

World Wide Web Address: <http://www.climber.org/pcs>

## Next General Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, August 10

**Time:** 8:00 PM

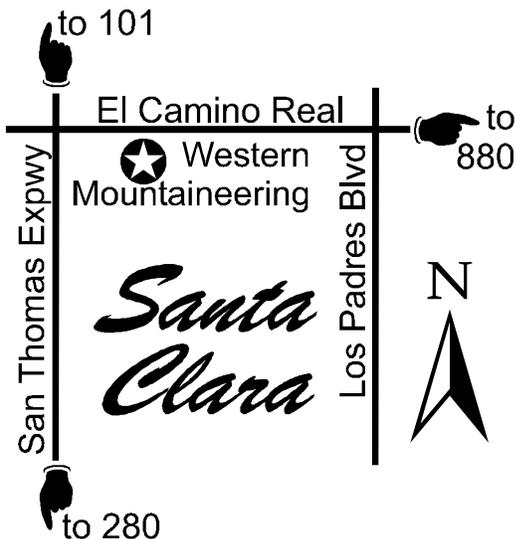
**Program:** Escapade in Escalante

Follow Cecil and Kai down the strenuous canyons of the Grand Staircase. Will they be turned back by the deep waters of the Escalante? Will their camp be destroyed by flash floods? Will the deer flies drive Kai screaming into the river? Will the petroglyphs of Scorpion Gulch reveal the secret to their escape? Find the answers to these questions and more as we weave our way beneath the towering canyon walls

**Location:** Western Mountaineering, Santa Clara

**Directions:** 2344 El Camino Real, Santa Clara (between San Thomas and Los Padres), parking in the rear.

From 101: Exit at San Thomas Expressway, Go South to El Camino Real. Turn left and the Western Mountaineering will be immediately to your right.



Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 8/29/99 Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.

## Official, Unofficial, and Private Trips

Recently, George Van Gorden and I were approached by the new chair of the Mountaineering Oversight Committee Bill Oliver regarding the loose distinction the PCS was making between "Official" and "Private" or "Unofficial" trips. The concern Bill raised is that people on a private trip may mistakenly think they are on a Sierra Club sponsored activity. In case of an accident the club may be legibly, because we do not make it clear that private trips published in the Scree are not affiliated with the Sierra Club.

Both George and I agreed that the ability to advertise private trips in the PCS publications is an important service to our community, particularly because the club cannot sponsor all the trips our members like to run. At the same time, Bill Oliver has a valid concern. The Sierra Club had been conceived as a deep pocket, and been dragged into litigation for lesser things. We need to do our best to protect the club, so we can continue to enjoy its services. Following are the issues that were raised and how we like to solve them.

### Private or Unofficial:

One of the issues raised was how we call trips that are not affiliated with the PCS. We should not call them "Private PCS Trips" and we shouldn't call them "Unofficial PCS Trips", because that creates the impression that those are PCS affiliated trips (guess who was caught making this mistake.) We should simply call them "Private Trips" (no PCS in there), as that is what they are. I know we are all very proud in the fact that we are members of the PCS and would like to express that when we talk about our trip or sign the summit register. But let's try to be careful not to create the impression that we are on a trip affiliated with the PCS when it is not. I recently started to sign summit registers adding, on a separate line, the phrase "Friends of the PCS". I think "Members of the PCS" will work too. I know first amendment gives every person some rights, but we ask that in exchange for having your trip advertised in the PCS publication, you try to be considerate of the PCS needs.

### Scree Issues:

There were some mistake made in the list of "Official PCS Trips" in the Scree. They were partly my mistakes, and partly other's. We came up with a new scheme that will help reduce mistakes in the list and also make the list available on line. See the "PCS Calendar" link in the PCS web page. We also added stronger words to the disclaimer leading to the private trips section in the Scree.

## Web Page Issues:

The "Calendar" link in the web page used to point to our advance trip list which listed both private and official trips together. We have changed that so official trips are listed in the calendar and all other trips in the advance list. We will be careful to keep the 2 lists separate. We also improved the disclaimer.

## What We Tell Participants:

We ask leaders that have their private trips listed in the scree to make sure all their participants know that the trip is not affiliated with the Sierra Club or the PCS. I am aware of situations where participants of a private trip thought they were on an official trip of the PCS... not a good thing. A private trip leader who doesn't make it clear to his/her participants that they are on a private trip may lose the right to use PCS publications for their private trips.

This apparently is not the first time the issue is raised. In the past, a few changes were made to try to address this problem, apparently we need to revisit this issue every so often. One problem seems to be that the PCS has no representation in the MOC, and so our activity and procedures get scrutinized without us having a say in the manner. This time we requested and been promised a PCS representative in the MOC. For now George, as the PCS chair, will appoint someone to represent us. We may want to add this position to the PCS bylaws for the future.

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

• *Ron Karpel*

## Sleeping Bag Care

Here are various comments on sleeping bag care from the broadcast list.

• *Bob Bynum, Scree Editor*

Most down bags would rather be cleaned with gentle detergent (such as REI's LOFT soap, not Tide) than with dry-cleaning solvents.

The feathers do have some natural oils, and I've been told by highend bag makers that dry cleaning can shorten the life of the bag. I run mine down to the Laundromat every other year, putting just one bag in one of the huge side-loading washers, then air dry it for about an hour in one of the huge side-loading dryers. No old shoe needed, the tumbling works just fine. Go easy on the soap.

• *Steve Eckert*

I just took mine to a local dry cleaner. Nearly all of the ones near my home offer sleeping bag cleaning, though they all send the bag somewhere else.

The results were impressive, besides being clean, my bag came back twice the size it was when I sent it in. I half expected it to be ruined, but it turned out fine.

• *Eric Busboom*

I put both my SD down bag in the washer on "gentle/warm/warm" for 2 cycles (about 45 minutes) and fluff dried it on low heat for 1 hr and it also was twice the size as before...and warmer and wonderfully clean!

DO NOT PUT SOFTNER (It is oil and you don't want Exxon Valdez in your dryer or bag).

This is all according to the directions that came with my bags.

I must have done this 5-6 times in the last 2 years, but I use in over 90 days per year so it needed it.

