

**A Tribute
to the Honorary Members of the Sierra Peaks Section:
Norman Clyde, Glen Dawson & Jules Eichorn - Part III**

From summit of Michael Minaret, Clyde Minaret in background on left. Shot by Glen Dawson on 7/31/31 during second ascent, and after first traverse from Clyde M, with Jules Eichorn and Walter Brem. [Glen did not take photos during the Starr search in 1933.]

*by Bill Oliver
Page 19*

S The
Sierra

ECHO

From summit of Clyde Minaret, Michael Minaret on left. Shot by Glen Dawson (age 17) on 7/26/29 during second ascent (a year after Norman) with Bill Horsfall and John Nixon.

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by Bill Oliver

First, a Quick Retrospective

Tribute Part I

On the Way to Whitney

[Sierra Echo, 2/89] – briefly covered the Sierra Club’s early Annual Outings (High Trips) with emphasis on the years 1929-31. [The four-week High Trips typically had 150 participants, plus about 25 packers - and more stock than should be mentioned (200).] It also chronicled Norman Clyde’s peak-bagging frenzy beginning in 1924. In 1929 Glen Dawson (from Los Angeles) and Jules Eichorn (from San Francisco) were on their first High Trip together. Although the 17-year-old youths happened to both be in a party that summited Seven Gables, they really had not yet connected. However, they heard gnarly campfire stories about the climbs each was doing, and at the end of the trip they agreed to join forces the following summer.

Did the boys connect? Well, after the 1930 Outing Will Colby would write in the Sierra Club Bulletin (SCB 2/31): “Some youthful enthusiasts, including Glen Dawson, Jules Eichorn and John Olmstead, swarmed over everything that looked formidable in the way of a mountain peak.” One noteworthy “swarm” was the second ascent of Devils Crag – first topped by Charles Michael solo in 1913, and later only reconned by Norman Clyde. The trio later managed the first traverse from Mt. Sill to North Pal, ascending from Dusy Basin.

The 1931 High Trip would be a phenomenal year for Sierra Club mountaineering and for Glen and Jules, especially after the arrival of Robert Underhill. The Harvard instructor was then the country’s leading technical alpinist, and he introduced modern rope management to the Club. This included proper techniques for belaying the leader and the first use of pitons and carabiners in the Sierra. A highlight of Underhill’s sojourn included the electrifying first ascent of Thunderbolt Pk. After

the High Trip his High Sierra romp concluded with his teaming with Norman, Glen and Jules in the inaugural classic East Face Route on Whitney – completed in only 3¼ hours of roped climbing. Two 19-year-old lads were elated beyond words. [In 2006 Glen Dawson (age 94), the only living member of that party, celebrated the 75th Anniversary of this seminal climb!]

Tribute Part II

Beyond Whitney

[Sierra Echo, 4/92] – followed the climbing exploits of Clyde, Dawson and Eichorn for only the next two peak-filled years – 1932-33. A gnarly triumph outside the Sierra Nevada was in the Sierra San Pedro Martir – an ascent of El Picacho del Diablo, at 10,171 feet the high point of Baja California. This exploit included Clyde and Dawson plus Bestor Robinson, Nate Clark and Dick Jones, Glen’s boyhood friend. Also noteworthy in 1932 was the founding, at last, of the San Francisco Bay Chapter’s Rock Climbing Section – the Club’s first activity section.

Quoting now from the 1933 Outing Report by Ethel Boulware (SCB 6/34): “*Composed partly of ambitious climbers determined to scale every formidable peak in sight and partly of those out for rest and relaxation, the party soon resolved itself into two sections – the knapsacking mountaineers and the stay-at-homes. The climbers adept in the use of the rope would make up ‘The Polemonium Club,’ aptly named for the sturdy, violet-colored flower common among the highest Sierra crags and crevices, and its members were particularly entitled to proudly wear a feather in their caps.*”

The High Trip followed an itinerary similar to that of 1930 (beginning at North Lake and coming out below Bishop Pass). This time Jules and Glen, with assist from Norman, put 15 climbers atop Devils Crag – constituting its third ascent. Back in the Palisades, Glen and Jules climbed Peak 13,956 (now 13,855 and

named Norman Clyde Pk) and then managed the first harrowing traverse from it over to Middle Pal. At the end of the trip, Ms. Boulware would write: *“If any old-timer has entertained pessimistic doubts of the continued existence of the Sierra Club, let him count the number of young people signing up for the outings, let him watch them taking eager instruction in rock climbing, and swarming, as never before, up difficult peaks, and his conclusions may be radically changed.”*

Tribute II concluded this way: “The 1933 High Trip ended on schedule at South Lake on Saturday, August 5th. Over the weekend everyone scrambled back to their mundane lives – Jules to San Francisco and Glen to Los Angeles. Not quite everyone, however. Norman Clyde’s life was in the mountains. Also still in the High Sierra was Pete Starr (Walter Starr, Jr), camped near Lake Ediza – below Ritter and close to the Minarets ...”

Tribute Part III *Development of the Rock Climbing Sections*

... The harsh reality is that by August 5th the body of Pete Starr had already lain motionless for two days on a barren ledge high on the NW face of Michael Minaret! Climbing solo, as was his habit, he would not be missed until August 7th, when a tentative plan called for Walter Starr, Sr to meet his son at Glacier Lodge. The two did not meet, which led to some anxiety for the Sr Starr. However, it was not until Pete failed to arrive at his work office on the morning of August 14th that the alarm went out.

The Search for Pete Starr

Walter Starr, Jr, although not involved with Club High Trips, was indirectly well known to Pol-emonium Club members based on his numerous summit register entries throughout the High Sierra. Normally traveling fast and solo, he was, at age 30, very close to completing his “Guide to the High Sierra and John Muir Trail.” Neither Clyde, Dawson nor Eichorn had ever actually met Pete, although registers indicate that some of their summits were attained in close time proximity to his. Glen almost felt like he knew Pete based on reading the latter’s often lengthy entries. As a young man, Pete’s father had fairly broad Sierra mountaineering experience, including the first ascent in 1896 of Electric Pk near Mosquito Flat. [More on this later!]

Until recently there were but two detailed accounts of this famous Sierra search. (1) “The Search for Walter A. Starr, Jr.” was authored by Francis Farquhar, editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin, and appeared in the June ’34 issue. (2) “The Quest for Walter A. Starr, Jr.” was penned by Norman Clyde but not published until its appearance as one of the essays in “Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada,” Scrimshaw Press, 1971.

Much later yet, 2001 marked the appearance of William Alsop’s “Missing in the Minarets,” Yosemite Association, 215 pp. [Forward by Glen Dawson.] The author, a Federal district judge in San Francisco, former prosecutor and avid mountaineer, was able to combine his investigative skills with his gift as a historical writer

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Illustrations—Plates I to XXIV
The drawings in the text are by Leland Curtis.

During the 1920-30s, under Francis Farquhar’s editorship, the Sierra Club Bulletin was one of the premier American mountaineering journals

to produce a fascinatingly detailed account of the events prior to, during and following the search. It answered many unresolved questions. Your author highly recommends it as an amazing and riveting tale. For brevity, most of what follows here is taken from the SCB account, with some of the quoted sections slightly edited.

Right away on August 14th Starr Sr contacted Francis Farquhar, then Sierra Club president, to enlist the Club's aid in the search for his son.

