



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

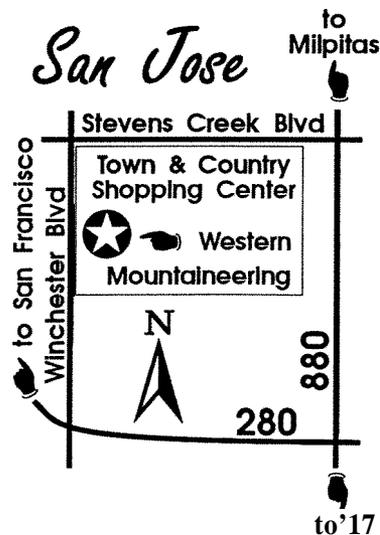
June, 1993

Vol. 26, No. 6

Next meeting

Date: Tuesday, June 8, 1993
Time: 8 PM
Place: Western Mountaineering, 840 Town & Country Village, across from the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose
Program:

This month's program is a sequel to last year's hit, *A Novice in Wonderland*. Charles Schafer will present pictures of his wanderings through the Sierra over the last year or so, and since most were on PCS trips, I'm sure you'll recognize more than a few of the places and faces.



New book sheds light on K2 tragedy of 1939

A Fritz Wiessner stood on the brink of pulling off the greatest mountaineering coup of his era – perhaps of all time.

Wiessner and Sherpa Pasang Lama had reached 27,450 feet on K2's unclimbed Abruzzi Ridge. Only a 25-foot traverse on moderate rock stood between them and the gentle snow slopes that rose the remaining 800 feet to the summit of the world's second highest mountain.

What was remarkable was that Wiessner had gotten so high with almost no support. He had led virtually every foot of the climb, with no oxygen and little assistance from the other members of the expedition, who had turned out to be more hindrance than help. In 1939, the tops of all of the world's 8,000-meter peaks still remained untrodden (with the possible exception of Everest). And of all those Himalayan giants, K2 was – and still is – the toughest to climb.

Wiessner's tour de force was 50 years ahead of his time.

With K2's summit only hours away and the weather unusually calm, Wiessner intended to climb through the night and descend the next day in daylight. But as he tried to move, the rope went tight. Pasang Lama had no intention of spending the night out on the mountain. He insisted they go down.

In the days that followed, Wiessner's near-triumph would carom abruptly into tragedy. One American climber and three Sherpas would die, and bitter recriminations, hushed whispers and controversy would haunt the survivors for the rest of their lives.

The story of the ill-fated 1939 K2 Expedition has become part of mountaineering lore, and notions of what went wrong and who was to blame have filled many books and campfire discussions. But it turns out that much of what has been passed

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Official PCS

Trips

Sierra Conditioning Weekend Class 2

Date: June 19-21

Where: Carcamp near Hwy 50

Leader: John Ingvaldstad

Home: (209) 296-8483

Work: (415) 604-3156

Eagle Rock (6,270'), Bald Mountain (6,980'), and Four Cornered Peak (6,858') are all easy Class 2 climbs suited for the beginner or the old timer who's out for that first Sierra weekend of 1993. We may do Saturday night at South Shore.

Black Kaweah (13,680+) Class 3

Date: July 2-5

Leader: Aaron Schuman

Home: (415) 968-9184

Email: schuman@sgi.com

Co-leader: Charles Schafer

Home: (408) 378-9682

From Sequoia National Park's Crescent Meadow (6,800'), we'll hike up and down on the High Sierra Trail on Friday, making camp near Bear-paw Meadow (7,800'). Saturday we'll cross the Great Western Divide at Kaweah Gap (10,600') and head for a tarn (11,800') high on the slopes of Black Kaweah. Sunday, we'll climb the peak (13,680+), then move our camp back across the divide to Hamilton Lake

(8,400'). Monday, we'll make the long hike back to Crescent Meadow.

Great distances, steep terrain, complex route finding, and perilously loose rock are among the challenges that our party will face. Comparable experience is required. Our group is limited to six people.

Mt. Dana (13,053') Class 1-2

Date: July 17-18

Leader: Debbie Benham

Home: (415) 964-0558

Co-leader: Phyllis Olrich

Home: (415) 322-0323

Hike up Yosemite's most accessible peak for panoramic views of the Sierra high country. Dana is the second highest summit in Yosemite, second only to Mt. Lyell. We'll hike from Tioga Pass due east on a well-worn, but unofficially maintained, trail. This is a good climb for beginners (welcome!). A \$5 deposit is required to cover campsite cost at Tuolumne Meadows Campgrounds for two nights (Fri./Sat.). We are open to suggestions for the hike on Sunday.