• *Rich Calliger*

I bought some REI down soap and cleaned my own bag some years ago. It came out very nice. However, I was very careful and used a big laundry/work tub to do the work. I wouldn't recommend a machine, too rough. Probably also makes a difference if you're synth vs. down.

Mine was/is down and it took some days to dry between an outdoor line (be sure you've got sunny weather for a few days) and the cool-tumble dryer setting. I also think the more you wash a bag, the shorter its lifespan.

I typically sleep in a "clean layer" to postpone the need for cleaning.

• *Mark Adrian*

## Mt Morrison, 12227 ft.

June 27, 1999

A note on the conditions found on Morrison yesterday and a route description.

There is no need for an ice axe. Wear gaiters to avoid getting scree in the boots. Everything on this mountain ambles, slips, shifts, slithers and falls. In combination with nearly 5000 ft of gain within very few miles, it gets to be a strenuous day.

The description of the route in Secor is dead-on and so are the PCS and SPS trip reports.

Here is an attempt at describing the route:

Drive to the left end of Convict Lake as far as the road will take you and park at the furthest parking lot.

You are 2/3rd of the way of the length of the lake.

Hike through brush to the first ridge line on the left of the lot. You will meet an old jeep road, follow it till it ends in a short distance at a stream. Follow this stream up, keeping it to your right as it comes down a beautiful verdant valley. The stream seems to originate from a small tarn. There is another tarn further up which looks like it is turning into a meadow and then there is a much larger tarn further up.

By following the stream, you are going behind (south) the front peak (10800+) that blocks the view of Morrison.

Turn right (west) at the small tarn towards a cirque like valley that is on the lower reaches of Mt Morrison.

A steep trail switchbacks through this valley till it tops out below Morrison's east face. One of the many options to reach the summit is to go straight up this face over class-2 and sometimes easy class-3 stuff. This is the worst part of the climb. The summit has outstanding views of Red Slate, the Minarets, Ritter, Banner, the Inyos and the black, foreboding face of that equally loose and unstable peak, Red and White.

Thanks to the many listeners on the PCS/SPS email broadcast who offered useful tips and suggestions when I had asked about conditions at Convict Lake and on Mt Morrison.

• *Arun Mahajan*

## Official (PCS) Trips

PCS trips must be submitted through the Scheduler (see back cover for details). Trips not received from the Scheduler will be listed as PRIVATE, without recourse.

### Mt. Bolton Brown

Peak: Mt. Bolton Brown, Class 2, 13,538'  
Dates: August 1-3 (3 days)  
Leader: Debbie Benham, h: 650/964-0558  
benham4x@aol.com

After reading about Bolton's first ascents, and seeing Lucy Brown's footpath, my curiosity was peaked. This summit hides from viewing via Hwy 395 behind the magnificent eastern Sierra skyline. We'll see! Could be just a pile of old' scree. Trailhead is Birch Lake, out of McMurphy Meadows, off Glacier Lodge Road. Permit for 6. \$3 covers permit fee

### Dragon Weekend

Peaks: Dragon Peak (12,955) Class 3 and Kearsarge Peak (12,598) Class 2  
Dates: August 7-8 (Sat.-Sun.)  
Map: Kearsarge Peak and Mt. Clarence King 7.5'  
Leader: Bill Isherwood 925-254-0739 (h) 925-423-5058 (w), isherwood2@llnl.gov

We will meet Saturday morning at 9 AM at the trailhead for Golden Trout Lake on Onion Valley Road out of Independence. A 2000-ft. climb will bring us to a camp near one of the two unnamed lakes just north of Golden Trout Lake. For the ambitious, Kearsarge Peak may be climbed Saturday. Sunday, we will climb Dragon Peak from the col immediately south of the peak. Hike out Sunday afternoon. Send a \$10 deposit (call first) to secure your spot. Trip limited to 8.

### Grand Canyon of The Tuolumne

Backpack: Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, Class 1/2, Yosemite National Park  
Dates: August 20-22 (3 days)  
Leaders: Debbie Benham, (h) 650/964-0558, email: benham4x@aol.com  
Bill Kirkpatrick, (w) 408/279-3450, wmkirk@earthlink.net

Join us for a 'reverse' peak trip through a pristine wilderness canyon in beautiful Yosemite National Park! We will be out three days, walking approximately 23 miles total with roughly 4-5000' elevation loss and gain. We'll start at White Wolf Campground and finish at Lumbert Dome in Tuolumne Meadows, a one-way jaunt up the canyon. \$10 deposit required on sign-up and fully refundable at the trailhead. Permit for 8. Co-listed with Backpacking Section/Loma Prieta Chapter.

### Blank Slate (Red)

Peak: Red Slate Mtn, class 2, 13123  
Dates: Aug 21-22, Sat-Sun  
Maps: Morrison 15" or Convict Lake 7.5"  
Leaders: Charles Schafer cgschafer@lucent.com  
H 408-354-1545, W 408-324-6003  
Aaron Schuman aaron\_schuman@yahoo.com  
H 650-968-9184, W 650-943-7532  
Kelly Maas maas@idt.com  
H 408-279-2054, W 408-330-1717  
Details: <http://sj.znet.com/~cynthiam/redslate.html>

Climb lovely and scenic (if somewhat fractured) Red Slate Mountain from Convict Lake. Believe it or not, there's no peak in the Sierra Nevada to the north of Red Slate that is taller than Red Slate.

### Merced Peak

Peak: Merced Peak, Class 2, 11,726', Yosemite National Park  
Dates: August 27-29 (3 days)  
Leader(s): Debbie Benham, h: 650/964-0558, benham4x@aol.com  
Anouchka Gaillard, h: 408/737-9770, anouchka@cup.hp.com

A long hike in to another classic of the Clark Range set in lovely Yosemite National Park! Approximately 16 miles (one way) to the summit with 4,000' gain/loss over three days. We'll climb the northeast ridge after leaving the Red Peak Pass Trail near Upper Ottoway Lake. Hearty and fit newcomers are welcome, and must be able to carry full pack a long way on trail! Deposit of \$10 required for sign-up which is refundable minus \$3, charge for permit. 10 on permit.

