

The Sierra



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Glen Dawson

Julia M. Eichow

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ECHOES FROM THE CHAIR

(Good news - I'm about penned out!) This has been a year of tumult for the Section - first and foremost the insurance crisis, more recently acrimony over historic register preservation proposals. Both generated strong feelings, both remain unresolved. The accompanying article relating to early Sierra Club mountaineering harks wistfully back to a long ago time - a time when the Sierra beckoned with untrodden peaks and "unclimbable" faces, a time when the Club numbered two-three thousand members - and most of its directors were capable mountaineers, a time when the annual Treasurer's Reports showed no insurance expense. Today, the Sierra needs to be saved from exploitation and overuse, the Club has at most two-three thousand mountaineers - and over 500,000 members who are not, and insurance expense has climbed to truly unreachable heights.

We cannot now go back to olden times or simply wish that things weren't so. We must accommodate to the present reality. The SPS can remain viable so long as we have capable leaders for the trips which can be lead. Beyond that, Section membership and the *Echo* can continue to offer a point of contact for those seeking to climb together on trips that the Club cannot sponsor (those involving ice axe or rope). Within the past two months a movement to create an independent climbing club has gained momentum. It appears that many leaders are willing to lead published technical trips without clear liability protection. Certainly there are many unwilling to do so. There are also some leaders highly critical of the prospective new club, apparently perceiving it as a competitive threat to the viability of the SPS. Many have in mind that the new entity, currently called The XYZ Mountaineering Club and in the process of incorporation, would only lead trips that the SPS and DPS cannot lead. Once formed, however, it has no reason to restrict itself. The Management Committee neither opposes nor endorses this effort, but does encourage maintenance of SPS membership. *Echo* readers are encouraged to share their views with all of us - write the Editor. The XYZ Club is conceived out of and nourished by the anxiety and frustration felt by our members seeking to climb all the peaks on our list. Those leaders most upset by this development need to somehow publicize the private trips which they will lead.

As a result of the climbing restrictions, we need to review our peak list to determine which climbs can still be scheduled and lead by the SPS, taking into account expected snow conditions and degree of third class. (I'm not talking about removing peaks from the list.) On his own initiative, Dave Dykeman recently produced just such a modified list based on his extensive experience. Other broadly knowledgeable leaders are now

urged to likewise share their judgments on this important matter - send input to the new Outings Chair (me).

With respect to the historic register preservation proposals presented in the last *Echo*, let me be brief (surely he jests). I have no hesitancy in saying that the poll, which I fashioned, was badly flawed. As a consequence, the results are inconclusive. The poll failed to provide for the option of returning the original book to the summit, and it was poorly designed. Sixteen people voted in favor of both leaving the registers undisturbed and cooperating with the Sierra Register Committee - incompatible choices. The opportunity now exists for members to express their views in time for the February *Echo*. This should allow for a fuller airing of this issue before another poll is attempted with the April edition.

In closing, let me express my deep, personal gratitude for the support provided by the Management Committee throughout the year, as well as for that from the membership at large. We were not always all of us of one mind regarding various issues, but we could always discuss them as fair-minded individuals with respectful regard for each other's convictions. I could not hope for better. Have a joyous holiday season, and a safe and fulfilling new year.



PEAK INDEX: VOL 33-6 (NOV-DEC, '89)

Cardinal Mtn.	Sirretta Peak
Moses Mtn.	Split Mtn.
North Maggie Mtn.	Taylor Dome
North Palisade	Thunderbolt Peak
Olancha Peak	Mt. Whitney
Rockhouse Peak	Mt. Williamson

PHOTO CREDIT: The front cover photograph of this special issue features Glen Dawson, Robert Underhill, Jules Eichorn and Norman Clyde (left to right) atop of Mt. Whitney. It was taken on August 16, 1931 by Francis Farquhar. The picture is from the Clyde Collection courtesy of Dick Beach.

**A TRIBUTE TO THE HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE SIERRA PEAKS SECTION -
PAST & PRESENT:
NORMAN CLYDE, GLEN DAWSON AND JULES EICHORN**
by Bill Oliver, Chair 1989

Part I: On the Way to Whitney

In The Beginning

In the beginning, there was nothing. On the third day dry land appeared. Evidently sometime later in that first hectic week the Sierra Nevada crested high above California, "... since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing." (*Genesis 1*) Meaning "snowy range" in Spanish, the Sierra Nevada for many years was seen only as a distant and imposing obstacle to travel. By the time John Muir arrived in 1868, the Whitney Survey parties were winding down their ten-year effort to explore and map the range (as well as name peaks after themselves, to wit: Brewer, Cotter, Gabb, Gardner, Hoffman, Clarence King, and Whitney). The obstacles to travel were starting to become the objectives. As one of the earliest mountaineers, Muir himself made many solo first ascents in his Range of Light, including Cathedral Peak (1869) and Mt. Ritter (1872).

John Muir was elected the first president of the Sierra Club at its founding in 1892. The Club's purposes were declared to be:

To explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and the government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada.

Under the direction of Will Colby, and with the enthusiastic support of Muir, the Club led its first Outing, or High Trip, the summer of 1901, which went to Yosemite Valley. For several years the Outings alternated between Yosemite National Park, the Kings River region, and the Kern River area. Major exceptions included excursions to Shasta, Hood & Rainier - 1905; Glacier National Park, Montana - 1924; Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming - 1926; and Jasper and Robson Parks, Canada - 1928. For those who could not handle the full four-week trip, provisions were soon made for people to end or start after the first two weeks.

The following informative piece is taken from Francis Farquhar's "History of the Sierra Nevada:"

During the course of more than half a century of outings almost every peak and canyon has been visited, and in this there has been no distinction between the sexes, for women have become completely emancipated from their traditional handicaps. In the announcement of the first outing, in 1901, the following recommendation is found: "Women should have one durable waist for tramping and one light one to wear around camp. The skirts can be short, not more than half way from knee to ankle, and under them can be worn shorter dark-colored bloomers." After ten years there was a slight modification - the bloomers under the skirt could be the same color as the skirt! In 1914 there was a further change, this time a radical departure, a portent of the future: "bloomers or knickerbockers" should be worn under the skirt, as "the latter are essential for the more difficult mountain climbs where skirts are dangerous to wear." In 1920 the outing announcement went so far as to say that "many women prefer to wear the knickerbockers or trousers on the entire trip to the exclusion of shirts. After 1925 they were left to do as they pleased ... and blue jeans have become the standard costume.

From the very start, these High Trips included those engaged in serious mountaineering, and often dozens or more at a time were guided to lofty summits. As early as 1894 the Club began placing summit registers and preserving prior records. Beginning in 1928 it issued formal certificates to members who could satisfy a committee (Joe LeConte, Walt Huber and Francis Farquhar) that they had climbed at least five peaks, anywhere in the world, over 14,000 feet high. The *Sierra Club Bulletin (SCB)* of 1936 noted that 77 such certificates had so far been issued. The lowest of the eleven Sierra 14ers at that time was Mt. Barnard at 14,003'. (At some later date Barnard was reduced to 13,990', and much later still its position on the list was taken by the addition of Thunderbolt, which has comparatively recently ended up at 14,003'.) It is interesting to note the following observation made by Lewis Clark, Mountaineering

SPS HONORARY MEMBERSHIPS:

The SIERRA PEAKS SECTION was founded in 1955. Since then it has awarded only one honorary membership - to NORMAN CLYDE, at the Angeles Chapter Banquet, October 19, 1960. The emblem pin was presented to Norman by then SPS Chair Jerry Keating.

The publication of this special issue of the ECHO coincides with the awarding of two more honorary memberships - to GLEN DAWSON and JULES EICHORN, at the Section Banquet, December 13, 1989.

Committee Chair, regarding Middle Palisade (SCB,1934): "There is no easy approach to Middle Palisade, either from the ends or by the sides; rather it is still generally considered the most inaccessible and the most difficult to climb of the state's 14ers."

1931 marked a epochal turning point in Sierra Club mountaineering with the introduction of modern roped climbing in the Sierra by Francis Farquhar and Robert Underhill. But let's back up a few years first, in order to gain a better perspective on that long ago era.

