

# Scree

August 1995

Peak Climbing Section, Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter

Vol. 28, No. 8

## NEXT MEETING

**DATE:** Tuesday, Aug. 8

**TIME:** 7:30 pm.

**LOCATION:** Bob Wallace and Marj Ottenberg's home in Saratoga. From I-280 take Saratoga Sunnyvale toward Saratoga. Right at Pierce Road. When Pierce bends left, go right onto Foothill. It's the fourth house on the left, with Christmas lights. Bring a sweater, and please carpool. Lost? (408) 867-4576

**PROGRAM:** Bill Rausch will show slides and give commentary on his trip with Saeko Izula to New South Wales and Tasmania in Australia, and the South Island of New Zealand. Experience the unique flora, fauna and geology of these areas and the climbing and bushwacking opportunities.

## Mission improbable

**M**ESSNER BAGGED the fourteen 8,000 meter peaks. I aimed a little lower: 100 ascents of a lesser peak - the 2,517-foot grass and cow-covered fang of sandstone that towers loftily over Fremont, otherwise known as Mission Peak.

That was in 1989. Now, to my consternation, I realize I still haven't found anything better to do with my weekends. I logged ascent number 200 last weekend! I'm contacting the Guinness Book of World Records people to see if they can give this feat the exposure (pardon the pun) it deserves.

Why would anyone in his right mind devote so much attention to such an undistinguished peak, you ask?

1. Where else can a mountaineer get a 2000-foot workout in only a couple of hours in the south bay?

2. Where else can the aforementioned mountaineer find a steep enough slope where he can get anaerobic without subjecting his sore knees to the indignity of running?

3. Where else around here is there a mountain with such a variety of routes to explore (when the grass is low, that is)? Counting variations, I've probably hiked/climbed 50 different routes up every side of Mission. There are even a variety of rock scrambles on the upper west face (Careful, the rock is quite crumbly).

So which of those climbs were most memorable? There was one last

winter when I summited in the teeth of a wet, ferocious gale (can you spell h-y-p-o-t-h-e-r-m-i-a?)

There was one climb where I breached the overcast to watch the sun set on a sea of fog. Then there was the time my girlfriend and I sampled Mission after dark, with the city lights glowing at our feet.

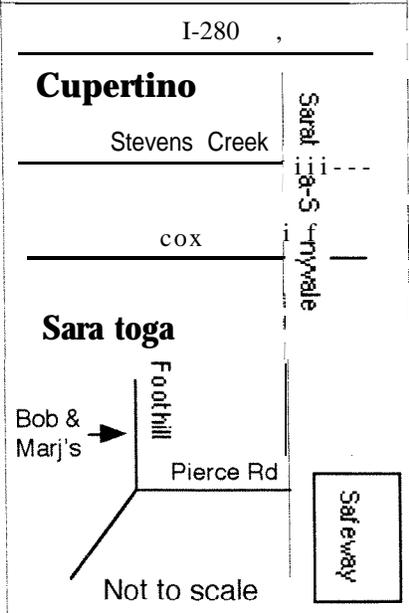
Also memorable were the wildlife sightings:

- 1 rattlesnake
  - 3 bobcats
  - 2 herds of wild pigs
  - 20 deer (approximately)
  - 10,000 "slow elk" (i.e., cows)
- (Alas, no mountain lions)

To sum it all up: "I came, I saw, I got stuck in one heck of a rut climbing this peak."

- Butch Suits

(Editor's note: assuming Butch began all his ascents from the Stanford Avenue trailhead, his trips up Mission Peak add up to a cumulative elevation gain of **423,400** feet, or the equivalent of climbing from sea level to the summit of Everest 14.6 times.)



## OFFICIAL PCS TRIPS

HAECKEL WALLACE, ETC.

Aug 5-12

13,000+ feet, class 3

Leaders: John Ingvaldstad, Kate Ingvaldstad

(408) 996-7129, (209) 296-8483

Topos: Mt. Goddard 15', Mt.

Darwin 7.5'

From Lake Sabrina it's only one day in to Evolution Basin via the col between Mts. Haeckel and Wallace. Once situated, many class 2 and 3 climbs beckon, including Haeckel, Wallace, Fiske and Huxley, all over 13,000 feet. Deserving separate mention is Mt. Darwin, the highest peak in the area at 13,830 feet, and arguably one of the best class 3 climbs in the Sierra, featuring multiple chutes and route finding, and very solid, clean rock. Don't miss this week of thrills!

VOGELSANG, FLETCHER

Sept 16-17

11,493 feet, class 2

Leaders: Bob Suzuki

(408) 259-0772 H (after 7:30 p.m.)

Debbie Bulger

(408) 457-1036 H (until 10 p.m.)

