation. This was hard on morale, but we could see the peak now and pushed on.

Soon we were passing one, then two, then whole clutches of troll eggs. We actually had to tiptoe amongst them at times. To the untrained eye, troll eggs look like rocks from 2' to 6 inches and even 10 inches in diameter but we knew better than to make that mistake. Of course we knew also not to touch them lest we be bitten risking the possibility of disease and death. Accidently I kicked one but as it turned out it must have been unaffected for I suffered no ill effects.

Pushing on we encountered endless curves in the fire road forcing us to be constantly on the alert, lest we walk over the edge into the abyss. Up, up, up, the brutal path relentlessly went, at times only 10 feet wide which increased the hazard of enscrapement by the Growth along the sides of the road, at times looming over it and even forming a roof in the form of intermingling tree branches. These pitches would be particularly nerve racking when they occurred right in a curve of the road for then, as well as not being able to see to either side or up, you couldn't see ahead or behind either. Only the ground - that unforgiving ground - and there troll eggs lurked.

On and on we went. It seemed like days but of course was only hours. We paused briefly at noon for grapefruit and cookies, constantly fighting off the urge to sleep which was overwhelming at this altitude. Roused out of listlessness by some passing climbers, we were shocked to see how close the coming Darkness was. We knew now that the moment of truth had come. Shall we go on, risking bivouacing in the Parking Lot and who knows what else, or turn back in defeat like so many others surely have, and have our names forever recorded in the Black Book of Mountaineering, Ascent to Failure - never! As true mountaineers we would rather die than be Black Booked. On we must go! To the summit! The peak at all costs! Up, up, and away, for it is there and, yes, Victory will be Ours!!

Quick, up the last hundred yards of road. Don't trip over the cable and fall on the asphalt. Jump out of the way, here comes a car. Duck, a Crespuscular Chill Factor just ran through those bushes and is heading our way. Oh no! The Parking Lot. Don't get run over or trampled. Avoid the mob at the catering truck. Look, there it is, the summit only 100 yards away. Run up the rocks. Stand on the stone wall surrounding the lookout tower. We made it. The highest pinnacle. Hurrah!

See the funny little houses down below. Cars like ants on tiny paths. And the millions of people all around, invisible to our eyes.

RED & WHITE MOUNTAIN, July 8-9 John Ripley, John Issac

The Climber's Guide is not very helpful to those wanting to climb Red & White Mtn. So, we thought SPS members might be interested in the route we took from McGee Creek this summer. From our camp at Big McGee Lake, we went up the trail to Little McGee Lake. Leaving the trail, we crossed the creek at the lake outflow and followed a rounded ridge southwest to the Sierra crest at Peak 12,320'+ (0.4 mile north of Red & White). We proceeded south from that

RED & WHITE MTN continued

peak, following the crest or its western slopes, until we reached the prominent saddle northeast of Red & White. This saddle separates Red & White from the prominent point seen on the map just west of the "W" in the peak's name. The route is Class 1-2 to the saddle. We crossed the saddle and ascended chutes on the southeast side of the crest to the top. The chutes are on the northeast part of the upper southeast face and are Class 3 with not too much exposure.

This route is probably similar to that followed by Clyde in 1928 and listed as Route 3. It is recommended because it offers a way to the summit that is relatively free of the loose rock and scree that characterizes this steep metamorphic peak. On the descent, we went several hundred feet down the southeast face (Route 4) but found it so covered with loose rock that we backtracked to the ascent route.

PEAK 12,640'+, "PEPPERMINT PEAK", August 19-20 Andy Smatko

On the week end of August 19-20, Barbara Lilley, Bill Schuler, Tom Ross and I based our operations at the Treasure Lakes at the foot of Mt Dade.

Saturday - after backpacking to a select campsite there, the four of us, having both the yen and the time, ascended Peak 12,975', 0.5 northeast of Mt Abbot. We had intended to climb it via the southwest ridge but Barbara informed us that Harvey Hickman and she were turned back for lack of time due to good 4th class difficulty, a couple of years ago. Not liking the looks of the ridge either, we four dropped down 200 feet north over the saddle southwest of the peak and contoured along the northwest base and climbed it via easy Class 3 rocks of the northwest face and north ridge. After climbing this peak Bill and I climbed Mt Abbot.