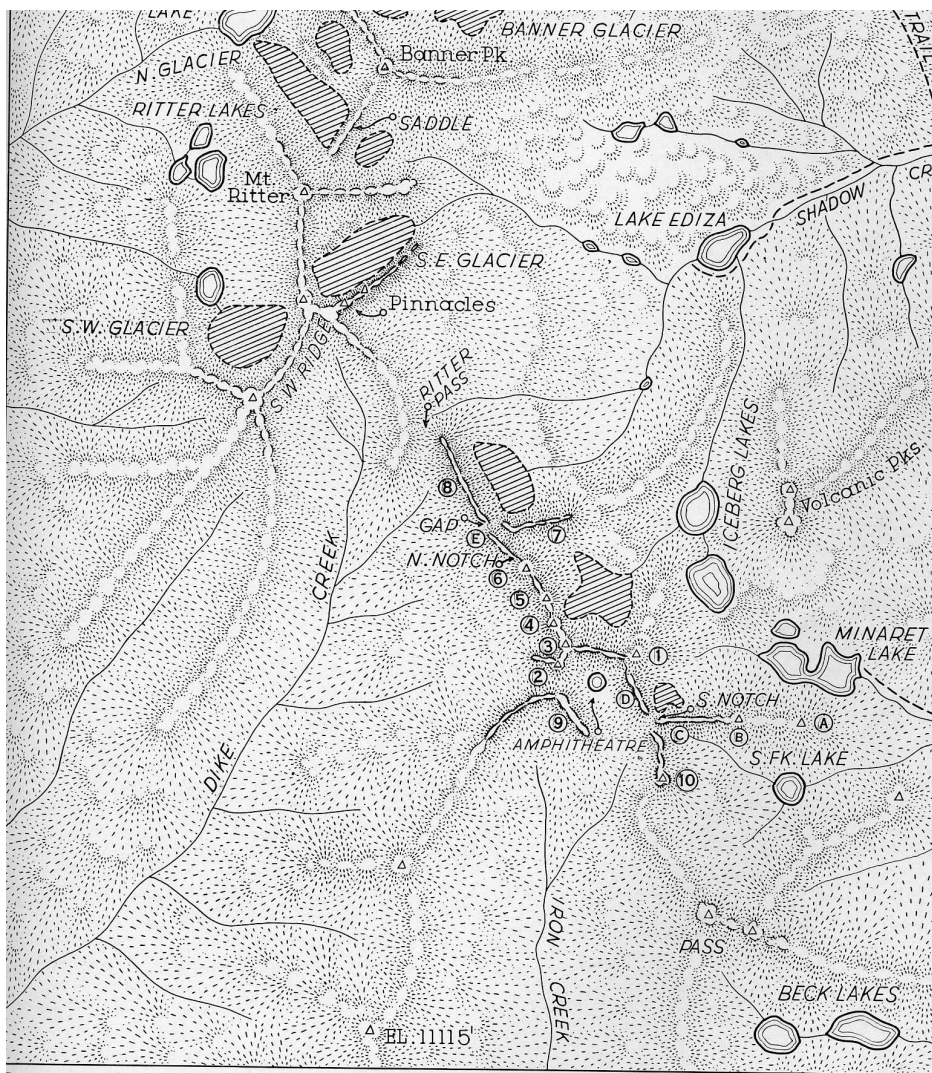
The explorer's intentions and itinerary were not clearly known. Later that day Pete's car was found at Agnew Meadows and his campsite near Lake Ediza. Glen Dawson, accompanied by Dick Jones, then departed immediately from LA, while Jules Eichorn exited San Francisco with the Starr family and friends. Driving through the night they all arrived at the Mammoth Ranger Station at about 7:00 am, August 15th.

Later that afternoon Eichorn, Daw-

son, Jones, Allan Starr (Pete's younger brother) and Starr Sr arrived at Lake Ediza, meeting the Mammoth Rangers search party, who had set out the day before. That evening Norman Clyde and Oliver Kehrlein also arrived, having gotten the call at Glacier Lodge.

Quoting sections now from the SCB: *"Their arrival made it possible to form four climbing parties, and it was decided to reach the summits of Banner, Ritter, and the main Minarets on the first day for possible clues. Starr's camera was found in his abandoned camp and the exposed film was taken out and sent down to Mammoth for development. During the afternoon a plane carrying Farquhar as observer circled above the area several times, and again the next morning. It was hoped that if Starr were still alive a signal might be seen. [Francis sat in the open rear seat of the biplane.]*

"The climbers were off at 6:00 am the morning of the 16th. Two rangers climbed Ritter by a route up the east side of the mountain, pointed out to them as one known to have been taken before by Starr. They succeeded in reaching the summit and found that Starr had registered there on the 31st of July, saying that he had used crampons and ice-axe, having crossed the glacier. [Actually, as Alsup later discovered, the date of this ascent was the 30th.] As both items were in his camp, it was evident that he had returned safely from Ritter.

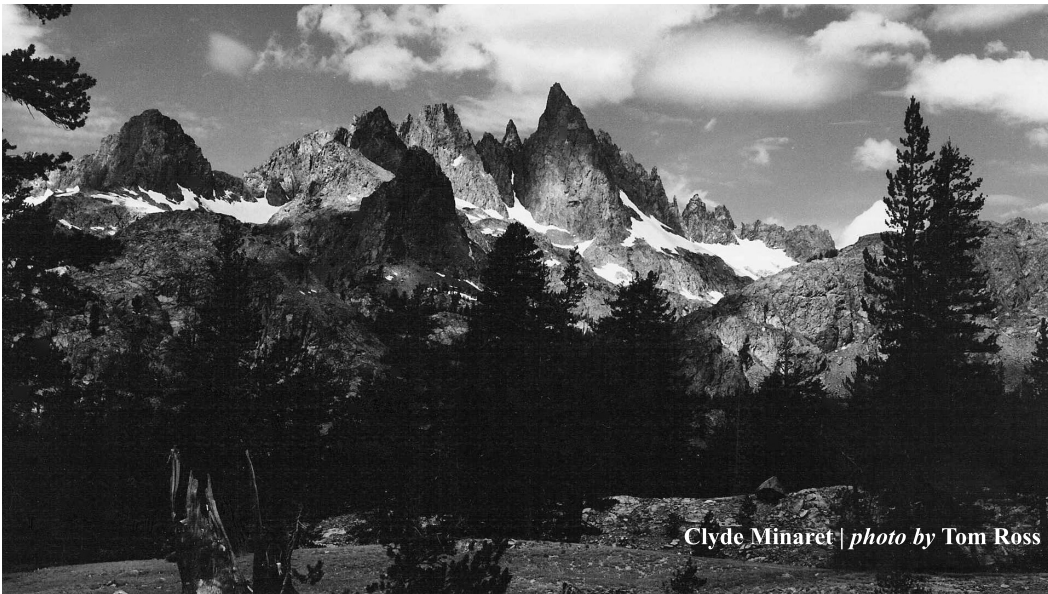


Prepared by W. A. Starr
 MAP OF THE RITTER RANGE, SIERRA NEVADA
 Drawn by W. B. Wheeler