Topo: Vogelsang Peak

Mid-September is the ideal time to visit the Yosemite high country. Warm days, cooler evenings and diminishing tourist crowds allow a more peaceful wilderness experience. From Tuolumne Meadows we'll backpack in seven miles, drop our packs at camp and climb Fletcher Peak. Sunday morning we'll climb Vogelsang, then hike out. This will be a relaxed outing suitable for beginning peak climbers. Limit 8-10 people.

## PCS Slide show for aspiring climbers at Planet Granite

The Sierra Club, Peak Climbing and Rock Climbing Sections are presenting a slide show at Planet Granite for new and interested peak baggers and rock climbers on Aug. 29 at 7 p.m. The presentation will last about one hour with time for comments and questions. Planet Granite is located at 2901 Mead Avenue, Santa Clara. Phone: (408) 727-2777. Ask for Tonya Emerson, Director of Marketing, for more information.

## The Hand: More tales of the gripped

**R**FADING ABOUT Royal Robbins and the Hand in the July Scree reminded me about a story I had heard years ago regarding the same notorious climb.

After Salathe made the first ascent of the Hand the climb soon became a test-piece for local climbers. Many of the best climbers of the day tried their hand at the Hand. One of these climbers was Floyd Burnett.

The following story is about his attempt to scale the Hand, and about the climb that is now known as the "Burnett Bolt Variation." Floyd Burnett was an active local climber back in the late 1940's and early 1950's. He has a handful of first ascents to his credit in the Sierra and Tetons.

As it so happens he is a close friend of my father - they went to high school together. A number of years ago my father thought I would enjoy meeting his climbing friend and

invited me over one day when Floyd had stopped by.

I had recently climbed the Hand by the standard route during which I had noticed the lone bolt of the Burnett Bolt Variation. I asked what provoked him to create such a bold variation on the original Salathe route.

Apparently he had inadvertently climbed past the point where Salathe traversed left into the easy gully. By the time he realized his mistake he was high above some questionable pitons on a vertical face on the verge of taking a very long fall. There was no way he could climb down.

He figured his only chance was to somehow place a bolt and lower off. Unfortunately, he needed to have at least one hand hold onto the rock. Placing a bolt with only one hand would be virtually impossible. Fortunately, a short distance above was a large protruding knob. While his belayer, a young climber named

Allen Steck, prepared for a big fall, Floyd climbed up to the knob and wrapped a loop of the climbing rope around it with his one free hand.

He called for "tension." Somehow the rope held. Now Floyd could use both hands to place a bolt. By the time the bolt was finally in Floyd was spent. It had been a harrowing experience. He had narrowly escaped taking a dangerously long fall.

Floyd had had enough of the Hand and yelled for Allen to lower him off. The two of them retreated. Floyd never again attempted the Hand.

A few years later some hapless climber spotted the bolt and climbed past it to the summit, not realizing that he had actually made the first ascent of what has since become known as the "Burnett Bolt Variation."

— George Sinclair

# YODELS

## RAIDERS OF THE LOST AXE

**P**hyllis Olrich checks in with a desperate plea: "Please help me get my beloved ice ax back! If you can retrieve it from the summit of Mt. Haeckel, I will personally bestow upon you an appropriately wonderful reward

"While on the summit block of Mt. Haeckel July 22 I dropped my 8-year-old Royal Robbins Alpenlite ice ax down a crevice. It has a blue handle strap attached. You can see it if you look way down into the crack, but is just out of reach. I think it can be one if you bring some kind of long rabbing tool that could hook onto the trap.

Become a celebrated hero(ine) and receive my eternal gratitude and admiration (and don't forget that reward)! Contact Phyllis Olrich at (415) 322-03233."

## HAVE A SHERPA TO DINNER

This from Judith Dean: "Dreams of Nepal dancing in your head? Want to organize your own trip? Come and meet a sirdar and find out more this country of snowy mountains, green fields and smiling people. Urgen Sherpa, owner of Sherpa High Ambitions Trekking in Kathmandu, is visiting some of his "trekkies" here. He arranged such an excellent trek for us last year that we'd like the chance for you to meet him.

We trekked in the Everest region, but Urgen will organize treks or climbs anywhere in Nepal, and is especially interested in working with clients to plan routes which fit their interests and schedules. We're having an open house on Friday, Aug. 11 at 6:30 p.m. at Judith (Yarborough) Dean's house in Menlo Park.

"If you'd like to stop by, call or email one of us for directions (and so we know how many corn chips to buy)."

Judith Dean (415) 854-9288

e-mail:

~~JudithDean@cs.stanford.edu~~

Chris MacIntosh (415) 3257841

e-mail: clnism@clbooks.com

Linda Smith (415) 327-2099

## SLAP HAPPY

**T**hose PCSers who cancelled their subscriptions to Sports Illustrated after the last swimsuit issue missed the fascinating report on the latest sport in Finland: mosquito swatting.

It noted that "swat teams" from around the world had gathered in Pelkosmriemi, Finland, last month for the third annual World Championship of Mosquito Killing.

Their goal: to eclipse the world record of seven kills in five minutes.

