

January, 1994
Vol. 27, No. 1

Scree

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

Next meeting

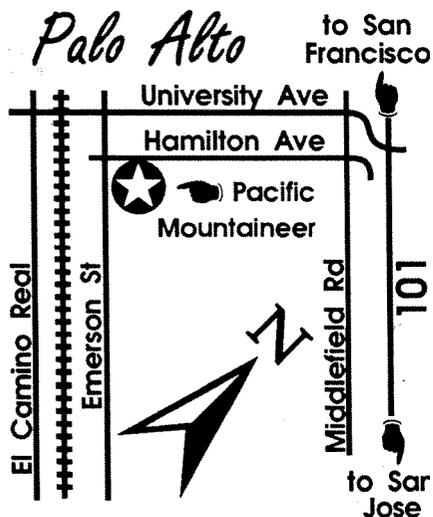
Date: Tues., Jan. 11, 1994
Time: 7:30 PM
Place: Pacific Mountaineer
200 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto

Program:

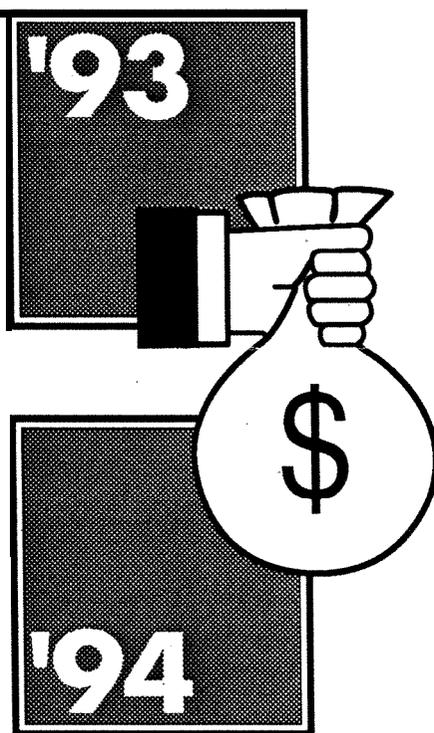
Climbing in Bolivia

By Dennis Meister

American Alpine Institute at its finest. Bolivia as you've never seen it before. Move over Butch Cassidy.



Treasurer's Annual Report



The PCS continues to be in good financial health. The number of members increased by 6 (to 203). Our net worth increased \$157.00 from 1992. At this time a dues increase does not seem necessary. My thanks to Paul Vlasveld and Charles Schaffer for their assistance. — **Brian Boyle**

Balance Sheet December 20, 1993

Assets	
Checking	\$2,329.39
Liabilities	
Potential Funds	
Owed	\$1,203.76

Greetings and Happy New Year.

This is my first attempt as editor of Scree. Hopefully the information that is included is correct and informative. If phone numbers, names etc. are incorrect please let me know, and I will put a editor's correction notice in the next issue.

Since the last issue I purchased E-Mail, but have yet to activate it. Please call if you are interested in using the service.

(Or bobwedig@aol.com still works.)

Thank you,
Patt Baenen



Official PCS Trips

Hold Your Horses (or Ice Axes)!!!

Regarding climbing insurance coverage: as announced at the PCS party, the good news is that the Sierra Club has regained leader liability insurance coverage for some mountaineering outings. BUT . . . it won't be effective for a couple of months, and will entail getting advance approval from National for each such trip. We will be able to use equipment (ice axe, crampons, maybe ropes), and I believe even to hold practice sessions at the start of a trip, but will not be able to hold training courses (such as the lare lamented ice axe & crampon training weekend). As the Activities Chair for our Chapter, I will be getting full, info from National whenever it is available and will keep you posted. For now, you can plan such trips for late spring and summer, but can't actually run them until we can get each trip approved by National.

