

Newsletter of the Peak Climbing Section,
Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club

August 1992

Vol. 25, No. 8

Matterhorn Madness

We were just below the summit, and downclimbing furiously, when all hell broke loose. Dark, malevolent clouds swept across the upper part of the mountain, hailstones stung our shoulders and thunder rumbled from all points on the compass.

All afternoon the storm had been patiently laying a trap for the seven of us, and now, as we scrambled posthaste off the top of Matterhorn Peak, it was springing it. And it was a wild one, dishing up generous helpings of snow, hail, rain, wind, thunder and swirling mist in various disagreeable combinations. Parka hoods cinched tight, ears cocked for the warning sound of buzzing ice axes, we hurried down to a col south of the peak and then dropped lickety-split down a slope of ball-bearing scree toward the valley below.

Mid-June, as you will recall, was a period of weird, unsettled weather in the Sierra, and we had managed to climb up into the very maw of a summer storm that startled us with its ferocity. Instead of scampering back toward the shel-

ter of Twin Lakes, though, we continued over Matterhorn Peak and deeper into the back country. That had been our plan all along, and we figured the storm had to blow itself out soon. Three hours later, though, we were still being lashed as we downclimbed rain-slickened rock. My GoreTex parka had soaked through, and several of us were showing the early signs of hypothermia.

That morning, as he set off from the cars, we had been a pretty smug bunch. We were going fast and light on Kai Wiedman's alpine ramble, and we had pared our loads down to the bare essentials. On the trail up Horse Creek Canyon, we passed a couple headed in to climb the same route as us, but they were staggering under huge, knee-buckling loads.

By comparison, most of us were carrying slightly oversized daypacks for an overnight trip. The skies were blue and the air warm, but as we left the trail below Horse Creek Pass the first wispy clouds began to appear on the eastern horizon.

The snow in the couloir above the glacier was firm but yielding, and two or three hard kicks resulted in a decent step. Soon we settled into the classic snow-climbing rhythm: plant the ice axe, kick, kick, step, plant. We were a pretty fit group, but Jim Curl was virtually bionic. He kicked steps faster than the rest of us could follow them. The couloir was steep enough to require our full attention, and we didn't spend a lot of time looking over our shoulders at what was developing in the sky.

It wasn't until we were scrambling up the northeast ridge that we realized we'd been had. With frightening suddenness, the storm closed in on us with a pincer movement. We visited the summit only long enough to nix Kai's original idea of descending a steep, untried ridge/buttress leading toward the Doodad.

Instead we made our way down easier slopes and angled through the blowing snow and rain toward Burro Pass, at the head of Slide Canyon. The route-finding was a bit tricky in the mist, but Jim and Brian Boyle kept us on track. Eventually some scrambling and a couple of standing glissades brought us down into the lush green meadows at the upper reaches of the canyon.

Under different circumstances I might have proclaimed this one of the most beautiful places I've seen in the Sierra, but we were all wet, cold and demoralized. By now it was 6:30 p.m., and the storm showed no sign of letting up. It looked as if like the night would be

a miserable, shivering one, especially so for Peter Maxwell, who didn't even have a bivy sack. (Although, for some reason, he didn't seem very concerned about this. (Peter's layering system, incidentally, consisted of a Pierre Cardin dress shirt under a Marmot parka.)

They were soon supplanted by ugly, black-bottomed monsters that looked as if they meant business. Over lunch on the moraine below the Matterhorn Glacier, we studied and analyzed the evolving weather system, trying to read the cloud patterns like tea leaves. The storm seemed to be splitting in half, with one half going to the south of us and the other to the north. Little did we guess that this was a cunning flanking maneuver. Above us the sky was clear and Matterhorn Peak looked sunny and inviting. The vote to go for it was unanimous.

An hour later, just as we were reaching the first pines that could stand up and be counted as real trees, the storm finally took pity on us and lifted. After setting up camp and cooking dinner, we all wanted a fire, so I employed a crafty stove-assisted wet-wood-lighting technique I described a few years ago in SCREE.

If any of you clipped out the article, you might as well throw it away. It doesn't work all that well. Sunday dawned sunny and warm, and after lingering in camp long enough to dry everything out we continued down Slide Canyon to its confluence with Little Slide Canyon.