### Mt. Langley

Peak: Mt. Langley (14,042), Class 1  
Dates: August 28-29 (Sat.-Sun.)  
Maps: Mt. Langley and Cirque Peak 7.5'  
Leader: Bill Isherwood, 925-254-0739 (h) 925-423-5058 (w), isherwood2@llnl.gov

This is the southernmost 14,000-foot peak in the High Sierra. Clarence King and Paul Pinson climbed it in 1871, believing that they were making the first ascent of Mt. Whitney. They found a cairn with an arrow on the summit.

We will meet Saturday morning at the Cottonwood Lakes trailhead (driving instructions from Lone Pine are available) at 10 AM. We will camp at Long Lake (11,135) on Saturday and climb the South Slope to the summit via the New Army Pass trail on Sunday. Drive home Sunday night. Join us for a leisurely climb with time to enjoy the scenery. There is a \$10 sign-up fee, refundable at the trailhead, less the cost of the permit. Send check to Bill Isherwood, 37 La Encinal, and Orinda, CA 94563. Space is limited to 8.

### Mt. Goddard

Peak: Mt Goddard, Class 2, 13,568'  
Dates: September 3-6 (4 days)  
Leader: Debbie Benham, h: 650/964-0558, benham4x@aol.com  
Co-Leader: Nancy Fitzsimmons, h: 408/957-9683, pkclimber@aol.com

This magnificent, stand-alone, peak is a showstopper from all vantage points in the high Sierra. A long, long hike in (approx 20 mi), where we'll camp at Martha Lake, then summit via the southwest ridge. I'm asking each participant to bring an ice axe for summit day and all who participate should be proficient with ice axe use. This is an MOC approved trip and participants must be current Sierra Club members. \$10 deposit required on sign-up and fully refundable at the trailhead. Permit for 8.

### Yosemite: Petit, Piute, and Volunteer

Peaks: Petit, Piute, and Volunteer Class 2  
Dates: Sep 4-6 (Sat-Mon) Labor Day weekend  
Leader: Steve Eckert <eckert@climber.org>

A one-way walk through northeastern Yosemite should provide some of the best early fall scenery available. Hopefully the

mosquitoes will be dead or dying, and hopefully it won't have snowed yet. The plan is to enter at Saddlebag, exit at Twin Lakes (requires car shuttle). There is a bit of cross-country travel at the beginning and some 2nd class near the peaks, but basically it's a lot of trail walking (15 miles/day) with an average of about 4000' of gain per day. To avoid a dawn-to-dusk sort of trip we'll need to move fairly quickly, but skipping one or two of the peaks or adding a fourth day could provide an easier trip if desired

### **Bagg Gabb**

Peak: Mt. Gabb, class 3, 13xxx ft.  
Dates: Sept. 4-6 Sat-Mon  
Leaders: Kelly Maas [maas@idt.com](mailto:maas@idt.com)  
H 408-279-2054, W 408-330-1717

Gabb is a big 13er, set off just a bit from the Sierra crest. It should have great views of adjacent Abbott, Mills, Dade, Bear Creek Spire, etc. The real excuse for this trip, however, is to hike up the second Mono Recess. The west side approach is via ferry across Thomas Edison Lake, followed by a hike up Mono Creek and then the second Recess.

### **Mt. Dubois**

Peak: Mount Dubois, 13,559', Class 2  
Dates: September 25-27, 1999  
Map: Boundary Peak 7.5'  
Leaders: Bill Kirkpatrick H (408) 293-2447  
[Wmkirk@earthlink.net](mailto:Wmkirk@earthlink.net)  
Ahmad Zandi H (408) 255-4233  
[Zandi@zandi.com](mailto:Zandi@zandi.com)

If you've wondered about the White Mountains, join us on this climb of the second-highest peak in the range. We will hike from the Fish Lake Valley on the Nevada side, near the Chiatovich Creek.

### **Kern Peak**

Peak: Kern Peak (11510) LIST FINISH!  
Dates: Oct 2-3 Sat-Sun  
Leader: Steve Eckert [eckert@climber.org](mailto:eckert@climber.org)  
Co-Leader: Erik Siering

Help the leader celebrate finishing the SPS Peaks List in good style. The 9-mile pack in, over almost-flat terrain with uncrowded camping, should give rise to a nice party Saturday. A quick 7-mile romp to the peak on Sunday and we're back in camp for the stroll back to the cars. Reserve a spot early and pack the good stuff (for the mother of all happy hours)! Co-listed with the Angeles Chapter SPS.

## **Climbing Schools**

Here is a list of climbing schools recommended by various PCS members.

Mountain Adventure <http://www.mtadventure.com/>

Sierra Mountain Center, Bishop, CA,  
<http://www.sierramountaincenter.com/>

Nidever Mountain Guides June Lake, CA  
<http://www.themountainguide.com/>

American Mountain Guide Association. <http://www.amga.com/>

Moving Over Stone <http://www.movingoverstone.com>

Mountain Adventure <http://www.mtadventures.com>

Sierra Wilderness Seminars. <http://www.swsmntns.com>.

Alpine Skills International. <http://www.aplineskills.com>

## **Rainier A Summit Too High**

Memorial Day 1999, May 29-30

We were sitting on a downhill lip of a crevasse which formed a small platform at 13,000 ft. The wind was relentless, and the temperature around 5 degree. It was too cold to stay sitting on the ice, so after barely 5 minutes, I got up and said, "Let's go." The group ahead of us got up too, but instead of going up, they turned around and went down. I guess they had enough. I started to pull ahead. My teammates following. After less than 50 ft. I stopped to catch my breath. I was very tired and could only managed a few steps before stopping. Our progress was extremely slow. I looked back. The tail of our rope was dragging on the ice. Something must be wrong. Last time I checked, there was someone attached to the rope at that end. I needed a whole minute to figure it out in the thin air at this altitude. Our 4th teammate untied himself from the rope and remained sitting at the edge of the crevasse. A minute later we were on our way down back to camp.