Gale & Sing Peaks (10,700' & 10,500') Class 2

Date: July 17-18

Leader: Charles Schafer

Work: (408) 943-7488

We'll start at the Chiquito Pass trailhead just south of Yosemite National Park, and hike in about 6 1/2 miles with 2,000' elevation gain to camp at Chain Lakes. We should be able to bag Gale Peak that afternoon, then climb Sing Peak the next morning before hiking back out. These are the tallest peaks in that general vicinity and the country should be beautiful - so I'm looking forward to a very scenic trip.

Merced Peak (11,726') Class 2

Date: July 24-25

Leader: Kai Wiedman

Home: (415) 347-2843

Co-leader: Pete Davison

Home: (408) 245-3759

From the Glacier Point trailhead, we'll assemble a strong fast team of mountain commandos for this one-day blitz of Merced Peak. A vast, sweeping panorama of dashing cascades, beautiful lakes, and many granite peaks make this one of Yosemite's special places. Don't worry, be happy. We'll make it! With a steady

yet moderate pace, we will celebrate sunset in camp. Yeah, don't forget, no alpine start on Sunday. This trip involves a 32-mile round trip with a 5,700' elevation gain; 95% of this is on trail.

Flatiron Butte (11,466')
Class 2

Date: July 24-25

Leader: Roger Crawley
Home: (415) 321-8602

This is a pretty darned easy trip, Buckaroos, and it's a real nice place! We saw a bobcat there last time. After breakfast in Bridgeport, we'll rendezvous at

the junction of Hwy 395 and Hwy 108 – the Sonora Pass road at 9 AM on Saturday. Then we'll drive about 4 miles to the Burt Canyon trailhead at 7,600'. The trail follows the Little Walker River for 8 miles rising 1,200' to our campsite. Sunday we'll amble up the Flatiron and gaze at Buckeye and the Sawtooths. The permit is for eight peak climbers.

Humphreys Basin Base Camp
Class 2-3

Date: Sunday, July 25 - Friday, July 30

Leader: Debbie Bulger
Home: (408) 457- 1036

We'll hike in over Piute Pass. Plans include Four Gables (12,720'), Merriam Peak (13,077'), Royce Peak (13,253') and Pilot Knob #2 (12,245'). Emerson is also a possibility. Pertinent quads are Mt. Tom, Mt. Goddard, and Mt. Abbot. ***Because of the heavy snow year, this may be a private trip with ice axes just in case.***

Private Trips

Private trips are not insured, sponsored, or supervised by the Sierra Club or the PCS. They are listed here because they may be of interest to PCS climbers.

Lost Coast Backpack

Date: June 19-21

Leaders: Debbie Benham
Home: (415) 964-0558
Judith Yarborough
Home: (415) 854-9288

Hike along a rugged section of the coast in a little used area near Humboldt State Park. We'll hike from north to south with a car shuttle to return us to our starting place.

North Palisade
Class 3+
Mt. Sill
Class 2-3

Date: July 2-5

Leader: Jim Curl
Work: (408) 452-6506
Home: (408) 371-0760

Climb two of the prettiest and highest peaks in the Sierras. The hike in from South Lake is about 10 miles long, first up to Bishop Pass, and then cross-country over Thunderbolt Pass (class 2) into the Palisade Basin. Mt. Sill is easy but involves a fair amount of cross-country on the approach. The Le Conte route on North Palisade

features some wonderful class 3 climbing as well as a move or two of class 4. The presence of snow should make the climbing easier, but I will carry rope to ensure that we safely surmount this very short section. Technical rock climbing experience is not required, but this is not an easy route. An ascent of Mt. Agassiz on the hike out is a possibility.

Mt. Ranier
Ingraham Glacier (tourist)
Route

Date: July 9-July 12

Leader: Jon Penn
Work: (408) 862-7673
Home: (415) 949-4035

July 9 – depart Bay Area and arrive in Seattle by 7:30 PM (I will help coordinate travel plans and such, but travel arrangements are an individual responsibility). Assemble at Sea-Tat, rent cars as needed and drive to Mt. Ranier. Camp at a campground in the park on Friday night.

July 10 – Leave Paradise Lodge early (no later than 7:30 AM) and climb to Ingraham Glacier flats at 11,000' to camp. This is a long day but we will go fairly slowly and there are no technical difficulties.

July 11 – Depending on group condition and the weather, this may be either a summit day or rest day. If we go for the summit we can descend back to camp for another night or get off the mountain completely (descending Ranier is a much simpler proposition than climbing it.. as you've no doubt seen on other mountains).

July 12 – Slack day as indicated above. If this is our summit attempt, we will leave camp very early AM, summit at dawn and descend off mountain. Drive to Sea-Tat and return to Bay area follow immediately.

Party max: six people. Previous glacier experience and appropriate equipment are needed. Ranier's weather is completely unpredictable; it's generally better in summer, but not by a whole heck of a lot. Forewarned is forearmed.. . Questions are welcome – please call!