Striking off cross-country, we wandered down this side canyon, one of the real gems of the Sierra. Sparkling sapphire lakes; a rushing stream; luxurious, flower-dotted meadows; soaring granite spires - Little Slide Canyon has it all.

As we neared the bottom, Noreen Ford, who had been this way before, offered some advice. "The one thing we don't want to do here is go to the right," she said. "Let's go to the right," replied Kai. At first it looked as if Kai was right--there was a faint trail to follow, and the going was pretty easy.

But as we emerged at Robinson Creek, Noreen got to have the *Mother-of-all-I-told-you-so's*.

Spread out before us was a vast, swamp-besotted network of beaver ponds, grassy mud bogs, and thigh-deep muck holes. Real "Apocalypse Now" stuff. Jim Curl and Paul Vlasveld took a long, circuitous route upstream, while the rest of us just plunged ahead and mucked our way through it. We all reached the trail at the far side around the same time, but from the waist down Jim and Paul were a lot cleaner.

As we approached the cars, we were a contented bunch. We'd seen a lot of wild and magnificent country in two days, climbed a majestic alpine peak and displayed a stiff upper lip during the worst the skies could toss at us.

Kudos to Kai for planning it. This was a good one.

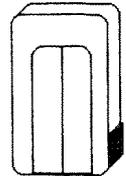
-John Flinn

LOST IN ACTION

Missing: my old "Hiking Yellowstone" Sierra Club totebook, by O. Bach. Yellow cover, 1970's edition, well-loved and used. Did I lend it to a PCS friend? If so, please call me (Chris Macintosh) at 415 325-7841.

LOWE Internal Frame

Medium capacity backpack, in good condition, for \$25. Call Dorothy Coltrin 408-253-1165



PERMITFORBUBB

Backcountry permit for Bubbs Creek (Kings Canyon) on Sept 12 for 6 people. Asking \$18, but will consider any offer for this great west side trailhead. Contact Kelly Maas at 408-279-2054.

LOS GATOS APT

PCS member wishes to share luxury 2brdm / 2 ba 1200 sqft apt on Lake Vasona with beautiful mountain view. Fireplace, dishwasher, pool, sauna, enclosed garage, air conditioning, available washer and dryer. Seeking quiet, stable professional person (M/F) to share expenses equally. \$563/month plus half utilities, deposit. Call RexNaden at 408-434-3089 (w) or 408-354-5143 (h).

Becoming a Mountaineer

Climbing a peak inevitably involves off-trail hiking. This month's PCS Mountaineering Committee column features an informative section on the equipment needed for cross country travel as excerpted from the Sierra Club Totebook Timberline Country: The Sierra High Route by Steve Roper and hints for hiking excerpted from The 2 oz. Backpacker: A Problem Solving Manual for Use in the Wilds by Robert S. Wood.

Next month we'll provide information on the actual cross-country travel techniques across talus, scree, snowfields, streams and slabs (but if you need this information before then, just get Roper's book and turn to pages 13-22 or Woods' book, pages 9-43).

From Roper

. . . cross-country travel, a type of hiking significantly different from normal trail walking. Perhaps the greatest dissimilarity between the two types concerns the walker's rhythm. The consistent, relaxing strides favored by those who travel well-maintained trails are replaced, in rugged terrain, by irregular movements of the feet and continual body shifts that alter balance. . . . in the end it proves more rewarding to discover techniques on one's own than to be told at every juncture what one is doing wrong. Still, cross-country hiking . . . can be made safer and more

enjoyable by absorbing the small number of basic lessons a book can furnish. The advice that follows is given with one overriding thought in mind: a trip without traumas is bound to be a pleasurable one.

Perhaps the prime piece of advice for beginners is to start hiking early each day and move slowly, but inexorably, toward the next campsite. Unpleasant experiences often result from being tired and pressed for time at the end of a strenuous day. . .

However carefully one plans the itinerary, the day's journey will not be carefree if one is burdened with inferior or unnecessary equipment. Although the cross-country hiker's gear closely approximates that of the trail walker, the traveler should reevaluate his or her equipment with the more demanding terrain in mind. The two most important items to reexamine are boots and packs.