I am not in a habit of writing trip reports for not climbing a mountain, but some people ask that I write this one. During our planing for this early season trip we were told that the Disappointment Cleaver Route was still closed and that the preferred rout was the Ingraham Headwall. By the time we climbed, the DC route was in full operation with a nicely cut trail in the snow and a fixed rope for the lower stepper section. By the look of things, I think the headwall would have made a fine rout too, but we climbed the cleaver.

We had an uneventful trip to Paradise trailhead and to the start of our climb. Luckily we had permit reservation, because they fill up the quota for both Muir Camp and the Ingraham Glacier. The ranger office was busy and filled with many happy smiling faces. We were promised that the weather forecast is excellent and that we should have little or no problem climbing, except that everybody else in the Northwest was going to be there too. Our plan was to hike up to Ingraham Flat and setup our high camp. Then climb from there the next morning.

We made it in good time to Muir Camp. There were hundred of people on the trail which made it into a giant staircase in the snow. Most people, day hiked just to Muir Camp and return to Paradise. A few remained at Muir Camp, and we could see only one group ahead of us crossing the Cowlitz

Glacier on the way to Ingraham Flat. We roped up and continued. With full packs and after climbing all the way from Paradise it took us a couple of hours to get from Muir Camp to the "flats". The total for the day was 5,500-ft elevation gain. If I had to do it over again, I would have spent a night just below Muir Camp to break the climb and get acclimatized. It was 6PM when we arrived at Ingraham Flats. Digging up tents platforms, fixing dinner, and fighting the wind pushed bad time to 9 PM. Not much rest since we had 1:30 AM wake up on the following day.

Our 2 AM start time got pushed to 2:30. We were tired and disoriented a bit and couldn't get organized quickly enough. There were already several groups on the route when we started. We simply followed. Even before we reached DC, one of our teammate decided to return to camp and get a full night sleep... a good idea indeed, as it turned out.

We followed several groups ahead of us up the Disappointment Cleaver.

Climbing the knife-edge of the Cleaver was the first time I realized how bad the wind was. I had to lean hard against my ice axe to avoid getting knocked over. We stopped at the top of the Cleaver to rest. The trail at this point merges with the old trail leading up from Ingraham Headwall.

Starting up again, we passed by a group that camped the night there and was just getting out to return down. The view up was a reminiscent of the biblical story of Jacob's ladder. There were groups going up, and there were groups coming down. It seems as if the trail was blocked at some point farther up, because no one was going farther up, but I couldn't see why. And it was crowded. The trail at this point was just a trace of many crampons stomping the ice. It went back and forth twisting around crevasses and climbing over snow bridges. We continued the exhausting climb at a slow pace, and by 7:00 AM got to the edge of the crevasse and the end of our climb, as I mentioned at the opening paragraph.

Upon returning to camp, we crawled into our slipping bags to complete the night sleep. By the time we got up, clouds were moving in obscuring the otherwise clear sky. Concluding that Monday is not going to be any better, we packed our stuff and returned home.

Participants: Nancy Fitzsimmons, Stephan Meier, Stephane Mouradian, Ted Raczek, and your faithful scribe Ron Karpel.

• *Ron Karpel*

## Climb High Sweet Charlotte

June 19, 1999

The Stoic and I climbed the S. Face of Charlotte Dome last Saturday, the route made famous in Roper's "50 Crowded Climbs of N. America." Here's a full description if you want the details.

For me, the crux was the approach, although the Stoic described it simply as "okay." We came in from the west, from Road's End near Cedar Grove. The initial 7-8 mile hike up Bubbs Cr. was lovely and pleasant, but the 1-2 miles of rugged cross-country climbing 2000' up Charlotte Cr. was, for me, sheer Hell. When I am encumbered with a heavy climbing pack, my damaged right ankle does not perform well on loose or brushy terrain, and this approach had both in spades, often at the same time. I think that most mountaineering folks would have found it to be a rugged and strenuous but otherwise unremarkable little hike. We camped in a small stand of trees about 300 vertical feet below the dome with an excellent view of the route. The entire approach took us a bit less than 7 hours at my paraplegic pace.

The next morning, we left camp at a rather leisurely 6:30 AM. The initial brush gave way to friction slabs and headwalls, but nothing that should have been particularly difficult. Unfortunately, in getting over the final headwall, we made a poor choice of route, and ended up standing foolishly together on a small sloping ledge, blocked by steep wet slimy slabs and unable to downclimb safely. So, we were forced to break out a rope, slam in a few pieces of pro, and I took a delicate and largely unprotected lead up the marshy slab. Finally, we were able to get to the base of the dome. About 300' of class 3-4 climbing brought us to our first belay and the actual start of the technical climbing.

And that was pretty much that. The crux was the approach, as I said earlier, and the rest of the climb was sweet but highly uneventful. The weather was superlative for the entire day. Insects were negligible.

Never before have I done a climb that matched the route description so precisely (see Moynier and Fiddler for a topo). About 12 years ago, I climbed Charlotte Dome with my original mentor, John Woodworth, and, I think, never once managed to find a pitch of the "classic" South Face route, although we had a very good time. Our difficulty, I think was trying to find the route by observing the dome from the east, for we had approached over Kearsarge Pass. The start of the route, and many of its features, only become obvious when the dome is viewed from the south.

The Stoic and I traded leads steadily over the 11-pitch climb. The first 3 pitches I would have described as easy class 5 as opposed to class 4. The "Slot Pitch" was my lead, and very pleasing. Although steep, the rock of Charlotte is so featured with knobs and edges that is always possible to make progress without much difficulty. In fact, the combination of substantial holds and high angle makes for satisfyingly gymnastic moves -- great fun! The Stoic got the

"ambiguous and runout face," and did an excellent (and stoical, of course) job of both tolerating the runout (30-40') and finding a nice, 5.7 line through the ambiguity. I was graced with the lead on the "Furrows" pitch, and this has got to be one of the best bits of alpine climbing I've ever encountered. This formation is a long sequence of deep-water grooves and solution pockets in a vertical portion of the face. You could stem them, mantle them, or just pull hard, but after each fun sequence you were again standing on a substantial ledge -- the floor of the solution pocket above.

