



November, 1999 Peak Climbing Section, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club Vol. 33 No. 11

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

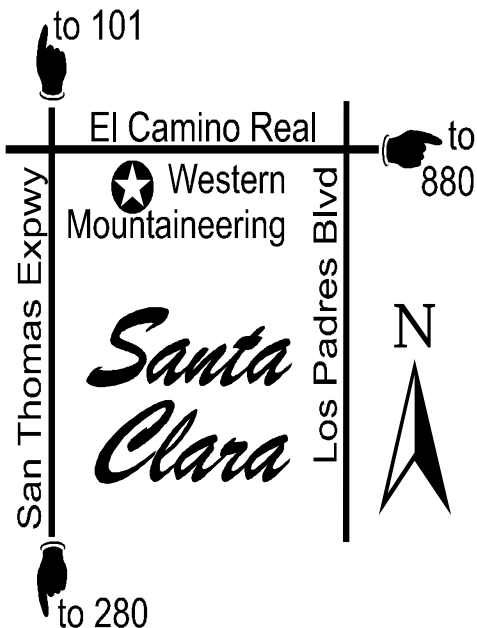
Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, November 9
Time: 8:00 PM
Program: Climbing in Israel by Ron Karpel

This show is a collection of climbing, hiking, and rappelling trips from the 70s and 80s in Israel and the Sinai Desert. Come see local climbing crags, hiking trails, scenery, and people. I promise it will be like no other show of Israel. There will be no old buildings, no synagogues, churches, mosques or graves.

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 11/28/99 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Vote For PCS Officers

The PCS nominating committee offers the following slate of candidates for this year's election.

Chair: To be nominated from the floor.
 Vice Chair/Scheduler: Dee Booth
 Treasurer: Bill Kirkpatrick.

You need to be present at the meeting to vote. Nominations will also be taken from the floor. We'll announce the new officers following the vote and they'll start immediately!

-- PCS Nominating Committee (Nancy Fitzsimmons, Bob Suzuki, Arun Mahajan)

Congratulations Steve Eckert!

On Sunday, October 3, 1999, Steve Eckert and 29 other climbers ascended Kern Peak. This completed Steve's quest to climb all 247 peaks recognized by the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter. To climb all 247 of these summits is a monumental accomplishment. Steve worked continuously for years on this project, and its completion was really a rite of passage for him.

-- Bob Bynum and Aaron Schuman

Farewell George Sinclair

Long time member of the PCS moves on. George Sinclair, after being involved, off and on, with the PCS for over 25 years, is moving out of the area. He lead his last trip for the PCS in late September to Mt. Clark. George is a past PCS chairperson, and past chairperson of the Mountaineering Committee.

Bob and Gretchen

On Saturday October 2, 1999, Bob Bynum and Gretchen Luepke were married in her hometown of Tucson, Arizona. Bob has served the PCS for the past two years as the Scree editor. Due to wedding planning and the actual wedding, we have not made it out on any official PCS trips this year, but hope this will change in the future. However on the way home, we stopped in Lone Pine where I photographed Gretchen in her wedding dress with Mt Whitney in the background!

-- Bob Bynum, Scree Editor

Bill Oliver

New Chair of the Mountaineering Oversight Committee

I am pleased to announce that Bill Oliver is the new chair of the Mountaineering Oversight Committee. He has been acting in that role for some time without the benefit of an official announcement. This is the official announcement.

Bill has already been working on new policies and procedures to help promote mountaineering outings in the Club while at the same time ensuring that our trips are safe and that our leaders are qualified.

To introduce Bill to you, I attach below a short resume that Bill wrote about himself.

I hope that you will all welcome Bill into his position and work with him to make the Sierra Club mountaineering programs strong.

-- David Simon, Chair, Outdoor Activities Governance Committee

Bill Oliver Resume

Bill took the Angeles Chapter's (AC) ten-week Basic Mountaineering Training Course in 1984 - and he got hooked! He followed with the Advanced Course, and the next year he became an assistant leader and later an instructor.

He's been most active with the AC climbing sections and has earned his "emblem" in all three: Sierra Peaks Section (SPS), Desert Peaks Section and Hundred Peaks Section. He's also twice served as chair of the SPS - 1989 and 1991.

Bill has climbed the 14 California 14ers, as well as challenging summits throughout the West and high volcanoes in Mexico and Ecuador. He eschews the term peak-bagger, however, preferring instead to repeat the gnarly ascents. He has written many stories on the history of high Sierra mountaineering and of the Club's once prominent role in this activity. Over the past few years, he has shifted his focus somewhat from the high Sierra to the grand, narrow and slot canyons of the Colorado Plateau country.