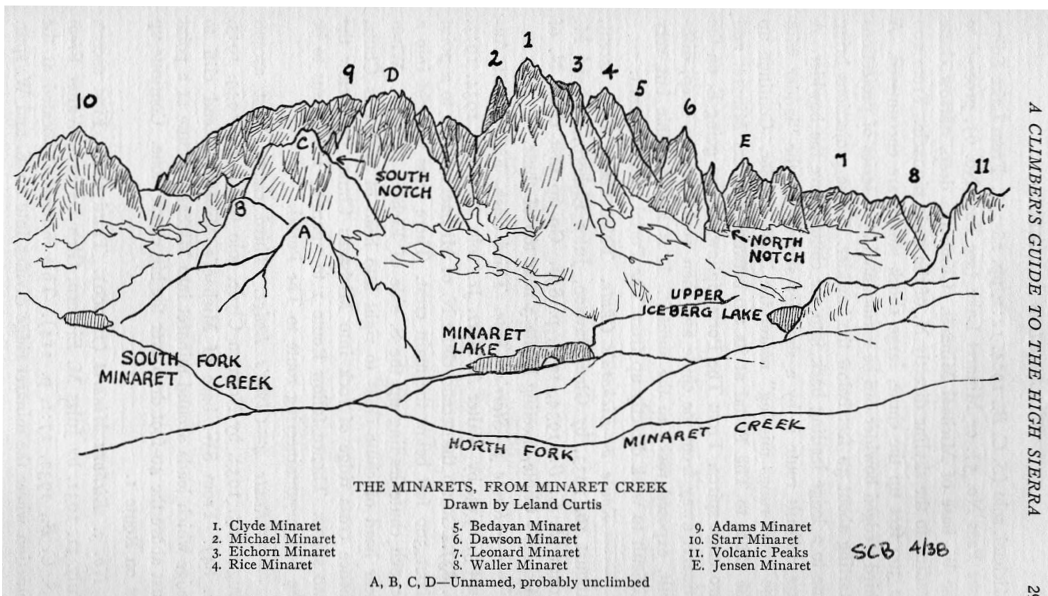
1. Clyde Minaret	4. Rice Minaret	7. Leonard Minaret	10. Starr Minaret
2. Michael Minaret	5. Bedayan Minaret	8. Waller Minaret	11. Volcanic Peaks
3. Eichorn Minaret	6. Dawson Minaret	9. Adams Minaret	E. Jensen Minaret

A, B, C, D. Unnamed, probably unclimbed

SCB 4/38



Clyde Minaret | photo by Tom Ross



“Walter Starr, Sr and his son Allan Climbed Banner, going up the SE side by way of the saddle and down the W side, then circling the N and E sides. Pete had not registered on the summit. Norman Clyde and Oliver Kehrlein climbed up to the glacier on the NE side of Clyde Minaret, where they searched the crevasses and bergschrund. Proceeding to upper Iceberg Lake, they found what appeared to be a place where a climber had rested on the short grass, and picked up a piece of handkerchief, afterward identified as one of Starr’s. The pair followed a line of ducks which took them up a daring route on Clyde’s Minaret. One duck had been placed on grass which was still fresh underneath. Climbing to the summit they found no record, although Starr was known to have climbed this minaret before.”

Meanwhile Jules Eichorn, Dick Jones and Glen Dawson climbed together from the west side of the Minarets. Jules and Glen were obvious choices for this area as, two years earlier during the 1931 High Trip, they had climbed Michael M and then proceeded in the first traverse to Clyde M. Enroute they topped “Third

Minaret” – later named for Eichorn. Glen reported as follows in a letter to Farquhar:

“On the 16th, we crossed Michael’s Notch to the west side of the Minarets. We climbed a fine high pinnacle on the main crest of the Minarets [now Dawson Minaret!] under the impression we were climbing Leonard’s Minaret [topped the prior year by Dick Leonard]. We went down a different chute to the one we went up. We next went up the first chute north of Michael’s, finding evidence of a recent big slide. Near the top of the chute we came across a line of ducks and a half-smoked cigarette, of the brand that Starr was accustomed to smoke. We followed the ducks to a point below the two large spires north of Michael’s Minaret and draining into Michael’s chimney. Jules and I hurried up Michael’s Minaret, but found no evidence of anyone having been there since our previous climb in 1931. Heavy storms made further investigation inadvisable. We went down Michael’s chimney roping down over the ‘ladder with the lower rungs missing.’ We returned to camp over a big gap north of the notch and slid down a small glacier.

“On the 17th, Jules



Glen Dawson shot of Jules Eichorn belaying Walter Brem (all 19) on Michael Minaret during 1931 High Trip.

and I [without Dick, who explored elsewhere] went up the second chute north of Michael's chimney. We found the apparent beginning of the ducks. Some were very wobbly. None of them were down. The ducks were usually of three stones, although one at the head of the first chute north of Michael's chimney was quite large. We saw indistinct footprints in one place. These ducks connected with the ones we saw the day before. The line of ducks was made by an experienced route-finder. Jules and I both admired the excellence of the route. We climbed Third Minaret [Eichorn M.], but found no trace of Starr or of his ever having been there. We returned by a chute between Third and Fourth Minaret, the lower part of which was the same as we had come up.

"Jules and I went around Michael's Minaret over a ridge to a lake. ... We went down to a lake up another ridge from where we could have climbed Clyde's Minaret from the south in a short time and without any

great difficulty. We went down a chute, doing a 50-ft rope-down (the word *rappel* was not then in use) over a huge chockstone. We met Clyde and Kehrlein searching near Upper Iceberg Lake. We were stumped. As I write this I can't understand it. Lines of ducks led to near the summit of two major minarets, but no signatures on top; Starr usually wrote lengthy accounts in registers I have seen.

"We seemed to give up the search rather suddenly. However, I don't know how much more value further search would be. It is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. I urged Mr. Starr to let Clyde stay on, and I hope the mystery may some day be solved." Clyde alone did remain behind, and some details of his daily search activities are part of the SCB account. He was sure that Pete would have been climbing either Clyde or Michael Minaret. On August 25th he did finally spy Pete's body lying on a ledge on the northwest face of Michael's. It was a route Clyde was not comfortable leading solo, and he immediately returned to Mammoth and wired the news to Mr. Starr.

On August 30th Mr. Starr accompanied Jules and Norman as they climbed to the west side of Michael Minaret. Quoting from the SCB: "*Eichorn and Clyde were successful in climbing to the ledge where the body lay. Starr had met instantaneous death by a fall of some three hundred feet from near the top of Michael's Minaret. On a narrow ledge below lay his watch, badly damaged, with the hands standing at 4:30. On a narrow ledge above was evidence of a large rock having recently struck. This, with other evidence, pointed clearly to the fact that a large slab of rock must have broken away as Starr clung to it in climbing, and, hinging outward at the base, had thrown him clear of the face until he struck the ledge several hundred feet below. It was fitting that the body was entombed on the ledge where it fell. The earthly remains of this lover of the Sierra have become a part of the mountain.*"

[Excellent photos and drawings of the Minarets may be found in "The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes and Trails," R. J. Secor, 2nd edition, 1999; pp 359-368.]

Fifty-six years later, in 1989, Eichorn would reveal to this author that Clyde would not touch the body. Thus it fell to him alone to conduct the actual entomb-

ment. Glen was amazed to learn of the location of the body and was perplexed that he and Jules had somehow missed it in their earlier search of that area. Mr. Starr was exceedingly grateful to Jules and Norman. One expression of his gratitude was a lifelong annual stipend he paid to Clyde (no details available). He also paid most of the tuition and fees that would allow Jules to attend UC Berkeley, which he and his family had been unable to afford, related to the Great Depression.

Although neither would have imagined it then, it turns out that their climbing together in the Minarets on the occasion of the Starr search was the last time that Glen and Jules would ever share a rope. They never again participated in the same High Trip year, and Jules soon became deeply involved with the San Francisco Rock Climbing Section (RCS) and Glen with the soon-to-be Los Angeles RCS. On the several joint RCS trips to Yosemite that both attended, they were busy assisting their own groups. Of course, they remained dear lifelong friends, and they shared a considerable Sierra climbing legacy as very youthful mountaineers. [Jules passed away on Feb. 15, 2000, just shy of his 88th birthday. A multi-page memorial by this author appeared in the Mar-Apr 2000 Sierra Echo.]

San Francisco Bay Rock Climbing Section

As previously noted in Tribute II, the San Francisco Bay Chapter's Rock Climbing Section was chartered by the Sierra Club in November 1932. It had initially existed briefly as the Cragmount Climbing Club, under Dick Leonard (then 24 and a recent law school graduate). [Cragmount Rock was one of several practice sites in the Berkeley hills.] The new Committee on Rock Climbing consisted of Jules Eichorn, Lewis Clark, Kenneth May, Marjory Bridge and Leonard as chair. Quoting now from Leonard's article in the SCB (6/34): "Values to Be Derived from Local Rock Climbing."