1924

A brief review is best achieved by examining the annual issues of the *Sierra Club Bulletin* (predecessor of the monthly Sierra magazine). In the *Bulletin* of 1924 the following notice appeared under the heading "News Items From the Southern Section:" (The So. California Chapter was chartered in 1911 - the first. It would not be until 1950 that the first chapter outside

the state would be organized.) "Six bronze register boxes will be placed this summer on as many peaks - namely, San Jacinto, San Gorgonio, San Bernardino, San Antonio, all from 10,000 to 11,000 feet elevation, - and also on Mt. Waterman, and N. Baldy. Each box bears on the cover the name of the peak, the elevation, and the Sierra Club name and emblem."

Norman Clyde first climbed in the Sierra Nevada in 1914. He joined the Sierra Club in that year and participated on its Outing to Yosemite, making his first "first ascents" - Electra and Foerster Peaks. Later in the year he climbed Mt. Whitney from the west, the first of his fifty ascents of this peak. (John Muir died in Los Angeles on Dec. 24, 1914 at the age of 76.) Clyde went with the High Trip to Glacier National Park in 1924, his second consecutive summer there. On the prior private trip he made headlines with a stunning display of endurance: 36 summits in 36 days, nearly half first ascents. Norman settled in the Owens Valley, home base for the rest of his life, in the fall of 1924 with an appointment as principal of the Independence High School.

1925


1925 was the first year Clyde really went wild in the Sierra, climbing 48 peaks - 23 of which were first ascents or new routes. Two of the former were Mts. Mallory and Irvine, which he named to honor the two British climbers who lost their lives on Everest the prior year. Clyde concluded his memoranda: "I sometimes think that I climbed enough peaks this summer to render me a candidate for a padded cell - at least some people look at the matter in that way. However, I got a lot of enjoyment from this rather strenuous form of diversion."

1926

In 1926 Norman Clyde's Sierra ascents numbered 60 - including 17 first ascents or new routes. This activity was in addition to his job as school principal and teacher, and in spite of his participation on the High Trip to Yellowstone. The high point of the Outing was the ascent of the Grand Teton on July 14. The party consisted of Clyde, Julie Mortimer, Alice Carter, J. C. Downing and Ernest Dawson (Glen's father), who wrote of their venture in the SCB. It was the first climb of the year and, in spite of sketchy directions, in a great tour de force Clyde managed to get the whole party to the summit after 9+ hours of continuous climbing. (This would have been the Owen- Spaulding Route, the only one then known.) The following excerpt is taken from the elder Dawson's account, "Mountaineering in the Rockies:"

14,000-FOOT CLIMBERS
OF THE
SIERRA CLUB

"Altiora Petimus"



This is to certify that

GLEN DAWSON

*has climbed five mountains 14,000 feet or more above
the level of the sea.*

QUALIFYING PEAKS

<u>WHITE MOUNTAIN (1927)</u>	<i>Walter L. Huber</i>
<u>MATTERHORN (1928)</u>	<i>Francis P. Underhill</i>
<u>MIDDLE PALISADE (1930)</u>	<i>Committee on Qualifications.</i>
<u>MOUNT SILL (1930)</u>	
<u>NORTH PALISADE (1930)</u>	<u>September 8, 1926.</u>

... In another thirty feet we reached what might easily have been an impasse. The ledge ended, or at least thinned and sheered down at a dangerous angle, and from that point on was covered with ice and snow. The only apparent outlet was a crack in the not quite perpendicular wall. A tiny stream was trickling down, and just out of reach was a projecting cleft that once gained would make possible an ascent, by using all-fours, bracing and clinging, and gradually working one's way up. Clyde tried it and failed. Then I climbed on his shoulders and tried it, but looking down from this uncertain perch, where a slip might have been fatal, I remembered my wife and four children and decided not to risk it. Only for Clyde it is likely that at this point we would have turned back; but at this critical juncture he made a little jump, pulled himself up, and gained the crack above, getting soaked by the icy stream on the way. Worming his way up the crack thirty feet or more, he threw a rope, and one by one the rest of us scrambled up or were pulled to a somewhat safer ledge.

Only three days later Clyde scaled the summit of Mt. Moran in a daring solo climb up the east face, via Skillet Glacier. He managed this feat without an ice axe, making do with a borrowed miner's pick. Before returning to the Sierra, he embarked on a two-week backpack into the Beartooth Range of Montana. This culminated in a thrilling ascent, only the second, of Granite Peak, the state's highest (12,850').

1927

In this year Clyde made about 56 Sierra climbs, including twelve or so first ascents or new routes. It was also to be his last year of regular employment. Hearing that a few students were planning a Halloween prank at the Independence High School, Clyde stood guard. He fired a couple of shots when the pranksters tried to call his bluff. A parental uproar ensued and a few days later Clyde resigned. Although he was an excellent instructor, many townspeople had been openly stating that the high school needed a principal that would act as a principal should, rather than a crazy mountain climber.

Already the author of many SCB articles, Clyde took to supporting himself with numerous articles for "Touring Topics" (now the Auto Club's *Westways*), and also occasionally as a Sierra guide. When not climbing, he spent winters as a caretaker at various mountain resorts, including Glacier Point, Giant Forest, and camps up Bishop and Big Pine Creeks.

1928

This year marked the Club's farthest and most technically ambitious High Trip - to Canada's Jasper and Robson Parks. Needless to say, Mt. Robson (12,972'), first climbed by Conrad Kain in 1913, was a major goal of the mountaineers - if successful, theirs would be only the seventh ascent. The climb

was chronicled by Marion (Rusty) Montgomery in the SCB: "Ascent of Mt. Robson - 1928." The gripping story begins with the advance planning: "Notices were sent out to prospective climbers giving important directions as to ice axes, ropes, hobnails, and calks. It was recommended that all climbers prepare for the cold by bringing "red woolens" and by sleeping with feet in the frigidaire during the entire month of June."

This remarkable venture began (for those who did not already have frost-bitten feet) with twelve climbers plus three guides. Their route was the sw arete, and they reached high camp after a day and a half backpack. On the summit day, after climbing well over 1500 feet in about six hours, they were stopped dead by the upper ice wall. "To go further seemed out of the question." With considerable daring and skill, head guide Hans Fuhrer managed to lead past this imposing crux. He was followed by his younger brother, Heinie, then Don Woods from the Mazamas, and finally Clyde and Montgomery. The third guide declined to risk it. A tough decision was then made that there would not be time for a larger party to proceed. Those able mountaineers left behind included Bestor Robinson, Bill Horsfall, Oliver Kehrlein, and John Olmsted. After further difficult mixed climbing and a second major crux, at 3:15 the five triumphantly stood astride the prized peak, the "Monarch of the Rockies." They stumbled back into their camp at 12:45 AM, rather weary and rather content. (Additional high trip articles in the *Bulletin* tell of "The Ascent of Mt. Edith Cavell" - Bestor Robinson, and "The Sierra Club Ascent of Mt. Geikie" - Norman Clyde.)

Not all of the Club's mountaineers joined the Canadian Outing of 1928. Ernest Dawson penned "A Sierran's Impressions of the Alps" for the *Bulletin*. Dawson, a bookseller in Los Angeles, though not in the forefront was an active climber and leader both in the Sierra and in Southern California. It is notable that he was also a Sierra Club Director from 1922-25 and 1926-37 - the final three years serving as President. The elder Dawson and 15 year old Glen, accompanied by two guides, embarked upon a climb of the Matterhorn. He wrote in part: "I had read of this climb and expected a stiff bit of work, but I fancied that the narratives were overdrawn and that for one with Sierra Club training it would be no special stunt. But the difficult rock work, the slippery precipices, the knife-edges with awful drops on either side, the hand-over-hand climbing of ropes when fingers were all but frozen, and the added danger from falling rocks convinced us that it was "up to the brag." ... The triumph more than matched the effort."

In June of 1928 Clyde, solo, made the first ascent of North Palisade from the glacier side: "I climbed a broad snow chute to the notch (U Notch), descended the chimney on the south side about a hundred feet, scaled the wall and worked to the left around the shoulder (the Clyde Variation) and then right to the crest, which I followed to the summit."