He is vice-chair of the AC Leadership Training Program, which currently has about 1500 "rated" leaders in the Chapter; he serves on the AC Safety Committee; and he is a group instructor and lecturer in the ten-week Wilderness Travel Course. Bill also chairs the chapter's Outings Management Committee, which has oversight over all the AC outings and training. He was also a member of the nine-person chapter Executive Committee - 1992-97.

Bill has represented the AC in the area of mountaineering oversight ever since the "insurance restoration" in 1994. This past spring ('99) he succeeded

Cal French as chair of the Mountaineering Oversight Committee (MOC), a subcommittee of the Outdoor Activities Governance Committee. He had also served in 1992 on the National ad hoc committee that helped develop the Group & Chapter Outings Committee.

The MOC is focused on continuing the Club's record of safe mountaineering and mountaineering leadership training. The committee is also strongly motivated to promote and expand this traditional Club activity more widely - a tradition that follows in the footsteps of our founder, John Muir.

Letters to the Editor: Trip Attendance

The Scree is printing two letters to the editor. One is from George Sinclair and the other has comments from Debbie Benham. They are both long-term active leaders in the PCS. George's letter was originally sent to the e-mail broadcast list and Debbie's letter is in response. Before publishing George's letter, I sought advice from the other PCS officers and several former PCS officers. I was concerned that a letter like this would be divisive to our membership yet I didn't want to censor discussion on important issues. The general consensus was to publish.

I would also like to add my own comments. I have been active with the PCS since 1995 and I have been on a number of trips. On every trip that I have participated, the leaders and all of the participants have been very congenial. From my perspective, the PCS is a great organization with many fine leaders and knowledgeable climbers.

-- Bob Bynum, Scree Editor

As a long time member of the PCS, and as someone who has lead a number of trips for the group in recent years, I wish to make the following observations:

1. Except for those trips that are lead by popular PCS leaders, most trips are poorly attended.
2. In many cases private, un-advertised trips are more heavily attended than those listed in Scree.
3. At times there are multiple trips listed for the same month to the same mountain, which can cause one trip to be poorly attended.
4. Sometimes a leader will initially encounter a great deal of interest for his/her trip, only to have most everyone drop out at the last minute.
5. With permit costs going up, it can begin to become financially burdensome for a leader to plan a trip where the level of participation is unknown.

The PCS exists because of volunteer leaders. If there is little, or no interest in the trips a leader attempts to lead, then that leader will most likely cease leading trips and in the end the PCS will lose. To improve things perhaps the PCS should have a leaner schedule, or perhaps people who only go with their friends should try doing a trip with others.

-- George Sinclair

Debbie Benham Adds:

I read George's letter with interest and would like to comment:

- 1) I have been leading and/or coleading trips for PCS for about 10 years, and, with the exception of one trip, all trips have been full, and, usually have had a waiting list, whether an official Sierra Club trip, or, a privately listed trip in the 'Scree'. For official trips, I have made a habit of leading trips for newcomers, and, on these trips specifically, I have welcomed those who are new to peak climbing with proper screening. For private trips, I have kept the group small, as these are generally a higher class of climb. With that reduced number (say 4 or 5), the trip number has been complete.

With an unadvertised, private trip, I believe it is not really within the province of the Sierra Club to monitor these excursions. One of the benefits of belonging to the PCS is meeting others of like ability and character with the free will to go where you like, together, and climb. More to the point, however, would be to ask

each leader, whether private or public trip, to support each others' efforts rather than to undermine.

2) The one time I encountered a great deal of interest, then nothing, was to Mt Agassiz, four to five years ago. The trip was full with a waiting list of four or five people, then, two days before the start of the trip, most everyone dropped out. I learned through that experience to ask for a deposit to secure a participants' spot on the climb with a full refund at the trailhead. Now, those who cancel, forfeit the deposit, and, I donate their share to the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter. It's worked out very well.

3) I think more care should be taken to pace trips throughout the year, especially during the summer months. I'd like to see the PCS Trip Planning meetings better organized with more direction from the PCS Trip Scheduler.

4) Permit costs are on the rise and this is something I now take into consideration when advertising a trip in the 'Scree', ie: how many to ask for on permit; am I willing to lose x amount of money if I don't get signups; should I use their deposit \$ if they cancel to pay for the permit? et cetera.

5) Good competent leaders are hard to find. I agree with George that a more concerted effort is needed to encourage leaders to stay and to keep on leading. While climbing and backpacking in the wilderness is wonderful, leading a group of people into that wilderness does involve some organization, coordination, and judgement. I'd like to see discussed: what goes into leading a trip; a query as to why some have stopped leading; leader concerns on a trip; and participants' views of what they think leading is all about, specific to PCS and Sierra Club.