"The local activities of the RCS differ from those of the other rock climbing groups of which I have knowledge in three important particulars, namely: the use of the upper belay; climbing upon problems considerably beyond the present capability of the climber; and the systematic practice of falls and belays. ... By means of such practice we are able to hold the five-foot falls with a standing hip

belay and up to ten feet with the sitting hip belay. ... We feel that with further practice we shall be able to hold falls up to twenty feet by means of the body belay." [Bear in mind, of course, that in that period climbers tied into rope at the waist (no seat harness), used static (not dynamic) ropes, wore tennis shoes and no helmets, and used the Dulfersitz body wrap for "roping down" (rappelling).]

[As detailed in Mountaineering Notes, SCB 6/34.] The "first annual" RCS trip to Yosemite Valley was scheduled for Labor Day weekend, 1933 – an event that would mark the inauguration of roped climbing in the Valley. [For Eichorn, this within a couple of days of his entombment of Pete Starr.] Summary of events by various members: (1) a traverse of Mt Starr King, (2) an ascent of Half Dome from Mirror Lake (found to be "disappointingly easy"), (3) "the first serious attempt" upon the Washington Column from below by Jules Eichorn, Bestor Robinson, Dick Leonard and Hervey Voge [they ran out of time, but gained a 1,000 ft to Lunch Ledge!], and (4) a prolonged attempt upon the Higher Cathedral Spire by Eichorn, Robinson and Leonard - "we were turned away by the sheer difficulty of the climbing." [In this first attempt, they were using 10-inch nails in lieu of pitons! The Cathedral Spires stand tall on the south side of Yosemite Valley, next to Cathedral Rocks and roughly across from El Capitan.]

This latter trio returned on November 4 – this time with a supply of pitons mail-ordered from Germany. They first attempted Lower Cathedral Spire – "hoping it might be easier, but were soon disillusioned." The next day they were back on the Higher: "By means of pitons as a direct aid, we were able to overcome two holdless, vertical, ten-foot pitches and carefully traverse out over the 800-foot overhang of the NW face. ... Darkness turned us back at 'Second Base' with our piton supply practically exhausted." ["First Base" was a prior broad ledge.] Leonard later wrote of "Jules' remarkable sense of balance and ability to stick to next to nothing" when he had surmounted an overhang on a traverse. This was the first instance of "direct aid" in the Valley – a climbing ethic not embraced by Robert Underhill and other "purists."

Los Angeles Rock Climbing Activity

Needless to say, Glen Dawson was not far behind in establishing a rock climbing presence in the Southern California (later Angeles) Chapter. This effort initially evolved as one of the activities of the new Junior Section. Their first scheduled rock climbing session was led by Glen on November 5, 1933 at Eagle Rock, assisted by Dick Jones and John Poindexter – John, but not yet Dick, also a High Tripper.

Late in the year the LA climbers ventured to the far south of the state for a climb of **Picacho Pk** (1,920') – twenty miles north of Yuma on the California side of the Colorado River. As written up by Glen Dawson in the Mountaineering Notes (SCB 6/34):



Approaching Picacho Pk from the north

“An impressive-looking peak, Picacho, rises high above a number of other fantastic buttes. Its base may be reached by an hour’s walk from the abandoned Picacho Mine. By going around to the left, a break in the cliffs, known as The Crevice, is found leading to the sky-line. From the top of The Crevice a view of the Colorado River is obtained – and there the real climb begins. The first difficulty is a short pitch to a ledge which leads down across a deep crack. A series of remarkable ledges, or shelves, leads almost to the summit. The last pitch requires a shoulder-stand. There is another way to the top without a shoulder-stand, but it is more difficult.



Climbing the Crack on Picacho Pk: Glen Dawson and John Poindexter at base; shot by Art Johnson, 12/1/33.

“The late afternoon of December 1, 1933, John Poindexter and I started up Picacho; but instead of crossing the crack down to the left, we climbed directly up, later getting into the upper part of the crack, which runs up the whole face. The final two pitches (one leading to a platform at the top of the crack and one from the platform up by a small cave to the summit ridge), because of the insecure rock and the vertical cliffs, require good balance and assurance. Both our route and the regular route lead to the low end of a long narrow summit. To reach the highest point to the south, it is necessary to climb up a rather difficult pitch and then rope down an overhang. It was getting dark as John and I came up the overhang, hand-over-hand, back from the highest point. We found a less difficult way down.

“The next day, led by Randall Henderson [future publisher/editor of Desert Magazine], who has made a number of climbs on Picacho, a small party [nine] of Sierra Club members reached the top – with Dick Jones, Glen Dawson, John Poindexter and Arthur Johnson attaining the highest point.” [Members of the Desert Peaks Section typically use a ladder at one segment of this gnarly climb. Although Picacho Pk is by far the lowest in elevation, it is the most technical peak on their list of 99. In May 2007, Glen does not recall any ladder being there 74 years ago!]

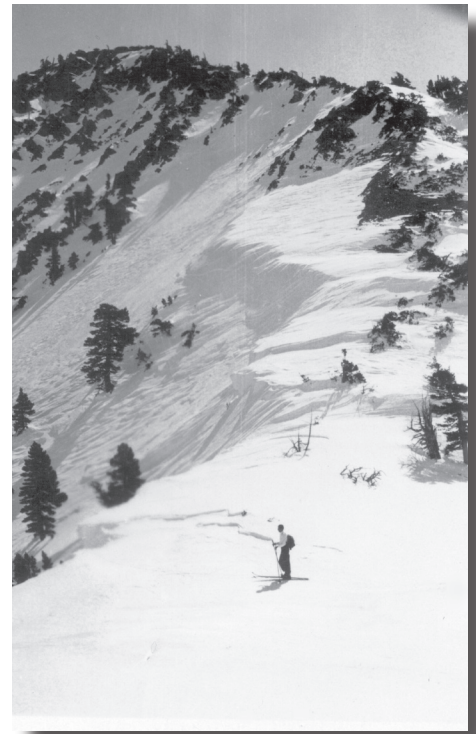
The following day, the latter four-some plus five other Club members climbed Castle Dome – “an outstanding peak in SW Arizona. ... The final ascent, a short rock climb up the NE side, is made by

going between the main peak and a prominent pinnacle. The west side has also been climbed by Randall Henderson and T. J. McKeeney.”

Mountaineering on Skis

To this point in the Tribute series, all the mountaineering activities have been on foot. We cannot further delay the matter of mountaineering on skis. Walter Mosauer provides an excellent introduction for us in “Ski Trips in So. California,” (SCB 6/34). [Originally from Austria with a new M.D. degree, Dr. Mosauer earned a Ph.D. from the Univ. of Michigan with a dissertation on the “Muscular System of Snakes.” He joined the UCLA Zoology Dept. in 1931, at age 26.]

“In 1932 I taught the principles of the Arlberg School, the low crouch and the stem christiania [christy], to several students



Louis Turner in foreground below Telegraph summit. He and Glen Dawson started from Harwood Lodge – and without benefit of a ski lift!

at Pomona College, who became my faithful followers. ... Then, during the winter of 1933, ski mountaineering in So. Calif. finally came into well-deserved popularity. ... At UCLA a ski team was developed [coached by Mosauer], and, to my great joy, the So. Calif. Chapter of the Sierra Club took a serious and energetic interest in skiing.”

