

The Sierra



ECHO

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FROM THE CHAIR

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Permit quotas and the trip leader's discretion necessarily limit the number of participants on SPS trips in the Sierras. Even so, over-subscribed trips sometimes are going only partly full because people are not showing up at the roadhead or they are cancelling too late for people on the waiting list to be notified. One person called me on a Thursday night before a weekend trip to say that he had signed up for 2 trips and had decided to go on the other one. Holding space on 2 trips is totally inconsiderate to other SPS members and unconscionable. The same can be said for not showing up without informing the leader. Most of the time cancellations can't be avoided, but if you do have to cancel, please notify the leaders as soon as possible so someone else can take your place. Don't forget that people on the waiting list need time to organize, pack and arrange car pools. When a trip quota does have unused spaces, leaders should make every effort to turn these back into the Forest Service so others will also have a chance to experience the wilderness.

Pat Holleman

SIERRA PEAKS SECTION
MEMBERSHIP REPORT
JUNE 15, 1982

New Members

Jeffery Koepke
Ernie Kuncel
Pat McGaughy
Richard Reynolds

New Emblem Holders

Gisela Kluwin #427
Tina Stough #428

Mountaineers List

Larry Machleder

OLANCHA PK., May 22-23, 1982

Jerry Keating and Walt Whisman

Some may feel that the weekend before the Memorial Day holiday is rather late to climb Olancha Pk. (12,123'), but a mild spring provided otherwise for 18 participants in a joint SPS-Backpacking outing that went from Sage Flat over Olancha Pass.

Weather and snow conditions were ideal, and all but one participant climbed the peak from camp situated where the Bear Trap Wildroute leaves the Pacific Crest Trail (10,130'). The camp was in a clearing surrounded by snow, but everyone had plenty of bare ground. Water flowed nearby in a seasonal stream.

The return to camp from the summit was enlivened Sunday by the appearance of Cuno Ranschau and Greg Vernon. They were making a one-day roundtrip of Olancha via the Falls Creek Wildroute. We wished them well, returned to our packs, took the Bear Trap Wildroute down to Summit Meadows and reached the cars at about 3 p.m.

COVER PHOTO: Snow and rock vary in shape and form but the objective of straining men is the same--to attain the heights. All this is well captured in hind-sight by Ron Webber.

Of Peaks and Bears

Planning to bag a dozen peaks prior to joining Campy's foray on the King/Kern Divide, I headed up the trail from Onion Valley to Robinson Lake. After climbing Independence peak, I dragged myself and a sixty pound pack (provisions for an 11 day sojourn without an ounce of freeze dried food) toward University "Pass". At the base of the near vertical scree chute I was loudly execrating the bright SPSeer who suggested the particular route (me). Afflicted with altitude sickness and fatigue, I retreated to lick my wounds. Back at Robinson Lake my ignoble defeat was witnessed by three SPSeers with whom on the following day I climbed University peak (via ~~east~~ east ridge). In the afterglow of the minor success, I revised my itinerary and traipsed over Kearsage Pass scaling the lofty summits of Gould and Bago along the way.

After a quiet night at a secluded campsite (a rare find) on Bubbs Creek, I was ready for East Vidette. Despite the multitude of ducks marking the east ridge route, I succeeded in exploring some challenging deadends. The summit register, originally placed in 1910, with the names of Norman Clyde and other mountaineering heavies was a pleasure to peruse. On the descent I maximized the destruction of encountered ducks. Continuing on to Center Basin (the original destination) I climbed Center peak. The summit register had a page devoted to a paw print of a canine named Homer. Center was Homer's sixth peak (he can join SPSeer?) and his master apparently had enough forethought to pack an ink pad to the summit.

After a night at Golden Bear Lake, I sauntered up Keith. At 13,970' Keith was dwarfed by Williamson looming up on the other side of Shepherd's Creek canyon. On the descent from Keith I encountered some newly arrived fauna of the fair sex and dallied some hours in conversation missing the opportunity to scale the inviting crags of Bradley. Descending from Center Basin to upper Bubbs Creek, I bedded down for the night at an overused campsite equipped with an iron frame spring bed.