6) For the first time, this year, I had someone ask to be on a trip, then, in conversation, she mentioned that she had signed up for several other trips that same weekend. She hadn't yet made up her mind!! Some beginning climbers do not know what is involved in organizing a trip and they do not fully realize that PCS is not a commercially run venture. We're all volunteers.

-- Debbie Benham

Wilderness First Aid

To help trip leaders and would-be leaders get the required First Aid certificate, the Chapter sponsors a First Aid class each quarter, based on a nationally recognized first aid text, but with added material and emphasis on wilderness situations with no phone to dial 911. The next First Aid classes will be Saturday, November 20 and Sunday, November 21 at the Peninsula Conservation Center in Palo Alto (from Bayshore/Hwy. 101 at San Antonio, turn toward the Bay; turn left at 1st stoplight, then right at Corporation Way to park behind PCC). Class is 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (1 hour for your bag lunch) and is limited to 12 people. To sign up, send choice of day, and a check for \$38 with a stamped, self-addressed business-sized envelope to: Health Education Services, 200 Waverly, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Cancellations get partial refund if a substitute attends (you get to keep the Wilderness First Aid book). For more information, call 650-321-6500.

-- Marg Ottenberg

Tumpline Article

R. J. Secor has requested that I make a note in this month's Scree that his article, which appeared in the October Scree, on The Tumpline first appeared in the Angeles Chapter's June 1999 issue of the Southern Sierran.

-- Bob Bynum, Scree Editor

Trip Planning 2000

We had a very enjoyable trip planing meeting for the winter season. Thanks to Bob Bynum and Aaron Schuman for participating. Thanks to Arun Mahajan for an impeccable hospitality. See if you can spot Arun PC's Y2K bug

If you like to propose additional trips, please email them to me. The web version of this message is in the PCS web page under "other trips"

Trips for Winter/Spring 1999 and 1900 planned at the trip planning meeting on the 26th of October 1999.

Nov 6/799 Crag (3), Smith (1),

Jan 16, 1900, Junipero Serra, Arun Mahajan, Ron Karpel

Jan 22, 1900, Full Moon hike to the Pinnacles, Aaron Schuman

February 6, Cone Peak, Ron Karpel, Arun Mahajan

March 12, 1900, Sunday, Tinker Knob, Winter, Aaron Schuman

March 25, Sunday, 1900, Roundtop, George, Arun

April 8-9, Sat, Sun, Spanish Needle (3) Sawtooth (2), Aaron

April 15/16, Saturday/Sunday, Training Trip, Ron Karpel

-- Ron Karpe, Vice-Chair and Scheduler

Jeri and John Flinn

In long term PCS member John Flinn's column in the San Francisco Examiner last week, he wrote that his wife requires a kidney transplant, and that he has volunteered to give her one of his. Apparently, Jeri has been quite ill for sometime now. The operation will be performed between now and the end of the year.

-- George Sinclair

Inyo Reservation System

Inyo National Forest has announced the new reservation system for next year. Price increased to \$5 per person, reflecting actual costs. Mt Whitney zone permits will be \$15 per person, to help with enhanced services that area. The phone number for Wilderness Reservation Service is (888) 374-3773 or (760) 938-1136. From April 1 - Sept 15th, they will be open seven days a week from 8 am to 4:30 pm.

Only 60% of the quota will be available by reservation, 40% will be available on day of entry (except Whitney Portal). All permits must be picked up in person. Mt Whitney permit applications should be submitted in February, other areas on March 1st. Reservations are available six months in advance until two days in advance. The Forest Service Region Five/Inyo National Forest/Virtual Visitor Center web site and Ranger Stations will have complete information and application form on November 1st.

Inyo What's New Page, see Permits and Permit System 2000:

<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/inyo/whatsnew.htm>

Year 2000 permit information :

<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/inyo/vvc/permits.htm>

Mt. Whitney trail

<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/inyo/vvc/mtwhitny/whitnytrl.htm>

-- Neal Robbins

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.

Death Valley/Telescope Peak

Peak: Telescope Peak, Class 2 or 3D (DHS)
Date: Nov 11-14
Leader: Jeff Fisher, 408-739-1702,
han1cannae@aol.com
Co-Leader Needed for Mahogany

Two separate hikes one leaving from the floor of Death Valley at 250 below sea level is a one way hike coming out at Mahogany flats. The second leaving from Mahogany Flats at approx. 8,000 ft. both going to the summit of Telescope Peak at 11,300 ft. Those hiking from Mahogany flats, will help in shuttling those doing the longer hike. The hike from the valley floor is long and very strenuous, and those participating should be in excellent condition. E-Mail for more information or phone if no E-mail. Leader; Jeff Fisher 408-739-1702

Avalanche Transceiver Practice

Dates: Sat, Nov 20
Leader: Butch Suits 408-616-0085,
butch.suits@lmco.com>

Avalanche transceivers can potentially save the life of a skier buried in an avalanche. To use them effectively in an emergency,, you need to practice. Come and locate buried transceivers at San Gregorio Beach .