Mosauer’s article goes on to detail skiing opportunities out of the Club’s Harwood Lodge and on nearby Mt. San Antonio (10,064’). *“After heavy snows, one can continue (from the summit) on down below Ice House Canyon, thus making a total descent of more than 5,000 feet. ... The crowning experience of the Southland’s skier, however, is a trip to the north side of Mt. San Geronio (11,485’). I spent two days there in early April 1933, with Mur-*



Glen Dawson adjusting bindings on first ski ascent of Telegraph Pk (8985’) in San Gabriel Mtns, 2/22/33. Shot by Louis Turner

ray Kirkwood, Glen Dawson, and Louis Turner – and what a time we had! ... [Having climbed to the ridge above Dollar Lake (9900'),] the descent was perfect. In fact, daring continuous runs on reliable granular snow through open woods, I led the wild chase, followed closely by my companions, whose technique and steadiness had improved rapidly. Sudden, swerving christies at high speed through narrow gaps between trees; long-drawn-out, rhythmical swings on the open slopes brought us, all too soon, back to the valley, thrilled, exhilarated, happy.

“Toward the end of April, Glen Dawson, Louis Turner, Dick Jones, and I drove up from Independence towards Onion Valley, which we reached the next day after a two hours’ climb. We then continued up to Kearsarge Pass (11,823’), and returned in a snow storm, the new snow marring the quality of the ski run. Nevertheless, we enjoyed it.”

Glen had picked up skiing well ahead of Mosauer’s arrival. While still a senior at Los Angeles High School, initially he and a few pals taught themselves. Joining the new (Jan 1932) Big Pines Ski Club, they also got expert lessons from Lester LaVelle.

1934

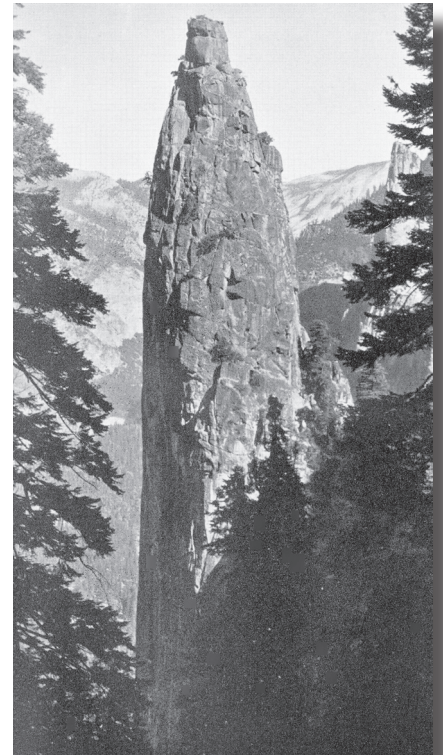
OK – we’ll kick off 1934 in February with a quick quote from Mosauer’s same article. “Our group [the four above], enlarged by four other UCLA students, spent several days in Bishop Creek in the company of Norman Clyde and William W. Dulle. With them, we skied to Bishop Pass (11,989’) through unforgettable high alpine scenery.”

The Cathedral Spires in Yosemite Valley



Spires from Valley floor, Higher on right. Scene shot during a LA/RCS climb in 1942.

April now – and back to Yosemite Valley and Higher Cathedral Spire. Paraphrasing from Bestor Robinson’s “The First Ascent of Higher Cathedral Spire,” (SCB 6/34). With a new supply of pitons, on April 15 Leonard, Eichorn and Robinson at last achieved the ascent, cheered on from below by Marjory Bridge, Helen LeConte and Francis Farquhar (Sierra Club president). Their gear included two half-inch, 120-ft ropes; 200’ of roping-down line; 60’ of extra rope for slings; plus 55 pitons, 13 carabiners, two hammers and three piton step-slings, as well as two small cameras and one motion-picture camera. Starting on the uphill side of the huge monolith, they still had 400 feet to climb.

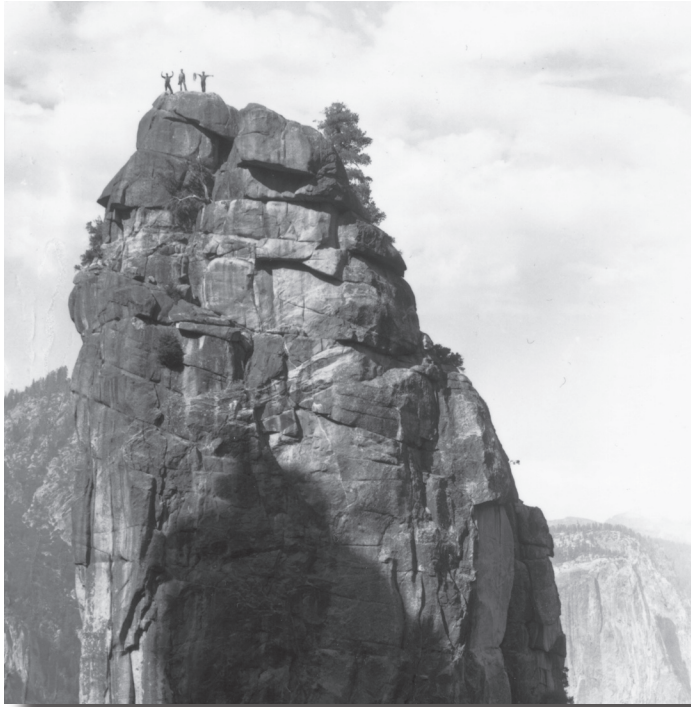


Higher Cathedral Spire, taken by Francis Farquhar; SCB 2/40.

Eichorn and Leonard alternated the “exhausting” leads, belayed by Robinson. Well beyond Second Base: “A clever ‘rope-traverse’ out of the chimney to the north by Leonard, a two-man stand, and we were up. Thirty feet of climbing had taken fifteen pitons and two and one-quarter hours. ... The summit block, however, was sheer, without any convenient one-eighth-inch cracks designed for receiving pitons. How exasperating to be forty feet below the top and no route in sight, especially with the sun setting! Hopefully we followed this ledge to the south to see what we could see. Since it continued under the overhang of the summit block, it was necessary to crawl, gazing down occasionally while wiggling across gaps where small sections of the ledge had dropped away.

“On the south face of the peak we found the crack we

had been hoping for. It was almost perpendicular, too small for handholds or footholds, but it would take pitons. Twelve pitons we drove into it and used them for the ascent without additional handholds or footholds. Then a ledge, a two-man stand, a little scrambling, and we were on the flat-topped summit.



First ascent of Higher Cathedral Spire, 4/15/34.

“The sun had already set. Hurriedly we sat a cairn, raised an American flag on a stumpy improvised flagpole, took pictures, and signed the register we had lugged to the top. The descent was sheer joy. Rop-



Atop Higher Cathedral Spire on first ascent. L-R: Bestor Robinson, Dick Leonard and Jules Eichorn.

ing off one-hundred feet at a stretch from ledge to ledge, never having to use tired fingers and toes, we had nothing to bother about except the temperature of our pants as the rope converted mechanical energy into heat. In forty-five minutes we descended, in ease, what had taken nearly nine hours of difficult climbing to ascend.

“Looking back upon the climb, we find our greatest satisfaction in having demonstrated, at least to ourselves, that by the proper application of climbing technique extremely difficult ascents can be made in safety. We had practiced belays and anchorages; we had tested pitons and ropes by direct falls; we had tried together the various maneuvers which we used on the peak, until three rock scramblers had been coordinated into a team.”

Some additional details of this climb (and subsequently the climb of Lower Cathedral Spire later in the year) are also related by Dick Leonard in [“Piton Technique on the Cathedral Spires,”](#) Appalachia, 12/34. Within this article Leonard points out that in a fall the belayer must consciously allow the rope to slide a little in order to lessen the jerk on both the belayer and the falling climber [dynamic belay]. He also mentions that during the climb, on-the-fly, they developed a “new double-rope technique” to cut down on the friction developed in clipping into many carabiners on a long pitch. [Note the rope was typically connected directly to the biner in the piton, without the benefit of slings as used by modern climbers.] The climber would lead off belayed by two ropes. However, he only clipped in with one rope. When the friction got too much, he would then start clipping in with the second rope, releasing the first. [Of course, we wouldn’t do that today; rather we’d use slings and generally alternate clipping into the two ropes.] Additionally, Leonard explains that “rope-traverse” meant climbing to a high point, being lowered off that piton, and then penduluming over to the next available crack system. Finally, it is noted that as Eichorn neared the summit block he was unavoidably confronted with a crack too wide for pitons but too narrow for fingers. The solution: he discovered that the pitons could be securely driven horizontally into the vertical crack. “Since we were using them as direct aids, handholds and foot-

holds, to the next ledge there would never be the likelihood of a severe strain upon them.” Truly, this was a seminal climb!

[Steve Roper, in “Climber’s Guide to Yosemite Valley” (1971), rated this Regular Route on the southwest side of the spire as 5.8 (5.9 by some). The first free ascent was made in 1944 by Chuck Wilts and Spencer Austin. Thirty-eight pitons were used in the first ascent.]

Rock Climbing in the South

Meanwhile, farther south, on May 5th Glen Dawson conducted the Junior Section’s second rock climbing practice. Quoting now from an article that appeared in the summer ’34 issue of Trails Magazine by Chair Dick Jones: “*Perhaps the most outstanding events of the Junior Section’s hikes and climbs since the first of the year are the climbs up and down the sheer northwest face of Eagle Rock, and the ‘rope downs’ over the northeast face of Bee Rock, which overlooks Griffith Park Zoo. Those of us – boys and girls of high school and college age – who have climbed or ‘roped down’ the sheer faces of these rocks know that such a stunt is not foolishness, for we have experienced keen fun and thrills with perfect safety. ... ‘Roping down’ the sixty-foot overhang at Bee Rock is somewhat similar to parachute jumping, the difference being that in ‘roping down’ one may stop in mid-air at one’s will.*” [Eagle and Bee Rocks were closed to climbing around the end of WWII.]

High Sierra Saunter

Let us note in passing that on May 18th Dave Brower (age 22) and Hervey Voge (age 24) set out on a ten-week High Sierra adventure – as detailed by Brower in “Far from the Madding Mules: A Knapsacker’s Retrospect,” (SCB 2/35). They had previously shipped provisions ahead and also set up numerous food caches. They began at Onion Valley and ended in Tuolumne Meadows. A few especially noteworthy items:

(1) “*Although much activity had been planned for our Kern sojourn, our desires were somewhat appeased by the first day’s effort – a moonlight ascent of Mt. Tyndall, breakfast after sunrise on Mt. Williamson, lunch on Mt. Barnard [then counted as a 14er], a second lunch at Wales Lake, and a ten-mile walk back to camp.*”

(2) Now at the base of the Devils Crag, our duo having connected a few days earlier with Norman Clyde: “*For the next three days there followed our most interesting mountaineering. We climbed ten of the low Crag and explored nine of the chutes. We climbed both roped and ropeless, and roped down in severe places. Norman spent long periods with his ice axe, cutting steps for the party. We basked in the sun and chilled in the wind. Hervey built enormous cairns, and we left little registers. When, at last, we had climbed all previously unclimbed Devils Crag [8], we moved camp to Dusy Basin.*”

(3) From a camp at Fifth Lake, up the N. Frk of Big Pine Creek, our trio departed at 8:00: “*We enjoyed the sunny walk up the trail and over the Palisade Glacier; and settled down to climbing in the chute [Underhill Couloir] leading to the notch between North Palisade and Thunderbolt Pk. Ropeless climbing took us to the summit block of Tbolt, a belayed shoulder stand to the top. Then, turning back, we kept to the ridge, traversing the two peaks of the North Palisade [the lower now named Starlight Peak], and continued southeast into the great notch [U-Notch]. The sun set as we returned to the glacier and the amber summer alpenglow tinged the peaks about us.*” [The hour of their arrival back at camp is not given.]

(4) The last week of July Dave and Hervey caught up with the Sierra Club High Trip in Matterhorn Cyn, although they did not formally join it. In the Sawtooths, they climbed The Doodad and the West Tooth – “about as difficult as any we had climbed. ... Our chef d’oeuvre would be the first ascent of Matterhorn Pk by the light of a partially-eclipsed moon.” This was their 63rd and last peak as they finally ended their ten-week Sierra saunter.

Over the July 4th weekend, Glen Dawson and Ted Waller were enroute to the Sierra Club High Trip forming in Tuolumne Meadows, when they diverted west out of Lone Pine. The East Face of Mt. Whitney was then climbed for only the second time – not since Glen, Jules Eichorn, Norman Clyde and Robert Underhill established the route on August 16, 1931. [However, over Labor Day Weekend of 1931, Glen did descend this route with Dick Jones and Walter Brem, roping down over what would later be called the Shaky Leg Crack.]

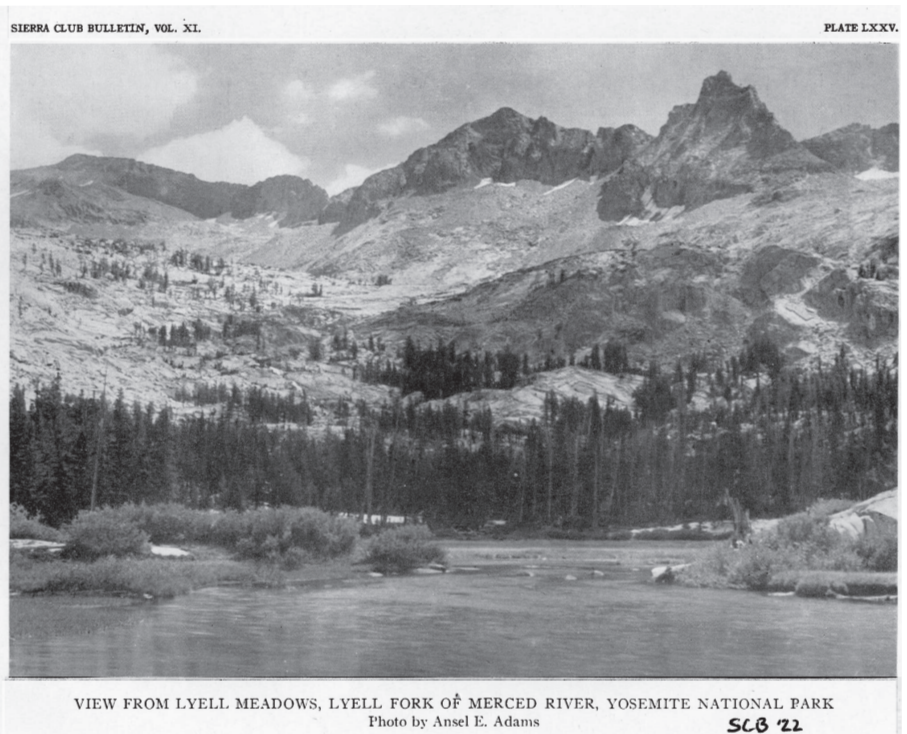
The 1934 High Trip

The primary narrative here is provided by Glen Dawson's mountaineering notes in the SCB, 2/35. "The climbing was largely in three centers – the Cathedral group, the Lyell Fork of the Merced group, and the Sawtooth group." The trip, July 6 – August 4, began and ended in Tuolumne Mdws. The technical leaders this year would be Glen, Ted Waller, Jack Riegelhuth, Marjory Bridge and Neil Ruge – Norman Clyde joining later in the month. [Jules Eichorn was not on the trip.] Glen and Jack made the second ascent of Eichorn Pinnacle (just below the summit of Cathedral Pk), first climbed by Glen and Jules on the '31 High Trip. Unicorn Pk, Cockscomb, Echo Ridge, Echo Peaks also fell to various parties, as did Lyell and Maclure.