Lightweight boots suitable for trail walking may not give the talus walker enough support; indeed, they may even fall apart before the journey is completed. Boots constructed with heavier materials and thicker soles will prove superior on much . . . rugged terrain. (Incidentally, lug soles once were thought to be indispensable for mountain travel; yet boots with smooth rubber or composition soles work equally well, . . . and are preferable to lug soles because they don't tear apart the earth un-

derfoot with such alarming efficiency.)

Regardless of the weight carried, packs constructed with aluminum tubing are usually top-heavy, and as the hiker lurches through talus, the rigid load can shift abruptly and throw him or her off balance. . . . "equilibrium destroyers." Frameless packs -- or packs with nonrigid internal frames -- prove far superior for cross-country travel because they cannot shift independently of the body. The hiker in the market for a new pack should consider the frameless styles. In addition to their non-shifting characteristics, frameless packs admirably substitute as daypacks, a boon to hikers who plan side trips while on a backpacking journey. It must be admitted that frameless packs have one drawback: they are not as comfortable as their rigid counterparts. Resting directly against the body, they quickly trap the sweat from one's back, thus causing a hot, sticky feeling relieved only by removing the burden." From Woods

"Walking involves about a hundred different muscles, but all the walker's propulsive thrust is delivered by the terminal bone of the big toe. Our computer propels us by converting potential energy to kinetic energy with almost 50% efficiency. Walking is a state of carefully controlled falling, using the acceleration of gravity for the purpose. . . . Walking downhill is easier because the body can fall further, Freely swinging arms help walking efficiency by stabilizing

the shoulders and pelvis with the thrust of their counter rotation.

Hurrying, especially uphill, can be counter productive in another way. Super exertion produces lactic acid in the blood, which hampers muscle performance, causes great discomfort and requires more than an hour for recovery, So the clever backpacker's strategy requires keeping his [sic] activity level below the lactic acid formation stage. On difficult grades that means slowing the pace to a comfortable level or stopping frequently to rest and allow oxidation to flush the blood of acid buildup. . . .

It is important to react immediately to changes in grade. Failure to cut speed instantly when the trail turns abruptly upward places a demand on the body for extra exertion. . . . Large expenditures of energy -- running, lunging, jumping, taking huge steps, even hiking too fast -- must be avoided.

On a really steep slope, at high altitude under load, or where the footing is bad (sand, scree or loose snow), I adjust my pace even more precisely by controlling my step-to-breath ratio. I may, for instance, take two steps to the breath, inhaling as I plant my right foot and exhaling as I plant my left. If that proves hard to maintain, I may slow to a breath for every step or even two breaths per step, with a greatly shortened stride. On exceptionally difficult slopes it is better to slow to a crawl, taking six inch steps, then to make the frequent stops a faster pace would require.

Starting and stopping consume extra energy. .

Ask Mr./MS. Mountain

Mr./MS. Mountain has been patiently checking the mail box and telephone answering machine and will respond to ALL questions received (once any are received). Address questions to 112 Garcia Avenue, #301, San Leandro, CA 94577 or call 510/430-2631.

PCS Hints

When faced with the dismal task of tons o' downhill you can save your toenails by placing a small piece of ensolite (or folded extra sock, bandanna, whatever) under the tongue of your boot before lacing snugly. This helps keep your foot back and away from banging against the front of your boot.

CLIMBING THE COULOIR, (or, K2 Revisited)

We all met at 6:30 am, Saturday, June 13, in the parking lot of TPR (Tioga Pass Resort) to sort our gear, put gaiters and boots on, and layer all clothing, prior to beginning our all day climb of the Mt. Dana Couloir.

The group consisted of Debbie Benham, Brian Boyle, Daniel Lord, Kelly Mass (leader), Charles Schafer, and Bob Suzuki. Temperatures had dropped the previous night, and I believe the range throughout the day was 25 to 35 degrees. Daniel Lord quipped that this was the first time he had done a winter ascent of Dana.

