

The

Sierra



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The SPS has a reputation of being a Gung Ho group; dashing up and down peaks. This is a fact. We are not known for dragging our feet. I believe we have the best leaders and run the best mountaineering trips in the business. However our dashing image may at times discourage potential members from going on our trips and joining the section. In conversations with BMTC students and new people in general, their main concern is - can they keep up on SPS trips and enjoy going with us. They wonder if they belong in the SPS.

To stay vibrant and healthy, we need new faces in our section. Our Trip Leaders are our first line ambassadors of good will. So Leaders lets put our best foot forward and extend the hand of welcome. Begin with scheduled write ups and trip sheets that define the degree of difficulty and tell people what to expect. We are using the Chapter rating system, but it is not enough. "E" rated trips are more difficult and speak for themselves. However most of our trips are in the "M" category, and there is considerable latitude that requires further definition to help newcomers select a trip. Encourage car pooling. Ask for a second sase to provide a participant list to aid in car pooling. In the Sierras have empathy for people who don't move as fast as you do, especially newcomers. Know where your people are at all times. The leader can hardly be in control of a group if they are spread for miles over the Sierras. Move it when you need to but don't push it without reason. That is when blisters and accidents happen. We have a lot of talented leaders and just fine people in the SPS. We have a good image and a good safety record. Lets show newcomers we have heart as well as speed.

Followers also have a responsibility. Leaders expect people on SPS trips to be in good condition and move along smartly. Make an effort to keep up with the group. Call or write the leader well in advance to ascertain the trip is for you. The rear leader is there to help when needed. Don't hesitate to ask for help before little problems get bigger. Don't let hot spots become blisters and ruin your trip. Be ready on time. Leaders appreciate people that are packed and ready to go at the announced time from the roadhead or basecamp. Never lose sight that we go to the mountains to have fun and enjoy. Never let it be said that you have scaled a hundred peaks but have not taken time to really "see" the beauty of the Sierras.

Special Notice: With the anticipated heavy runoff this year, stream crossings will be more difficult and more hazardous. Leaders are alerted to take extra caution and carry a rope for safety on stream crossings.

GEORGE TOBY

Following is an item from the American Alpine Club Journal, Dec. 1977

LIBRARY COMMITTEE—Secretary Vaill reported that he had begun negotiations with Ruth Erb of Malibu, California regarding the donation of a 2500 to 3000 volume mountaineering library owned by her and her late husband, Arkel Erb, who was killed on Dunigiri last year. Committee Chairman Von Hennig telephoned his recommendation that the donation be accepted, and upon duly seconded motion, the Board unanimously authorized Secretary Vaill and Director R. Mendenhall, in consultation with Chairman Von Hennig, to work out the terms of the donation with Ruth Erb.

COVER PHOTO: Self portrait- arranged for by Chuck Stein- of the 24 who did the inspiring climb of Starr King on July 10, 1977. Leaders were: Bill Birnbaum, Chuck Stein, Gene Mauk.

WEATHERED WEBBING TESTS

Nylon webbing loops found on rocks are considered unsafe because of deterioration from sunlight and weather. Most climbers discard nylon runners and slings after several seasons just to be safe.

I recently tensile tested a nylon loop of one-inch webbing retrieved by Bill Gray from a desert peak after exactly 11 months exposure on sunny rock. Another virgin sling from the same batch of webbing was donated by Bill as a control specimen. The results indicated a strength loss of 17% between the test and control slings; 3800 lbs and 4600 lbs, respectfully. It would be interesting to test more webbing samples having documented exposure periods to determine how much and how quickly strength decreases. Webbing replacement intervals might be based on a time/exposure history instead of an arbitrary time limit.

I am willing to run tests on retrieved webbing if the exposure period is accurately known and especially if an unexposed sling of the same material is available for comparison tests. Climbers with valid samples can call me to make arrangements for testing - Bob Hartunian, (714) 962-4034.

SPS MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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January 1978

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This was to be a very short geology course as well as a climb of Iron, including a detour to the Granite Stairway. I'd had a course on "California Geology" at UCLA Extension from Bill Gustafson, and was going to share what little I'd learned about the Sierras with my fellow climbers.

When I discovered that the trail to Summit Meadow didn't go directly past the Postpile, I postponed the trip to those columns until Sunday afternoon, because since they face West, the sun would be better for photography then. Heading for Summit Meadow, we missed the trail going to the south of the hill NE of the meadow. The new trail, not even on my Forest Service map, goes to the north of that hill and meets the trail to Fern Lake just as that (marked) trail turns NW. This slight confusion caused me to misjudge where we were, so instead of dropping our packs at this trail junction or 1/2 mi. later at summit meadow, we were at "Granite Stairway Pass" before I realized we had packed too far.