Three members of the Polemonium Club at Lyell Fork High Trip camp, 7/13/34. L-R: Glen Dawson, Jack Riegelhuth and Ted Waller. [Glen could not recall, in 2005, why his thumb is bandaged.]

On July 11th, Glen, Jack and Neil "climbed a prominent peak (11,760') standing above the Club's camp on the Lyell Fork of the Merced and named it for Ansel Adams, in recognition of his services to the Club as an outing leader and as a photographer." Two days later dedication ceremonies were conducted

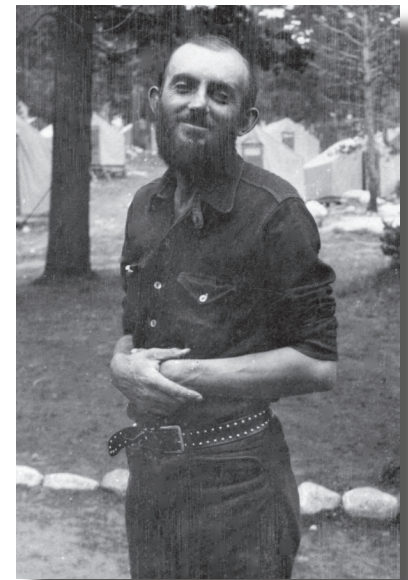


VIEW FROM LYELL MEADOWS, LYELL FORK OF MERCED RIVER, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
Photo by Ansel E. Adams
SCB '22

Rogers Pk near center; Mt. Ansel Adams the gnarly one on the right (hiding Electra Pk).

on the summit by a party of fifteen, including Ansel and Virginia Adams, Marjory Bridge, Francis Farquhar, Nathan Clark, Louise and Milton Hildebrand, and Helen LeConte. Marjory, Louise and Helen then "traversed from Mt. Ansel Adams to Foerster Peak, climbing enroute an unnamed peak, about 12,000 ft, presumably a first ascent."

Ansel Adams, who was young Jules Eichorn's piano teacher, helped run the Club's High Trips. Adams convinced Jules' parents to let the 15-year-old accompany him on the 1927 High Trip – forever changing the boy's life (and our Tribute Series). Adams served on the Club's Board of Directors for 37 years (1934-1971), was honored with its John Muir Award in 1963, and was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980. Within a year of his death in 1984, the Ansel Adams Wilderness was designated. Formerly known as the Minarets Wilderness, it is located SE of Yosemite and north of the John Muir Wilderness. Mt Ansel Adams



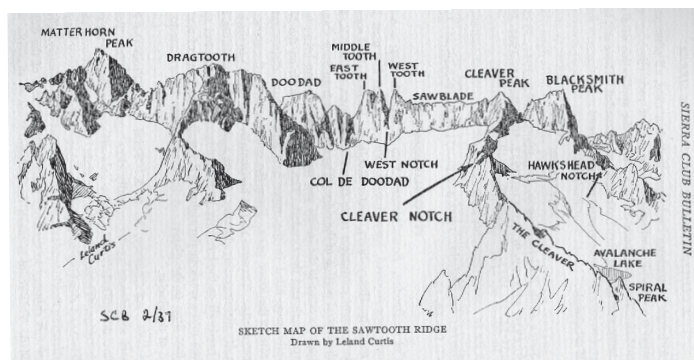
Taken at Tuolumne Lodge, 8/6/31, and identified as "Amiable Ansel Adams."

is on the boundary line of the AAW and Yosemite. On the anniversary of his death in 1985, his two children scattered Ansel's ashes from the peak, now officially bearing his name. This gnarly 3rd class peak is not on the SPS List! [Adams Minaret: first ascent 7/15/37 by Ansel Adams and Rondal Partridge; 3rd class route.]

The Thumb, near the summit of Mt. Hoffmann and first topped, solo, by Jules Eichorn on Oct. 15, 1932, was climbed by fifteen belayed climbers over two days. Muir Dawson, then 13 and Glen's younger brother by nine years, rather than following others up the back side, made the first ascent of the upper side of the pinnacle, belayed from the top.

With one night in Matterhorn Cyn, the High Trip then spent its last week at Benson Lake – from which bases the knapsacking climbers ranged all over Matterhorn Cyn and Sawtooth Ridge. “Near the Benson Lake camp a rock-walled amphitheater furnished excellent opportunities for practice climbs, instruction, and exhibitions, under supervision of the Mountaineering Committee.” Glen and Jack Riegelhuth completed the first east to west traverse of The Three Teeth (East, Middle and West). The pair also made the first ascent of Blacksmith Pk, with Ansel Adams in tow. [Refer to “[The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes and Trails](#),” for excellent photos of the Sawtooth Ridge peaks.] Over three days The Doodad was topped by eighteen; while a total of 47 climbed Matterhorn Pk. Glen led a traverse with five from South Whorl to Whorl; the latter peak also led by Norman Clyde with seven the next day.

Post High Trip, Glen and Tony Chorlton, of the New Zealand Alpine Club, ventured farther north, Glen penning: “[Rock Climbing in Oregon](#)” (SCB 6/34).



Summitting Mt. Shasta on the way, they topped Mt. Thielsen (near Crater Lake), Three-Fingered Jack, and Mt. Washington, “which has been called the most difficult rock climb in Oregon.” They continued on to summit Mt. Rainier and then headed for the Canadian Rockies. The Canadian venture is not described in the SCB note. In May 2007, this author asked Glen what they did. In Banff National Park they climbed two fine peaks: Mt. Hungabee and Mt. Temple – the former a technical climb and the latter (11,624’) the highest peak in the Lake Louise area.

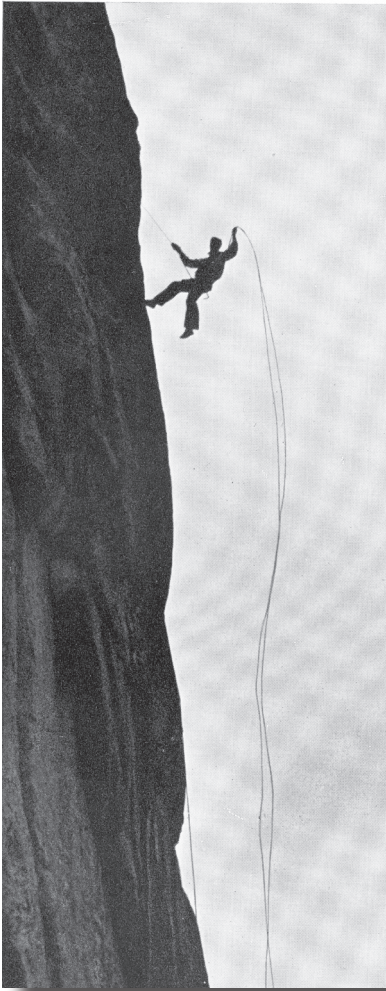


Glen Dawson belaying Jack Riegelhuth on first ascent of Blacksmith Pk, 7/26/34; shot by Ansel Adams.

Notably, the 1934 High Trip did not reunite our amazing duo: Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn. The issue for Jules was certainly not lack of interest but rather lack of funds in the depths of the Great Depression. However, he would not be deterred from gnarly adventuring. Sharing expenses with fellow climbers Boynton Kaiser and Herb Blanks, the trio headed to the NW and climbed Mts Rainier and Shuksan. They followed up with a frenzy of climbs in the Tetons. According to Jules' mountain climbing log, they summited Tee-winot, Nez Perce, Middle Teton, and the Grand Teton by the East Ridge.