(No, that is not a typo. That is in fact the official world's record. We know that most Scree readers have killed that many with one swat; on a recent trip to Alaska, your humble editor had at least that many kamikazee into his soup at once. All we can say is, pack your bags for Pelkosmriemi next summer. Glory awaits.)

"It's surprisingly few," SI quoted organizer Kai Kullervo Salmijarvi as saying of the record, "but the mosqui-

toes are drawn away from the competitors by the warmth of the crowd."

Speaking of the fans' short attention spans, he added, "That's another reason why the contest is so short. People get bitten."

## Now YOU KNOW

**W**hat does Ama Dablam mean? It means "mother's jewel box."

The term refers specifically to a prominent hanging glacier high on the mountain.

## THE LAST WORDS

"We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I." — Li PO

"The mountains speak in wholly different accents to those who have paid in the service of toil for the right of entry to their inner shrines." — Sir Arnold Lunn

"There where human habitation, then trees, then grass peter out, is a kingdom, sterile, wild, inorganic. But in its extreme poverty, in its total nudity, this kingdom of silence and light proffers a joy which is beyond price—the happiness one sees in the eyes of those who frequent it."

## A bad day on North Pal and an epic on Cathedral Peak

**D**OT REILLY and I took a four day weekend (July 13-16) to do some climbing in the Palisades. Our main objective was North Palisade via the U Notch. We had a nice hike up to about 12,200 feet on the Palisade Glacier on Thursday under beautiful cloudless skies.

The trail was clear to just below Sam Mack Meadow and over much of the trail leading out of the meadow. The snow conditions were fantastic and the weather was consistently clear, although a bit cold at night.

On the way in, we had met a pair that had told us of their failure to overcome the bergschrund. They said that another pair had also failed and that they could see no footprints in the couloir.

Nonetheless, Dot and I hiked up to see for ourselves on Friday morning. The guy we talked to had given us an accurate story. The bergschrund was wide open and to climb it directly meant getting up and over a lo-foot overhanging lip of not entirely consolidated snow.

A careful traverse to the right under a giant snow tongue showed the only real possibility for us. If we carefully stepped out onto a questionable snow bridge, some 5.8 rock would lead to further climbing (of a hopefully easier level) and finally back left into the couloir. Not for us, we decided.

Dot and I discussed whether or not our mutual friend David Ress would have given it a try. I'll have to show him the photos when I get them back and hear what he has to say.

We lazily traversed over and up to Glacier Notch and I ran up and down Gayley while Dot took in some sun. Back at camp, my MSR XGK stove went from annoyingly flakey to almost non-functional. Add in the fact that animals had eaten much of my breakfast and lunch and we decided to forego the third class climb of

Witchell we had considered for the next day.

We ran into the climbing ranger on the way out and he said that he thought the rock on the right was about 5.9. He was also of the opinion that the snow in the couloir was rotten and would slide sometime soon. I wouldn't have thought that looking at it, but there is a lot of snow up there.

The V Notch looked like a snow climb (complete with a cornice) and we talked to a pair that had climbed easily up the right Underhill Couloir the day we checked out the U Notch.

Dot and I talked of climbing in Tuolumne or perhaps another go at Cathedral for Sunday. We got up a little late Sunday morning and I suggested we just go for pancakes at Tioga Pass Resort. Of course we had the usual run-in with TM. Herbert at the resort, complaining about the pancakes there.

Sitting at the Lembert Dome parking lot, where we planned to climb the Northwest Books, Dot and I decided to just go and climb Cathedral anyways. We drove quickly to the trailhead and madly sorted our dirty and disorganized gear, finally setting out at 9 a.m. under a cloudless sky. We made decent time and arrived at the base a little before 11 p.m.

As we geared up, TM. and his partner arrived to solo the route. When we mentioned that we'd been there twice the previous weekend, first in the rain on Saturday and then again in the wind on Sunday, he said "what are you guys, Reinhold Messners?"

At the top of the first pitch, I looked out at the few clouds developing and jokingly told Dot that it would probably rain on us when we got to the end of the fifth pitch. We moved pretty well, the only snag being a stopper that stuck near the second belay. I downclimbed and spent seven or eight minutes working it free.

Our enjoyment of the climb began to fade as the clouds grew darker. As Dot reached the belay at the end of the fifth pitch it began to snow in wet gloppy blobs. Dot had no rain jacket so she put on her fleece. I

donned my eight-year old Gortex (which wasn't a whole lot better) and began traversing left around the peak. By the time Dot followed the wet fourth class traverse, she was pretty freaked, and I wasn't sure whether to hunker down under a space blanket or try to get off before it got worse.

Fortunately, the weather improved. In fact, it never actually rained after that, but the sky gave no indication that things would remain dry. A short 5.6 corner brought us to the ridge and we did one short and two longer rappels to arrive at easier terrain. We took a moment to rest, I coiled the ropes very sloppily, and we started down the west side towards the Muir Trail.