We drove to within a few yards of the Tioga Pass entrance station and were on our way about 8: 15 am. It was very cold and crisp with clear skies; however, we were not novices to the changeable weather in the high country. Upon asking Kelly Maas about the weather, and "What is the forecast?," he grimly replied, "The forecast is for pain".

As we reached the final ridge that circles Dana Lake, we had our first full view of the Dana glacier and the couloir. It was spectacular and startling -- hard snow conditions with visible ice beneath the layer of snow. We now realized that we had entered "THE DEATH ZONE" where ". .the adrenaline alone could kill you. ."

We stopped on the ridge to put on our crampons and it was here that we noticed the first clouds coming in just to the southwest of the summit. The wind was whipping, but the sun was shining. We traversed the bowl of the glacier to get to the base of the couloir and stayed high rather than lose elevation and actually begin the climb from the bottom.

While Roper describes the angle as 40 degrees, we mutually consented that the angle was actually 45. Kelly Maas and Brian Boyle began the climb and front-pointed up the couloir. The rest of

the group combined several techniques (French technique, side-stepping) while traversing from side to side. We all self-belayed with our ice axes. About half way up, there was some rock fall. One rock shot by and reminded us of a round saw blade by its noise and shape. Charles Schafer was tapped by some of the rocks, but was un-hurt.

We ascended the top of the couloir at 1:00, took our photos, then determinedly turned and headed for the summit of Mt. Dana. We reached the top at 1:30 where brisk, cold winds greeted us. Looking east, we not only had a wondrous view of the Mono basin: but a good look at the couloir we had just climbed. Kelly looked at the thermometer, and read out, "25 degrees!"

We headed back down the 'regular' route about 2:15-2:30, and reached the cars about 4:30-4:45. On the final hike out amongst the trees, slight snow flurries began. By the time we were in the cars and headed toward Tuolumne Meadows campground, snow was coming down slow and steady. What great timing!!!

By mutual agreement, we all decided to set up camp, then head on over to Tioga Pass Resort for a warm, 'somebody-else-cooking' meal. While waiting to be seated, we went over to warm ourselves by the fire, and ran into Bob Coble, Dave Caldwell, and Balu Sharma. Apparently, they had been investigating rock climbs in the Glen Aulin Canyon areas.

As we enjoyed and savored our respective dinners, talk turned to tomorrow's hike. Due to the weather conditions, we were unsure about climbing the planned Unicorn Peak. As it turned out, the decision was made the next morning, and we all agreed that the Echo Peaks were "just the ticket."

Jim Curl joined our group that morning, and he, like the rest of us, was eager to "do something" that day.

Snow flurries enshrouded us and followed us to Budd Lake. We passed several backpackers heading out and commenting on the opportunity to build a snowman; however, we were a determined group. The snow stopped, the cold weather didn't, and all of us climbed Echo Peaks 5 and 8.

Kelly, Daniel, Bob, and Jim continued on and summited Peaks 1, 2, 3, and 7. Several members hiked up to the top of Echo Ridge, where spectacular views were had of Matthes Crest and the Coxcomb.

We left the Echo Peaks playground around 2:30-3:00 and reached the cars soon after. Dinner at Sonia's Restaurant in Oakdale was delicious, and a perfect way to end a very successful weekend...

— Debbie Benham

Q. Doctor, how many autopsies have you performed on dead

A. All my autopsies have been performed on dead people.

ADVANCE TRIP SCHEDULE

A quick place to look for trips, but full write-ups may be available for trips that are NOT listed here. Unfortunately, some trips are not being written up at all, so "open season" is hereby declared by the official PCS Scheduler.

denotes trips that are definitely private

N denotes new trip or new information

Date	Class	Destination	Leader
August	3	Mt Hoffman (co-leader needs leader)	Sally Glynn
Aug 14-16	ice	# V-Notch Couloir / Mt Sill	Eugene Miya
Aug 8-9	2	Pyramid Pk (Tahoe)	John Flinn
Aug 8-16	mix	# North Cascades (Washington)	Kelly Maas
Aug 22-23	3	Rogers Pk	Kelly Maas
Aug 29-30	2	Simmons Pk	Noreen Ford
Aug 29-30	2-3	Red & White Mtn	Roger Crawley
Sept 4-7		# Kearsarge Pass to Taboose Pass (wl peaks)	Eugene Miya
Sept 5-7	3	Mt Stanford (south)	Peter Maxwell
Sept 12-13		Tuolumne Meadows (car camp)	Cecil Magliocco
Sept 12-13	2	Graveyard Pk	Roger Crawley
Sept 1Q-20	2	Mt Hutchings	Aaron Schuman
Sept 26-27	2	Half Dome	Brian Boyle
Ott 2-4		Great Western Divide "marathon"	Butch Suits
Ott 10-11	3	Virginia Pk	Gary Pinson