Repeat this many times and you have one heckuva fun pitch! No memorable alpine route is complete without at least a little bit of silly difficulty, and, on my last lead, I carelessly went astray. This pitch is labeled "5.6, many ways to go" on the topo, but, I discovered at least one of those ways was not 5.6. My choice of "crack up, friction traverse L, bulge, and reverse hand traverse R" is probably to be avoided in favor of simpler and more aesthetic alternatives.

We arrived at the summit at about 6 PM. There is a summit register on top, but someone, probably a climber that doesn't approve of summit registers, appears to have hammered the register tube permanently shut. The summit vista, and that of whole climb, in fact, is very nice, featuring the Brewer group, Stanford, Deerhorn, the Videttes, Gould and Dragon, and many others. Not bad for a little (10,690') bump on the map!

The descent from the summit initially involved a fairly tricky class 3 traverse that would be difficult to do in the dark. The remaining descent was an easy walk down slabs to the east, followed by a pleasant 120-degree rotary traverse at the base of the dome in a rocky gully and adjacent slabs. An obligatory bit of bushwhacking brought us back to camp at about 8 PM.

The next morning, we descended back to Road's End without mishap. To keep me from sobbing and whining about my ruined joints, the Stoic took down a double load of climbing gear, an extra 10 pounds. (When I look at him just right, you know, I can see a halo...) The 9-10 mile walk took my weak body about 4 hours, and we arrived at the car at about 1 PM. I was tired but very happy and satisfied. The Stoic, of course, was a bit dissatisfied because he hadn't gotten enough of workout." Next time, darn it, I'm gonna give him the double load of rock gear on the way up, too!

• *David Ress*

## The Rolls Royce of Climbs

June 20, 1999

I know the "Rolls Merriam" trip title confused a lot of people, but it's not too much of a stretch from Rolls Royce to Royce and Merriam to Rolls Merriam, is it?

Anyway, Robert Evans, Larry Sokolsky, Dylan Schwilk, and I headed up the Pine Creek trailhead in what felt like the first summer climb of the season - no jackets even at 7am, a cacophony of birdsong to wake us up, and only occasional wafts of sulfur from the local titanium mine... but strangely enough there were few mosquitoes at the trailhead and none once we climbed a few hundred feet.

The first major stream crossing left us looking at a sawn log bridge under four inches of fast moving water, so we headed for the lake outlet "cross country" on a good use trail and waded on shallow flat rocks. (On the way out I discovered it was possible to do the crossing with only one ski-pole-vault and keep your boots dry, but others waded.) There was no snow at to speak of until the Honeymoon Lake /Pine Creek Pass junction (which we missed) and above that we tried hard to avoid the soft thin slush.

At the pass, at 1pm, Robert headed toward an apparent ridge to survey the amount of snow between Royce Lakes and us while the rest of us contemplated our navels and enjoyed the warm afternoon. I was concerned about dry campsites and running water, others about postholing in the snow with full packs the next afternoon. We decided the pass campsites were too good to pass up, but it turned out the higher lakes were more ice-free than the ones at the pass and there would have been dry (if somewhat unprotected and boring) campsites.

Starting before 6am, we were on the summit of Royce by 830am and spent an hour up there reveling in the view and the warm air. Dylan and I climbed both bumps just to make sure the register was on the higher one and for hero shots (the lower bump is the more photogenic, I think), then we stormed down the sand to the saddle and rested briefly before heading for Merriam. We met two other climbers who had camped at the upper lakes, but since they chose the opposite peak to climb first each group had each mountain to themselves. It was often possible to choose between sandy walking, boulder hopping, or third class moves to make things more interesting.

We spent less time on Merriam, and also climbed both bumps, and returned once again to the saddle. The permanent snowfield between the saddle and the lakes had not required crampons on the way up, and by now it was so mushy that a standing glissade only worked for a short distance. (It's 45 degrees at the top, but only that steep for 100' or so.) The rest of the snow required a glissade pad or slick nylon pants but was enjoyably fast with the right gear.

Breaking camp was made tedious by the wilting heat - overnight it barely froze dew on my bivy bag, but in the early afternoon it was scorching in the sun. Summer Solstice or some such thing. Anyway, we squished our way back down to the cars as the day cooled, bottoming out around 6pm. Larry opted out of the second peak, and hiked back to his car alone with only a surprise bath in a stream crossing to mar the day. No bugs, no bruises, both peaks in good weather. What more can you ask for?

• *Steve Eckert*

## Mt. Sill (14,153')

July 3-5 1999

Unofficial trip

Arun Mahajan (leader), Stephan Meier, Noriko Sekikawa, Karon MacLean (got to write it down)

Arun planned this trip 6 months ago with rosy dreams of following a friend up Sill's 5.5 Swiss Arete, on the east side of the Palisades. Two weeks before the trip the friend dropped out and Arun had to content himself with our company and Sill's North Couloir. Lucky for me - I got the spot and this was one of the nicest trips I've been on.

We zoomed out of the Bay Area Friday night in Stephan's rolling bordello of an SUV, mysteriously encountering no holiday traffic whatsoever. Reached Mammoth a little after 1am and caught a few hours of sleep off of Glass Flow Road. Croissants and lots of coffee at Schatt's, and onward to the Glacier Lodge trailhead where we hoped to run into Kelly Maas and party, allegedly attempting Middle Pal the same weekend but nowhere to be seen; walking at 9:30.

The weather was hot and clear. We wended our leisurely way up Big Pine Creek's North Fork trail and then south towards Sam Mack Meadow, climbing past tiers of lakes and increasingly stunning mountain views - excepting poor Alice, looming over the approach and identified by Arun with characteristic lyricism as a "festering maggot-ridden heap of slag". We made it to Sam Mack Meadow by about 4:30pm due to Arun's heroic navigation skills (it helped that there was a fine trail with only two branches).

After luxuriating awhile in the lush, crag-cradled green of this alpine oasis, we crossed the stream and headed southeast up the Glacier trail. We hoped to camp near the east edge of the Palisade Glacier, where indeed the next day we found excellent campsites. An hour out of Sam Mack Meadow, however, the wind rose and one of our number was feeling a touch of altitude sickness, so around 6pm we found a slightly protected spot near a pool of snowmelt and camped at around 11,500'.