At 5 a.m. I was awakened by a bear bashing away at the tree branch from which I hung my food. Oblivious to my imprecations and numerous tossed projectiles, the bear proceeded to break the branch and abscond with the food leaving only one box of Granola Bars behind. Rather than continue and starve in the wilderness, I sadly returned over Kearsage Pass to Onion Valley. Along the way I met a couple whose campsite was also raided the same night. In addition to their food, the bear confiscated their boots. Due to a bear with a boot fetish on the loose, hikers in the area are strongly advised to hang their boots along with the food for protection over night.

In conclusion, with the exception of Gould and Bago (class 1), all of the peaks climbed were trivial class 2. Keith and Center peaks will need new summit registers in the near future. In each summit register I found a recent Cuno signature followed by an irritating comment attesting to the fact that he had climbed a dozen other peaks on the same day. Cuno's boots require close inspection; they may be the pair of talaria recently reported lost by Hermes.

Igor M.

SUCCESS AND TRAGEDY ON MT. WILLIAMSON PRIVATE TRIP JULY 9-12, 1981

It would be hard to over-emphasize the personal significance of this trip to the writer, who after having sustained a fractured hip while climbing at Tahquitz Rock last summer, discovered that he could still get up the big Sierra peaks. The sweet success of attaining the summits of Tyndall and Williamson was, however, marred by the death on Mt. Williamson of a climber who was with another group camped at the same site as our party.

The Thursday-through-Sunday trip began with a hike from the Symmes Creek trailhead to a campsite at Lake 12002 just south of Shepherd pass. The much-deplored 6000-foot climb to the pass consumed most of the first day, with the writer clearing the pass at 6 pm, traveling solo. The following morning was enlivened by a solo climb of Mt. Tyndall via the NW ridge with a short 3rd class deviation onto the North slopes. Descent was by the large rib which splits the North side of the mountain. Round trip time was $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours, with much time consumed searching for a summit register which was never found (did someone drop it over the East face?). That same afternoon I was joined by 3 companions (all of whom had previously climbed Tyndall) with the objective of climbing Mt. Williamson on the morrow. We were informed somewhere around dinner time by four climbers camped adjacent to us that a fifth man in their party had failed to return after separating from them on a climb of Williamson that day, stating that he thought they were on the wrong route. Although everyone was apprehensive about this development, all entertained the standard hopeful notion that the missing man would stumble into camp during the evening. It was not to be. The following morning saw us out of the sack at 5 am; upon querying the other group, we found that the missing man had still not returned, and that they were descending immediately to alert search and rescue personnel. For our part, we agreed to maintain an active lookout for him during our approach to and climb of Williamson and departed camp at 6:15. No sign of the missing was observed, however, despite binocular searches of Williamson's West chutes plus very substantial "hello" calls by one well-voiced member of our group. Upon reaching the famed water stain below the proper climbing chute, one of our group stated he did not feel up to the climb and decided to return to camp. Fred Mickey, Ken Conger and I continued on to the summit, which we reached at 11:45. Although we carried a rope, all free-climbed the 3rd class cleft at the top of the chute both up and down with no problems. A 45-minute stay on top was followed by a descent of the chute and a very wearying return to camp over the seemingly unending talus slopes in the Tyndall-Williamson "bowl". During this return, at about 2:30, a search-and-rescue helicopter appeared and made several passes over the bowl, finally landing a search party at the foot of Williamson. Since we had no information of value to the searchers, we made no signals to the copter, and continued on to camp, which we reached at 5 pm. The next day, Sunday, we departed camp at 8:15, noting further helicopter operations in the area as we left the pass. A gentle breeze in Shepherd and Symmes canyons made the dreaded hike out to the cars not too unpleasant, followed by an uneventful ride home. The next day, we heard that the missing climber had been found dead at about 11 am Sunday.