Peninsula. We will meet in the parking lot at the corner nearest the path to the beach at 10:00 a.m. and practice for 2-3 hours. Please let leader know you are coming--and bring your beacons if you have any.

Junipero Serra Peak, 5862 ft, Class 1,

Date: Sunday, January 16, 2000.
Maps: Junipero Serra 7.5'
Leaders: Arun V. Mahajan <arun@tollbridgetech.com,&br/>(h) 650-327-8598 (w) 408-585-2114
Ron Karpel <ronny@luxsonor.com
(w)510771-3231, (h)650-594-0211

Advance notice. Complete write-up in December.

Agassiz and Winchell

August 28, 1999

Just before dawn on the last Saturday in August, Bob Suzuki, Joan Marshall, and I roused ourselves from our bivy spot next to the Glacier Lodge parking lot. A quick breakfast, and then Bob and I headed up the trail toward Sam Mack Meadow. The plan was to drop our packs there, climb Mt. Agassiz (13,893), camp back at Sam Mack with the rest of our group, and then climb Mt. Winchell (13,775) on Sunday.

At 11 a.m. after four hours of hiking, Bob and I reached Sam Mack, a small jewel-like meadow nestled at the foot of the cliffs and moraines leading up to the Thunderbolt and Palisade glaciers. The meadow is enclosed by broken cliffs on three sides and has no obvious way out. After a break, we climbed the steep snowfield at the southwest corner, which is over 40 degrees near the top and requires an ice axe, and would probably require crampons in the early morning. Above that we passed a small lake with a snow cliff just south of Sam Mack Lake, then started upwards over rugged moraines toward the foot of Agassiz. True moraine like this is harder to walk on than talus -- it tends to

form up-and-down ridges instead of even slopes, and the boulders are more likely to be loose and mixed with rubble. To pass the time, we estimated how long a day we were going to have, and we figured that if things went well, we'd top out at 3:30 and get back to camp at 6:30.

Around 2 we took a break at the top of the permanent snowfield southeast of Agassiz, then decided to head straight up the southeast face instead of wandering over to Agassiz Col and getting on the south ridge -- the alternate route suggested in Secor. We chose the gully that cuts most deeply into the southeast face and aims just left of the apparent summit. We climbed some class-3 slabs left of the gully, and then when these got a bit steep (for me, not for Bob) we moved into the gully for a tedious class-2 scree slog. The gully topped out just 200' feet left of the summit, and when we reached the top it was 3:31 p.m. It was a great relief to finish the uphill part of the day -- we'd come up almost 14,000 feet in 24 hours (8000 by car, 6000 on foot), and we hadn't been sure this plan would work out.

After a snack and short blissful rest on the soft boulders, we headed down, almost floating now that gravity was working with us instead of against us. The trek back over the moraine felt great as the sinking sun spread its alpine colors over everything, and we arrived back in camp at 6:29, right on schedule. We were greeted by the rest of the group Joan Marshall, Steve Eckert, Nancy Fitzsimmons, Maggie Hudson, Stephan Meier, and Ted Raczek. Most of us had climbed together before, in some cases too often to count, so it was a relaxed evening in camp. After supper, we were all in bed by 8 to rest up for the big day tomorrow. Weather was cloudless and quite warm for 11,000'.

Sunday we got up at 5:30 and left camp at 6:40. To exit the meadow, we chose the talus slope at the southeast corner. This leads up to a small frying-pan-shaped snowfield with a finger of snow forming the "handle" and pointing upwards. Early in the summer this steep finger of snow may be hard to climb, but now in late August it had a moat along its right edge with rocks that formed a perfect class-2 staircase. At the top of the slope, we passed "snowcliff lake," then stayed on snowfields as much as possible to avoid the tedious moraines. We gave up a little altitude once or twice but it seemed to save time and certainly saved effort.

At 9 a.m. we took a break on a talus plateau at the foot of the southeast face of Winchell and contemplated the two gullies above. They looked steeper and much less distinct than when I climbed the peak four years ago; in fact they looked almost undoable. I knew there was a moderate class-3 route up there somewhere, but it makes one wonder -- what drove the first ascensionists upward on peaks like these, when they could see no safe way through the cliffs above, and had little or nothing in the way of climbing gear?