Here I screwed up pretty badly. We followed what looked like an obvious descent path (complete with ducks), but soon found ourselves on wet death slabs. I worked us into a position in which I didn't want to continue and Dot didn't want to go back. So I climbed up and found a place to set up a rappel.

Oops! I had Dot's pack with the ropes but no gear or harness. Also, because of the way I'd coiled the ropes, it took me 15 minutes to untangle them. In the pack was Dot's harness and one sling. I slung the sling around the horn, crossed my fingers that it would hold, and started back down the slabs with a dulfer rappel (two 8.5 mm ropes – ouch!)

Finally down to Dot, I backed up the rappel with a couple cams, got her into her harness and she dropped down to a tree. I carefully got into my harness, pulled the backup cams and noticed that the ropes were not going to pull.

Once again I climbed up the wet death slabs, nearly slipping off twice. I finally arrived at the sling again, fixed the problem, and rappelled down to Dot at the tree. One more rappel finally got us out of that mess. Whew !

The rest of story was just one of hunger, thirst, fatigue, mosquitos, third class grunge and trying like hell to find the next tree blaze to keep us

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on the snow-covered Muir Trail. We got back to the car at 9:00 p.m. How do you spell "epic"?

Dot swore off Cathedral **after this** (her third) trip. Her first time she got out at 10:30 p.m., the second she had to bivvy, and now this. I've decided to give up mountaineering. I'm staying **home** on the weekends and watching cartoons from now on. :-)

— Jim Curl

## *Banner's direct North Buttress: A new variation*

**W**E MADE a leisurely start on Friday, first enjoying a large breakfast at the "Breakfast Club" restaurant in 4mammoth. Then, the four of us, Kai Wiedman, Dave Erskine, Bob "The Stoic" Suzuki, and me boarded the shuttle bus for the Agnew Meadows railhead.

The hike into Thousand Island Lake via the Pacific Crest Trail was beautiful and pleasant, particularly after we climbed out of the swarms of nosquitos that abounded near the meadows. As we approached Agnew Pass the trail was occasionally hard to find because of patches of snow, and later, a huge mudslide.

But we eventually made our way to the snowbound outlet of Thousand Island Lake. A short hike from there we located **an** acceptable dry campsite on a bench above the lake. We were early to bed before the sun fully set.

The next morning we arose rather late, about 5:30 a.m. The night had been cold and damp, and a thick layer of frost coated my sleeping bag. The coyotes sang to us as we ate our breakfast. At 6:35 a.m., we departed for the climb.

The approach to the climb was almost terrible in its difficulty, because of the 1.5 miles of continuous one-foot scalelength suncups in the snow. Never before have I traversed such a hellish field of snow. When we

finally reached the far end of Thousand Island Lake, things became much, much better. Without much difficulty, we reached the start of the technical rock, an ugly gully consisting of mixed loose rock and snow.

Above the gully loomed the North Ridge of Banner at this point a chaotic collection of towers and blocks. The whole party found the appearance of the gully to be very demoralizing. The route description made it clear that the "good" part of the route lay beyond and above the gully. The gully itself, with its mixed snow (or ice) and rock, was beyond our abilities as equipped.

To my amazement, Kai and Dave wanted to turn back! To me, the difficulty with the gully offered the opportunity to find a new, more direct and aesthetic line up to the main buttress. The Stoic was not decisive, so I went forward to explore a bit, climbing up a fourth-class chimney to gain the top of arete, then down and around easy blocks and ledges on the other (west) side of the arete.

It turned out to be easy to reach the base of the next tower on the ridge, and I saw a ledge that might allow a traverse halfway up the tower. I returned to the others and related my findings, but Kai and Dave were unmoved. The Stoic was psyched, however, and so he and I left the others and continued.

With a pack on, it was a bit more difficult to negotiate the chimney up to the arete. I managed to stem it without much problem, but the Stoic struggled mightily, making me nervous because of the serious exposure. From the top of the arete, we had no difficulty in getting to the notch below the next tower. We climbed up a bit more and roped up for a technical pitch to gain the ledge. I was able to make the ledge in my mountain boots, although the moves proved to be 5.7 - a little challenging in stiff and heavy footwear.

Unfortunately, the ledge went around to nowhere in terms of gaining the next notch below the main buttress. So I put on my rock shoes and continued up the face. Climbing

up an exciting and slightly overhanging 5.9 dihedral/crack rapidly used up my larger gear. The crux move required substantial calmness and character because of the absence of pro and loose rock in the crack, now larger than fist size.

From the top of the crack, a short ledge led around to more broken terrain on the west face of the tower. It looked like an easy traversing pitch would take us to the next notch at the base of the main buttress. We had nearly completed the "Direct North Buttress" variation! I brought the Stoic up. Poor guy, he was shivering cold from the shady belay stance. The Stoic is prone to numb fingers and his climbing suffers from such. He was unable to **manage** the bulging crack, and had to swing over to easier terrain. When he got to the top, he noted that it was now 3 p.m., and we probably didn't have enough time to do four more technical pitches, traverse the summit ridge and still get down during daylight.