The altitude sickness sadly persisted throughout the weekend, and as a result the travel times listed here are generally slower than a typical PCS pace].

I probably should have posted this to GEAR...

Dinnertime turned into a windy adventure when both MSR stoves (a 10-year-old Whisperlite and a new Shaker Jet) and the two of the three pumps between us malfunctioned. We fixed the one that was just leaking through dry seals (bring your mineral oil, it's dry there) and got by. When Karon unzipped her flapping tent, humped up the hill by Stephan, she discovered a headlamp left there by her last tentmate. But if you hear Stephan grumble about hauling the Coleman lantern

Karon sneaked into his pack, it's not true. It was only a Petzl Micro.

The wind gusted wildly all night, leaving a thick skin of ice on the pool and inducing drowsy hallucinations of shredded tent flies. Between the racket and the brilliant moonlight, we didn't sleep at all. We stumbled bleary-eyed out of bed, questioning the sense of an ascent in the gale from a vantage high above camp while debating which shade of rose-gold Gayley's rugged pyramid and Sill's regal, towering profile would turn at the sun's first rays. But the wind died down and we hit the trail at 7am.

The Glacier trail hugs the northeast edge of a two-lobed moraine, and turns into a duck-marked scramble up to a ridge bordering the glacier's northeast edge, then a tedious boulder hop to the glacier itself which was the first real snow. Still in the shade, the surface was icy enough to merit crampons but otherwise easy going.

The bergschrund, pronounced everywhere else around the glacier's upper edge, leaves a good path to Glacier

Notch (we also heard there was still a weak bridge allowing access to the U-Notch and North Pal). We reached the notch at 11:45, which Arun celebrated with his latest selection of Cliff bars direct from Whole Foods, featuring the For Women Only "Lemon Luna Bar". He extolled its superiority over the dozen or so in his lunchbag, and we decided that the principal difference being the shape, we would refrain from suggesting a sex change but refer him to a marketing focus group.

Stephan and Noriko elected to rest awhile and enjoy the already-impressive spectacle and then attempt Gayley (class 3), while Arun and Karon went after Sill. The plan was to do both and we weren't sure of the difficulty of the route up Sill, so we figured we'd try it first while we were fresh. Secor calls the North Couloir Class 4 (also the North Couloir Descent Route, although these look like the same thing to me), but others had told us it was hard Class 3. Climbers on their way down reported one tricky spot where we might want a rope.

We quickly climbed up the L-shaped couloir between Sill and Apex to its north - iceaxe but no crampons. As we neared the saddle between Sill and Apex, we eyed Sill's north ridge and guessed at the route and the nasty class 4 move. As it turns out, we were looking at something that was probably in the low 5's; the North Couloir route isn't visible even from the saddle. When we turned south on the saddle and climbed a few feet, an actual trail materialized along a ledge to our right, on Sill's southwest side.

The trail soon dies out, but the route remains clear through lack of options - it is mostly a fun class 3 scramble that circles and rises counterclockwise more than 180 degrees around the mountain and finally comes out on the summit ridge. Some slings hung in one spot on the southwest rib, indicating that some people rap down through this spot, and we wondered if we would have trouble on the way back. We summited one hour from the Sill-Apex saddle. Arun whistled at the orange spot on the rocks below which was Noriko's parka, but got no response. The day was clear, and all I can say is that Secor's claim that Sill has the best view from any summit in the Sierra may be right on.

We hurried back down, having no problem on the class 4 section (no rope required, a good thing since we didn't have one); and reached Glacier Notch three hours after leaving it. Stephan was on his way back from a try at Gayley; at 1/3 of the way up he determined it was better completed with friends nearby. Arun and Karon decided that Sill was so satisfying we didn't need Gayley either, and we all dived off the Notch and glissaded down the glacier to the dread boulder field and back to camp.

Along the way we met two groups who had done North Pal (one pair hiked all the way from the cars in plastic boots, ouch) and decided we wanted to do it next... After a scenic detour when we missed the exact point where the Glacier route goes around the moraine's eastern lobe, we reached camp at 7pm.

We found it swarming with mosquitoes, and missed the wind of the night before. Stephan and Arun got to perform some class 5 moves after all, undoing the knots Karon tied when she hung the

food in the trees. Arun's couscous wouldn't cook and Karon's water filter (a Pur) stopped working (dry seals again). But we slept like babies. We left at 7:45 the next morning, to Sam Mack Meadow in 30 minutes and the parking lot by noon.

However, the adventure had only begun. On the road out of the park, just before hitting 395, we found ourselves on the front line of a brush fire, cheering on heroic firemen and water trucks and helicopters. After half an hour, we were advised that it would be a while and there was a back way... we led our caravan back up the road, where there was a roadblock and, uh oh, a Winnebago just turning onto the perilously rutted jeep trail. With dread we followed its swaying, hesitant progress for a mile, past a paddock crammed with alarmed and staring cows - evidently their first RV - and finally out to the road.

Yosemite was uneventful, but just east of Oakdale we drove through another forest fire. And the crowning oddity: in a roadside pen outside Escalon, a ten-minute-old calf wobbled to its feet trailing umbilical cord and maternal slime.

Home at 9pm, delightfully mystified once again by the total absence of traffic.

• *Karon MacLean*

## Foerster Peak, Electra Peak

July 16-19, 1999

Elena Sherman and I picked up our permit at the Tuolumne Meadows Permit Station, which now opens at 7am. I thought it opened at 8, so it was 8:15 before we hit the trail. We parked by the permit station since I didn't know you could drive a half mile to a closer parking lot near the lodge. We hiked in approximately 17 miles and 3000' of gain to where the Lyell Fork crosses the Isberg Pass trail, dragging into camp a few minutes after 8pm.

Due to our late arrival and long first day, we left the next morning about 7:30, later than planned. We followed the north side of the Lyell Fork, passing both lake 10217 and the two lakes at 10400 on the north side. From here we left the drainage and headed directly to the small lake just below lake 10999. At this point we broke out ice axes and headed mostly on snow up the north west bowl of Electra. We eventually climbed out to the west ridge near the summit which was reached at 2pm. This route is class 2. There was no register, but fortunately Tina Bowman had provided me with a register to take. The cannister was fortunately still there. Rodgers seemed too far to get back to camp in daylight so we decided to leave it for another time. We returned the same way to camp.