On the following day, after a preliminary warm up from an ascent of Peak 12,866' up the northwest slopes, we descended to the pass between this peak and Bear Creek Spire. All the while we kept looking at Peak 12,640'+, 0.7 miles ESE of Bear Creek Spire, trying to decide which of the two spires was the high point. The more pressing question though, was trying to find a route up the peak (see cover photo). We decided to try the pass between the peak and Bear Creek Spire. Even this looked formidable but except for about 50 feet of exposed high 3rd class, the route gained us the eastern end of the pass - Peppermint Pass. A large chockstone in a narrow chute and some vertical 3rd class presented the main difficulty, and for safety, we used the rope. We now traversed in an ascending fashion on the south side, across steep ribs and gullies to the more eastern pinnacle which we had decided was the high point. The climbing varied from Class 2 to moderate 3. On attaining the summit, we searched for evidence of previous visitation and the consensus was that all the rocks were definitely undisturbed and "naturelle". We had a first ascent and named the peak "Peppermint Peak" due to the characteristic banded appearance of both the peak and the pass. We built a cairn and left a register. The view of Bear Creek Spire from Peppermint Peak was awesome and might appear on the cover of a future Echo. It is surprising that such a spectacular peak had never been ascended. The south wall of Peppermint Peak below our ascent route fell away in precipices, while the ridge further to the east appeared to be Class 4. The north face (see cover photo) looked at least Class 4 via the easiest route but perhaps a future venturesome party might try it and render a more accurate opinion.

There are any number of peaks, usually less readily accessible than Peppermint Peak, that could provide first ascents to those interested persons who would scan the range from various prominent Sierra summits and reap the pleasure of a first ascent, such as we enjoyed in our escalade up this peak.

GARDINER BASIN AND ENVIRONS, September 9-17 Bill Schuler

Last year, from the summit of Mt Clarence King, I looked down into the beautiful Gardiner Basin to the west and southwest, and at this moment resolved someday to tramp in its pristine floor. This opportunity came during a nine day holiday in September. The company of Tom Ross and Andy Smatko provided able mountaineers, and perfect companionship.

GARDINER BASIN continued

Our trip began under the weight of fifty pound-plus packs at Onion Valley roadhead. Our goal was the first water and wood north of Gardiner Pass; however, a not too early start, the heavy packs, threatening weather, indistinct sections of trail, and too many rest stops enabled us to justify a decision to camp at the trail-stream crossing just southeast of Gardiner Pass. Alas, the map (and a low snow year) crossed us up, for the anticipated year-round stream was totally absent, or at least way underground. In resignation, we groaned our way up to the Pass where darkness and low clouds overtook us. Lacking moonlight we broke out our flashlights and were able to follow the trail to the first stream, where we camped for the night and left a cache.

In the morning, after a leisurely breakfast, we backpacked along the unmaintained, but distinct trail to about 10,400 feet on the northern tributary of Gardiner Creek, spying enroute a curious Pine Marten and a magnificent Mountain Coyote. We set up our camp and then climbed Peak 11,691 via the curving west ridge - Class 2. There was a cairn, but no register on its flat summit. We returned by way of the eastern saddle and the streams to the north in plenty of daylight.

Our sights for this, the third day, were several peaks along the west ridge of Mt Clarence King. First we ascended Peak 11,870 by a steep Class 2-3 chute on its south face and thence up its east ridge to the virgin summit. We left a cairn and register, dubbing it West King Peak. We elected not to follow the ridge line, as it was a minimum fourth class traverse. Dropping down onto the south face again, we picked our way across to a chute that gave access to the ridge near Peak 11,760+. Scrambling to the top, we searched in vain for signs of humanity on this table-like peak. Descending to the northwest from "Mesa Mountain" we were amazed to find a large cairn at the saddle, and even more surprised to find well over twenty names signed into the register, among them being the Three Corner Round from Ohio and Carl Heller and his Occasional Peaks Gang. This pass has an easy Class 2 ducked route from Gardiner Basin and descends down a stream to Woods Creek to the north. The pass is named after its discoverer, Mr Phil Moulthrop, who first crossed it in 1940.