I sighed, wishing that we were a bit faster or even just a little less sensible. But I agreed to **his** alternative to rap down to the west, downclimb the fourth class terrain below, then follow a large ledge south to what appeared to be a much easier gully to the top, thus bypassing entirely the lovely looking rock on the North Buttress.

The remainder of the climb was fun but non-technical. The downclimb was fourth class as expected, but not challenging. The ledge did indeed take us to easier terrain, a gully of clean rock that provided pleasant, mostly third class scrambling to the summit.

At a bit past 5 p.m. we reached **the summit** and went through the usual rituals. I attempted to get a unique photo of the Clyde Minaret as it appeared through a hole in the drifting clouds.

The descent was largely uneventful. We dropped down steep snow on the east side of Banner directly to the Banner-Bitter glacier, turning a steep part near a bergschrund on nearby

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rock The remainder of the descent to Thousand Island lake was straightforward plunge stepping and foot glissading down the glacier and neighboring snowfields.

Unfortunately, the hideously textured snow surface near the lake had not magically vanished. The Stoic, in character, seemed unfazed by the hideous stuff, and I let him lead me through the torture. Finally, we reached camp at about 8:30 p.m. I was so weary! It was remarkably pleasant to just sit quietly and make dinner. I slept intermittently through the night, awakened periodically by the remarkable harmonies of three snoring mountaineers.

— The Monoplegic

## Parking structure

### proposed for Yosemite Valley

Memo from the Yosemite Committee, Sierra Club: *By Sept. 1, please write to:* B.J. Griffin, Superintendent Yosemite National Park PO. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 953589 regarding the recently released '1994 Alternative Transportation Modes Feasibility Study' for Yosemite National Park. NPS is encouraging comments on future transportation plans for Yosemite.

One of the alternatives in the study proposes the construction of a parking structure for 1844 cars and 20 buses in the West end of Yosemite Valley, opposite El Capitan. The Sierra Club Yosemite Committee rejects the parking structure as it could only move the problem from the area of the Valley to a currently undeveloped area.

Please participate in this important issue which will result in a final transportation plan for the Park. Thank you. Any further questions, please contact Linda Wallace Chair, Sierra Club Yosemite Committee at 916-758-5034 or email to: pswallace@ucdavis.edu

## Abbot and Dade prove tough in the year of big snow

THE PCS advance trip schedule showed Mt. Abbot and Mt. Dade on June 3-4, but the trip was dropped from the final schedule due to co-leader reluctance and the incredible snowpack this year. At the last minute, several people called and wanted to do the trip anyway, so off we went.

In the meantime, the CMC schedule had come out indicating a Mills/Abbot trip the same weekend, so we hoped to have some company. Our merry band met near Rock Creek Lake since the remaining 1.5 miles of pavement was covered with 3 feet of snow.

A little pavement walking, a little hard morning snow walking, and the two with skis (Charles Schafer and Chris Yager) decided to lighten their packs and weigh down their feet. The two snowshoers (Steve Eckert and Bob Suzuki) stomped on down the trail, confident that the skiers would overtake them soon. Well, not so soon. It became apparent that there was a pace difference, and a route choice difference, that split along the ski/snowshoe boundary.

Bob and Steve set off for Treasure Lakes, dreams of an afternoon blitz up Dade dancing in front of them like a mirage. Chris and Charles headed up past Ruby Lake and planned to meet us at the 12,500-foot saddle between Dade and Treasure Peak, where we would camp poised for a Sunday assault on Abbot.

This year, there is no such thing as a trail. None of the lakes were melted, and the streams poked through heavy blocks of snow making the simple task of filling a water bottle quite exciting.

The Dade-bound duo dropped their packs at the base of the Hourglass (a 40-degree snow chute south of Dade) about 3 p.m. Snowshoes had not been required until about 11,000 feet, but the snow was softening

rapidly. We actually kicked steps up the Hourglass in snowshoes because it was too soft to climb in just boots! (If you flip your foot out behind you, the tail will swing up and you can punch the tip in instead of letting the shoe hit flat.) Still on snowshoes, we summited about 530 p.m. Late summiting is becoming a habit for me, it seems.

Anyone going to Dade should take a new register box, because the one there is missing a lid and badly crushed. Most entries have washed out because they were in ink and some fool stood the topless can upright in the snow. Back to the packs around 6:30 p.m., we faced a 1,000-foot climb up snow that still required snowshoes.

Even protected by Diamox, Steve did not feel up to the task after the long day, so he started melting snow while Bob headed up to the saddle (sans pack) to let the others know we'd join them in the morning. He never made it. Ran out of light and returned with the report that while he could see the saddle, there was no one there.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to us, Chris had broken a ski binding and Charles was suffering from early-season altitude effects as well. They got within sight of the saddle (on the other side) around 8:30 p.m. and decided to stop there. Charles skied over toward the saddle, but found himself in avalanche debris with failing light and turned back.