With the benefit of their Canadian climbing experiences behind them, Clyde repeated this route in September, joined by

Bestor Robinson, Oliver Kehrlein and the latter's son. This time he faced "a gaping bergschrund" and "found the couloir exceedingly steep and the ice free of snow and hard and brittle." The climb unfolds in "An Ascent of North Palisade from the Glacier," by the elder Kehrlein (SCB,1929). The four signed the summit register, but it was past 4 o'clock when they headed back. Using flashlights they started to descend from the U Notch. They "quickly decided that the prospect was unfavorable." The narrative continues:

... To try to locate in the dark, with our toes, a series of previously cut steps on a slippery ice-wall that might have changed through melting or cracking during the heat of the day, with a yawning bergschrund below, was more than we cared to undertake. The chances seemed a hundred to one against us. So we climbed back up the couloir to the rock wall, where we found a shelf just big enough to accommodate one man. The flashlight revealed a nearby crack in the rocks into which the thinnest of the party managed to squeeze after taking everything out of his pockets and doubling up like a jack-knife. One man sat on the ledge, another sat on him, both as a matter of economy of space as well as conservation of heat; the last man sat on the ice. Soon, however, the draft coming down the couloir and the frozen perch proved too much for the ice-sitter, so the man in the crack pulled himself together another few inches and made room for two.

As the bergschrund was directly below, ready to receive anyone who might become drowsy, we deemed it advisable to unwind the trusty rope and make it secure upon a rocky projection and lash ourselves together as tightly as possible. This was a wise precaution, for we soon found it impossible to keep awake. In fact, we spent the night alternating between catnaps and convulsive shiverings. These shivers involved every muscle and were quite violent. A temporary warmth pervaded the body, and we would doze off, only to be awakened by another fit of shivers and shakes. As our limited space prohibited any exercise, we aided the automatic endeavors of our reflex systems, by beating each other in turn until we were black and blue.

... The night was one of those clear, sparkling ones, when the stars appear large and brilliant, and Clyde did his best to keep us awake with a dissertation on the Pleiades, Orion, Ursa Major, and other interesting topics.

With the first break of dawn, we anchored our rope and Clyde went ahead to cut new steps. Our descent was easy and simple enough by daylight. We had a hot breakfast in camp and by noon were at Big Pine, with the temperature over one hundred degrees.

Sierra ice climbers of that time wore an adequate version of crampons and used the ice axe to laboriously cut steps in the ice. Techniques employing ice tools and front-pointing were a long way in the future.

1929

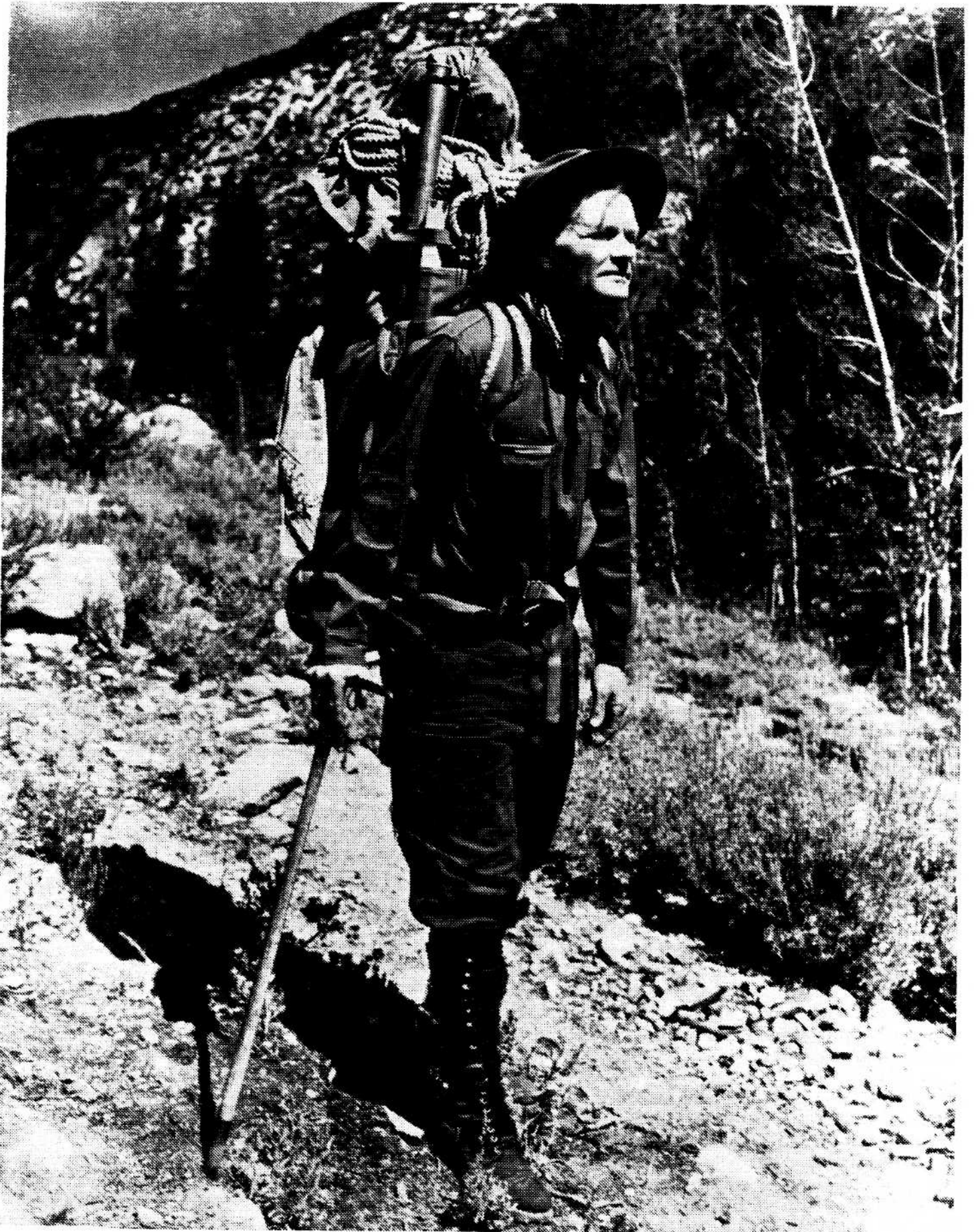
Francis P. Farquhar, a Club Director from 1924-51, became editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin in 1926, an assignment he diligently labored on for twenty years. He also served two terms as President, 1933-35 and 1948-49. His climbing credentials had been established as a young man with first ascents on Midway and Milestone in 1912 and, more notably, on Middle Palisade in 1921, among others. Surely his fame endures principally, however, as a result of his prodigious mountaineering scholarship and wide-ranging efforts to promote climbing. Published in 1965, his "History of the Sierra Nevada" (HSN) is impressively comprehensive and richly footnoted.

Each of his Bulletins, in addition to various climbing feature articles, carried "Mountaineering Notes," which often included a compendium of Clyde's Sierra activities. (The *Bulletin* usually appeared early in the year and contained articles and notes on the prior year's climbs.) The Mountaineering Notes of the 1930 issue begin with these prophetic observations by Farquhar: "Very few reports of first-class mountain ascents made in the Sierra in 1929 have come to the notice of the editor. It is true that many of the peaks have been climbed so often that there is nothing much new to be said about them; but as time goes on the discovery of new routes is likely to become one of the chief diversions of climbers in the Sierra Nevada, as it has in other mountain ranges."

The High Trip of 1929 took its 200-plus Meadoweers and Mountaineers to the central Sierra. Starting at Ward Lake, they went on past Florence Lake, caught the John Muir Trail and headed north. The two-week half way point was at Shadow Lake, below the Ritter Range, where participants could exit or start via Mammoth Pass. The Trip went on to end in Tuolumne Meadows. It was also the end of the 28 High Trips to be headed by Will Colby, the same man who had inaugurated the Club Outings in 1901 (although he continued to join the trips for many more years). Incredibly, Colby was a Club Director for fifty years (1900-49), and he held the office of Secretary from 1900-17 and 1919-46. (The second longest Board service was that of Ansel Adams: 1934-71; closely followed by Lewis Clark: 1933-69.)

1929 was also the year of the High Trip on which young (16) Glen Dawson started to be seriously noticed as a mountaineer in his own right. In the absence of his father, Glen was under the loose care of the accomplished climber Bill Horsfall. Joined by a John Nixon, the three climbed many peaks, among them Mt. Abbot ("brought back the original records for the Sierra Club archives"), followed the next day by only the third ascent of Mt. Mills. They also summited Mt. Humphreys and made the second ascent of what appeared to be the highest Minaret. This pinnacle, first climbed the year before by Clyde (solo), would later prove to be about thirty feet higher than the nearby one first climbed by Charles Michael (solo) in 1923.