Mount Conness (12,590') Class 3

Date: July 17-18

Leader: John Flinn
Home: (415) 968-2050

Will need ice axes for the ascent of the Glacier Route, a moderate snow slog. Maybe we'll climb North Peak Sunday. Carcamp or short backpack. Co-leader wanted.

Graduation on Mt. Lyell Class 3

Date: August 14-15

Leader: Tim Hult
Phone: (408) 970-0760
Email:
tim_hult@qm.is.lmsc.lockheed.com

Come celebrate the end of Tim's academic career with the ascent of one of Yosemite's most sought-after peaks. Permit is for five people only and a waiting list will be used. The hike in is a long one through the scenic Lye11 canyon (about 10 miles) and the return will take place immediately after the climb on Sunday. Participants must be in good shape, able to carry themselves on snow and ice using crampons and an ice ax (prior experience a must); be capable of scrambling over moderate class 3 rock and move fast and light. I will not be bringing a rope for protection. This is not a beginners trip!!!

Bear Creek Spire Class 3

Date: September 11-12

Leader: Tim Hult
Phone: (408) 970-0760
Email:
tim_hult@qm.is.lmsc.lockheed.com

Little Lakes Basin, aka beneath Bear Creek Spire. I have a permit for up to six people to visit what Galen Rowell calls his favorite place in all the Sierras. The current plan is to climb Bear Creek Spire via one of the 3rd class routes, but I could be convinced to do something else, if the group wishes. Experienced 3rd class climbers only!

Desert Survivors Summer 1993 Trip Schedule

DESERT SURVIVORS is an affiliation of desert lovers committed to experiencing, sharing, and protecting desert wilderness wherever they find it. A summary of their trip schedule is listed here as a courtesy for interested PCS members.

June 5-8
Mt. Stirling Backpack, Nevada
Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

June 12-14
Antelope Range & Fandango
WSA
Central Nevada Backpack
Bob Ellis (5 10) 526-3788

June 14-17
Hayford Peak Backpack, Nevada
Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

June 26

Annual Summer Picnic, Briones Park
 Rochelle Gerratt (5 10) 769-1706

July 3-5

Central Stillwater Mts. Backpack, Nevada
 Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

July 10-11

Mono Lake/Glass Mt. Car-camp
 Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

July 17

Desert Survivors Technical Seminar
 Mt. Diablo State Park
 David McMullen (5 10) 549-2645

July 24-26

Morey Peak-Hot Creek Range
 Central Nevada Backpack
 Bob Ellis (5 10) 5263788

July 31-August 8

Escalante Crossing Backpack, Utah
 Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

August 15-21

Bandelier National Monument
 New Mexico Backpack
 Rochelle Gerratt (5 10) 769- 1706

September 3-5

Mt. Dubois Backpack
 Steve Tabor (5 10) 357-6585

September 4-6

Burning Man-Black Rock Desert, Nevada
 Karen Rusiniak (5 10) 778- 1879

September 9-12

Reville & Worthington Mts.
 Fang Ridge & Leviathan Cave
 East-Central Nevada Backpacks
 Bob Ellis (5 10) 526-3788

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down as fact is simply wrong.

A new book, *K2: The 1939 Tragedy* by Andrew Kauffman and William Putnam (The Mountaineers, \$19.95) seeks to set the record straight. Using a scholarly approach rarely seen in mountaineering books, the authors have uncovered previously undiscovered sources of information that shed new light on the events played out on a remote mountain 53 years ago.

What began as a biography of Wiessner by two admirers turned into a more critical examination of the doomed expedition when the authors found important discrepancies in Wiessner's accounts of what happened.

The outline of the story is well-known to armchair mountaineers: When Wiessner and

Pasang Lama descended from their high point, they discovered to their horror that the well-stocked series of camps below them had been stripped of sleeping bags, air mattresses, and in many cases stoves and food. Just who ordered the camps stripped would remain a mystery for half a century.

After two shivering cold nights, Wiessner and Pasang Lama staggered into basecamp, more dead than alive. But the drama wasn't over. In descending, the two had left behind an American climber, Dudley Wolfe, in Camp VII, at 24,700 feet. Wolfe, the only American to follow Wiessner high on the mountain, was a wealthy playboy but not much of a mountaineer. He could not descend without a lot of help.

Too exhausted to go himself, Wiessner sent four Sherpas up to

try to rescue Wolfe. Three of them and the American never made it down. Exactly how they died will probably never be known.

Who was to blame for the tragedy? Initially fingers pointed at Wiessner. Although a naturalized U.S. citizen, he had grown up in Germany, and in 1939 anti-Nazi sentiments were beginning to blow across the Atlantic. Upon his return to America, Wiessner probably did not ingratiate himself to the public by uttering, in his thick German accent: "On big mountains, as in war, one must expect casualties."