Bob and Steve got to the saddle with day packs around 7:30 a.m., and between gusts of wind managed to communicate with the others who were still half a mile away at their camp. They were not climbing, so we headed up Abbot with high hopes and good hard morning snow.

Crossing the standard snow chute was no big problem, but some spots were past knee deep. Climbing out on the third-class rock seemed particularly dangerous, because there were few route choices not covered by snow, and a fall almost certainly would send you on a rock-spiked

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glissade.

Then we turned the corner and stared into the jaws of defeat: The traverse over to the summit ridge measures 48 degrees, and was fluffy soft corn snow with gaps near buried rocks. Packing a step involved repeatedly kicking or pushing snow into a deep footstep until there was enough of a base to hold your weight. The solid step was then five feet below the snow at arms length in front.

We spent 45 minutes doing a 200-foot traverse, using all kinds of unusual snow moving methods (knees, shins, ice axes held horizontally with both hands, etc.). Once on the ridge, there was a knife-edge cornice that was packed hard by the wind. It seemed friendly compared to the soft corn.

Some mixed third class and icy snow lead to the summit of Abbot, where we excavated in vain for 10 minutes but never found a register. Too much snow. Damn. We were there. *Really!*

The return to the saddle was much less nerve-wracking, but we had to repack our steps due to softening in the sun. Bob accused Steve of working for CalTrans and making a sidewalk but the steps that did crack out under testing caused little wet avalanches. Caution was advised, because recovery from a mistake would be difficult.

Baking in the afternoon sun, we darted from shadow to shadow trying to avoid further sunburn. Steve was doing the zinc oxide clown face routine after giving up on SPF 40, while Bob was counting on superior genetics to protect him.

Snowshoes were required for the entire hike out: We got back to the car around 6 p.m., and due to closed passes we got back to the Bay Area around 3 a.m. after a scenic drive past Lake Tahoe. A long trip, and one of the most challenging mixed condition climbs I've done in many years, but two people got two peaks in two days.

We never did see the CMC

group, so I assume that the ranger's warnings of high avalanche danger kept them away. We saw only melted debris, but the soft snow was certainly at risk of cutting loose.

— Steve Eckert

## Cherry Creek offers pink granite slabs and the Flintstones

**T**HIS MEMORIAL Day trip to the western edge of Yosemite was a nice warm-up for the summer and the group enjoyed a beautiful weekend of sunshine, granite and wild water.

The trip turned out to be a merger of Kai Wiedman's Scree-listed trip and Laura Sefchik's private trip. Participants were Laura, her husband Wade, Kai, Gary Aldridge and me.

The gathering place was to be the end of the road that crosses Cherry Creek Dam, which is the Kibbie Ridge trailhead. I came up Friday night and found a "road closed" sign on Cherry Oil Road above the Tuolumne Canyon and for a moment thought I would have to go all the way back to Sonora and come in the other way.

However, the sign said it was open at night and on weekends, so I went ahead slowly. There was some major construction dealing with a part of the road that had slid out during the winter, but the drive was uneventful and I got to the end of the road about 11 p.m.

Next morning the others arrived and we got on the trail to Kibbie Ridge around 10. Our plan was to follow the ridge to a point where a creek drainage allows access into the canyon and then drop down into the canyon to a place called Flintstone Camp. This avoids the long slog up the canyon starting from near the end of Cherry Lake.

After later experiencing the lower canyon on the way out, this route is definitely the only way to go. At the trail junction for Kibbie Lake, we encountered snow on the ridge and

finding the trail became difficult. After a few minutes of wandering around trying to find the trail, we just went for the ridge and followed it on the west side to a lookout point. Wade needed as a reference to find the route down into the canyon.

This lookout provided a fine place for lunch and we could see a good portion of the canyon as well as the campsite down on the creek. Heading down the drainage was actually made easier by the snow cover until about halfway down. After that we had to do some minor bushwhacking to get to Cherry Creek and our camp.

At the so-called Flintstone Camp there are rock tables and chairs (hence the name) over in a stand of trees close to the creek. However, we chose a nice flat platform covered with sand and gravel above the creek and with a much better view of the white water coming down the canyon.

No one else was there and we saw no one until we were on the way out on Monday. Cherry Creek was a raging torrent and the right temperature to provide some really cold beer. It was obvious to everyone that if you somehow went into that creek along here your longevity would be measured in minutes if not seconds.

We arrived early enough (which probably disqualifies this as an official PCS trip) for a leisurely dinner and some hiking around the immediate vicinity on nice slabs and domes of granite.

A leisurely start the next morning got us on the way up the canyon to explore further. It was cross-country but easy as it was mostly exposed granite, with a lot of the red/pink tinted granite that supposedly gives the canyon its name.