After more upward slogging, we finally reached the top of the talus and put our hands on rock. Winchell is a fun climb -- we climbed a steep class-3 step near the bottom the right-hand gully, continued up a few hundred feet on excellent rock, and then searched for the traverse into the left-hand gully. To keep this climb class-3, you must traverse at the right place, and after one false start we found it -- it's at the upper edge of an area of white rock high up on the left side of the right-hand gully, just 30' or so below the top of the gully. (Secor's instruction to climb to the crest of the arete is wrong.) Another marker is an 8" wide horizontal dike of white rock that cuts across the gully just above the traverse line.

The traverse takes you across an airy class-3 ledge with good holds, and drops you onto a sidewalk ledge in the left-hand gully. Solid, fun, class-3 ledges then take you up a couple of hundred

feet up to the summit, where we arrived at 10:30. All seven of us managed to crowd onto the cramped summit area, and we enjoyed beautiful views of the Palisades, the tarns in the Bishop Pass area, and the sea of high peaks to the south and southwest. Weather was clear and quite warm for almost 14,000' as we ate snacks, took photos, and searched the register for PCS names, of which there were many.

Soon it was time to descend, and we passed the two steep spots with no trouble except for one team member who needed some coaching. Once off the peak, we took another break to enjoy the warm sun, then headed down the moraines. We again made use of snowfields to avoid most of the moraines, and got down to "snow cliff lake" by 1:30. Here the group split up to try different routes down to the meadow. Steve explored rockbound Sam Mack Lake and found a couple of primitive campsites there, then followed me down the straightforward talus slope. The rest of the party tried descending the snowfield that Bob and I had climbed on Saturday, but some folks didn't like the angle (or the run out into a cascading creek with sharp boulders), so they backtracked and came down the talus also.

We were all back at camp by 2:30, and decided to end the trip there so the three carpools could hike out independently. Steve disappeared down the trail, now able to count his remaining peaks on the SPS list on one hand. Bob, Joan, and I managed to hike out in just 2 1/2 hours, and we flogged Joan's poor little Honda home in less than 6 hours. Thanks to everyone for a great weekend -- by keeping our pace steady and our breaks short, we managed to pack a lot into two days and still get home at a reasonable hour.

-- Jim Ramaker

Mt. Conness (12,580')

September 25, 1999

Who: Mike Rinaldi, Vincent Rinaldi

For the past four years during the months of September and October I've loosely planned trips to climb Mt. Conness. Twice from the Youngs Lakes side and twice as day trips while car camping in Tuolumne Meadows. Each time something came along to change the plans. One year they even closed the park when some nut was running loose in the high country. This of course happened the day that I drove down from Lake Tahoe for the express purpose of day hiking the East side of Conness. Made for a long detour return trip to the Bay Area. This past weekend I again planned to climb Conness. This time my brother (Vince) came along. I guess he was the lucky charm. We hadn't climbed anything together since 1992 when we climbed Half Dome. Having reserved a camp ground in the Meadows we came to get that big bad mamma. This weekend was also the last weekend that Tuolumne Meadows campground was open. One ranger told me that as of October 15 no cars will be allowed to park overnight along Tioga Road. Winter is just around the corner!

Saturday morning we drove to SaddleBag Lake. We parked near the dam and we requickly off toward the old Carneige Research Station. The Fall colors were out in force making for a very enjoyable hike. Fall is by far my favorite time of year in the Sierras. Days are not too warm, mornings are crisp so that the early morning brew tastes extra good and of course the best reason is that all the dammed mosquitos are dead! dead! dead!!!

The route we did is the standard one described in many of guides. We hiked to the low point on the Ridge connecting Conness with White Mt. Then we proceeded along the ridge to the summit. We ran into a bit of difficulty when at this low point. To get over

the ridge we chose a chute that looked better from below than from up close. This caused us to make 2-3 class 5 moves to get onto the ridge. From there it was a easy class 1 stroll all the way to the base of the last 300 feet. The snowfield which I read about in many guides was easily avoided and we carefully made our way up to the summit. Many granite stones are layed out in a staircase all the way to the top. It reminded me of the Half Dome trail (the bump below the cables). Once on top we enjoyed perfect Sierra weather. Not a cloud in the sky and not a peep from the wind as well. The glacier lay below us and lots of snow from Hurricane Hillary's weather still stuck to the Northern Faces. While eating lunch a lone climber came up from the West ridge. He apparently did the 5.6 route solo. After signing the register we headed down. Near the snowfield we encountered two more climbers. They told us that they came up the East Ridge. They said that it was more direct than our route. So on the way down we decided to take it instead. The East Ridge intercept the main ridge at the first ridge high point south of the summit. From there a class 2-3 trail takes you to Alpine Lake and then down to the meadow. This route was shorter but actually took us longer since we took a wrong turn and needed to come down a mostly dry but slippery cascade. We were back at the truck by 3:45PM and quickly back to Tuolumne for some snacks, pasta, wine, and finally Grand Marnier to top it off. Later that evening we went on a Tuolumne Meadows ranger led astronomy talk. The Full Harvest Moon made the stargazing a bit difficult but the stories from the ranger were fun. The trip home on Sunday took us north on 395 to see what we could of the Fall colors. The change is well in progress but not peaking yet.