We continued on to climb Peak 11,840+, a short distance to the northwest, finding absolutely nothing on top except an eagle soaring overhead. We called this summit Moulthrop Peak and after positioning the usual cairn and register, we retraced our steps to the pass. The north faces of these three peaks are impressively sheer, and the view of Clarence King's Bow-tie wall was staggering. We dropped down to the north for about 600-700 feet, angled northwest under a concave precipice, and boulder-hopped amid Pimus Albacaulus to the heights of Garwood Peak 11,866. We were delighted to claim a first ascent of this isolated pyramid. We had one more objective for the day, namely Peak 11,360+, 0.7 miles southwest of our position. We decided it would be best to drop down directly to the west to the outlet of the highest lake in the basin below us. Like our ascent route, it was Class 2 broken by a sixty-foot band of cliffs that was easy 3rd class. We plodded up to a saddle, knowing it was our last uphill of the day, culminating in a pleasant walk along the ridge. Hah! The route along the ridge turned out to be a devious and exposed Class 3-4, consuming much time and forcing us over numerous gendarmes that defied all attempts to bypass them. Nevertheless, the summit was attained at length, rewarding us with another first. We had surmounted five peaks and compiled a perfect record of five first ascents - unbelievable! Leaving the overhang high point, we sped down the Class 2 southeast slopes, arriving in camp amid a glorious display of alpenglow. We were engulfed by the soft orange and rose tints, a perfect ending to a long, satisfying day.

Our next day's objective was Mt Gardiner and the two peaks southeast of it. Our route through Gardiner Basin brought to fruition my ambition to amble along its lovely valley floor. Gardiner's northeast ridge - or rather the shallow chute and slope south of this ridge made an easy Class 2 route approach to the southeast ridge line. Tom chose to photograph the area, while Andy and I traversed the enjoyable Class 3 knife edge to the top of Mt Gardiner. This was Andy's second ascent of the peak, this time by a different route. We three then ridge-hopped to Peak 12,720+, which had a cairn and register. It was named Mt Adlai Stevenson, the day after his death. Andy had previously gone over this peak on his first climb of Mt Gardiner. We continued on along the ridge to the very striking Peak 12,560+. In the register, the name Overlook Needle was suggested, and I agree that it is an apt name. We had intended to drop into Gardiner

GARDINER BASIN continued

Basin via a chute immediately northwest of this summit and proceeded to start down. Within about 100 feet, we became aware of the really dangerous character of this route. We could not proceed along the bed of the chute as it was black ice with a thin covering of dirt and loosely imbedded crud. We tried hugging the precipitous rocks on the west side, but found them friable and held by insecure friction. We carefully re-ascended to the pass on the west wall itself, wondering what, if anything, was holding it together. A slip here would have plunged us all pellmell down the steep slope for at least 800 feet. The fall would probably inflict serious injury and the resultant rockslide would be disastrous. This definitely is not the way to descend from Overlook Needle. Instead we chose the rocks on the right (east) wall of the chute, and were able to work our way down to safer ground and the valley below. We returned to camp in darkness, having goofed off too many hours during the day. A thin sliver of moon helped us for a while.

It was time to leave this most pleasant, remote basin and accordingly we backpacked down and then up the south fork to our first day's camp and our cache. Having arrived early, we decided to climb, if possible, Peak 12,320+, 0.35 northwest of Mt Gardiner. From the summit of Gardiner yesterday, we could see no easy way to the top. On the southeast ridge, just below the summit is a grotesque, deformed, trigger-like gendarme about 100+ feet in height, the peak itself looked forbidding as we approached, but as we got our hands on it, it turned out to be only good Class 3 for the upper 350 feet. And lo, we claimed another first ascent. We named the peak (christened with Wylers) Trigger Peak and voted it to be our best climb of the trip. We descended westward along the ridge and climbed Peak 11,600+, amid room-sized rocks, Class 3. We had hopes of another first ascent, but found we were pre-empted by two weeks by another party who left a register and cairn. The drop back to camp was fast and uneventful.

On the following morning we ascended to Gardiner Pass with summit packs, climbed Peak 11,805 to the east, and found the same two names in the register as on Peak 11,600+ the day before. Again, two weeks too late. Undaunted, we continued on up the ridge toward Mt Gardiner and climbed Peak 12,400+, 0.35 miles southwest of Mt Gardiner. There was no evidence of previous ascent, so we built a cairn and left a register. The entire north wall of this ridge from the Pass to Gardiner's summit is sheer and overhanging throughout. Rock engineers could establish hundreds of routes all along this wall. We returned to the pass and climbed Peak 11,520+ just west of the pass and courageously titled our register Westguard Peak, and left it in the cairn that we found on top. We continued along the ridge climbing every summit along the way, detouring over to Glacier Monument and then back-tracking to Peak 11,320. None of these summits were previously climbed and registers were duly placed on all of them. We dropped down a chute just east of Peak 11,320 and into the basin about a half mile below our camp. All peaks climbed today were Class 2 with a few Class 3 summit monoliths.