Some of the gorges showed striking evidence of glacial polishing. We probably got three to four miles up the canyon (just past a major eastward turn in the creek) before snow made further progress treacherous due to postholing down into talus and boulders.

We backtracked to camp, had

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another nice evening and next morning rose at dawn to get an early start for the hike down the canyon back to the cars. After a false start up a dome that Wade thought we had to go over to get down-canyon, we retreated to the creek and followed it down.

This was all cross-country. We couldn't even find a use trail although we occasionally saw a duck. The route is fairly obvious but you do have to search around often for a way through all the rocks, trees and brush and we did find the maps quite useful in determining our position in the canyon.

Just below our camp we saw people camped on the other side of the creek and wondered how they got there considering the state of the creek and with no official trails or bridges in the canyon. As we moved down canyon and came to a 40- or 50-foot chimney (class 3?) that we had to go down, we noticed a large tree across the creek which provided a very good bridge to the other side and explained the campers over there.

The chimney wasn't difficult and was about the only part of the hike out that required any climbing. Moving further down we encountered more people who had come up the lower canyon and were now leaving. It was now getting pretty hot as we left Cherry Creek just behind the lake and headed up the forested slope back to where the cars were. Here there were many use trails and although none of them seemed to be a preferred route they all traversed up and to our left toward where the cars should be and in fact we hit the road right at the cars arriving around two o'clock.

We drove back from Cherry Lake on the road to Sonora and this turned out to be a very nice drive, although probably not as fast as using Cherry Oil road.

Cherry Creek Canyon is a real gem and makes for a great backpack trip. The trip is almost all cross-country and most of it on granite. It was obvious that the most spectacular

part of the canyon is upstream from the Flintstone Camp, the lower canyon being unappealing. I would suggest that future trips follow our route or avoid the lower canyon altogether and come out the way we came in.

– Larry Hester

## Avalanche danger changes plans on Matterhorn Peak

**F**RACURE LINES in the snow clinging to the sides of Horse Creek Canyon were visible from the trail below. We put on long gaiters at 8,500 feet and stepped one to two inches down into crunchy snow. Perfect conditions.

We camped at 10500 feet at the origins of Horse Creek on June 23. Snow was all around, with patches of earth near trees and large boulders. As we passed the gully for the approach to the east couloir, Brian Staby, co-organizer, and with a group consensus, nixed the idea. Exposure on the route, fracture lines in the snow along the sides, and abilities of the entire group came into play to make the decision to contemplate another route.

Avalanche stories worried, then scared, us (well, me actually – organizer, Debbie Benham). All encouraged me to “wait and see what’s up there.” Approximately 6 a.m. the next morning, Brian led the way up to Horse Creek Pass, where we then followed the Southeast Slope up to the summit. Snow until about 11,700 feet, then no snow at all on the ridge line and top o’ peak. Beautiful weather, beautiful day!

Participants: Christopher Fulton, Patti Haight and Kate Ingvaldstadt. And from all of us, THANK YOU Brian for your very competent leadership!

– Debbie Benham

## “Inaccessible” Starr-King is an enjoyable climb

*“Mount Starr King is the most symmetrical and beautiful of all the dome shaped masses around the Yosemite. Its summit is absolutely inaccessible. It will never be trodden by human foot.” – Josiah Dwight Whitney*

**I** CLIMBED Mt. Starr-King with my friend Doug Mohr on July 1.5. We climbed the southeast face, the standard route. According to the register, it was the first ascent of 1995.

Friday night we crashed on a dirt road a few miles south of the Wawona entrance station. The Wawona ranger had, reluctantly, agreed to leave our permit taped to the outside of the ranger station so we could pick it up Friday night.

From the Mono Meadows trailhead on the Glacier Point road, we hiked about five miles to our camp. Illouette Creek was raging, but fortunately we found a logjam that made for a practical yet exciting crossing. Our plan was to find the closest campsite to the mountain that still had water.

We followed a branch of the creek all the way up to the base of the southernmost dome of the Starr-King massif. This required a good hour and a half of uphill cross-country. Although a fire has cleared away some of the brush in this area, we still had to work hard to minimize tedious bushwacking through manzanita. This approach is probably why more people don't climb Starr-King.

After pitching camp, we headed up the mountain at 3:30 p.m.. We contoured up around the east side of the massif to the saddle between the southern and middle dome, then clambered up the granite slabs of the middle dome to its top, which is a stone's throw from the base of the northernmost (summit) dome of Starr-

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# PRIVATE TRIPS

## TEMPLE CRAG

9 Aug. 5-6

12,999 feet, class 3

Organizers Debbie Benham

:415) 964-0558 H;

jmbenham@aol.com

Charles Schafer

:408)354-1545 H;

:harles.schafer@octel.com

Topo: Big Pine 15'

We'll be climbing the south-eastern chute which is 300 feet below the south side of Contact Pass. The chute leads to a large talus slope then a 50 ft section of Class 3 just beneath the summit. As we do not have a backcountry reservation\*, we'll try for either a N. Fork or S. Fork, Big Pine Creek, entry. Accepting four people for a total of six participants. All will be asked to sign a liability waiver. p-waiting in line with fingers cross; Plan B possible]

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King.