The next morning we retraced our steps up the Lyell Fork, but crossed the creek with some difficulty at approximately 9500'. We headed south to the first saddle immediately east of Peak 11210, then traversed onto the northwest ridge of Foerster. The greatest difficulty encountered was class

2. Once on the summit, lassitude started to set in. Although Florence was beckoning, we lounged for an hour and a half on the summit, then headed back to camp to get a start on the hike out. On the way down, we found a much better crossing just below Hutchings Creek.

Split over two days, the hike out was much more enjoyable. We also had to contend with lots of mosquitos, including a few even on the summits. All in all it was a pleasant first Sierra trip of the year for us.

• *Scott Sullivan*

## Private Trips

Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree Editor, but are not insured, sponsored, or supervised by the Sierra Club. They are listed here because they may be of interest to PCS members.

### McDuffie, Black Giant, Charybdis, Fiske, etc.

Peaks: McDuffie, Black Giant, Charybdis, Fiske, Huxley, etc. (Class 3)  
Dates: August 7 thru 15 Sat thru Sun (9 days)  
Maps: North Palisade, Mt. Thompson & Mt. Goddard  
Contact: Charles Schafer (408) 324-6003 (w)  
cgschafer@lucent.com  
Co-Contact: Bob Suzuki(510) 657-7555 (w)  
bobszk@bigfoot.com

If you've ever climbed to the top of Bishop Pass, looked off into the interior of the Sierra, and thought that those magnificent peaks on the horizon looked awfully appealing; then this trip is for you. . We will hike in over Echo Col on Saturday and set up camp near Helen Lake (at Muir Pass).

Secor says McDuffie, Black Giant & Charybdis are easily day hiked from there, so we want to give them a try. There are also a number of other peaks in that area that are worth climbing, and between Bob and I we'll go after most of them. Towards the end of the trip we will move south and climb Wheel, and perhaps others in that neighborhood. Saturday and Sunday we will hike out over Bishop Pass.

This should be a lot of fun, but it is a pretty ambitious trip so we are looking for experienced class 3 climbers to join us. Ice axes and possibly crampons will be required.

### School's Out

Peaks: Recess, Gabb, and Hilgard  
Dates: Aug 13-16 (Fri-Mon)  
Contact: Steve Eckert, eckert@climber.org

A somewhat mellow west-side trip starting near Lake Edison. The permit is full, but there is a short wait list if you want to get in line. You could also get another permit and join us!

### Agassiz & Winchell

Peaks: Agassiz (13,893'), Winchell (13,775') class 2,3  
Maps: Big Pine, Mt Goddard 15' topo  
Dates: August 28-29 (Sat-Sun)  
Contact: Bob Suzuki, w: 510-657-7555,  
>8pm: 408-259-0772, bobszk@bigfoot.com  
Nancy Fitzsimmons, w: 408-764-1761,  
h: 408-957-9683, Pkclimber@aol.com

Last fall our attempt to climb these 2 magnificent peaks in the Palisades never got beyond Sam Mack Meadow. Constant snow almost from the trailhead encouraged us to save these high peaks for another weekend. We'll try again this August.

A fast hike in to basecamp will be followed by an assault on Agassiz via the class 2 south ridge. Sunday won't be easier. We'll enjoy the classic east arete of Winchell, then backpack out to the cars for a late return to the BA, hopefully, with fond memories of two successful climbs.

### Clarence King & Gardiner

Peaks: Clarence King and Gardiner.  
Dates: Sept 3-6  
Contact: Rick Booth at 408-354-7291 or  
rick\_booth@worldnet.att.net

Dee Booth, rdbooth@worldnet.att.net

Pack in from Onion Valley over Kearsarge Pass and Glenn Pass into Rae lakes and eventually into Sixty Lakes Basin. Estimated distance is 10 miles. This is kind of a chug.

Clarence King has a fifth class summit block requiring a few moves of about 5.4. Gardiner has a longish fourth-class summit ridge.

Requirements: Both peaks require rope and modest rock climbing skills. You should know my wife or myself.

### Middle Pal & Norman Clyde

Peaks: Middle Palisade (14,040'), Norman Clyde (13,920'), Class: 3, 4  
Map: Mt. Goddard 15' topo  
Dates: Sept. 4-6 (Sat-Mon)  
Contact: Bob Suzuki day: 510-657-7555  
>8pm: 408-259-0772, bobszk@bigfoot.com  
Rich Leiker <2pm: 408-378-9522  
>3pm: 408-453-4253  
leiker@san-jose.tt.slb.com

This 3 day outing will be tough, but good. Saturday we'll drop our packs at our basecamp near Finger Lake then tackle the northeast face of Middle Palisade. We'll take all of Sunday to try our luck with a class 4 route on the north-northeast ridge or north face of Norman Clyde Peak. Only fast, strong peak climbers with previous class 4 and roped climbing experience will be considered for this outing.

### Capitol Peak, Colorado

Peak: Capitol Peak, Colorado (14,130'), Class 3-4  
Dates: Sept 4-6 (Sat-Mon)  
Contact: Bill Isherwood, 925-254-0739 (h)925-423-5058 (w)isherwood2@lln.gov

This is a class 3-4 climb up one of Colorado's more difficult 14'ers, noted for its exposed knife-edge ridge. The plan would be to fly to Denver Friday evening, drive to the mountain and hike in to a high camp on Saturday, make the climb on Sunday and hike out, staying overnight in the Aspen area. We would return to the Denver airport on Monday for return home. Roped climbing experience required. Contact leader for coordination of travel plans.