Anyway, we ran up the hill to the south, anticipating finding a magnificent, unusual granite formation. Instead, we found a hill and nothing more. Where and what is the Granite Stairway??? (HELP, o knowledgeable reader! HELP, Bill Gustafson!!)

After that fiasco, we still had to backpack through the heat and mosquitos to Ashley Lake. I got lost on that leg of the trip only once.

The next day we climbed Iron via the glacier. The rock was rotten at the top of the chute. (Barbara Magnuson discovered a better way a few weeks later; talk to her if you're planning this climb.) I still hadn't given my geology talk, figuring that the people would rather do their own thing on the summit.

After our return to camp, one couple took so long to pack up that we never had time to have a formal lunch and have the geology talk. It started to rain soon after we started our hike out. To aggravate the situation, the segment of trail above the south end of Johnston Meadow has been regraded for horses and Sunday hikers, and is now about 3, not 1, miles long. By the time (4:00) we reached the Devil's Postpile turnoff, we felt like soaked rats with sore feet. And the sun was definitely not out. So no one objected when we headed directly for the cars.

Oh, well . . . You know what one earthquake said to the other . . . ? . . . ("It wasn't my fault!")

The time is here again when we all start trekking off to the high places in Calif. to do our week-end thing. All of us know the pleasures of sitting back in the seat of a car and sharing refreshments and gossip with our compatriots. There are those poor unfortunates, however, who have not had the pleasures of such camaraderie and even those who have not been subjugated to the loquaciousness of stalwart peak-baggers. This is especially true of the new crop of impressionable BMTC graduates.

How have we been so remiss to let this come about, you might ask, what can be done to assuage this untenable situation? Fear not! Our peerless leaders can come to save the day by encouraging participants to carpool to the trailhead. Even the location of the universal carpooling spot in Sylmar may be divulged in the trip sheets leaders send out (new BMTCers are somewhat ignorant of traditional carpooling places). The leader may even meet the participants at that spot to make sure that nobody drives to the mountains alone. Driving to the Sierras with cars which have room for more people is a needless waste of energy. We all have got to do our share to lessen our dependence upon imported oil.

Greg Vernon

July 9-10

Mt Starr King

Leaders: Chuck Stein
Gene Mauk, Bill Birnbaum

This climb actually began a few weeks prior to the scheduled dates with a planning meeting at Gene's. The trip objectives were to get all of the participants on top of Starr King for a leisurely lunch and to be back to the cars by 6 PM on Sunday. I brought my color slides of Walt Kabler's 1976 climb for familiarization of the rock and the two pitches. We decided on two parallel belays to the ledge for the lower pitch, and prussiking on a fixed rope for the upper pitch for the ascent and two parallel rappels on each pitch running concurrently for descending. Yup! four 150-165 foot 11mm-7/16 ropes and 150 feet or more of trailing lines for rope management - but we had 24 to help carry.

Another desire was to find a closer campsite than the usual Clark Fork/trail crossing location southeast of Starr King. This could save us over an hour of daylight on Sunday.

Twenty five of us met at the Mono Creek roadhead on the Glacier Point Road at 8:30 AM Sat, July 9. Most stayed in the Bridalvail campground because the ranger had kicked early trail head arrivals away from the roadhead the previous year. We started the downhill hike into beautiful Mono Meadow without realizing that we had to climb up to the road after our ascent on Sunday. We crossed a very low Illilouette Creek with no difficulty. This creek has caused problems in early July in wet years. After reaching the trail identified on the topo as "Mono Meadows Trail" (even though it leads to Nevada Falls) we cut back for about 3/4 of a mile crossing over a running creek headwatered on the west slope of Starr King and followed the trail west of the creek for a short distance. Our campsite was at the 6900 foot level on a flat area between the trail and the creek. We arrived in camp with plenty of time for a leisurely lunch before an afternoon rock climbing practice session.

The only good practice rock we found was up near the lower saddle of Starr King and served as a prelude to Sunday's climb. After a good practice session we returned to camp for dinner and campfire. Most of the entertainment was provided by Jim Maclay and Bill Birnbaum who played "can you top this" for as long as anyone would listen. Sometimes they even got some laughs. I think they must catalog their stories in a computer bank.