Over the years, though, sentiment changed. Out of deep respect for Wiessner's many mountaineering accomplishments, much of the climbing establishment eventually sided with him and shifted responsibility for the tragedy from

Wiessner to Jack Durrance (of Teton fame). To his death in 1988, Wiessner insisted it was Durrance who ordered the camps to be stripped, and who bore full responsibility for the four deaths. Durrance, who is still alive, kept his silence – until recently.

But the complex chain of events that led to the tragedy was too complex to pin on one person, or on one incident. With painstaking documentation, Kauffman and Putnam have tried to sort out and identify the cumulative acts that led to disaster. One of their sources of information was the original copy of Durrance's diary, which he had kept private since the expedition.

Their conclusions: Durrance, for one, was blameless. New evidence shows that it was not him, but Deputy Leader Tony Cromwell, who ordered the camps stripped. And Wiessner can't escape some of the responsibility. He comes across as a brilliant climber but an autocratic and distant leader who probably shouldn't have tried to climb K2 with so weak a team.

And, ultimately, it was Wiessner's decision to leave Wolfe behind at Camp VII as he and Pasang Lama descended. This, more than the stripped camps, was what ultimately led to the deaths of Wolfe and the Sherpas

The story of the 1939 K2 Expedition has been told elsewhere in more breathless prose, but never has it been told as accurately. Armchair mountaineers will appreciate its

insights into an important chapter in climbing history, and all alpinists can learn important lessons about leadership by reading K2: *The 1939 Tragedy*.

- **John Flinn**



National Parks Plagued by Too Many People/ Too Much Snow

As this issue of Scree goes to press, the San Francisco Chronicle reports that park rangers at Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks are asking visitors to stay away or least be prepared for long delays during the Memorial Day weekend.

Over the weekend of May 22-23, rangers closed all entrance stations at Yosemite for three hours because too many cars tried to get into the park. It was the first time in Yosemite's 102-year history as a national park that it had been closed for anything other than for natural disasters.

An outbreak of bubonic plague among the squirrels at the Grant Grove section of Kings Canyon has meant the closure of three campgrounds there. Two more large campgrounds at Sequoia, Dorst and Lodgepole camps, are still affected by snowdrifts left over from winter.

There will also be no room to camp in California's state parks. National forests adjacent to the three Sierra parks are gearing up

for the overflow.

One of the problems in the recreation areas in the mountains is that the big winter snowfall has meant that many roads are still snowbound, among them the Tioga Road in Yosemite. The National Park Service had said it planned to open the road in mid-June, but community leaders in the eastern Sierra put a lot of political heat on the park, and yesterday Yosemite officials suddenly announced that the road would be open Wednesday (June 2), two weeks early.

- **excerpted from SF Chronicle, 5127193**



License Plate Fund Helps Pay for Yosemite Projects,

Ordinary citizens can help Yosemite National Park cope with its financial problems by buying a special automobile license plate issued by the state of California. The plates, with a picture of Yosemite, cost an extra \$50, and the additional money is split between the California Environmental Fund and the nonprofit Yosemite Fund. Information on the Yosemite license plates can be obtained from the Yosemite Fund, 155 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94 104.

- **SF Chronicle, 5/14/93**

A look ahead...

Our July meeting will feature, among other things, an informal gear swap. This is your big chance to sell all that extra or unused gear and/or clothing you have lying around. This advance notice should give people enough time to rummage through their closets and find that long lost jacket or Sierra cup that's been gathering dust.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to our Vice Chair Peter Maxwell and his bride, Anouchka Gaillard, who gave birth to an 8 lb. 14 oz. baby girl this past Mother's Day, May 9 (good planning you guys!). We hope to see little Tanya Louise on the trail soon.

Found

Someone left a stuff sack at the April meeting. Was it you? If so, contact Kelly Maas and identify the contents.

Tip for trip leaders

At the start of your trip, ask someone from the group to volunteer to write up a trip report for Scree.



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For change of address, contact Paul Vlasveld, 157 Kellogg Way, Santa Clara, CA 95051; (408) 241-1144 H, (408) 257-7910 W.

PCS meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month. See Scree for meeting location and program information.

The following trip classification are to assist you in choosing trips for which you are qualified. No simple rating system can anticipate all possible conditions

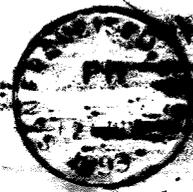
- Class 1: Walking on a trail.
- Class 2: Walking cross-country, using hands for balance.
- Class 3: Requires use of hands for climbing. A rope may be used occasionally.
- Class 4: Requires rope belays.
- Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Scree articles and contributions must be received by the editor no later than noon on the last ~~Tuesday~~ Tuesday of the month: email 3 112" diskettes (Mac or DOS), fax, or U.S. mail okay. Black and white photos welcome.

Deadline for the next issue is June 29!



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