### Needsaw, Hamtooth

Peaks: Needham (12467), Sawtooth (12343) class 2  
Dates: Sep 18-19 (Sat-Sun)  
Contact: Steve Eckert <eckert@climber.org>

Depending on who signs up, we'll do the standard grunt to Needham over the top of Sawtooth, or we'll skip Monarch Lake and go directly to Needham (which might involve a bit of class 3 scrambling on an unscouted route). This area is great in the fall, when the bugs are dead and the marmots have their fill of salt bush (so your car doesn't look like a buffet). Needham could be done as a ver

### Annual Tuolumne Group Camp

Peaks: (Need volunteer to lead day trips)  
Dates: September 18-19  
Leader: Cecil Ann (408) 395-4525 cecilann@earthlink.net

Join us Friday night through Sunday for the annual PCS group camping trip. Historically, we've had fabulous dayclimbs/dayhikes and this year will be no exception. Camping will be at a group site in Tuolumne campground. Children, seniors, non-climbers, etc. are welcome.

## **Mt. Clark & Starr King**

Date: Sept. 24-26

Peaks: Mt. Clark and Starr King

Contact: George Sinclair 650-941-2160; geosinc@aol.com

Description: Join the leader as he returns to the peak he first climbed 25 years ago when he first began leading Sierra Club trips. One peak, and perhaps both will require the use of rope. Interested people should have some experience doing class 3 and know how to rappel.

## **Cherry Creek Canyon**

Peak: None - Cherry Creek Canyon

Date: October 9-10

Leader: Kai Wiedman (650) 347-5234

Don't miss this adventure backpack into one of the most beautiful granite canyons near Yosemite. Witness Cherry Creek charge forcefully through narrow slots. Gaze at granite domes in the distance. The scenery of this 25-mile loop backpack will dazzle you as you experience one of the Sierras' best kept secrets.

## **Nepal October 1999**

Peak: Chulu West, 20,500Ft

Date: October 1999

Contact: Warren Storkman

Phone 650-493-8959

FAX 650-493-8975

dstorkman@AOL.com

## **Middle Palisade**

July 3-5, 1999

Over the July 4 weekend, several of us had a great time climbing Middle Palisade. With three days to do the climb and get home, we were not rushed. We marveled at the beautiful flowers (wild rose, lupine, columbine, shooting star, cactus, Indian paintbrush, buttercup, penstemon, etc.) as we hiked in, but our attention soon turned to a rushing S. Fork of Big Pine Creek that we had to cross.

It wasn't very wide, but it was thigh deep, and it delayed us several minutes. It would no doubt pose little trouble later in the season. We then battled mosquitoes as we passed near Willow Lake, causing us to rush up the trail to Brainerd Lake without a rest. Fortunately good tent sites outnumbered mosquitoes at beautiful Finger Lake, so that's where we dropped our packs for the night.

I had a permit for 5, but we ended up with 10 at our camp. Chris and John Kerr had gotten their own permit and joined us, and some of their friends had a permit that they were using to climb Norman Clyde Pk. It was a great group and they made my job as leader an easy one.

Sunday morning dawned windy but otherwise beautiful. 7:00 saw us heading for the peak. As if on an expedition climb, almost everyone had crampons and helmet as well as an ice axe. The crampons were nice to have early in the morning but were not essential for the more experienced. We donned the helmets when we stepped off the glacier, as we had heard of loose rocks in the gullies. It proved to be a good idea for a group our size.

As with many previous parties, our group spent some time wondering what gully was what as we struggled to match the guide book descriptions with what we were encountering. Only after we were done with the climb and I did a little more scouting did we come to a real understanding of the route(s). After an

incorrect start on some terribly loose rock (one person turned back), we ended up climbing the same gully that Peter Maxwell's group did almost 6 years ago. His description is right on - it's an enjoyable climb, but rather stimulating at times as there were a couple of class 4 moves. While we were all able to climb it, none of us wanted to down climb it. A stimulating but short traverse of the ridge took us to the summit, which itself is non-trivial.

After lunch and a rest and some fantastic views on the summit, we descended the "correct" chute which directly intersects the summit.

Again echoing Peter, this was an easier but less exciting chute with a bit more loose rock. With 7 people, we went slowly to minimize knocking down loose rock, which was impossible to avoid. We all got off safely and enjoyed glissading and boot skiing back to camp.

That evening the mosquitoes arrived with warmer temperatures. We tried to linger and socialize after dinner but these pests drove us to our tents, where we soon fell asleep. The hike out Monday morning was a bit over 3 hours. While some of us rushed home, others stopped for a relaxing swim in Hot Creek.

The participants were Jeff Fischer, Wendy Wason, Landa Robillard, Dave Erskine, John and Chris Kerr, Mark Wallace and Kelly Maas (scribe and organizer).

So what's the secret of the Northeast face route on Middle Palisade? I don't normally engage in protracted route descriptions, but this time I can't resist - probably because we goofed - but with good results.

Our mistake was that we didn't start at the correct place. As David Harris says in his report, the key is to find the ledge, which is above the moraine. We got off the glacier and onto the buttress too low, on some rotten red rock. We should have known better since there was no ledge, and we were below the top of the moraine. I later found the ledge and it is much better.

All of my guidebooks (Secor (1992), Roper and Moynier/Fiddler) correctly say to follow the ledge into a chute. Note where you enter this chute so that you can find it on your way down - it's the only way off. At the top of the chute, Secor and Roper both say to "traverse right" at a particular colored rock, but this is confusing. Topping out of this gully (by a small pinnacle) is obvious - you get a much improved view of the face of the mountain.

A large couloir comes up from the right and splits at a point about 100 feet lower down. (From a distance, this is the wide chute immediately to the right of what I call the "lower buttress" of the face.)

The left fork is the "correct" gully, and during our early July climb it had a patch of snow in it. (The snow was easy to avoid and will probably be gone by the end of July, but it made a great landmark since it was the largest snow patch on the face.) To take this easier way up the mountain, just climb straight up and into this chute. Higher up, take the left fork when it branches. This takes you directly to the summit.

The right fork is the "wrong" gully, which our group climbed. If you wish to take this route (a good route, but not for novices), traverse across the left fork to get to the right fork. This will also require about 100 feet of descent. As with the other route, take the left fork when it branches higher up. A traverse left along the summit ridge takes you to the summit.

• Kelly Maas

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**Scree** is the monthly journal of the Peak Climbing Section of the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter.

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## Rock Climbing Classifications

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, rope may be used.
- Class 4: Requires rope belays.
- Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

**Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 8/29/99. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**



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