Opposite page: Photo of **Norman Clyde**, circa 1940, from the Clyde Collection, Eastern California Museum



The year 1930 heralded more than a new decade. It was the kick-off to a new era in American mountaineering - one in which roped climbing would gradually progress from low fifth class on through to 5.8 by 1937. Two vital players in this vast transformation did their first climbs together on the High Trip of 1930 - Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn.

Jules Eichorn was born in San Francisco and has lived his whole life in the Bay Area. Both his parents were musically inclined, and Jules undertook piano lessons about the age of eleven - a decision that would have profound consequences for his future. Two years later, in 1925, the family having recently relocated, his mother was casting about for a new piano teacher for her budding son. She connected with a neighbor, who worked with a certain Charles Adams, whose son, Ansel, could possibly give lessons. After hearing the boy play for a few minutes, Ansel Adams, then 23, concluded that they could work together. Ansel had his first pupil and Jules a life-long friend. (Adams passed away in 1984 at the age of 82.)

Ansel was an active Sierra Club member, as well as a climber who had a few Sierra first ascents to his credit. (He was also beginning to think that he might have some talent as a nature photographer, although his parents strongly encouraged him to pursue his musical gifts as a concert pianist and to forget such nonsense as photography for a livelihood.) With some difficulty, Adams managed to convince Jules' parents that the 15 year old lad should be allowed to accompany him on the 1927 Club Outing. Eichorn's very first Sierra ascent took place with Adams atop Alta Peak. They also climbed Mt. Kaweah and later summited Whitney by the then commonly-used route from Crabtree Meadow. Jules did not join the Outing to Canada in 1928. However, he added several more peaks to his list on the 1929 High Trip, including Mts. Ritter and Lyell. But still he and Glen had not yet connected, though both were the same age.

TEAMED

All this changed on July 6, 1930, when Jules and Glen together made the third ascent (after the Hutchinson party and Clyde) of Red-and-White Mtn. Two days later they climbed Mt. Abbot and the following day Bear Creek Spire and Mt. Dade. Other peaks were also topped, including Turret Peak on which they were joined by Marjory Bridge (who five years later would marry Francis Farquhar).

On July 14 the boys, joined by youthful John Olmsted, climbed Mt. Darwin. A day later they summited The Hermit, having been preceded only by Clyde and Rennie in 1925. (Within three days 65 persons were guided to the top of the monolith.) The next day the trio managed a new 4th class route on Mt. McGee. On the 18th they made the first recorded ascent (finding a cairn) of Peak 13,701' (the future Mt. Mendel), and two days later climbed Mt. Goddard.

Perhaps the most significant climb by the Dawson, Eichorn, Olmsted party occurred a few days hence. Devils Crags had been climbed only once before - by Charles Michael solo in 1913. This was followed by several unsuccessful attempts. On the 23rd the bold trio did succeed, however, by a chimney up the west side, followed by a climb of nearby Mt. Woodworth. The remaining few days of the Trip were not idly passed by these eager mountaineers. July 26th: Middle Palisade from the SW. July 27th: Mt. Sill, followed by the first traverse to North Palisade (also bagging Polemonium Peak). July 29th: Mt. Winchell, in the first ascent from the west, followed by Agassiz Needle (later to drop the "Needle" - for an obvious reason).

It was no overstatement for Will Colby to write of this Outing: "... Some youthful enthusiasts, including Glen Dawson, Jules Eichorn, and John Olmsted, swarmed over everything that looked formidable in the way of a mountain peak."

Though perhaps not a "youthful" enthusiast, Norman Clyde managed to get in his share of Sierra swarming in 1930. Perhaps he was somehow thinking of the year to come, or perhaps it was merely fortuitous, but he swarmed most in the Palisades and around Whitney. Five times he climbed Temple Crag in May (and wound out the year with three climbs in December). In June he made the first ascent of North Palisade by the north face (up a couloir later to bear his name) - "one of the very best climbs in the Sierra." Three days later he started up the same couloir in the first scaling of the slightly lower, second highest peak of North Pal (commonly known now as Starlight or the Milk Bottle) - "a superb climb."

Clyde wrote up both feats as Touring Topics articles, and they are among those collected in "Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada" (NCSN), 1971. Regarding the latter climb, let us briefly join this daring solo mountaineer as he approached the rugged crest:

About thirty feet up the face, after testing a rock, I began to pull myself up, but the rock began to part from the wall. With little relish for landing at the bottom of the cliff, the rock on top of me, I let go and slid down the face, the rock settling back into place as soon as it was relieved of the outward pull of my weight. Fortunately my fall was arrested within a few feet by a shelf. After scrambling up to the rock again, I shoved it down, thereby making of the place where it had rested one of the desired holds which nature had failed to provide.

After a subsequent climb of the summit needle, Clyde wrote that it is not difficult to get to a position from which one can reach up and touch the top. "According to mountain ethics, however, except in the case of a dangerous snow cornice or the like, to claim the ascent of a mountain one should sit on, stand on, or at least lie across, the highest point." (NCSN)

Regarding Whitney, Clyde provided the following summary for the SCB: "July 10 to October 5 - Numerous ascents of Whitney and Muir by various routes, including ascent and descent of Whitney on the northeast via North Fork of Lone Pine Creek,

a mountaineer's route; also, from summit of Whitney (14,496') to bottom of Death Valley (minus 276'), highest point in the United States to lowest, between daybreak and sunset, on foot and by motor."

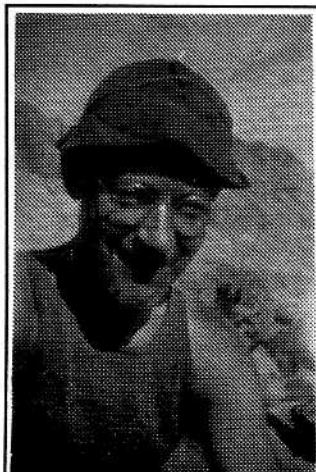
Norman's "Mountaineer's Route" was only the second ascent of Whitney by this path - following an absence of over 50 years. John Muir first soloed it on October 21, 1873, making the summit only two months after the three Lone Pine "fishermen" achieved the very first ascent, which was from the west. Having spent a fair amount of time below the imposing East Face of this great peak, Clyde very likely must have scrutinized it closely. We can only speculate on this matter, but he must have felt that a strong roped party might find a way - and that the time could not be far off.

1931

The time was indeed near at hand in 1931 - all that awaited success was the convergence of four exceptional climbers. Clyde for sure! Would the 19 year olds - Glen and Jules - be up to the task? The ascent of the East Face of Whitney was not something the latter two even imagined about as spring ended and summer beckoned. It surely burned, however, in the mind of Francis Farquhar, especially after learning that Robert Underhill had accepted his invitation to come to the Sierra that summer and share his considerable knowledge of roped climbing technique.

ROBERT L. M. UNDERHILL

Dr. Underhill, a philosophy instructor at Harvard, was quite active in the Appalachian Mountain Club and had been the editor of the club's journal, *Appalachia*, since 1928. On account of this position he and Farquhar, editor of the *Sierra Club Bulletin (SCB)*, had corresponded regularly. They got together briefly on a Harvard Mountaineering Club outing to the Canadian Selkirks the summer of 1930. This meeting was pivotal as Underhill introduced Farquhar to modern rope management and also agreed to write an article for the SCB. The 22-page comprehensive piece appeared in the 1931 issue: "On the Use and Management of the Rope in Rock Work."



Robert Underhill, 1931

Underhill's mountaineering expertise had been developed over several summers spent climbing in the Alps in the mid to late

20's. It was carefully honed in the rock and ice climbs he pioneered in New England. It was skillfully applied in the Tetons, first in 1929. On July 26, with Kenneth Anderson he climbed the Grand Teton (13,766) by the East Ridge. This was the first new route on the peak since the Owen-Spaulling party first scaled the elusive summit in 1898. In 1930, Mt. Owen, second in height to the Grand, was the only major, still unclimbed peak in the range. On July 16 its east face fell to an Underhill party of four.

1931 would be the highlight of Underhill's climbing career. Returning to the Tetons in June (and fortunate to face an exceptionally low snow year), his six-week stay reached a frenzied climax with three major climbs in five days. On July 15 he lead a party of three in another new route up the Grand Teton, the SE Ridge. Surprisingly, they were congratulated on the summit by the young Glenn Exum, who had just succeeded solo by a new route up a south ridge. (These ridges would later bear the names Underhill and Exum, respectively.) On the 17th Underhill and park ranger Fritiof Fryxell put up a new route on the Middle Teton, via its North Face.