-- Mike Rinaldi

Mt. Clark & Starr King

Sept. 24-26, 1999

Since Starr King is a fifth-class mountain, this was listed as an unofficial PCS trip. However, it was listed in the PCS newsletter and was open to anyone with previous climbing experience. Originally there was going to be four of us, but a few days prior to the trip two people dropped out. That left just Greg Johnson and myself, which actually worked out well because it allowed us to travel and climb together as a team and thus do things that would ve been more difficult with a larger group. Since there was just the two of us, I decided to try a more challenging route on Clark than the one I had originally thought of doing. We also did a fair amount of cross-country hiking. I ve included a little more detail here then I normally would for those who may be interested in repeating parts, or all of this trip. I am not a GPS person, so there aren t any GPS details here.

As mentioned in the trip description in the PCS newsletter, this was an anniversary climb for me. I had first climbed Clark 25 years ago this October on the first Sierra Club trip I was a leader on. I was actually a co-leader at the time. The trip was listed as a joint PCS-RCS trip. Dave Kutu and Dick Irvin were the other co-leaders. Dick Irvin was a very experienced climber, who had been on the 1958 expedition to Hidden Peak. He was one of my sponsors when I joined the American Alpine Club a few years later.

The first day of the trip we hiked in to an un-named lake on the northwest side of Mt. Clark from the Mono Meadows trailhead. This involved a significant amount of off-trail hiking as we worked our way up an un-named fork of the Illilouette Creek. On the 7.5 minute Merced Peak map this is the creek that begins at about 8,800 feet a short distance below a lake and drops in a southwest direction until meeting the Clark Fork of the Illilouette at 7,230 feet. Most of the way we stayed on the west side of the

creek. We camped at the lake that is a short distance above where this creek ends. There is a very nice camp spot at the lake. We saw only one other person that entire day.

The second day we climbed Mt. Clark via the spectacular northwest ridge. This climb is included in the Sierra Classics book by Moynier and Fiddler. For a long distance this long ridge, which drops off vertically on the northeast side, rises very gradually. We found the going to be very tedious here as we worked our way over and around large blocks while attempting to get closer to the summit. It seemed like the ridge went on forever. As we got closer to the summit, we avoided some difficult gendarmes by staying to the right side of the ridge (the left side is a cliff). Eventually we reached a point where the ridge rises steeply up to the summit. For this final segment we stayed either directly on, or close to the ridge. This was the only part that required a rope. Most of it was class 4, but there was one 20-foot section that was about class 5.4. The very last bit was a very thrilling and spectacular class 3 traverse of the ridge leading to the summit.

Not wanting to descend the way we had come, we instead went down the Farquhar route and dropped into the cirque below the north face of Clark. A prominent ledge on the west end of the cirque allowed us to regain the lower end of the northwest ridge of Clark, from where we were easily able to return to our camp, which we reached around mid-afternoon. We quickly packed up our gear and headed directly towards Starr King. We were planning to camp somewhere near Starr King Meadow. The map showed a creek going through the meadow where we hoped to get water. Unfortunately, when we got there we found that the creek was dry. We then headed towards another creek somewhat to the southwest. Fortunately this creek had not dried up. We camped near this creek. The off-trail stretch between the Clark camp and the Starr King camp involved hiking through some very dense forests using map and compass.

The third day we climbed Starr King. From our campsite at about 7,600 feet on the south side of the southern of the two domes adjacent to Starr King (near the red 12 on the 7.5 minute Half Dome map) we hiked around the east side of the domes and up to the saddle where the southeast face route begins. We climbed this 2 pitch route wearing our rock climbing shoes. The climb is rated as class 5.5 in Spencer's Southern Yosemite guidebook, which seems about right. If one were to do this friction climb in mountain boots, it would be much more difficult. This was my second time up Starr King. The first time up in 1979 I climbed what we (Erik Simpson and I) thought was the East Face route, but which I now believe is the Tsunami route in Spencer's guide which was published in 1988. However, Spencer says he first climbed this route in 1987? Speaking of Spencer, we saw his name in the summit register where he once claimed to have climbed Starr King in under two hours from the road!