Back in California, on August 17, 1934, Jules with Marjory Farquhar made the third ascent of the East Face of Whitney - starting for the first time with the Tower Traverse, which is now part of the standard route.

Lower Cathedral Spire



Jules Eichorn "roping down" Lower Cathedral Spire after first ascent, 8/25/34.

A week later, August 25th, Jules was reunited with Bestor Robinson and Dick Leonard for another crack at Lower Cathedral Spire. Details of this first ascent are provided in Leonard's Appalachia article cited earlier (as well as the SCB, 2/35). "As a whole the climb was far easier than that of the Higher Cathedral Spire." Initially using their prior pitons as direct aids, the ascent went well until midway up. "The Flake was the most interesting and astonishing part of the climb." Leonard led this pitch, doable after he first lassoed a horn. He then used his hammer to chip out two-inch nicks

along a narrow edge of the flake and mounted these steps for about 20 feet to its top. He noted that this pitch was "far more difficult" than anything on the higher spire. The team was next delayed an hour and a half by two 20-ft "Mummery Cracks," passed with four pitons as direct aids. Beyond that "we had climbing so easy for the remaining 150 feet to the summit that we moved continuously, without intervening belays." The climb took 6 ½ hrs, using only 14 pitons.

[Steve Roper rated the route 5.6 aided or 5.9 free. The now-standard route, which avoids the Flake Pitch, was established in 1948 by Roy Gorin, Paul Estes and Raffi Bedayn. The Mummery Crack was the crux move in Albert Mummery's first ascent of the Aiguille du Grepion in the Alps in 1881.]

From their lower summit, Leonard, Eichorn and Robinson were able to look up and see their pals Boynton Kaiser, Herb Blanks and Elliot Sawyer topping out on the second ascent of Higher Cathedral Spire – a good day for the northern RCS! On Oct. 20th, this latter trio also made the second ascent of LCS.

The third ascent of HCS was accomplished on Oct. 27th by Marjory Bridge, Jack Riegelhuth and Ted Waller – also of the northern RCS. Leonard noted: "This climb, together with an ascent of the east face of Whitney with Eichorn on August 17th, places Marjory Bridge (now Mrs. Francis Farquhar) in the front rank of women climbers in America." [Marjory was the first woman on both routes. She and Francis were wed in Yosemite Valley in mid-December.]

Birth of the Southern RCS

Well, the Junior Section of the So. Cal. Chapter may have been having "keen fun and thrills" on some of their events, but surely it was about time for the south to have a real Rock Climbing Section. Enter Art Johnson (age 27). Art was not a High Tripper, but he had joined the Club in 1930, had mountaineering experience in the High Sierra, and was an avid fan of the new sport of rock climbing. Mid-year of '34, he encouraged Glen Dawson, the obvious choice, to take the lead in this gnarly initiative. Glen, however, would be entering his senior year at UCLA in the fall. The following summer he would be departing on a year-long around the world trip – so he encouraged Art to run with it. And Art became the ringleader.

The first part of September '34 Art Johnson went before the Chapter Executive Committee and secured authorization – and he was appointed chair of the "Rock Climbing Committee." The original management committee also included Cecilia Carney (secretary), Glen Dawson, Mary Jane Edwards and Howard Koster. Art quickly wrote Dick Leonard, the Bay Area RCS chair, for assistance regarding their local methods. Dick eagerly and generously responded on Sept. 26 – promising to forward a cache of documents from their correspondence with Robert Underhill of the Appalachian Mtn. Club. His letter also noted that "to maintain active membership we require participation on at least

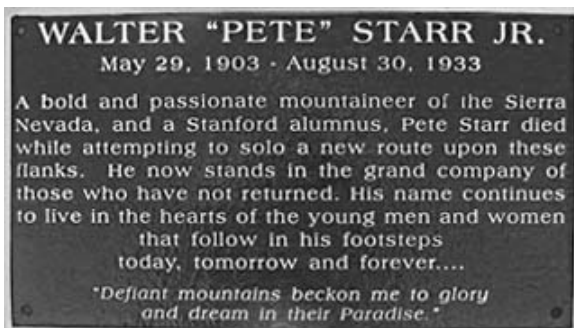
four trips a year.” The new RCS adopted most of the rules and procedures of their northern counterpart. The first official RCS trip ran on November 3, an Eagle Rock practice led by Howard Koster. ...

Gestation of the Ski Mountaineers Section

... Four days later on November 7, Walt Mosauer, the UCLA professor and ski coach, hosted a meeting at his home. Largely from the Bruin team, the thirteen included Glen Dawson, Leland Curtis, Frank “Tug” Richardson, Bob Frampton, Louis Turner, Dick Jones, Miles Werner and Wolfgang Lert. The group quickly drew up a constitution, designed a badge, and started plans for a ski hut – and they elected Mosauer president. They were the Ski Mountaineers of California – as yet, without any affiliation with the Sierra Club. [An excellent reference work includes a chapter on the SMS: “Pray for Snow – the History of Skiing in So. California.” by Ingrid P. Wicken, 2001.]

Walter A. Starr

Before we wrap up 1934, let it be noted that late that year marked the Sierra Club’s publication of the first edition of Walter A. Starr, Jr.’s “Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region.” Pete’s work, almost wrapped up at his death, was completed by his father. Writing a review of the Guide in the SCB (2/35), J. N. LeConte noted: “In many places the author departs from the trails, and describes knapsack routes and cut-offs with even more zest and joy than the trails themselves. It is easy to see that the highest, wildest, and most rugged of the High Sierra lay near-



Memorial plaque bolted at base of Michael Minaret on 70th Anniversary of Pete Starr’s death.

est the heart of the writer.” [Forty-eight years later marked the latest edition of the Guide - the 12th Revised, 1982; edited by Douglas Robinson. Seventy years after The Search, in 2003, a memorial plaque was bolted near the site of Pete’s fall. More info here: <http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2003/novdec/features/plaque.html>. Story and photos by Bob Burd: http://www.snburd.com/bob/trip_reports/michael_minaret_1.html.]

Walter Starr, Sr. soon became quite active in the Sierra Club. He served on the Board of Directors from 1937-48, was President for two terms (’41-43), earned the John Muir Award in ’64, and was Honorary President from ’64 until his death in ’69. Starr authored a 14-page article in the SCB (2/35): “From Yosemite to Kings River Canyon, 1896” – a gnarly summer adventure by 19-year-old Walter and Allen Chickering, his fellow undergrad chum at UC Berkeley. During much of their 500-mile mule pack, they were accompanied by Theodore Solomons. On July 31st the young duo made the first recorded ascent of Tehipite Dome, having finally “removed our shoes and socks in order to get traction on the granite.”

Earlier, on July 16th, the pair encountered a wild electric storm during the first ascent of Pk 12,835’ – and named it Electric Peak. It is located up Rock Creek above Mosquito Flat and across from Mt. Morgan. In 1936 the Club’s Board approved renaming this peak Mt. Starr in honor of Pete. The name became official in 1939. It is not on the SPS List. [Starr Minaret: first ascent 7/14/37 by Mr. Starr, Ansel Adams and Rondal Partridge; 2nd class route.]

Tribute IV Adventures Beyond the U.S.

- to appear in the next Sierra Echo. Very special thanks to these members of the Angeles Chapter History Committee: Glen Dawson, Bob Cates and John Ripley, without whose encouragement and essential support this work would not have appeared. Many old photos were generously provided by Glen Dawson, Fern Dawson Schochat and Marjory Farquhar (passed away on 1/22/99 at 95). Sara Danta’s skillful and enthusiastic editorship is also greatly appreciated.