The northeast face is a fun, low-angle slab climb- two pitches no harder than about 5.4. We summited around 6 p.m.. From the top we could see clearly see the white streamer of Yosemite Falls in the distance and ample snow on the north side of the Merced Crest, the west slopes of the Clark Range above 9,000 feet, and Mt. Hoffman to the north.

On the descent, we added fresh slings to the decrepit rappel anchors. With two ropes we were able to descend the route in two raps. We returned to camp for a hearty spaghetti dinner and some unwelcome guests: a few hundred voracious mosquitos. We botched our bearbag attempt by getting the end of our cord, to which we had tied a rock, stuck in a tree. Still, no bears disturbed our jury-rigged setup.

On Sunday we hiked out in the morning, beating the heat by baptizing ourselves in the bone-chilling waters of Illouette Creek.

- Butch Suits

DEERHORN, ERICSSON, ET<.

Aug 10-14

13,888 feet, class 3

Organizers: Aaron Schuman

(415) 390-1901 w;

schuman@sgi.com

Steve Eckert

(415) 508-0500;

eckert@netcom.com

Topos: Mt. Whitney, Mt. Pinchot

On the agenda: Deerhorn, Ericsson, Junction and East Vidette. Ambitious, eh? Everybody better be in good shape! We will start early to beat the heat and allow packing and climbing on the same day. This is a 5-day trip, but plan on taking an extra day's food in case the going is tough or the weather is bad. To sign up, call or send e-mail to Aaron for instructions. See "Eckert Note" below.

Mr. RITTER/BANNER PEAK

Aug. 18-20

13,157 feet, class 3

Organizer: Charles Schafer

(408)324-6003 w;(408)354-1545

Co-Organizer: Kelly Maas

(408) 279-2054 h; (408) 944-2078

Topo: Devil's Postpile 15'

According to Secor, Mt. Ritter is perhaps the most prominent peak in the High Sierra, and is located in one of the High Sierra's most scenic areas, so this trip promises to be nothing short of spectacular. We'll hike in on Friday to either Ediza or Nydiver Lake, then try for both peaks on Saturday. An ice axe will probably be required.

RED SLATE

Aug 19-20

13,163 feet, ice

Organizer: Eugene Miya

(415) 961-6772

Topo: Mt. Morrison

Red Slate's north couloir is noted as the "easiest" ice climb in California by Chouinard and Robinson. This is a 1000-foot 40-degree ice gully. It should be

climbable in three hours or less.

This will not be a beginners or instructional trip. Maximum of six climbers. All participants should have personal ice gear.

MT. W INCHELL

Sept. 15-17

13768 feet, class 3

Organizer: Siamak Navid

(408)553-3850 w;(415)361-8548

Hsia@vid.hp.com

(Leader wanted)

Topo: Mt. Goddard

This is a three-day trip. The plan is to camp at Sam Mack Meadow (or lake), climb the peak on Saturday and return on Sunday. I will be on vacation Aug. 5-20, so leave messages.

MT. SHASTA

Hotlam Glacier

Sept. 16-17

14,162 feet, class 3/ice

Organizer: Kai Wiedman

(415) 347-5234

Co-organizer: Kelly Maas

(408)279-2054

Topo: Wilderness Press: Shasta

The Hotlam Glacier is the most challenging of Mt. Shasta's glaciers. The Hotlam presents three distinct icefalls. Each offer route-finding among seracs and crevasses. Join Kelly and Kai for some mixed dimbing and exposed blue ice. Technical ice climbing skills are not necessary. Basic ice axe and crampon skills, including self arrest, are required.

Eckert Note: Each trip will require a \$10 appearance bond and your signature on a liability waiver. PCS members have preference until one month before the trip, when it is strictly first come first served. Your check will be cashed immediately (make it payable to the person you are sending the SASE to), and you will receive a refund at the trailhead after permit expenses are deducted.

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Scree is the monthly journal of the Peak Climbing Section of the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter. Subscriptions are \$10 per year. Checks, payable to the PCS, should be mailed to the treasurer, Phyllis Olrich. To ensure an uninterrupted subscription, renewal checks must be received no later than the last Tuesday of the expiration month.

**For change of address, contact Paul Vlasveld, 789 Daffodil Way, San Jose, CA 95117; (408) 247-6472 (h), (408) 257-7910 x3613 (w)**

PCS meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month. See Scree for 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.

**Deadline for September issue: Thursday, August 31**

**INTERNET**

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General Sierra Club Net News: alt.org.sierra-club  
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**First Class Mail**

"Vy can't ve chust climb'?" -- John Salathe