Chris MacIntosh

Mt. Watkins, Basket Dome Ski Mountaineering

Date: January 22-23
Leader: Butch Suits
Home: (415) 325-4116



We will approach these peaks by hiking **up** Yosemite Valley's Snow Creek trail. It's about 2500 feet of

climbing; the upper part will involve some snow slogging. After a short ski we set up camp opposite Half Dome's huge north face. **We'll** try one peak Saturday, one Sunday. If the weather cooperates we should have great views of Tenaya Canyon and Yosemite alley. Approaches are short but steep: you must be an experienced snow camper and able to negotiate steep terrain with a daypack. Metal edge skis and climbing skins required; avalanche beacons recommended. Stormy weather postpones/cancels. Colisted with Ski Touring Section.

Maguire Peaks (1688') Class 1



Date: January 23, Sunday
Leader: Debbie Benham
Home: (415) 964-0558

In sunoi Regional Wilderness, we'll hike about 10 miles with an elevation gain of 2000 ft. Meet at 8:30 Road and Hwy 280. Park 'n Ride, Palo Alto. Bring lunch and liquid. Rain cancels. Please contact leader if you have any

questions.

Mt. Diablo (3,849')



Date: February 5
Leader: Bob Suzuki
Work: (408) 473-2402
Home: (408) 259-0772

A strenuous climb of two peaks of this 3,800+ft, mountain should

reward us with panoramic views. Rain cancels. Colisted with the Day Hiking Section. No Host Carpool: 7:00am at Cubberly High (Middlefield & Montrose), Palo Alto. Time at Trailhead: 8:00am. Trailhead location: Rock City parking area (near South Gate in Diablo Park).

Mt. Lassen (~10,500') Snow



Date: February 12-14
Leader: George VanGordon
Home: (408) 779-2320

Skis or snow shoes. Crampons/ice ax possible.

Private Trips

Mt. Shasta (14,462') Class 3 Snow Climbing



Date: February 19-21
Leader: Kai Wiedman
(415) 347-5234 (H)

The Green Butte Ridge soars vertically to meet Sargents Ridge. From there the steep upper part of Sargents Ridge will take us to the summit. This is lull-blown winter mountaineering — **NOT A WEENIE ROAST.**



A Decent Through Time

By Tim Hull

June 1991

Unprintable words poured from my mouth as I writhed in pain on the ground clutching my damaged ankle. Broken? Jabs of raw pain said yes, but years of similar running and hiking injuries lead me to hope that it was just another bad sprain.

The Rangerette at the Grand Canyon back country reservations office had given me allot of grief about taking the Hermit trail. She had tried to scare me off by saying it was unmaintained and not for those who had never hiked the canyon before. In the end, I practically had to beg her to give me a permit, finally resorting to informing her, ever so nonchalantly, that I was one of those vaunted PCS members whose skills and exploits in mountains around the world was legendary (infamous?). I got the feeling she was unimpressed when she asked if I knew there was no water on the trail, and that a donkey ride back to the rim from the bottom cost \$200. It was a good thing she was packing only a walkie-talkie, because faced the choice of either giving me the permit, or shooting herself so she wouldn't have to listen to my tales of epic adventure and misfortune in the mountains, she gave me the permit.

Now I was paying for my insolence. Only a third of the way down, and I was already a litter case. Carefully, I examined the ankle for broken flesh, protruding

bones, or something bulging horribly out of place. Fortunately, there were none.' I would survive, but the pain was here to stay. Walking on similar injuries, no matter how painful that might be, had always worked in the past, and now it would be a necessity no matter which way I went: up or down. For me, the choice was simple. I had wanted to do this hike for a long time and I wasn't about to let some "unmaintained" National Park Service trail beat me. Me, a member of the famous (infamous?) PCS mountaineers. I would hobble down to the bottom then hobble out if necessary. Rising, I tested the damaged ankle tenderly, then began the long hike downward again. With each step, a flash shot up my leg, into the spine and registered in my brain as a needlepoint of pain which felt warm at first then growing to a white hot intensity as I applied more pressure, and slowly ebbing back to mild discomfort as my weight shifted back to the other leg. As the numbing cycle repeated itself with each step, I thought only 4 more hours of this

Except for getting a late start necessitated by the wait in an interminably long line at the permit office, and an 1.5 hr bus ride to the trailhead, the trip had gone rather smoothly until then. The hike down had been very pleasant and visually stunning as the three of us, I and two of my co-workers Jim and Paul, immersed ourselves in the awesome beauty of the canyon. As we hiked down deeper into the great kaleidoscope of colors, we were

Learn to Camp in the Snow

Are you excited - or at least curious - about camping in the snow? Come to the Beginners Snow Camping Seminar sponsored by the PCS and Ski Touring sections. The seminar consists of three evening lectures by six experienced climbers, snowshoers, and skiers. A weekend ski trip to the high country lets you practice under supervision.