The resounding climax came two days later when this pair took the Grand by the remarkable North Ridge (now rated Grade IV, 5.7). Success at the crux ensued when Underhill finally accepted his partner's tense advice: "Step on the piton!" Of this ascent Chris Jones wrote in "Climbing in North America:"

The climb was a great achievement. They had overcome considerable technical difficulties and cracked the aura of impregnability that surrounded the somber wall. Underhill considered the north face climb the culmination of his mountaineering career and wrote that he was content. It was then the hardest climb in the United States.

THE 1931 HIGH TRIP

The 1931 Outing extended some 150 miles along the eastern edge of Yosemite National Park. Beginning and ending in Tuolumne Meadows, it ranged from Matterhorn Peak, Benson Lake, and Pate Valley in the north to Washburn and Garnet Lakes in the south.

Based on what he had learned from Underhill, Francis Farquhar on July 12 lead a small school of climbers up the north face of Unicorn Peak. He referred to this as "The first properly roped climb made in the Sierra, so far as can be ascertained." (HSN) (This claim is somewhat surprising considering a climb made by 19 year old John Mendenhall the previous summer up the NE side of Laurel Mountain. As reported in the then latest SCB: "My companion and I were roped, moved one at a time, and employed the belays.") Completing the first traverse of Unicorn on that momentous day, Jules Eichorn and Glen Dawson continued south to Cockscomb Peak, making its second ascent.

A few days later camp was relocated north to Pate Valley. Glen and Jules, joined by the equally youthful Walter (Bubs) Brem, broke off from the pack on a four-day private trip. The trio made first climbs of Finger Peaks on the 19th. The next day they attacked the Sawtooth Ridge, putting up a new route on the highest peak, Matterhorn by the NW face, followed by the first ascent of the next highest peak on the ridge (later named The Dragtooth). In a few days Jules and Glen were back south and went for Cathedral Peak on July 24th. Before descending the mountain, they had the opportunity to employ their roped climbing skills with the first ascent of the prominent pinnacle west of the summit (to be named Eichorn Pinnacle). Two days following this, joined by Brem, they made the first climb of Echo Ridge (later renamed Matthes Crest).

As the Outing prepared to move to Garnet Lake, the trio again set off ahead of the main party for the Minarets. July 31st turned into a 14-hour day for them as they topped the three highest Minarets. They began with a climb of Michael (#2), traversed over to Third Minaret - a first ascent, and continued on the ridge to Clyde (#1). "Third" would later be named Eichorn Minaret. Dawson Minaret would first be climbed in 1933 - by Glen, Jules and Dick Jones.

Robert Underhill, fresh from his Teton triumphs, also caught up with the High Trip at Garnet Lake. His intent was to share his skills on modern rope management, and he immediately organized a climbing school that practiced on the steep slopes of Ritter and Banner. (He also brought the first pitons and carabiners to be seen in the Sierra - and left with them.) On August 3 he and Eichorn did a new route on Banner, up the east face. Jules recently recalled a close call on that climb. Underhill was leading a pitch and reached up to a huge rock. All of a sudden it went. He was able to hold it for an instant while shouting, "Get out of the way." Both dove for cover as the behemoth bounded down the precipitous slope.

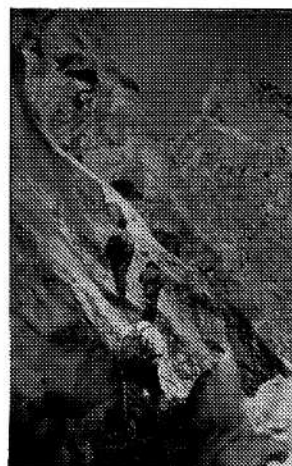
* Glen, Jules, Brem
 Lewis Clark
 * Jules, Eichorn
 Robt L. M. Underhill
 Francis P. Farquhar
 Norman Clyde
 Bestor Robinson

* With ascent of Pinnacle
 August 13, 1931
 ascended from notch to
 south.

THUNDERBOLT

Following the conclusion of this productive Outing, Farquhar, Underhill and six others moved on to the North Fork of Big Pine Creek to pursue postgraduate studies. Along the way they picked up Norman Clyde. On August 9th all nine climbed North Pal from the U Notch and then moved on to its second highest peak (Starlight) - second ascent, first traverse. Two days later Underhill, Clyde, Dawson and Eichorn, a team that would soon make history, did a new route on Temple Crag's north face. On August 13, these four plus Farquhar, Bestor Robinson and Lewis Clark set out to attempt a peak that Norman had been targeting for some time - the unclimbed "Northwest Peak of North Palisade."

Setting off at dawn with fair weather, they approached the peak from the east and headed for the notch topping (what was later named) the Underhill Couloir. They roped into three parties and gained the notch, primarily by climbing the wall bordering the chute. Clyde recounted the epic in "The First Ascent of Thunderbolt Peak, the North Palisade." (NCSN) We join him:



Cutting steps in ice to get to rock enroute to N. Palisade, Aug. 9, 1931.

...By this time, however, the sky had become overcast and masses of dark, threatening clouds were approaching from the southwest. We therefore lost little time in beginning our attack upon the peak.

...Arriving at the base of the monolith, one member of the party leaned across a deep crevice at its base and braced himself against the rock, forming a court echelle, enabling several in turn to mount upon his shoulders and then scramble, or rather crawl, depending almost entirely upon friction, to the summit. Static electricity presently began to hum and thunder began to crash. We beat a hasty retreat eastward along the crest in search of a shelter. As we hurried along, a thunderbolt flashed past in disconcerting, if not dangerous, proximity to one of the members of our party. ..."

The following narrative is based upon recollections made by Jules Eichorn some 58 years after the event:

The weather had been unsettled for several days. At the start of the climb bad weather was off over Middle Pal and didn't look very threatening to us. We watched it but it didn't seem to be doing anything. The roped climb up the couloir had been slow with seven climbers. At the summit, I may have climbed the monolith first or it may have been Glen. Any-



Clyde and Farquhar on Starlight, Aug. 9, 1931

thing I could climb, Dawson could too. We climbed it free, which the others weren't agile enough to do.

Within five minutes, it seemed, the storm moved north and suddenly enveloped the whole peak. Norman, being much more aware and experienced, didn't think it would happen so soon. There were sparks coming off my fingers and off the ice axe. I had never experienced this before, and Norman felt strongly that we should get off the damn thing immediately. I was the last man down. It seemed that there was an unbelievable force of electrical energy around the area. I was about 25 yards from the pinnacle when suddenly there was a tremendous explosion right in my face. The electric blast immobilized me for a moment - I felt paralyzed. Then almost as quickly, I got back my faculties and strength. It was a very uncomfortable feeling, to say the least. I felt very lucky I wasn't directly struck by the lightning.

We rejoin the Clyde narrative:

...A heavy wind drove thickly flying snowflakes into our faces. Finding a point from which we could easily descend for some distance on the south face, we did so, presently coming upon a ledge with an overhang above it. As this was enough to protect us from any thunderbolt which might strike the summit and afford some shelter from the storm, we crowded together beneath it, a rather bedraggled-looking group. Within half an hour, the storm ceased for a time and we returned to the top of the mountain. The summit monolith was too slippery to permit rubber soles to grip its rounded surface, and the other climbers were reluctantly obliged to forego its ascent.

...Presently the storm was upon us again. The wind blew violently and the snow flew so thickly as to be almost blinding. ...

The following passage is the first part of the Prologue written in 1971 by Jules Eichorn for "Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada." (In failing health, Clyde made his last, and highest, ascent on December 23, 1972 at the age of 87.)



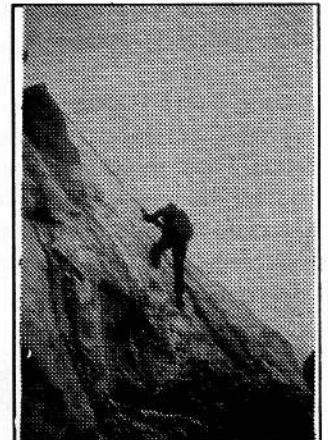
Eichorn and Underhill on Starlight, Aug. 9, 1931.