Using one 50-meter rope we were able to get down in four rappels. We returned to our campsite, packed up our gear, and hiked out. The only difficulty was negotiating a way through the manzanita that surrounds the base of Starr King. We reached the car about 2.5 hours later. On the way we saw two more people, making a total of three for the entire trip.

-- George Sinclair

Cherry Creek Canyon

October 9-10, 1999

On the weekend of October 9-10, Kai Wiedman led a merry little band of hikers on a fantastic non-climb near Yosemite. The destination was the not-so-well known Cherry Creek Canyon, a

place I had partially visited six years ago. On that spring trip, a small group of us hiked, scrambled and bushwhacked half way up the canyon before exiting via a snow-covered slope. The creek was more like a river. We kept a respectful distance from it, not wanting to get pinched between it and some unpassable granite slopes. Unfortunately we had missed out on the most spectacular upper half of the canyon, which we could see was a delectable granite playground.

It was therefore an easy decision to join Kai's autumn outing. Our group of six assembled at the designated time, but not at the trailhead. A locked gate left us nearly 5 miles short of the trailhead, almost stopping the trip right there. (The gate is open during the summer - they apparently closed it in late September or October.) Bob Suzuki was quick to extol the virtues of a restful weekend at home, and Kai had serious doubts, but Joan Marshall was willing, and Chris Kerr, Hal Tompkins and myself were eager to continue as planned.

The first day was spent hiking from Cherry Lake Reservoir up the Kibbie Ridge trail to Styx Pass, paralleling the canyon on the east. Once at the pass, we dropped down into the canyon and descended the first mile or so to a great camp on sand and flat rock which earlier in the season is part of the riverbed. In October, however, the creeks flow had slowed to that of a garden hose. As the low sun sank lower, we compared cooking styles, drank wine and generally had a great time talking about nothing. Having just experienced our first bit of the fabled Cherry Creek Canyon granite, we looked forward to seeing the rest of the canyon the next day - but I wondered how we could do it all in one day.

Kai led us onward once we had eaten breakfast and packed. His rule, he explained, was to stay as close to the creek as possible. This would minimize bushwhacking and maximize the fun. Indeed, we had already crossed the creek multiple times the previous evening - something that is absolutely out of the question in the spring. I don't think any of us will forget the wonderland of granite, pools and minor waterfalls water that we experiences the next few miles. Often the waterway was wide and easy to navigate. Most of us were able to keep our feet dry the whole way. At other times, the rock rose nearly straight up on one side or both. We often did not know if we could continue along the streambed until we tried it - but usually it went. Only a couple of times were we forced to climb up and around a particularly daunting pool or gorge. Every turn of the creek held something new, and we all grinned from ear to ear. Hal said it compared favorably to some of the better canyons of Utah.

As the miles passed, however, the raw glacier carved bedrock gradually gave way to dirt and vegetation, so that finally it resembled any ordinary low Sierra canyon. It was an unusually warm October day. We wanted to stop for dips in the enticingly cool pools, but we didn't have the time. We continued to descend a few more miles until we reached a key landmark and began our gradual hike up and out of the canyon. Even though there were generally no trails, Kai took us directly to the trailhead. From there it was another 4.5 miles along a gravel road to the cars.

We were all exhausted at the end of a very long weekend, but it was well worth it. A third day, would make the trip more relaxing and would allow time to take a dip in the pools. The terrain in the canyon varied from class 2 to class 4, and we sometimes had to climb or descend steep granite slabs, similar to Tuolumne. In the spring, rushing water would cover much of the rock that we had walked on. We saw a few other hikers on the Kibbie Ridge trail, but no one along the creek. The Emigrant Wilderness guidebook describes this "hike." I'll be back.

-- Kelly Maas

Raymond Peak

From The West

The Mokelumne Wilderness is one of my wife's (Luthien) favorite places to visit. Geographically, it straddles the crest of the Sierra Nevada between Highways 4 and 88. More than just a location, though, it's at the junction of the Northern Sierra, Southern Sierra, and Eastern Sierra botanic provinces. That makes for pleasant hiking through a diverse range of plant communities, which change with elevation, exposure, and soil type. For example, plants in the valleys grow amid slabs of granite, while the peaks and ridges are composed of dark volcanic rock. Perhaps these dark rocks, with their sinister appearance, keep the number of visitors down. I've seen few hikers there compared to nearby areas with carved granite peaks, such as the Desolation Wilderness.

It was my usual spur-of-the-moment decision last August to plan another visit to this wilderness area. The plan developed into a moderately strenuous dayhike up to the summit of the 10,011' Raymond Peak. From Sacramento, the closest trailhead is by way of Blue Lakes Road off Highway 88, a few miles east of Carson Pass. I originally planned to start our hike from Wet Meadows Reservoir, "road's end" per my map and the road signs. However, the road continued east, toward the peak, as did we, another half mile to a small undeveloped campsite on a small creek coming down from the saddle ahead.