Lectures will be in Cupertino on January 18, 19, and 20. Cost is \$40. To register and to get more information call Chris MacIntosh (415) 325-7841 or Sheldon Firth (408) 9885050.

overwhelmed by the vastness of it all, the enormity of which is only hinted at when gazed at from the rim. As we hiked deeper, the vegetation changed, so too did the sense that we were hiking into geologic history. We had entered a natural time machine, and in two hours of hiking had moved back through the ages to a point 280 million years ago when the rocks of the Hermit shale group lay as sediment on an ancient sea floor.

Eons clicked off with each footstep. Multicolored rock bands were as delimiters on a grand timeline stretching from the present to an age when the earth was a lifeless, cooling ball of rock. Epochs long past came alive as we descended past the first topsoils

(Continued on next page)

A Desent Through Time

(Continued from previous page)

formed when the ancient civilizations of Rome, Egypt, Chinese, and Mesopotamia flowered, but it was merely a veneer on the vast depth of time; space and geologic drama spread out before us.

Limping onward, our small band of three came to a spectacular turn in the trail - Lookout Point. From this vantage, at roughly the midpoint of our descent, the canyon spreads out in all its immensity; as much above us as below. This is what it must be like to be an ant trapped in a large sandbox I thought. My foot seemed to be on the mend as long as I ignored it, kept moving, and watched my footing carefully. An oppressive heat propelled our thirsts, unassuaged by many quarts of water, to a point well beyond parched; it fried our brains, and blurred our vision. Through this heat induced haze, a thought occurred to me that maybe hiking this trail in June wasn't such a good idea. Still, I was living in Phoenix only for the spring and summer so it was now or never. Did I mention that it was hot?

Paul had a particularly tough time of it. Unaccustomed to the weight of a pack relentlessly pounding his legs into the earth with downward each step, he was suffering big time. When I looked up from the map and announced that we were halfway and about to hike down "the Cathedral Stairs," he had visions

of impending dark doom well up within him. It also prompted a streak of black humor within us all that was fed by the wind sighing through the vaulted rock formations. Macabre vision of Peter Lorre' playing a dirge-like organ fugue were conjured up. Ordinary sights were transformed into fantasy visions: song birds became vultures circling as they awaited the certain demise; a menacingly looking prickly pear cactus with two-inch thorns became an instrument of torture, or as Paul viewed it, a trap door out from all his suffering. "I should throw myself on this cactus and end it all so I don't have to endure any more pain." Paul said. He didn't of course, but the remainder of the trip down under a blazing afternoon sun made him wish that he had.

Some hours later, with most of the weight of Paul's pack transferred to Jim's and mine, we staggered into a dusty, but accommodating campsite. After our ordeal, it looked like the Ritz. Cradled in the depths of a beautiful sandstone canyon it was the most prestigious address around. The pit



toilets may as well been a marbled tiled bathroom. A waterfall fed six-foot deep swimming hole was the best looking swimming hole I had ever seen. It was however, two miles from the Colorado river. Two miles too far for exploration that day by dehydrated, footsore bodies worn out by the 8 mile hike down this far. As it was, the swimming hole looked like a much better option in the 110 degree June heat, than a sweltery hike.