When I first heard of Norman Clyde, he was already a legendary figure. He had climbed solo almost all the important peaks of the Sierra Nevada, rescued numerous lost souls, located crashed airplanes, and carried a pack so heavy only he could handle it. I therefore had a strong desire to meet this superhuman person, and the chance came in the summer of 1931.

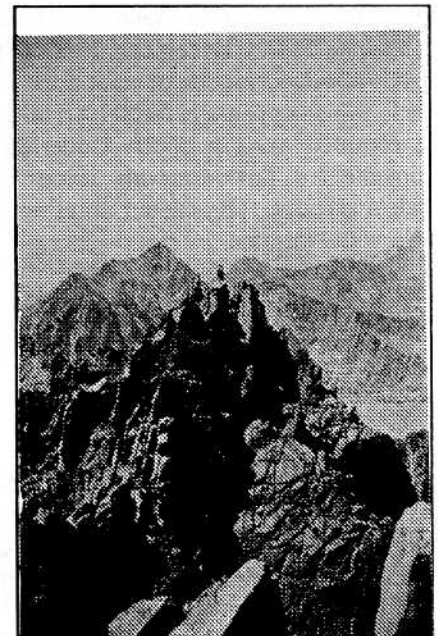
Through the efforts of Francis Farquhar, then Vice-President of the Sierra Club, Robert Underhill was enticed to come west and climb in the Sierra, with the idea of making some new routes and first ascents as well as demonstrating the proper use and management of the rope. Clyde was to be a part of the climbing team, which included my favorite climbing partner of the early thirties, Glen Dawson.

I first saw Clyde standing in the sun in front of Glacier Lodge, a jut-jawed, blue-eyed, ruddy complexioned, animated block of granite, somewhat resembling a soldier - mainly, I think, because of his campaign hat, which never (as I learned) left his head. My impression was that here was a man who had made up his mind what he had to do and would never swerve from his objectives. But, I asked myself, "How could a man with a build like Norman's be such a good mountain climber?" I was soon to find out. Immediate objectives for the group were to be a new route on Temple Crag, a traverse from North Palisade north to the second highest point, and the northwest peak of the North Palisade, which was unclimbed and later received the name "Thunderbolt Peak" because of the events which subsequently took place.

On the Thunderbolt Peak climb, where all of us almost lost our lives because of the suddenness of a thunderstorm, Norman proved to be the most remarkable of mountaineers. In weather conditions which included lightning, snow, hail,



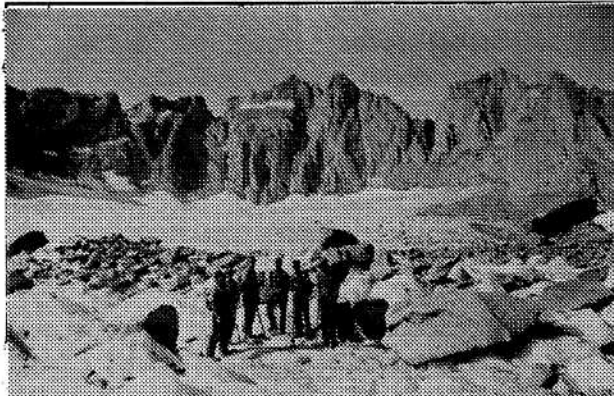
Underhill roping down on descent from Thunderbolt.



Summit of Starlight

sleet and rain, plus zero visibility, he got us safely off the peak and down the east face of the crest, where we roped into the bergschrund in total darkness; then across the heavily crevasse-d Palisade Glacier to camp, arriving around midnight. This tour de force made me realize how great Norman's mountaineering ability was. ...

(Historic Sierra registers are preserved in the Bancroft Library, U. C. Berkeley. A xerox copy of the first page in the original Tbolt register indicates that only Jules and Glen ascended the pinnacle that electrifying day. This entry was copied into the register from an original fragment that is now barely readable. Clyde placed the register on the second ascent of the peak two years later.)



North Palisade and Thunderbolt. Last 3 on the right are Eichorn, Dawson and Underhill.

THE EAST FACE

Both Underhill and Clyde wrote accounts of their Whitney climb: the former in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, 1932, and Clyde for *Touring Topics*, December, 1931. (This latter account is a slightly abridged version of what must have been the original article, which appears in NCSN.) The account that follows is the complete version of the Underhill story. It has been supplemented, however, with various insertions taken from Clyde's account. [Bracketed notes are by Bill Oliver.] We begin with Norman:

FIRST ASCENT OF THE EAST FACE OF MT. WHITNEY

by Norman Clyde

Among mountaineers, second in fascination to the making of first ascents is the finding of new routes up mountains already climbed, especially if these be difficult. As opportunities of accomplishing the former gradually diminish, climbers turn their attention to the discovery of new, more arduous ways of attaining the summits of mountains. Walking or riding being rather tame modes of reaching them in their

estimation, they are forever seeking new problems of ascent against which they may match their skill and strength, puny as these may be compared with the forces of lofty mountains. (NC)

MOUNT WHITNEY BY THE EAST FACE

by Robert L. M. Underhill

Our party had been gradually decreasing in size as we moved southward to more and more ambitious objectives. We had begun, most of us, up in the Yosemite as part of the Sierra Club Outing of 1931. At the close of that trip, nine, under the management of Francis Farquhar and the invaluable counsel-ship of Norman Clyde, had moved down to the region of the North Palisade where we had culled a little bouquet of new climbs in spite of four days (believe it of the Sierra or not!) of bad weather. Shifting southward again for our culminating effort, directed upon Mt. Whitney, we finally found ourselves a little remnant of five. (RU)

NC: Scalable with comparative ease from the south, west and north, Mt. Whitney, the highest peak in the United State proper, has lured mountaineers in quest of a "real climb." Last season a fairly difficult one was found leading from the east up a broad couloir culminating in a notch on an arete running northward from the peak and giving access to the north face, which was followed to the summit [the Mountaineer's Route]. Unsatisfied with this discovery, however, some climbers began to consider whether the apparently sheer east face of Mt. Whitney might not be scaled.

RU: At Farquhar's invitation and under his expert arrangement of program, I was enjoying a first climbing season in the High Sierra. The unclimbed east face of Mt. Whitney had been in both our minds from the start. True, whenever the subject came up for express discussion Farquhar was wont to observe with a chuckle that the face was pretty much of a precipice; but this seemed to diminish in nowise his estimate of the value of paying it a visit, and I eventually became highly stimulated by his view that sleek verticality was merely the normal terrain for rock climbing activities. Clyde, when he joined the party, gave a guarded confirmation of the topographic point, by judging from his more intimate acquaintance with the mountain, that the face was "pretty sheer." However, he showed himself completely indulgent to the enterprise, and gave us the immense benefit of his practical knowledge, without which we should have lost much time in coming to grips with our problem. The other two members of the group - Jules Eichorn, of San Francisco, and Glen Dawson, of Los Angeles, young natural-born rock climbers of the first water - had never seen the mountain; but neither had they seen any up and down the Sierra that they could not climb, and they were all enthusiasm.

[Underhill was mistaken: Jules had summited Whitney from the west in 1927. Regarding ages, Glen and Jules were then both 19, Underhill 42, Farquhar 43, and Clyde 46.]