Once out of the truck, we wandered around the creek a bit before finding a spur trail leading east toward the saddle. It joined the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), to our surprise, a few minutes later at a wilderness sign-in kiosk. After obtaining the self-service permit, we continued a similarly short distance on the PCT up to the saddle. Then, we turned south on a use trail up a gentle ridge before contouring around into the pines. We passed a couple small, but nice campsites, with Pleasant Valley Creek as our left handrail. Eventually we lost the trail while climbing some volcanic rock, taking in the view of a water cascade on the left.

Up the ridge on our right was a large natural arch set in a volcanic pinnacle. With our backs to the arch, we crossed the creek and climbed up to a string of volcanic outcrops. Luthien went around to the right while I went left, which put me on the high side of a cliff with Luthien 30' below. Luckily, she was able to scurry up a chimney without too much exposure. We then continued to the left just below more outcrops until my GPS put us just short of the summit. Our luck held as, looking up, a Class 2 route was evident. About three hours after leaving the trailhead, we had lunch atop Raymond Peak.

Below the opposite side of the ridge, an alpine lake set off its surroundings with deep blue. Water is like a magnet to Luthien, so it was easy to rationalize trying a different route out, especially since I figured the PCT must be down there somewhere. So, we changed plans and dropped quickly down an avalanche chute to the lake. There we met a couple fishermen, the only people we saw on this hike. We had better luck than they, since they hadn't seen a fish and we learned of an easy route out to the PCT via a Raymond Lake Trail. After a quick dip in the lake to keep Luthien happy, we found the trail and followed it to the PCT. However, the PCT wound around several water courses, so it was almost four hours before we were back at the truck and on our way home.

-- Beren Erchamion

The Unicorn in the Garden.

Oct 17, 1999

Once upon a sunny morning, a man sees a white Unicorn with a golden horn in his garden, cropping his roses. He rushes up to his wife and wakes her up. "There is a Unicorn in the garden" he says, "eating roses". His wife gives him an unfriendly look, "the Unicorn is a mythical beast". So begins a classic modern fable.

"There is the Unicorn from the meadows", says Ron Karpel, waking me up from my dozing. "The Unicorn is a mythical beast", I mutter. We have been driving for the past five hours after having started off from the Bay Area at a ghastly morning hour. So began our hike to Unicorn Peak (10880 ft) in our garden, Tuolumne Meadows, on Sunday, 17 Oct, 99.

Starting from the back of the campground at Tuolumne, a couple of miles of easy hiking on an evenly graded trail got us to an unmarked fork which headed west. Within a quarter of a mile on this fork, we came to Elizabeth Lake which we skirted on the north side till we came to the gentle class-2 slopes of Unicorn Peak's east side. Angling north-east on the slabs, we came to the small notch between the middle and north summits of the peak. At this point, there is a small arete of seemingly unclimbable rocks that lead to the summit. But there is a way by circling either to the right or to the left and a couple of airy class-3 moves later we were on a small platform looking at a large boulder on the route.

Here, we consolidated our packs into one and Ron pulled out his 9mm half-length rope and gave me a few hexes and cams and graciously let me lead. One may clamber directly on to the face of the boulder and use the knobs and other features on it to climb it but it was too much of a high step for me, so I decided to go on the left and under it. This is the only hard move of the climb as the left side is exposed. Carefully avoiding eye contact with the void below me and crouching on the small ledge under the boulder, wedging my hands in a crack between the boulder and a smaller rock I let my feet out into the void and found a small foothold and was able to slide to my left till I came to the rock on the other side and was able to stem with my left foot and thus get on and over the boulder. I did not have to place protection. A few easier steps and I was at the top. Ron quickly followed me up, making light of that class-4 step and we were on the horn of the Unicorn. No register here, nor is the peak on THE LIST, which we found to be very odd indeed.

The long wait at the summit, not wanting to let go of an ending season, finally came to an end. This time Ron lead and I belayed. He set three pieces on the way down and I followed to the platform where we had left some of our stuff. The hike out was uneventful and we got back to the cars to make it a total of six hours, ending an enjoyable trip to a most striking peak.

Did the man in the fable get put in the booby-hatch for claiming to have seen a Unicorn in his garden? I won't tell you what happens. I will let you enjoy that fable for yourself. It is a classic too.

(references to 'The Unicorn in the Garden' from 'Fables for our time' by James Thurber)

-- Arun Mahajan

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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 11/28/99. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.



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