Reveille was at 5:45 and 24 of us started for the peak. The trip went exactly as planned. When we got our first look at the climb Bill said "It looks just like I thought it should from the photos". We set up at the upper saddle, Bill led, Gene followed and cleaned the route and I fed the climbers to the belay ropes at the saddle. After placing two good anchors on the ledge for the lower pitch belays, Bill climbed the upper pitch, secured the fixed rope and managed the upper pitch. Gene stayed on to handle the belayers. Steve Mauk dragged me up the lower belay and then headed for the top. I prussiked into the fixed rope and soon reached Bill at the top of the pitch. We climbed the remaining blocks reaching the summit about 11:10. All 24 on top in time for a leisurely lunch! Great views of all the Yosemite back country- Lyle, McClure, Clark, Half Dome, Yosemite Falls (dry), Conness, North, Cathedral, Unicorn, etc.etc., etc.

After a leisurely lunch, lots of picture taking and thumbing through a summit register dating back to the thirties, we headed down. With four rappel ropes in constant use (we all had harnesses, swamis, and rappel hardware) fast work was made of the descent. We reached camp by 3:00 and were on our way in half an hour. We found a deer trail paralleling the creek cutting a good mile off of the trail route, enabling us to meet our second objective- reaching the cars by 6:00.

It sure is great to have a trip go as planned. As far as we know, this is the largest single group to be on the top of Starr King together. The previous two large trips led by Walt Kabler (1976) and John Hardt (1965) had about 20 in the ascent party, but some were descending while others were still climbing.

Fourteen of the fifteen scheduled participants arrived at Agnew Meadow Campground, including Roland Pesante, who made a "hero" solo all-night drive after attending a school function with his daughter. The hike in to Lake Ediza has to be one of the prettier backpacks -- especially around the edge of Shadow Lake. Cameras were in good supply to capture the magnificent scenery.

The rain gods also were in evidence -- we had barely made camp when they grumbled and dumped wetness all over us. Dusk brought clear skies, and two stalwarts broke out their hibachi and charcoal and taunted we freeze-dried folks with the aroma of broiled steaks and French wines. Evening ended around a campfire, with liquid refreshments, harmonica music, songbooks and songs.

Morning dawned without a trace of the previous day's thunderheads, so we took off for our peaks. Up the glacier to the Ritter-Banner saddle, where we met two rather inexperienced climbers who continued to the Banner summit with us. We didn't tarry on top -- the weather gods saw to that. We've never seen clouds move in so fast before. A fast retreat, more rain, some hail and thunder. Again, a clear evening and a repeat of last night's campfire camaraderie.

The remaining day left the choice of Mt. Ritter or Mt. Davis, and Ritter won handily. Once again, we slogged up the glacier (snow cover was missing on part of it, and we had an interesting traverse or two across bare ice). Despite the absolutely cloud-free dawn, once more the rain gods began to move in as we approached the summit, and began to spit popcorn snow just as we arrived. Once more, we left in a hurry, and were treated to snow, sleet, hail, and drenching rain on the way back to camp.

The only thing not dampened was our spirits. All fourteen of us made both peaks with no mishaps greater than broken crampon straps, and we sang as we hiked back to the cars.

ROCK PRACTICE (Thor Pk.), Sept. 24-25 Diana Dee/Jerry Keating

North Fork of Lone Pine Creek provided a suitable setting for an early fall training trip that attracted 18 persons.

Use of the Ebersbacher ledges gave the party a taste of Class 3 going on the backpack, and Upper Boy Scout Lake (11,300') provided a truly High Sierra campsite.

After lunching in camp, 13 participants got in some intermittent Class 3 scrambling on the face NW of Thor Pk. (12,300') before going on to the summit.

On Sunday, Diana took 14 climbers to the cliffs only a few hundred yards immediately south of camp to work on short scrambles and rope techniques. Jerry, meanwhile, repeated Thor, taking three persons who had not done the peak Saturday.

From Upper Boy Scout Lake, Thor can be climbed Class 2 by first ascending the easy slope above the small lake at 11,600', then traversing eastward over two ribs for about 250 yards. This route avoids the cliffs immediately above the traversed area. It was upon first encountering the cliffs on Saturday that we found good Class 3 rock, prompting us to proceed directly upward for scrambling practice.

Sunday's return to the cars took only two hours, giving further support to this area for practice trips when the Whitney Portal road-head is not jammed.

ABBOT & MILLS - August 6-7, 1977.....