After absorbing this news, some soul-searching conversations took place among our group, centered on whether we had done the right thing in continuing our climb when we could have begun a search that morning, about 6-8 hours ahead of the S & R people. The S & R leader was contacted,

and he stated that such a search by us would not have altered the outcome, since hypothermia was not a factor and the climber had been killed instantly in a long fall in the chute adjacent to the one we climbed. He further stated that technical climbing had been required to recover the body. Nevertheless, we all feel that this incident has taught us some significant lessons, and that we will be much better prepared to react in the event of a similar future occurrence. Although several lessons were learned, we feel the primary one is that solo climbing by one member of a group should not be attempted, even so tame a climb as the writer's ascent of Tyndall, with the route and time of return known to his companions in camp. Such climbing simply places too great a burden on the waiting-in-camp group, who may feel duty-bound to attempt heroic measures in the event the soloer fails to return, thereby jeopardizing the safety of the entire party.

Comments by SPS members and trip leaders on this incident are welcomed.

Ron Bottorff
3251 Sycamore St.
Oxnard, Ca. 93033
805-483-5644 (home)
805-498-3131 X1278 (work)

June 5-6, 82 Mt Perkins 12591' Larry Machleder and Dan Mihaljevich

Sat morning ten participants met outside not yet opened Sawmill Creek County Campground NW of Independence. We caravanned to Scotties Spring (5860') which is as far as can be driven, but can be reached by any type vehicle. We then proceeded to backpack up the mine road and into Armstrong Canyon to the only suitable camping area at 10K'. All were in camp by 3:00 PM. The hike is over easy terrain.

There were the usual late afternoon festivities including Becky Bales --? birthday celebration. Two capable participants attempted Colosseum on Sat but returned without the peak. Colosseum is easy via Sawmill Pass but formidable from Armstrong Canyon.

On Sun we arose at 6:00 AM with the pleasant sun shining on us and nine left for the peak at 7:00 AM. The route was a snow chute north of the peak to the crest and then south on the crest to the summit. Eight made the peak which is a "middling class 2" SPS type climb. We all returned to camp and the first group was back at the cars by 4:00 PM.

An interesting aspect of the trip was that not one trickle of water was found all weekend. Every bit of water had to be obtained from snow. Armstrong Canyon is a major U-shaped glacial valley with moraine-type benches typical of the eastern high Sierras. However, the benches contain no ponds and no streams come down the slopes. All water drains underground due to the porous metamorphic and volcanic rocks. This trip shouldn't be attempted after June.

L.M.

DEVILS CRAG #1, ETC.

JULY 24-28, 1981

MARK FROST

Jack needed just two more peaks to finish the SPS list and Ron needed only a handful more to turn the same trick. The first day was devoted to getting to camp on the Kings River. From Bishop Pass, and from several vantage points along our route, the jagged black ridge of DC could be seen, giving us plenty of time to reflect upon the difficulty of our prime objective. We crossed the river on a jumble of downed logs about a quarter mile below the lower end of Grouse Meadows and made our camp in an old campsite on the W bank.

The next morning we proceeded cross-country up the W wall of Le Conte Canyon and then up the N side of Rambaud Creek. We camped at the second (larger) lake at 10400' on Rambaud Creek, which lies at the base of DC's awesome E face and offers marginal camping but magnificent views of the crass and the Palisades across the canyon to the E. After lunch we were off to climb Wheel. In order to avoid the crud slope which leads to the saddle at 11553', we climbed to a point on the SE ridge of Wheel above and right of the saddle. This route involved some cruddy class 3 ledges, but once on the ridge the route was easy class 2, with a bit of fun class 3 near the summit. After returning to camp there was still enough daylight to have rappel and belay practice on some cliffs near camp.