Trip Classifications

These classifications are to assist you in choosing trips for which you are qualified. No simple rating system can anticipate all possible conditions:

Class 1: Walking on a trail

Class 2: Walking cross-country, using hands for balance only.

Class 3: Climbing which requires use of hands, occasional use of a rope.

Class 4: Climbing which requires rope belays.

Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Private trips are listed only because readers might be interested in them. They are not authorized, insured, sponsored or supervised by the PCS or the Sierra Club.

Meetings & Deadlines

PCS meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month. Each month's meeting location and time is printed in the Scree which arrives near the first of that month.

You may Email or FAX entries to the Editor as indicated on the back cover. A computer dialup (modem) is available upon request, and both DOS and **high-density** MAC diskettes can be sent.

Scree articles and contributions must be received by the editor no later than noon on the last Tuesday of the month.

Official PCS Trips

Official PCS trips must be submitted through the Scheduler (see back cover).

Mr. Rodgers

Date: Aug 22-23 (Sat-Sun) 12,978'

Where: Rodgers Peak Class 3
SE Yosemite: Merced Pk, Devils
Postpile, Mono Craters maps (15')

Leader: Kelly Maas
home 408-279-2054
work 408-944-2078

Co-Leader; Co-Leader wanted

Rodgers Peak is about a mile south of Mt Lye11 and only 136 ft lower. The climb is class 3 from Marie Lakes, which we'll reach from the east by hiking up Rush Creek from the June Lake loop off Hwy 395. If time allows, we might also try some of the smaller peaks between Rodgers and Mt. Davis. The hike to camp may be close to 10 miles, with good elevation gain, \$5 to reserve a spot.

NEW: Tuolomne Meadows #2

Date: Sept 19-20

Where: Yosemite

Leader: Debbie Benham
home 415-964-0558

Co-Leader: Anne Gaillard
home 408-737-9770

If you missed Cecil's group camp of Sept 12- 13, here's a second chance to enjoy the high country of Yosemite without the crowds. We've reserved two adjacent campsites on Friday and Saturday night for a total of 8-10 people. Hikes to Shepard's Crest and Mono Pass will be lead, but feel free to do what you like. Beginners are welcome.

Private Trips

Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree Editor, but the Scheduler may be able to help the leader avoid conflicts (see back cover).

Navigation

Date: Aug 28-30 (Fri-Sun) 12,053'

Where: **Simmons** Peak Class 2-3
Yosemite, Tuolomne Meadows

Contact: Noreen Ford
home 510-430-263 1

After a pre-trip navigation seminar on Wednesday, August 19, 7-9 pm, we'll be honing our navigation skills on this trip. Plan to carpool up Friday night, carcamp in Yosemite, and make an early start from Rafferty Creek trail-head on Saturday morning. We will

hike in 10 miles (not much elevation gain, honest!) to make our camp in a lake basin below Amelia Earhart, Vogelsang, and Parsons Peaks. We hope to summit on Simmons (and get views of Lyell) on Saturday and have time for an optional hop up Vogelsang on the way back Sunday. Bring at least one new joke and be prepared for heated Hearts card games. You must attend the navigation course in order to join this expedition.

Private Trips

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but the Scheduler may be able to help the leader avoid conflicts (see back cover).

Red & White

Dater Aug 29-30 (Sat-Sun) 12,850'
Where: Red & White Mtn Class 2-3
McGee Creek / Hwy 395 area
Contact: Roger Crawley
home 415-321-8602
work 415-324-2721 x470

Starting at 8000', the trail follows beautiful McGee Creek about 7 miles. Camp above 10,500'. Sunday we climb the steep talus SE slope. Apres hike soak at Hot Creek.