RU: *On August 15th, then, we started up the Mt. Whitney trail from Lone Pine. Here I discovered that the best way to obtain a pure enjoyment of mountain scenery is by all odds to entrust the concomitant task of making elevation to a mule. However, we had to reassume operating responsibilities ourselves, and thereby give up all but a practical interest in the scenery, at a point somewhat short of the usual base camp, and strike up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek. Relieving the pack train of its load, we here shouldered outrageously heavy knapsacks (Clyde's being an especially picturesque enormity of skyscraper architecture), and worked up the side canyon via a high southerly shelf discovered by Clyde upon a previous occasion. Ripe currants, or at least the opportunity to delay while eating them, seemed to be a great attraction to some along here. The shelf at length debouched upon a knoll, on the farther slope of which, above the stream, we found the most beautiful campground I had yet seen in the Sierra. It lay at an altitude of about 10,500 feet, with the eastern escarpment of the whole Whitney group high and clear before it. In recognition of the fact that Clyde had discovered the spot, at least for mountaineers, and had hitherto been the only climber to use it, we hailed with one accord Farquhar's suggestion that it be christened "Clyde Meadow." [By Lower Boy Scout Lake]*

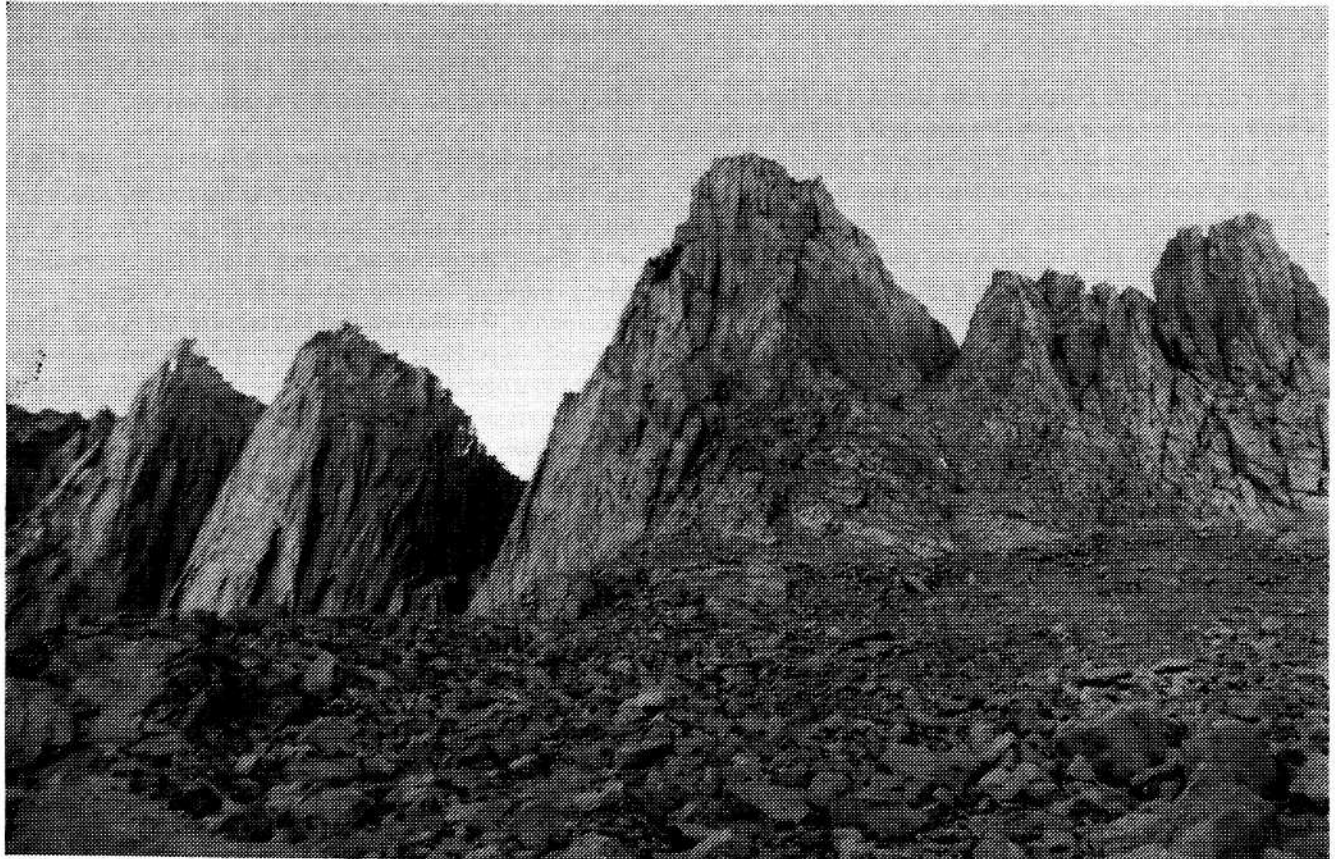
As we contemplated our mountain, in the evening light, I felt that it would be a mighty hard nut to crack. Certain vertical black lines, indicating gullies or chimneys, were indeed visible, but the questions remained whether they were individually climbable and susceptible of linkage together into a

route. Every rock climber knows, however, that such questions as these can be answered only at very close quarters; in particular, the broadside view of a peak, at any distance, is wholly non-committal or misleading. One feature, indeed, impressed us greatly. The northerly section of the east face stands forward from the remainder in a great square abutment, terminating above in a shoulder that lies some hundreds of feet below the actual summit. The object was clearly to gain this shoulder, and Clyde informed us of his own experience (for he had once descended thus far from the top) that the ascent from it to the summit was easy.

NC: *... Presently the sun sank behind the serrated peaks of Mt. Whitney, suffusing a few clouds that wreathed their summits with vivid-hued light.*

The ensuing dawn was literally "rosy-fingered," the peaks of Mt. Whitney and those on either side of the cirque glowing in roseate light of marvelous beauty. ...

RU: *Somewhat before seven o'clock the next morning, August 16th, we left camp. After the prolonged bad weather, we were treated to something more than what is considered, in the Sierra, an ordinary good day, and would rate as a perfect one elsewhere; even the Californians did not succeed in remaining impeccably blasé about it. [Underhill being an Easterner!] (I observed that they took to exclaiming, later on, over the hundreds of miles of clear visibility into Nevada and southern California.) Clyde led us down across the brook meadows and up along an "apron" of granite on the*



East Face of Mt. Whitney, picture taken by Jeff Solomon.

other (north) side to the floor of the next higher basin, thus neatly avoiding a long talus slope in the line of the more direct ascent. Crossing the brook again to the south, we now mounted the heel of a ridge which ran directly west into the mountain. This ridge rose in several steps, and at the top of each we paused a few moments to scrutinize, from ever higher and nearer, the problematic face. And it continued to look, I must confess, downright unclimbable. We had rather grown into the feeling, in the Palisades, that every Sierra mountain wall could be climbed, if only one tackled it properly; but at the present juncture I personally found myself becoming shaken in this conviction and wondering whether we weren't at last up against the so-called exception that proves the rule. I took to mapping out a route up the couloir to the south of the mountain in lieu of one up the face proper.

Our ridge now ran level for a bit, then sank slightly, preparatory to joining Mt. Whitney itself, up which it swung for a distance in the shape of a steep but broken rib. At its low point it formed the barrier of a subsidiary cirque to the north (i.e., to the northeast of Whitney) that contained a little lake [Iceberg Lake]. On the shore of this lake, just under the peak, we gathered for a final intensive bit of observation. Suddenly I saw what seemed a just possible route, and simultaneously Dawson and Eichorn exclaimed to the same effect. It turned out that we all had exactly the same thing in mind. Through the field glasses we now examined it in detail as well as we could, noting that much of it seemed possible, but that there were several very critical places. Rating our chances of success about fifty-fifty, we were eager to go ahead with the attempt.

To our extreme regret, Farquhar now decided to leave us. Not having had as long a period training as the rest of us, he felt that his presence might delay the party at critical points, and for the general good he renounced a share in the climb. After watching us for a while he set out alone, at his own pace, by way of the gully to the north, with which he was familiar through having descended it with Clyde in 1930.

NC: Our course decided upon, we left all unnecessary impedimenta including nailed shoes and an ice axe on a rock near the lake. In the matter of climbing equipment we took with us two alpine ropes averaging a 100 feet in length and a few pitons (spikes with iron rings through which to thread a rope) for possible use in roping down. ...

RU: Leaving at the lake everything we could spare, we left it at 9:30 and proceeded up the rib already mentioned about five hundred feet over loose rock, past one small tower on the left and to the foot of another, where the rock steepened and became firm. Here we roped up (10:00), Dawson and I together, and Eichorn and Clyde. (I might remark at once that the whole climb was a thoroughly cooperative enterprise. At times one rope would go ahead, then the other; and each rope shifted leaders several times.) [In fact, Jules lead his rope the entire time; and Glen his, except at the crux

traverse.] The first problem was to get from our position on the outjutting rib back to the true face of the mountain, to the left (south) of it. A direct rising traverse along the left flank of the rib looked inviting at first, but when I had climbed up here some distance I didn't like the looks of the remainder and suggested that Eichorn and Clyde try around to the right instead. This latter proved to be the preferable way: climbing some seventy-five feet diagonally to the right up the tower before us, we then traversed along its right flank to a little col; here we recrossed the rib to the left (south), descended to a little gully some forty feet, and moved a few steps farther to the south on a good ledge to the face of the mountain, just at the level where its lower precipice breaks back in some rising tiers of slabs.