On Sunday we were off by 6 AM for DC. From the high point E of Saddle 11553', the close up view of DC, backlit by the early morning sun, was awe-inspiring. From here our route dropped down to the first low point to the E, then up to the saddle immediately adjacent to White Top, circling a couple of minor peaklets on their left (N) side along the way. From White Top we traversed to the S and downward until we intersected the prominent white-bottomed chute which leads back up to the left. We followed this chute a short way until it ended in a vertical headwall and then climbed out of the chute on its righthand side over exposed class 3-4. We then climbed up to the main NW arete of DC over interesting class 3. The point at which the main arete is attained is a notch about half way from White Top to the summit of DC. From this point the route is easy to follow as there is only the ridge top or fresh air to choose from. The exposure is constant, and in places quite appalling, but the difficulty is not too great - mostly class 3 with a few short class 4 pitches. The summit of DC has at least three things going for it: it has a great view, it has a register dating back to 1933 which contains the names of many of the old Sierra bobbies, and it is about the only place on the mountain where the exposure is abated enough that one does not feel the overwhelming urge to reach for a secure handhold (even while sitting). The descent was every bit as exciting as the ascent and we were all very happy when we reached camp about 6:30 PM. Ron and I congratulated Jack for having completed the SPS list on DC and expected him to be in a festive mood, but he wouldn't relax until after he was safely across the Kings river again.

The following morning we returned to the crossing of the river below Grouse Meadows. While Ron and I crossed on a logjam, Jack rolled up his pants and waded the river -- not wanting to blow it after all those peaks by slipping off a log. Finally, Jack could fully savour his accomplishment. I hurried ahead to climb Giraud while Ron and Jack took a more leisurely pace to camp at the lower end of Dusy Basin. The route on Giraud was via the Rainbow Lakes basin to a crummy class 2 chute which leads to the ridge about a quarter mile W of the summit. This chute is probably filled with snow during normal snow years.

The plan for the last day was for Jack to climb Columbine via Knapsack Pass and for Ron and I to climb Thunderbolt via the large chute on its W side. Things went well for Jack but T'bolt got the better of us when we backed off of a class 4? pitch somewhere near the summit. A champagne dinner in Bishop, hosted by Jack in celebration of his list finishing, topped off a fine trip and eased the pain of the lost peak as well as the endless drive back to Santa Barbara.

THE EAST FACE

Bob Hartunian
7-19-81

Fifty years ago, Norman Clyde and his party of four made the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney. The crux of the climb is the Fresh-Air Traverse, which many climbers have since crossed successfully. I had the opportunity to do this route twice this summer, once to follow and again to lead. The attached diagram shows the whole route, except for the scramble up to First Tower and the summit blocks on top.

Dick Kutsch talked me into leading the route, after hearing I had followed it in June. During the long backpack to Iceberg Lake, we witnessed a helicopter rescue of a severely injured rock climber from a hard Whitney face route. The Navy rescue team from China Lake did a fantastic job of plucking the victim from a tiny shelf and speeding him to the Ridgecrest Hospital. Witnessing a rescue effort a few hours before your own climb has a sobering effect on your confidence.

With excellent July 19 weather, we proceeded up at 6:30 am and returned to camp via the Mountaineer's Route by 5 pm, after spending an hour on top. Much of the climb is 4th class and we stayed roped up until after the Grand Staircase. This is a rock climb of approximately 12 pitches. I tried to show the location of belay stances on the diagram. Several fixed pins in helpful areas can be used - especially at the Fresh-Air Traverse. Although exposure is high, the climbing is not difficult. (5.4?). There is some danger of rockfall from other parties so helmets are required.

Climbing hardware consisting of stoppers and nuts (#3 to #6) and hexes up to #9 are good choices. I carried a dozen single runners and a 150' rope. The climb is comfortably accomplished in mountaineering boots.

The East Face is a real commitment once past the Washboard, because downclimbing would be just as difficult as continuing up. It is a very satisfying accomplishment and has become a very popular climb after being described in the "50 Classic Climbs of North America". For competent rock climbers, this is a must route.

Bob

Two-Bit Adventures

After a long day of high risk in the desert sun, what were the hard-core rock climbers of Joshua Tree, California, doing for relaxation this year? They were abandoning the big walls and heading for the nearest Circle-K drive-in to do battle (a challenge is a challenge) with an electronic video game called Crazy Climber.

Guided by hand controls, a diminutive climber scales a seemingly endless skyscraper, bypassing falling bricks and girders, as well as malevolent inhabitants who toss down flower pots and empty gin bottles. When struck, the little guy yells "Ouch!" When he falls, he yells, "Oh no!"

If he survives the flower pots, the crazy climber must dodge King Kong, circumvent bare electric wires, and, most dangerous of all, sidestep yellow and orange globs of electronic feces dropped from a flapping vulture.

A successful climber eventually reaches the roof and grabs a passing helicopter, only to be deposited—in the real-life way of electronic games—at the base of an even more difficult skyscraper. —Eric Perlman

Q: What is the difo between the north pole and the south pole?

A: All the difference in the world!

Q: What is the difo between ignorance and apathy?

A: I don't know and I don't care.

She doesn't wear a bathing suit to look good, but to make me look--- good!

CHIMBORAZO

Gisela Kluwin, Bill Kluwin and Mark Goebel spent the two weeks before Christmas sightseeing and climbing (i.e., waiting) in Ecuador. Chimborazo was our principal goal, and, on the day we left Riobamba, the eternal clouds parted momentarily, providing a grand view of the mountain from the first class (i.e., rutted gravel) road to the Edward Whimper Hut trailhead. As our faithful VW Bug sputtered slowly to 15,000 feet, the daily clouds rolled in ominously from the Pacific Ocean. Despite the clear morning, we learned from a dispirited group of Canadians at the Hut that it had not been a summit day. The Hut at 16,000 feet is new, clean and spacious. Its condition lessened the discomfort, if not the boredom, of waiting in the fog and snow.

After our arrival the snow became more persistent, and, by the third afternoon, the snow level had dropped from 18,000 feet to below 15,000 feet. Our spirits dropped correspondingly, and the conversation turned to the attractions of the thermal baths at Banos. However, at 8:00 p.m., the fog started to lift and the air became colder. Around 10:00 p.m., I saw a wolf rummaging around the garbage pit, but I am still at a loss as to the significance of this portent.

We arose at midnight for our nocturnal sky watch. The patches of blue sky were still visible, but the summit as well as Riobamba were now enshrouded in clouds. Lightning flashed at irregular intervals. Operating by the last chance principle, we voted to start. The temperature was rising, and the fog returned at 1:00 a.m.. 8 inches of snow hid the many trails which crisscrossed the slope from the Hut to the ridgeline at 16,800 feet. We had climbed the slope several times so the fog was not a problem, and the snow over the noncohesive gravel aided the climbing. On the ridge the fog persisted, but we had wanded the ridge on the previous day.

About 3:00 a.m., we arrived at the rock wall (circa 18,000 feet) which is intersected with the snow chutes that provide access to the glacier. Because visibility was half a rope length and crampons were needed beyond this point, we waited in the fog, thinking our last chance had been lost. At 4:00 a.m., the fog lifted, much to our surprise, from the summit area, and we started up the snow chutes. In the nearly total darkness, Mark led through the chutes, kicking and cutting steps as needed. It was a tiring lead, for the route continued steeply onto the glacier, and breakable ice over the rocks had provided little security in the chutes. As it started to lighten, I took the lead to the crescent-shaped rock and ice wall below which we traversed to the left hand ridgeline.

The traverse was extremely slow as the foot deep snow sloughed constantly. Because the ice wall were also unstable, the slow pace was trying. By 19,000 feet, we had completed the traverse and started up the long snow slope toward the summit. The view of Riobamba was spectacular, but the opportunity to stop for pictures did not present itself.

Gisela took the lead to the summit, and, as the snow became extremely friable, I had to unrope because my floundering was slowing the group. I was able to stay within 100 feet of the dangling rope by advancing occasionally on all fours. At 20,100 feet, the weather blew in with fog and heavy snow. We voted to start down, and Gisela did a good job of finding the wands in the poor (i.e., one third rope length) visibility. We had wanded at rope length intervals and needed every wand for the descent. To add insult to injury, we missed the Hut in the fog and wandered around within 200 feet of it for half an hour.

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SIERRA PEAKS SECTION
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