V-Notch Ice

When: Sometime in August
Where: Eastern Sierra
Contact: E. Miya 415-961-6772.

The "V-notch" is a 900-foot high, 50-degree ice couloir which rises above the Palisade Glacier between Mt. Sill and North Palisade. This is not a beginner ice climb.

The crux is usually surmounting a near vertical schrund. 6 people max. Each climber should be capable of leading any ice pitch, should have own gear (rope, crampons, ax/hammer/tools, ice screws, biners and other rock pro) and should be capable of ascending the complete climb (900-ft) in approximately 3 hours or bailing.

The leader reserves the right to send a slow party back on short notice. Partner/climbers must have experience to do this climb on their own. An opportunity to ascend Mt. Sill can follow completion of the climb for those who want a summit.

Graduation

Date: September 5-7 (Sat-Mon) 13,963'
Where: Mt Stanford Class 3
Kearsarge Pass Mt Whitney Topo
Contact: Peter Maxwell
home 408-737-9770
Assistant: Kelly Maas
home 408-279-2054

Graduate from Stanford with 70 degrees. These are of the highly sought-after fahrenheit variety. Be a step above Caltech (a nearby peak). All it takes to earn such fame is to participate. Roper states that this peak has several routes up, "none of them trivial". We head over Kearsarge Pass and follow the John Muir trail up Bubbs Creek to a high campsite, which will set the stage for our ascent the next day and the graduation ceremony on the summit.

Tuolumne #1

Date: Sept 12-13
Where: Tuoiomne Meadows
Yosemite
Contact Cecil Magliocco
home 408-946-1238

Enjoy the first weekend away from the summer crowds in the Tuolumne Meadows Group Campsite. A couple of climbs will be lead, but come and do your own thing if you like.

Non-climbing family members are welcome (small ones too).

**"Thank God we don't
get all the government
we pay for!"**

Private Trips

Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree Editor,
but the Scheduler may be able to help the leader avoid conflicts (see back cover).

Graveyard

Date: Sept 12-13 (Sat-Sun) 11,494'

Where: Graveyard Peak Class 2
Edison Lake area

Contact: Roger Crawley
home 415-321-8602
work 415-324-2721 x470

I wouldn't drive a hearse over the long, winding, old-time road, but the hike isn't deadly. Meet at High Sierra Ranger Station, about 15 miles past Huntington Lake at 7AM.

Hike starts at Edison Lake (7600'). It's about 7 miles, I reckon. Sleep with the dead at Graveyard Lakes (10,000'). Come alive at Mono Hot Spring before the trip home.

Brewer Blitzkrieg

Date: Oct 2-4 Fri-Sun 13,570'

Where: Brewer, Farquhar, etc. Class 3
Kings Canyon / Cedar Grove

Contact: Butch Suits
home (before 10pm) 415-964-4227

With light packs and resolute hearts we will loop around the northern end of the Great Western Divide, climbing four major peaks along the way: South Guard, Brewer, North Guard, and Farquhar (12,960' to 13,570').

From the bowels of Kings Canyon (5,000') we will access the peaks via Onzel Creek and descend Sphinx Creek, gaining (and descending) about 12,000'. Because this trip is very strenuous, participation is limited to strong third-class climbers with whom I have climbed previously. Both high camps will be around 11,000'.

NEW: Virginia

Date: Ott 10-11 (Day) 12,001'

Where: Virginia Peak Class 2-3
Matterhorn Quad Topo

Contact: Gary Pinson
don't call 408-997-0298

Assistant: Debbie Benham
home 415-964-0558

Enjoy some steep Class 2 climbing on this very enjoyable peak. This is the best time in the Sierras - mosquitoes and tourists have gone and the air is crisp. The preferable and more direct route is from Green Creek. Because of the short hike in, we will possibly climb Virginia Peak on Saturday. Depending on our collective moods and the weather, we have our pick of another summit on Sunday.

Bearly Scratched

A Santa Cruz man attacked by a bear in Yosemite National Park suffered minor injuries when an apparently hungry bear attacked him.