[In other words, they climbed around behind the Second Tower, the route now used at the start of the climb of the East Buttress. The now commonly-used Tower Traverse (also known as the Eichorn Traverse) was pioneered three years later by Jules with Marjory Bridge, the first woman to ascend the East Face.]

RU: These slabs [The Washboard] were climbed easily for some three hundred feet up into a little recess, bounded on the right by the rib we had left, on the left by a low rock wall, and in back, or straight ahead of us, by a new uplift of sheer cliff. We now surmounted the wall to our left, and found ourselves on the southerly edge of the huge rectangular abutment previously mentioned (it was the face of this abutment which we had hitherto been climbing), and looking into the deep reentrant right-angle where it joined the southern half of the general east face, or the main body of the mountain. Descending slightly, we traversed right (west) along the side of the abutment into this corner.

It was clear that the hardest part of the climb now lay before us. The right wall of the corner - the wall of the abutment, leading to the shoulder - was out of the question. The left wall - that of the mountain proper - sloped back promisingly after a couple of hundred feet, but that initial section looked like trouble. We attacked it at first close to the corner. After climbing up perhaps fifty feet here, however, we were confronted by a bad crack. ((Editor Farquhar inserted a footnote into the article here: On September 6, 1931, Glen Dawson, Walter Brem, and Richard Jones descended the east face, varying from the route of the ascent by roping down over this crack.)) [This latter party had reached the summit by the trail. The crack is now known as the Shaky Leg Crack, first climbed in 1936.] It looked climbable at a pinch - in fact, Dawson and Eichorn were both confident of being able to do it and eager to have a try - but before such a tour de force was undertaken Clyde and I urged that a traverse, which we had all already noticed out to the left, be investigated. For this we descended part way again and then moved out to the south around a minor protruding rib which had obscured the farther view. Encouraged by what we saw we continued the traverse, which now led us out in a very exposed position directly over the tremendous precipice that falls a thousand

feet to the snow fields and talus piles at the foot of the mountain. [The Fresh Air Traverse] Some loose rocks which we here pried off fell without a sound for an uncanny number of seconds before crashing once for all at the head of the glacier. The hazard, however, was only illusory, as the holds were good and the climbing not difficult, though involving more delicate problems of balance than had any hitherto.

NC: ... The traverse proved to be one requiring considerable steadiness, as the ledges were narrow and there was a thousand feet of fresh air below. As we came around the projection we were confronted by a gap in a ledge with a narrow platform about eight feet below. There was the alternative of stepping across it - about the greatest distance a man of medium height could possibly reach, availing himself of rather poor handholds - or of dropping down to the platform and climbing the other side of the gap. Some members of the party chose one method, some chose the other. Once over the break in the ledge we were obliged to pull ourselves over a rounded rock by clinging to a diagonal crack with our hands while our feet swung out, momentarily, over the thousand foot precipice.

[It is remarkable that neither author mentions the use of pitons on the ascent. Eichorn's recollection is that no pitons were used. Dawson thinks that one may have been used at the Fresh Air Traverse, which Underhill lead, but is unsure. The old pitons currently existing on the climb were placed later in the 30's then.]

RU: The traverse, perhaps a hundred feet in total length, turned diagonally upward into the foot of a small chimney containing much loose rock. Half-way up this chimney we moved out of it again on the right and climbed directly up over a couple of shelves. The last of these was spacious enough to accommodate the whole party, and here, in a very airy situation, fronting the magnificent drop to the glacier, we paused twenty minutes for lunch

We had now practically passed the band of difficult rock. A short movement to the left, across the head of the little chimney, a straight-forward pitch or two upward, and a longer easy traverse back again to the right returned us into the corner formed by the great abutment, at a point where its left flank (upon which we were) took the shape of a large gully sloping back at a pleasant angle. Up this we scrambled, at first easily for a hundred feet over scree, then with increasing difficulty for seventy-five feet more over a series of huge granite steps [The Grand Staircase]. The last of these steps was surmounted, in its left-hand (southwest) corner, by means of a pretty little chimney, the secret of which - discovered by Dawson, leading, for the whole party - was to step out, near the top, upon the south wall of the great gully. Here we observed that a route from our lunching place, directly up the south ridge of the gully to the point where we now stood, would probably have been easier than the one we had taken up the granite steps in the base of the gully itself.

Our difficulties were now over. Moving around the head of the gully to the right (north), we found ourselves upon the shoulder that caps the great abutment, with nothing but easy broken rock, as Clyde had foretold, between us and the summit. The monument [large cairn] hove in view, unexpectedly close above, and was greeted by a cheer. Taking off the ropes, which were no longer necessary, we made our way individually up the final stretch by various routes (the easiest seemed to be around to the left near the top), and at 12:45 were shaking hands with Farquhar on the summit.

NC: ... Within a few minutes we came within sight of the cairn, little more than two hundred feet above us. Quickening our speed, we clambered hastily upward, arriving at the summit considerably elated by the successful accomplishment of the first ascent of Mt. Whitney up its apparently unscalable eastern face. Francis Farquhar, having ascended the mountain by another route, was there to greet us.

After spending an hour or more on the top, the party separated, three members following the trail southward in order to ascend Mt. Muir, while Dr. Underhill and I proceeded to descend the north face to a notch a few hundred feet below the summit. ...

RU: The route we had followed was exactly that which we had mapped out originally while standing by the little lake. Much of the fascination of our climb lay, in fact, in seeing the sections which we had marked out for ourselves as critical successively opening up to permit us a way. The rock work was not really difficult. There is, I should say, less than a thousand feet of it from the roping up to the unroping place, and I believe a good climbing party that knew the route could ascend from the lake to the summit in something like half the time we required upon the first occasion. [Of the four, only Underhill never returned.] The beauty of the climb in general lies chiefly in its unexpected possibility, up the apparent precipice, and in the intimate contact it affords with the features that lend Mt. Whitney its real impressiveness.

NC: After an evening spent consuming enormous quantities of food and lounging about the campfire, we retired to our sleeping bags under nearby foxtail pines, solemn and silent beneath a sky spangled with countless stars overarching the mountains that loomed darkly around the basin. On the following morning we make up our packs and proceeded down the canyon, pleased at having added another outstanding climb to the many already discovered in the Sierra Nevada.

END OF PART I

PART II - BEYOND WHITNEY will appear in a future *Echo* issue.

Gary Guenther, an SPS member residing in Mammoth Lakes, has alerted me to this month's conservation issue and also provided me with extensive relevant documentation.

In a Decision Notice, dated 7-11-1986, Dennis W. Martin, Supervisor of Inyo National Forest allowed commercial packers to bring in firewood into fragile, high alpine ecosystems, under the cover of a "No Action but Permit Testing" alternative. There is no information about where the resources to properly study the proposed action are coming from.

In short, packers have requested to be allowed to bring in fire wood into fire restricted areas because many of their clients would not consider a wilderness experience complete without an open fire. This decision by Dennis Martin is the response to their request. The Environmental Impact Report accompanying the decision acknowledges that stock causes more damage than humans and fires in high alpine ecosystems are damaging. The Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, and the National Park Service have voiced their opposition to this decision in writing. The National Park Service best summarizes the reasons:

1. Additional stock needed to carry the wood would mean increased trail and meadow impact,
2. Backpacker/stock user conflict may occur as backpackers will not be able to carry wood or have fires where others have fires going,

3. Law enforcement would be difficult. Local wood could be used to supplement packed-in wood. Desecration of the forest would likely be the result,

4. Foreign materials would be introduced into the wilderness.

I also question the availability of funds and manpower to adequately test the impact of this decision. If there is no test being conducted, then this decision is using testing to provide a loophole for commercial packers to escape sound wilderness management policies.

Thanks to Gary Guenther for bringing this important conservation issue to our attention. This decision affects Mono, Madera, Fresno, Inyo and Tulare counties. It includes sensitive areas such as the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wildernesses.

Please write your objections to this "Alternative C No Action but Permit Testing" plan to Dennis W. Martin, Inyo National Forest Supervisor, 873 N. Main, Bishop, CA 93514. If you don't like to write letters, send me an SASE for the three versions I have prepared. You can sign the one that best represents your point of view.

Sylvia Sur
658 Flaming Star
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

TRIBUTE (continued)

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