The next morning however, we set off on our own "Powell expedition" down Hermit Creek Canyon to the mighty Colorado. Those next two miles passed through some of the most vividly colorful rock formations I have ever seen. While we were there, Hermit Creek was nothing more than a refreshing medium sized stream capable only of cooling us off in it's frequent pools of placid water. But laid out before us was the testament of what persistence, time and infrequent storms can do. Anywhere else, this trail which hugged the cliffside of the snake-like canyon, would have been a marvel worthy of a park in it's own right. The sides of the canyon were sheer, reaching 200 feet above our heads, polished smooth by the action of this small creek, and at every serpentine bend, a new vista of banded multi-hued sandstone glowed warmly in the cool light of an early morning sun filtered by the depth of this "minor" canyon. What ancient seas beyond time had laid these layers down.

(Continued on nextpage)

Only the beautiful colors were left behind to tell these stories millions of years old.

The light of the early morning sun brings out the best in many things, morning glories, dew covered fields, and rocky mountain faces blessed to be standing for all time in its glow. Around the next bend, this same early morning sun ignited a entire hillside of dark rock glistening with a thousand points of light. A mountain of diamonds! Closer inspection however, revealed that I could shelve all those happy momentary thoughts of leaving my job and becoming a wealthy climbing bum. It was just bits of mica imbedded in dark rock. (It has an official name which I've forgotten.) Now we were in the deepest part of the canyon, the end of our time tunnel. The rocks all around us had undergone a transformation from their original state to Schist some 1.7 Billion years ago. Two-fifths the age of the planet itself. Long before dinosaurs and man.

Wait, what was that! A giant lizard. Holy smokes! He's bigger than my thigh! This is 1991 isn't it, not 2 million BC. I haven't really gone back into time - have I? More frightened of us than we of him, he leaped 5 feet up a steep slope in a single bound and was gone. A superlizard?

The mighty Colorado. We could hear it before we could smell it, and smell it's dampness freshness in this arid environment before we could see it. When it did come into view, it was, at first, something of an anticlimax. It didn't seem to be so big, or

mighty. Then a log floated by at mid stream. At first I thought it was a minor branch, but the stout amputated branches ringing it's body betrayed the large size of a once proud fir tree several feet in diameter. We watched it float gracefully downstream in the midst of the stream as if it had an experienced guide aboard. Then it was swallowed by the first Hermit rapid, once again it became a twig tossed upon a torrent as it ran submerged for tens of yards down stream. This was a mighty river! Surely, a river that wouldn't give a second chance to a rafter unlucky enough to make a mistake .

The rafters that passed by weren't going to take that chance. They disembarked far up stream of the rapids to examine them. Sipping frosty beers taken from colorful coolers strapped to the side of their rafts and crammed with other civilized delights we could only dream of; they taunted us more with their behavior than their deliberate actions. Our pride

returned when several gathered around and asked disbelievingly and with some awe; "Did you hike all the way down? In this heat?" "Well, we didn't parachute in with the Swedish skydiving bikini team," we replied. Pride does have it's bragging rights. Then they were aboard there boats and whopping it up as they crashed through the immense rapids, and we turned to go back to camp and a peaceful swim in our private pool. The following day, we arose at 4:30 AM and were on the trail to the rim by 5:30 to beat the heat. What followed was one of the most enjoyable, but unremittingly uphill, hikes I have ever done. The early morning sun once again gave a friendly warmth to the distant scenery, igniting it in high-contrast colors that stretched to the horizon. Each hue became ever more spectacular as we climbed the Cathedral steps toward the rim and the present once again.

Wilderness Etiquette *By Emily Postpile*

Have they no shame?

Dear Emily,

I've noticed on many PCS trips that some people (mainly guys) forget all about etiquette and make all kinds of embarrassing bodily noises . . . and the smells... in front of everyone. Is this acceptable?

Signed,

Disgusted on Dana

Dear Disgusted,

The methane problem you have cited raises some interesting issues.

It would be so easy to say shame, shame... stop that. But when dealing with altitude, the body expands in very interesting ways. The intestines and digestive systems are capable of adjusting to this pressure by releasing methane and other gases into the air.

The issue may be confused.. . what was the diet the day before the hike?

***A little advice: Stay upwind**

Keep those cards and letters coming,
Emily

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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 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.
- 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 of the month: email, 3 1/2" diskettes (Mac or DOS), fax, or U.S. mail okay. Photos welcome.

Deadline for the next issue is January 25!



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