Rob Conklin, 22, was treated with stitches by a doctor who was hiking in the area near Long Meadow. Conklin and two fellow campers stored food near their tent the night before waking to a full-grown charging bear. Conklin suffered scratches on his face, back, and collarbone. He said the bear retreated after he kicked it.

— Peninsula Times Tribune

No one will ever accuse Phyllis Otrich of being a "scardy cat" again-Ed.

Mt. Tyndall The Hard Way

Veterans of the weekend dash up distant Sierra peaks might find interesting how peak bagging has changed over the years. Consider the first ascent of Mt. Tyndall as related in Clarence King's "Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada" (1872). This was not only the state's first 14 thousand'er climbed, but according to Roper's Guide it was among the first five major peaks ascended anywhere in California, preceded by Mts. Tom, Hoffman, Dana, and Brewer. The amazing thing about this ascent, however, was not so much the climb itself, but the approach King and Richard Cotter took to reach the peak.

In June of 1864 they left Visalia on horseback as part of a survey team that included Charles Hoffman and William Brewer. Many days were spent winding their way through the Sequoia forests of the Sierras' western slope before they descended into Kings Canyon [note: named by early Spanish explores and no relation to Clarence].

From a camp on the Roaring River they viewed "a great pyramidal peak which swelled up against the eastern sky, closing the view in that direction" which Brewer and Hoffman climbed. Assuming that they were attaining the summit of the Sierra, they were shock to view on the other side not the expected Owens Valley but a wall of still higher peaks on the distant eastern horizon.

Upon returning from what had been the first ascent of Mt. Brewer, they related their unsettling discovery to King and Cotter. Fired by the possibility that the distant peaks might be the highest in the range, the latter two volunteered to get a closer look. However, as was to become apparent to them and to anyone today who has seen the topography on the map or in person, approaching Mt. Tyndall from the vicinity of Mt. Brewer is not a trivial task.

After gaining the saddle south of Mt. Brewer, they proceeded south along the Great Western Divide, probably making the first ascent of South Guard in the process. They were eventually stopped by difficulties on the Divide, and descended eastward into a headwater cirque of a tributary of Bubbs Creek. The crux of their entire journey came on the second day when, from a tenuous position just below the crest of the Kings-Kern Divide and from which they could not descend, they were forced to lasso a "small protuberance" and ascend the rope hand over hand.

"The smooth precipice-face against which my body swung offered no foothold, and the whole climb had therefore to be done by the arms, an effort requiring all one's determination. When about half-way up I was obliged to rest, and, curling my feet in the rope, managed to relieve my arms for a moment. In this position I could

not resist the fascinating temptation of a survey downward.”

The descent down the other side of the Divide proved no less difficult, and it took the rest of the day to reach their high camp in a cluster of trees on the shoulder of a mountain that they had chosen as their next day’s objective. Its ascent the following morning ended by chopping steps (with a bowie knife!) up an ice-filled gully leading to the summit.

“At last, in order to prevent myself from falling over backwards, I was obliged to thrust my hands into the crack between the ice and the wall, and the spire became so narrow that I could do this on both sides; so that the climb was made as upon a tree, cutting mere toe-holes and embracing the whole column of ice in my arms.”

From the top a careful survey lead to the disappointing conclusion that a few of the surrounding peak were higher (i.e., Williamson, Russell, and Whitney). Finally turning to descend, they discovered that the ice stairway had melted out and fallen onto the snowfield below. They ended up descending the SW ridge and skirted the mountain’s base back to their camp. Feasting on their meager supply of venison, they quietly celebrated their accomplishment beneath a billion twinkling stars.

The return over Kings-Kern Divide proved as difficult as the approach. After gingerly descending down the glacier-polished north face of the Divide (Cotter’s

boots had disintegrate by this time), they were forced into an ascending traverse around the south side of what was later named Lake Reflection. At one point King belayed Cotter up a particularly thin and exposed lead and was relieved when Cotter reported down that he had arrived at a good belay spot.

With this in mind, King confidently top-roped the difficult route, at one point nearly falling. He arrived at Cotter’s position only to discover him sitting on a downsloping ledge, rope in hand, and secured only to thin air. Nor was the rest of their return your typical alpine stroll:

“Cotter’s feet were severely cut; his tracks upon the snow were marked by stains of blood, yet he kept on with undiminished spirit, never once complaining.”