Friday we retraced our route to Gardiner Pass, this time with packs, and dropping down to Charlotte Creek we set up camp on a tributary about a mile below Charlotte Lake. Repacking our summit packs we stormed up 1200 feet of scree to Bump 11,568 (unclimbed previously), then continued up another 1000 feet of looser scree to Peak 12,560+. We found a cairn and left a register and Tom, to do his thing with his Rollex. Andy and I traversed along the ridge to Glen Pass climbing every bump along the way, including a sharp, loose, black pinnacle - 12,080+ about 0.25 miles west of Glen Pass. We continued southeast below the cliffs of Peak 12,400+ and ascended a Class 3 chute to the summit of this peak - 0.3 miles southeast of Glen Pass. A Park Ranger had mistakenly claimed this to be Mt Rixford when he ascended it years before. We continued south by southwest along the ridge to Peak 12,160+. We found a cairn on the easy Class 4 summit block and a register at its base. It was named Bullfrog Peak. After dropping down the sandy southwest slopes to the trail, we dragged ourselves back to camp just at dark.

Saturday, while Andy and Tom climbed Peak 11,360+, 1.0 east by southeast of Mt Bago, I dropped down to Vidette Meadow and slogged my way up to West Vidette. On my return, I ran up Bump 10,789, 0.4 southwest of Bullfrog Lake only to find Andy and Tom's names there. They had found a cairn so other people climb bumps too. Picking up my pack, I went up to Kearsarge Lakes, where I rejoined Tom and Andy. They had set up camp at the largest Kearsarge

GARDINER BASIN continued

Lake, a most charming body of water. There we met Dave Wallace, who came in for the weekend to fish and incidentally, brought a stove for our use. He caught four delicious (after frying) trout for our gourmet palates.

Sunday, all four of us climbed the chute between Kearsarge Pinnacles 9 and 10; and while Andy and I zig-zagged our way up the Class 2 ledges of Pinnacle #9, Tom snapped and clicked, and Dave contemplated. We descended, and hauling Tom along, we went up Pinnacle #10, while Dave descended to fish. This was easy Class 3 and the highest of the Kearsarge Pinnacles, (in spite of the map). Tom elected to descend, while Andy and I climbed Pinnacle #11, a nice 5th class move, and Pinnacle #12, a dangerously loose 3rd class. Our descent was loose Class 2 rubble to one of the lower lakes, and then upstream to camp.

Shouldering our packs we went slowly up to Kearsarge Pass and then rapidly and uneventfully out to Onion Valley and the cars.

It appears that mid-September is an ideal time of the year for climbing and hiking in the Sierra. The weather is usually crisp and settled. Although the clouds looked threatening our first two days, it predictably cleared each night, enabling the scintillating stars to cheer us as we blinked a sleepy eye at them. The temperature gets close to freezing when the sun drops, but the days are sparkly clear and warm. In total agreement with Andy and Tom, I will try to schedule a week's trip each year in September as long as I am able to climb. And so we bring the curtain down on another great trip in a beautiful area.



HIGHEST PEAKS IN NORTH AMERICA (as of 9/67)

Barbara Lilley thought the following list of the 20 highest peaks in North America might be of interest to those who don't find the SPS List challenging enough. (Mt Whitney is 28th.)

Mt McKinley	20,320'	Mt Steele	16,440'
Mt Logan	19,850'	Mt Blackburn	16,390'
Orizaba	18,700'	Mt Sanford	16,237'
Mt St Elias	18,008'	Mt Wood	15,885'
Popocatepetl	17,887'	Mt Vancouver	15,700'
Mt Foraker	17,400'	Mt Slaggard	15,575'
Ixtaccihuatl	17,343'	Mt McCauley	15,475'
Mt Lucania	17,147'	Mt Fairweather	15,300'
King Peak	17,180'	Nevado de Toluca	15,016'
Mt Bona	16,500'	Mt Hubbard	14,950'

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