Meridee Muell & Dennis Lantz

Ten hardy souls made the long drive to the Rock Creek roadhead for the trip. It was an easy hike in -- up the Mono Pass trail to the Ruby Lake cutoff; thence over the well-defined use trail to Ruby Lake, and a boulder-hop to an unnamed lakelet just short of Mills Lake. (The unnamed lakelet has excellent camping spots, some trees, and a good supply of firewood. Much better than Mills Lake, where you have to bring your own freeze-dried flat spot!)

After setting up camp, one and all successfully climbed Mt. Mills. The third-class chockstone succumbed easily without a rope, and the rest of the climb was a long, loose slog up a steep sandy chute, a traverse through second-class rock to the summit plateau and the register. We placed a new register container and sort of slid back down the chute.

Mills isn't especially difficult, but the falling rock is quite dangerous. We put climbing helmets to good use and kept the group close together. Several of the helmets now have new dents due to aforementioned rocks. This peak is best for a small group.

One of our members, Larry Dennis, injured an ankle, but made the peak anyway. The hobble over talus back to camp was long and painful, and we were delighted to be greeted with a cheery fire and cold beer and hot supper and warm sleeping bags.

Seven of us left early the next morning for the assault on Abbot. The Dade-Abbot glacier and the main Abbot glacier are raw ice, as the snow covering has completely melted in the past two drought years. That left a crud chute to the left of the Abbot Glacier as our only reasonable third-class route. About a third of the way up, two of the climbers decided not to continue, so Meridee took them back to camp. The remaining four climbers signed out and successfully made the summit. (Congratulations to Don Croley, Don Sparks, Bill Higgins, and Rene Landeros!)

Happy ending #2: Since this was a "grudge" match with Abbot for Meridee, she, Larry Dennis, and Fran Smith went back the following weekend and climbed Abbot via the same route. It was Fran's "Emblem" peak for SPS Emblem status. The consensus: A rotten, high-third, low-fourth (in places) route, and we're all glad we climbed it so that we won't have to climb it again!

The Abbot register is 41 years old and full of long-time SPS-er names. We left it there for others to enjoy, and added a new tablet for new climbers, plus a note requesting that the older book be preserved there. And the summit view is marvelous.

Cohesiveness was not the keyword on this trip, an impression which will, no doubt, permeate your thoughts as this tale unfolds. Fourteen signed in at the roadhead and then we were off for Bishop Pass. In Dusy Basin we reconvened and split into two groups. Doug led seven others down to the Middle Fork of the King River and up Rambaud creek to camp at lake 10400'. Cuno took the other five and headed for Giraud. We reached the ridge at the notch east from the summit and had to drop down the south side as a high 4th class down climb on the ridge would not go. We reached the summit early pm but hastily left for Dusy Basin via the first chute west of the peak. We departed for camp at Grouse Meadows where Barbara R. was waiting.

During the night another drama was unfolding--- a tall, ominous figure put on his pack in the moonlight and walked stealthily through the night and as he approached camp in the early morning light he was revealed to be Carl Stude(alias--The Vulture).

We got it together and headed through the brush up Rambaud creek to camp with the others who could now be seen high on the ridge of Devil's Crag. We quickly regrouped and headed for Wheel. By the time we reached the summit the sky was threatening and we left hurriedly. When lightning struck we felt the electrical discharges and stayed off the ridge, empathizing with our cohorts on DC who could not get off theirs. We met them as they came off the Crag where they reported very close encounters with lightning---frightening!!!

The usual convivialities persisted at camp where the terrors of DC were recounted and, nodoubt, enhanced for the 'encouragement' of those of us who were to climb it the next day.

Doug's group set off for Wheel with Sam & Brian doing it via the southeast arete, and our groupie of ten 'bit the bullet' and went for DC. There were four spots where we belayed/rappelled. The tuff climbing is not too exposed and all the exposed stuff is not too tuff. Every step on the ridge is a caution-- the first step in the wrong direction is a BIGGIE! Our ten was the largest group to ever sign in and we were down in good time (Rich Gnagy, who missed the Wheel climb because he deliberately came one day late, even had plenty of time to climb Wheel that pm and return to camp with light to spare).

Next am five of us headed back down to MF of KR, set up tents and charged off to do Observation via Amphitheater Lake (very nice place) and then hassled our way to Shakespeare---just in case--- and to camp at dusk. Meanwhile Doug took his troop leasurly back to Dusy Basin.

Monday, Doug led his charges off to do a good number on Isoscles while we worked our way back to the cars where Barbara was waiting for Doug's group for her ride while, for our part, we four--Mauk & Mauk & Vernon & I unaxed our sore muscles in Keough Hot Springs and melted the weekend into oblivion!!

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