It took them an extra five miles to finally and jubilantly arrive at base camp; Brewer had moved the camp down-river and had commenced writing death notices to King’s and Cotter’s next of kin.

[Next: Americans invent cars, build Highway 395, and climb Tyndall in a weekend]

— Greg Rau

**Did you hear that
there’s a group of
South American
Indians that worships
the number zero?**

Is nothing sacred?

Mt. Williamson: July 3-6, 1992

This was my third trip up Mt. Williamson (14,375') and the first for Bill Hauser and Janet Condino.

We left San Jose on Thursday, July 2 in my car. We spent the night camping near Deadman Summit on US 395.

Friday, we picked up the permit in Lone Pine, drove to the Symmes Creek / Shepherd Pass trailhead, and began the hike under overcast clouds which made the long desert trek endurable. Near the beginning of the trail, we saw a 2' long rattlesnake. Formerly, one had to wade four streams, but someone has placed large boulders, allowing one to cross without getting wet. According to Bill, we have the Los Angeles chapter to thank. We spent the night at Anvil Camp feeding the mosquitoes.

Saturday, July 4, we hiked up over Shepherd Pass and into the Williamson lakes basin where we spent the night at the 12,200' lake closest to Mt. Tyndall. There were very strong winds blowing; we estimated 40 to 50 miles per hour.

Sunday, we awoke at 5:00am and were underway by 6:00am. The weather was overcast, still very windy, with lenticular clouds blowing from the west. The sometimes dark and cloudy weather was apparently being spun off from the Mexican hurricane Darby. We wandered around the lakes and headed for the famous large black water marks, where there was ice and flowing water. We then

climbed up the 1500' scree gully, encountering some hail but nothing serious.

The gully ends in a 75' class 3 chute where Bill and I spent a half hour looking at the ice and debating going further. We did, climbing up to the very large summit plateau, then wandered up over snow and talus to Williamson's summit, arriving at 10:00am. We spent ten minutes on the summit looking at the view and the summit registers.

We found an envelope addressed to the leader from the June 27-28 PCS climbers containing two expired fast food coupons. Janet soon arrived as Bill and I headed off the summit. She briefly visited the top, then all three of us headed back to our lakeside campground. After an hour's rest, we packed up and moved back over the pass to Anvil Camp. Monday morning, we hiked back down to the cars.

An often repeated statement about mountaineering is that the most dangerous part of the trip is the drive to and from the trailhead. I managed to demonstrate this by hitting a boulder while exiting the trailhead parking area and severing part of my fuel line. We were able to drive to Independence (leaking 3/4 of a tank of gas), where a mechanic spliced the broken line, allowing us to drive home.

— Brian Healy

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Next Meeting: Aug 11

The slide show is Peter Maxwell's Summer 92 trips and his last trip to New Zealand...bring your pet sheep.. He should be contacting you with more info..

LOCATION: Marj Ottenberg's back yard

TIME: 7:30 PM Tuesday (8/ 11/92)
Bring something to sit on and a sweater...From Interstate 280 in Cupertino turn onto DeAnza Blvd sometimes known as SaratogaSunnyvale Road and go towards Saratoga 3.6 miles. Turn right on Pierce road and go 0.3 mile. Where the road makes a sharp left, you make a right switchback onto Foothill lane, and go 4 houses down on the left. Numbers are confusing, so look for lighted lamppost and Christmas lights. Carpool and come early, parking is limited. The meeting will start promptly at 7:30.

REMINDER:

Bring your own reusable cup to cut down on waste, and \$1 to repay Judith Yarborough, who is providing refreshments.

ASPIRING TO ASCEND

Peter Maxwell will give a sampling of trips both official and private. To show what PCS trips are really about there will be some shots of this year's adventures to Shasta, Matterhorn Peak (in a thunderstorm), Mt Haeckel and Amelia Earhart. To give the foreign, exotic touch, he'll show a walk done over Cascade Saddle in Mt Aspiring National Park, New Zealand.

SCREE is a publication of the Peak Climbing Section of the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter.