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## Next General Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, November 14  
**Time:** 7:30 PM  
**Program:** Elections and "Teton and Wind River Alpine Rock Climbs", by Bruce Bousfield

**Directions:** Peninsula Conservation Center  
3921 East Bayshore Rd, Palo Alto, CA

From 101: Exit at San Antonio Road, Go East to the first traffic light, Turn left and follow Bayshore Rd to the PCC on the corner of Corporation Way. A sign marking the PCC is out front. Park behind.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 11/26/2000 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

## 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.

### Annual Snow Camping Seminar

**Class Dates:** Tuesday, February 27, 2001  
Thursday, March 1, 2001  
Tuesday, March 6, 2001.

**Field Trip:** mid-March (exact weekend TBD)

**Contacts:**

Chris MacIntosh, cmaci@attglobal.net 650-325-7841  
Tom Wolf, twolf@snaptrack.com 650-961-2682

Annual Snow Camping Seminar will be held later in the season than before.

This course prepares you for camping happily in the snow, and gives tips for day skiers or snowshoers caught out overnight. Participants must be experienced summer backpackers as this course will give you winter information and tips but doesn't teach basic backpacking.

Sign up details and form will appear in the February 2001 Loma Prieta.

## PCS Election

The PCS Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the following roster of candidates for the posts of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer for the term starting in November 2000 and ending in October 2001.

The elections are to be held at the PCS November meeting. Nominations can be taken from the floor at the time of election.

Anyone who is a PCS and Sierra Club member may nominate at that time.

Chair: Dee Booth  
Vice Chair: Nancy Fitzsimmons  
Treasurer: Scott Kreider

The newly elected team assumes office right away.

• *Debbie Benham, Bob Suzuki and Arun Mahajan,*  
*The PCS Nominating Committee*

## Winter Trip Planning Meeting

**Date:** Thursday, November 9, 7:30 pm

**Place:** Western Mountaineering.  
2344 El Camino Real  
Santa Clara (between San  
Thomas and Los Padres).

**Directions:** 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.

If you cannot attend the meeting please e-mail your trip ideas to me and I will put them on the schedule. If you can provide a first and second choice for dates it will make planning easier.

Hope to see you there.

• *Dee Booth, PCS Trip Scheduler*

# Christmas Party Location Needed

Over the past several years the Christmas party and meeting has been held at the SGI cafeteria which has been graciously arranged by John Wilkenson who was an SGI employee. This has changed so I need suggestions as to another venue for the party location. It will be hard to beat the nice SGI cafeteria! Please e-mail me with any ideas.

•Rick Booth, PCS Chair, [rwbooth@home.com](mailto:rwbooth@home.com)

## Sarah Schuman

My mother, Sarah Schuman, died recently after a six week battle with her intestinal cancer. She was an elegant, educated lady, a lover of the arts and of books, and that is how I shall always remember her. She leaves behind in this world my father (to whom she had been married since she was twenty years old), her brother and sister, her two sons (my older brother and me), and many other relatives and friends.

Thank you for your help and support through this difficult time.

• Aaron Schuman

## Above The Sea of Clouds

### Sawtooth, Vandever, & Florence

September 2-4, 2000

It felt strange to leave the Bay Area for a climbing trip under cloudy skies and light rain, with the forecast calling for a snowstorm in the mountains that night followed by wind and clouds for the next few days. But there comes a point when the planning and packing for a climbing trip take on a certain momentum, and it becomes easier to just go through with the departure instead of canceling out. So the Friday evening of Labor Day weekend found six of us heading across the Central Valley to Mineral King: leader Bob Suzuki, Joan Marshall, Jeff West, Heather Kirby, Eddie Sudol, and your scribe Jim Ramaker. We got to the very nice Cold Springs campground at Mineral King at 10:30 p.m. and were surprised to find a couple of vacant sites on the holiday weekend and even more surprised to see stars overhead.

After a sound sleep, we ate breakfast at the picnic table on a cold clear morning and hiked up the trail toward Crystal Lake and our first objective, Sawtooth Peak (12,343). After a break at the lake, we cross-countryed over the saddle to the north and then did a sporty traverse across sloping slabs covered with fresh snow, and then upward along the gentle, snow-covered south ridge to the summit.

One member of the party came down with severe altitude sickness and could barely walk, let alone climb, so we gave up on our second objective of the day, Needham Mtn. (12,520+). Instead we relaxed on the summit and marveled at the vistas of snow-dusted peaks and the amazing sea of thick roiling clouds obliterating the Central Valley out to the west. The cloud layer extended up to about 8000 feet and stayed around all weekend, but except for one brief period, skies overhead always remained clear. From the summit we had great views of the Kaweahs, the Whitney area, and more distant peaks such as Goddard and the Palisades.

At 3:30 p.m. we traversed slowly northwest toward Sawtooth Pass, then descended the unmaintained trail westward down Monarch Creek toward the cars. This trail is sketchy in the upper section and rocky and rough throughout, but it's a scenic and shorter alternative to the trails up to Monarch Lake and Crystal Lake. About 6 p.m., the sea of clouds finally rose up to the 9000-foot level and engulfed us, and in minutes the visibility went from 100 miles down to about 100 feet. But no wind and no threat of rain -- just thick quiet fog. It was almost 8 p.m. before we all assembled back in camp and fired up the stoves.

On Sunday, the plan was for a mini two-day backpack southward to get Vandever (11,947) and Florence (12,432). The most efficient way to do this is to camp on the trail just north of Farewell Gap. The ranger told us we wouldn't find any water or any flat camping spots in the upper reaches of Farewell Canyon, but we did -- a beautiful grassy bench next to a flowing side creek on the west side of the canyon about a mile north of Farewell Gap. After setting up camp and eating lunch, we continued up the trail to Farewell Gap. Farewell Canyon, with its vast meadowed hillsides, open stands of trees, and rounded metamorphic peaks, looks a great deal like Colorado, according to members of the party who've been there.

From the Gap, we strolled up Vandever, an undistinguished scree hump that looks like Mt. Dana except a bit smaller. On her first PCS trip, Heather blew the group away by floating up the peak way ahead of everyone. She may be a bit of a sandbagger -- while it's true she'd never climbed in California before this trip, later in the weekend it came out that she's climbed in Alaska, gone to a climbing school in the Alaska Range, done lots of outdoor trips, and is one strong young woman.

Because we decided to do Vandever and Florence in two days instead of as a dayhike as some PCS stalwarts have done (that's you, Rich), we were able to relax on the summit for 1 1/2 hours. We lay down on the inviting scree and took nice long naps, or explored the tops of the steep, loose, dangerous gullies plunging down the west face.

Back in camp at 6 p.m., a cold wind came up and the sea of clouds rose up the Valley toward us, enveloping the trailhead and almost making it up to our camp at about 9700 feet. Bob had a queasy stomach and got so chilled from eating almost nothing all day that he was shivering inside his sleeping bag. Finally he was able to eat some hot soup and warm up.

Monday the objective was Florence, and this was the most interesting and beautiful of the three peaks. We quickly retraced our steps from Sunday up to Farewell Gap, then hiked down one switchback on the south side of the pass and began sidehilling across a loose scree slope toward Bullfrog Lakes. We were surprised to find no use trail here -- apparently most people drop down into the valley on the trail and re-climb the watercourse up to Bullfrog Lakes and Florence Peak. The sidehilling paid off -- in just 30 minutes we were at the lakes and wow, what a beautiful spot. Clean granite slabs and patches of grass surround the lake, with the inviting south face of Florence Peak rising above the far end of the lake.

After a break to get water and take photos in the clear morning light, we headed up slabs and easy talus toward the low point west of the summit. This was a mistake -- while the west ridge appears low-angle in profile, it consists of car and RV-sized blocks that create small dead-end cliffs and steep, awkward class-3 clefts. Bob powered straight up the ridge, but the rest of us eventually dropped a couple of hundred feet down and to the right, then worked our way up sandy class 2-3 chutes and ledges.

We got back to the summit ridge about 300 feet west of the summit, then followed it to the top. The best way to climb the south face is to go past the left end of the cliff band near the bottom of the face, then wander up and right, avoiding various small cliffs and aiming about 300 feet left of the summit. If you wander around sufficiently, it's easy class 2-3 all the way.

We topped out at 11:30 and had even better views than the day before. Besides the giants of the southern and mid-Sierra, we could clearly see Ritter, Banner, Lyell, and the Clark range over 100 air miles to the north. As an experiment, we tried a more direct route back to camp, going across the south slope of the reddish scree hump just west of Florence (Peak 12,146), then dropping down into a strange scree bowl devoid of vegetation with a tiny tarn shown on the 7.5 minute map at 11,300 feet. From there we passed through a narrow snow-choked slot between two scree humps, emerged high on the southwest slopes of Farewell Canyon, and spotted our camp 1500 feet below. This route saved some distance and time compared to Farewell Gap and Bullfrog Lakes, but it did involve lots of slogging across sharp, shifting scree. We got back to camp at 2, packed up, and hiked down to the cars very quickly in 1 1/2 hours. A delicious post-trip feast at the Pizza Factory in Three Rivers brought this trip to a close.

• *Jim Ramaker*

## It Ain't Over Until The Gale Sings!

September 2-4, 2000

Labor Day seems to bring rain in the Sierra - and 2000 was no different. Many people cancelled (too late for those on the wait list), but we had a stunning weekend with a whole drainage to ourselves.

The Chiquito Pass trailhead isn't in Yosemite, so permits are fairly easy to obtain even though it's only a 3 mile walk to the park boundary. See

<http://www.climber.org/DrivingDirections/chiquito.html>

for GPScoordinates and written instructions. We picked up a permit taped to the door of the Visitor Center in Oakhurst, and followed my GPS to the turnoff at Globe Rock. Near the trailhead you can spread out and set up tents for primitive camping on flat ground in big trees... where it started raining around midnight and seldom let up until after dawn.

Our scheduled departure time came and went, with most of us huddled in our tent and a few restless souls going for short walks. Several people went home despite my pleas to wait another few hours. TOO BAD! The storm WAS over, the Gale DID Sing, and the rain quit as per the forecast. We slowly gained the confidence to pack and start up the trail. Not another drop fell the entire weekend, but the sun was hidden by low clouds until well into the afternoon. I introduced several people to Yosemite blueberries, which are normally stripped by the bears as soon as they are ripe.

Entering Yosemite at Chiquito Pass, we soon turned cross-country and followed the drainage to Spotted Lakes (hoping, as Warren suggested, to avoid any crowds at Chain Lakes). The drainage is poorly defined, and I think we swung a bit too far to the north, but beginners and old hands alike stuck together and enjoyed the scenery as we climbed up out of the forest onto slabs and more open slopes. The short hike meant we had plenty of time to find a campsite, mill around, and still eat dinner before dark. The

cliffs of Red Top formed a stunning backdrop as we gazed across Spotted Lake and decided this wasn't the right place to build a fire (fairly heavy impact for a place with no trail, and we didn't want to make it worse even though there was a fire ring).

The next morning we tromped up the slope toward Sing Peak, passing through several patches of fresh snow from the previous day's storm. At the top (Rebecca's SECOND sierra peak!) much earlier than expected, most of the group decided to head for Madera while two people returned to camp to hang out with those who hadn't climbed at all. There is a register on Sing, but none on Madera. The views were great from both places, but I think I liked Madera better because it's at the end of a ridge.

Anyway, after a relaxing stay on Madera, we figured there was plenty of time to stroll over Red Top on our way back to camp. Quite a change in plans for a trip that anticipated only one peak that day! The traverse was excellent, and we made a complete loop out of the day by going right over the Top of Red and back to camp via the other shoulder. If you're in the area, the northeast ridge of Red Top is surprisingly interesting 3rd class... or you can keep about 100' down on the south side where it's 2nd class.

Happy hour, sunset, dinner, up just before dawn: Brian and Chris and I headed for Gale Peak while the others slept in. All but Rebecca would pack out before we returned, but we just COULDN'T leave that one peak unclimbed when the weather was great and we had only a short pack out.

It turns out that Gale is a harder climb than Sing by a good margin, but still 2nd class if you stay off the Gale/Sing ridge as long as possible. Another new register, a fond look north at Merced/Gray/Red/Clark, and we headed back down.

We took a slightly different route packing down, and it was almost like a different trip! Staying close to the (mostly dry) stream, we saw what would be stunning waterfalls in the spring and generally had an entirely new set of scenery. At one point we walked a couple hundred yards kneedeep in blueberry bushes (while the doubting followers whined about whether I knew where we were) coming back to the trail exactly where we had first considered leaving it on the way in. "Become one with themountains, and the mountains will show you the way!"

We were on two or three permits, so I'm afraid I don't have everyone's name. Here are the ones I remember (I'll update the web version of the report if Terry or someone with a better memory sends me the rest of the names) and I apologize in advance if I've forgotten anyone: Rebecca and Steve Eckert (leader), Scott Benson, Chris Franchuk, Terry Flood, Jeff George, Carol Horst, Carol and Gerhard Japp, Bruce Kocka, Brian Smith, Tony Stegman, Phyllis, Kurt?, JoAnne?, Mark?, and Nevada the dog.

Thanks to everyone who came, and remember to invite US on your next private trip!

• *Steve Eckert*

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Datum North America 1983, GRS 80, 0, -1.6E-7, 0, 0, 0
RouteName, 2, CHIQUITO PASS
RoutePoint, D, HWY99, 36.9746025876, -120.0748384940, ...
RoutePoint, D, HWY145, 36.9736732222, -120.0431797451, ...
RoutePoint, D, HWY41, 37.0103179728, -119.7939505183, ...
RoutePoint, D, OAKHST, 37.3310174880, -119.6554835393, ... SR 41
RoutePoint, D, YOSVIS, 37.3371799982, -119.6448099624, ... YOSEMITE VISITOR CENTER
RoutePoint, D, YOSFRK, 37.3671242458, -119.6301453663, ... HWY 41 - ROAD 222
RoutePoint, D, 222274, 37.3392176702, -119.5859438399, ... ROAD 274
RoutePoint, D, 274BEA, 37.3241112462, -119.5541569132, ... RD 274 - BEASORE RD
RoutePoint, D, CHILKT, 37.4150663876, -119.4949601340, ... CHILKOOT LAKE
RoutePoint, D, BEAMDW, 37.4445134270, -119.4719208991, ... BEASORE MEADOWS
RoutePoint, D, GLOBRK, 37.4883055380, -119.4185490964, ... GLOBE ROCK
RoutePoint, D, CHIQTH, 37.5096270578, -119.4180950858, ... CHIQUITO TRAILHEAD
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# Black Hawk Mountain

September 23-24, 2000

Black Hawk Mountain felt lonely; we set out to give it our company. Stefane Mouradiane, Kirsten Mouradiane, Barfin' Joan Marshall and I made up the whole party. Saturday morning we headed up the trail from Kennedy Meadows, a few miles below Sonora Pass, and walked deep into the Emigrant Wilderness. It's a long trail, steep and switchbacked places, and dusty from heavy equine usage. We passed high above Relief Reservoir, across Grouse Creek and up to Summit Creek. We passed numerous mounted hunters, including one cheery party of four who all held their rifles in one hand and cans of beer in the other.

Deer hunting, we discovered, is permitted in the Emigrant during its season.

We entered the long, broad Lunch Meadow. Stefane explained how his father was walking the famous Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage in France and Spain. I observed that every pilgrimage is like a trek, and every trek is like a pilgrimage. We chatted about the spiritual intent of mountaineers. Joan reminded herself to teach me, later on, that I am a mushy headed sentimentalist.

We camped at the head of the valley, near the location that Rob Langsdorf had suggested to us. I pointed out the ridges around us that displayed the inverted topography for which the Sonora area is so renowned.

In the morning we ascended the peak. From Lunch Meadow, there are an endless supply of plausible class two routes to the summit. We picked one we liked for the climb and another for the descent. We were on the summit at 8:00 a.m., taking our time and admiring the view.

Joan felt great on the mountaintop, and on the whole climb. Our moderate pace and her thorough hydration warded off the nausea that often plagues her. We had made a two day weekend out of a trip that some people do as a day hike, and I'm glad of our trip plan. There was plenty to do for two days.

On the way down, Joan and I did some bouldering on an attractive granite outcrop.

On the hike out, we saw a rider fall off his horse. Did he drink one Budweiser too many? Kirsten, an experienced nurse, helped the fallen cowboy back onto his feet, and worried about his injuries.

Great scenery, good companionship, clear weather, lots of exercise and an early return ... a perfect weekend!

• *Aaron Schuman*

# List Finish on San Joaquin Mountain

September 30, 2000

San Joaquin Mountain(11, 601') is good for a list finish because it is easy (class one), has area suitable nearby for a large party and camping, and has superb scenery from its summit. On Sept. 30, 2000, 24 climbing friends met at Minaret Summit near Mammoth Ski area. The weather was clear and warm. At 9:00 a.m. we then proceeded to walk the six miles along the ridge from the parking area. This ridge area, along the Pacific Crest Trail well below, is one of the best in the Sierra for wildflowers -

- along the many streams and wet areas down there that drain out of the rock and meadows.

As we hiked along, fellow peak climbers reminisced and related long past and recent experiences as well as talked travel and current happenings. The aspens were displaying their fall colors: yellows through reds in the views below. We also basked in the spectacular vistas of the Minarets, Ritter and Banner and many lakes including Shadow, 1000 Island, Garnet, and Ediza. Lively discussions ensued among us, as we had much in common. Some of the people were there whom I climbed with more than 20 years ago, for example, I met Mary McMannes on a 20s and 30s Singles trip I led to Yosemite in the late 70s. And Don Sparks and I led a trip to Iron Mountain in July 1976.

I had been high up on top of the ridge twice before, when I took advantage of its skiability in the wintertime (starting from the Mammoth Ski Lodge), but both times a snowstorm defeated my attempts. I had considered other routes for the list finish, particularly from Deadman Creek to the east, but the ridge would be the simplest for a potentially large group. I apologize to those who may have missed the trip, because I did not announce the trip far in advance and to everybody as widely as I should have; it was not even an official SPS activity. But I had other conflicts in a busy summer for me.

As we stopped for each rest it was not easy to start again in distraction from the congenial conversations and world-class natural splendor and peace. As we got to Two Teats, less than a mile from the summit, we picked up one additional person who had somehow missed us. The group was now 25 people, and one dog, (belonging to Igor and Suzanne). We then spread out somewhat on the final steep summit slope, but we all waited close to the top for the final action.

At that spot I contemplated the significance of the moment, the realization of a multi-decade goal, completing the ever-sacred list of the 247 most significant peaks in the Sierra Nevada of California. I tried to relate my final hurdle of the mere 50 feet remaining to the hundreds of thousands of vertical feet and thousand-odd miles traveled in the 40 years I had been climbing Sierra peaks. I approached slowly, and as I finally stood at the summit I yelled out to the visual feast all around in celebration. In tradition, we hugged, kissed, photographed, shook hands, drank champagne, and ate goodies.

Adventurous and lively discussion continued to be shared by all as we sat there in the balmy shorts-and-sleeves weather. Bruce Trotter, a botanist, gave me a copy of the book he had prepared. In addition to this newest completor, there were four other list finishers including Barbara Sholle, Don Sparks, Steve Eckert, and Rich Gnagy. And others present very close to the finish with only a few peaks remaining -- Greg and Mirna Roach and Pat and Gerry Holleman. As we proceeded back many stopped at Two Teats and walked up the east Teat and/or climbed the short third class section for the west (lower) summit.

We got back to the cars at Minaret Summit around 4:30. David Underwood helped by driving the rough 4WD road back up the ridge for two miles to pick up one of our group who had a painful heel. Next we made a short drive to a nice spot I had selected, in the open "dispersed camping" area about three miles NW of Mammoth Town. It was a great spot for our group, with ample flat area, protected by trees yet still open to the sky, and with existing fire ring and plenty of wood. Those who needed to could make a ten minute detour to town for purchases. The tables we brought were set out and then loaded with the potluck delights for a feast. The scrumptious dishes included quesadillas, sushi, hummus/pita, Caesar and bean salads, couscous, wok chicken

and veggies, BBQ chicken, and great cakes and cookies for dessert.

Around the feast and campfire many more mountain moments and meetings were mentioned and reminisced upon. I had the (dirt) floor while I related some items I had compiled from my Sierra Peaks (spreadsheet) list and notes. They include:

First peak: Half Dome 1960 - trip with my uncle

Most unsuccessful: State - 3 tries to get

San Joaquin - 3 tries to get

Longest Day: Norman Clyde (unsuccessful) 23 hours

Bivouacs: Henry, Sill, Norman Clyde

Worst bivvy: Sill - no sleep, couldn't get out of the wind and wet

Longest trip: John Muir Trail in 9 days with Whitney at end

Prettiest: Lake Ediza, View from Mt Goddard

Best Flowers: High trail from Agnew Meadows, Cliff Creek Mineral King

Coldest: Morgan South in winter - below zero at night

Wettest: Hilgard, Dunderberg, Emerald - I was completely soaked

Memorable: seeing the northern lights from Norman Clyde, electricity buzzing and later lightning on McAdie

Most dangerous (loose rock): Devils Crag, Temple Crag (Moon Goddess Arete)

Most frequent: Whitney 10 times

Second most - Williamson 5 times

Number soloed: 54

Number led or co-led: 104

Done more than once: 114

Most in one year: 40 new + 7 repeats - 1984

Most adventurous: Enchanted Gorge (1967), Williamson Creek to Williamson

Division Creek to Colosseum, Middle Fork Kings River Canyon

Easiest: Lamont

Most in one day: 4 - Joe Devel, Pickering, Newcomb, Chamberlin 1988

Most extreme trip: Palisades traverse - 5-14ers - Tbolt, Starlight, North Palisade, Polemonium, Sill

- light weight in 4 days/3 nights from trailhead

Unusual: cached some food near Taboose pass in 1983, recovered it in 1995 and it was mostly still good.

Organized Groups I did peaks with: UCLA Mountaineers ('65 - '68), Westwood Ski Club ('71 - '73), West LA Sierra Club, SF Valley Group, RCS, BMT, SPS, PCS, SCMA, CMC

Animals: Cougar on way to Mt. Kennedy. Big horn sheep on Muir Trail - Rae Lakes

After my tales, the group listened intently while Dave German and Judy Rittenhouse told of their recent survival adventure where they spent 4 nights in snow caves with bad weather on Mr Ranier. Participants (all made it to the summit and party) not already mentioned include Paul Graff, Keith Martin, Barry Holchin and Karen, Murray Zichlinski, Cathy Reynolds, Bob Suzuki, Dave Sholle, and Bruno Geiger.

And the inevitable question - what next? Yes, I'll continue in the Sierras. Maybe not so intently but I want to still do technical climbs, and new and exploratory routes. Thanks to all those who accompanied me on the various trips over the years. And to John Muir and the others who kindled and keep alive the mountain and climbing spirit and wilderness ethic.

• *Ron Hudson*

## Mt. Ritter

September 30-October 1, 2000

For anyone who has read John Muir's account of the first ascent, or the accident report from the 1969 climb on which four Sierra Club climbers lost their lives, the north face of Mt. Ritter has a serious reputation. So it was with some determination that seven of us hiked in to attempt it on the morning of Saturday, September 30. The group included David Harris (leader), plus his colleagues Cora Hussey, Roy Shea, and Alfred Kwok from the Claremont colleges in Pasadena, and Zander Brennen, Nicolai Sapounov, and myself (Jim Ramaker) from the Bay Area.

We left Agnew Meadows at 8:30, hiked down into the aspen-clad valley of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River, then up the beautiful trail past Shadow Lake to Ediza Lake, where we arrived about noon. Along the trail, we met a wild man from Belgium named Paul Wilms, and invited him to join our group. I later found out that Paul works for the same company I do in an office about 100 yards from mine.

On the hike in, we had discussed the possibility of attempting Ritter that afternoon, but after lunch, the group drifted into listlessness, setting up tents and taking naps. Later on, most of the group took an easy hike south to Iceberg Lake at the foot of the Minarets, while I strolled north into one of my favorite places in the Sierras -- the wonderful alpine Valley between Ediza and the foot of Mt. Ritter. While exploring the creek, meadows, and cliffs up there, I ran into a solo climber just down from the north face of Ritter, who gave me some tips about the route. I also ran into a young couple planning to bivvy on the south face of Ritter with nothing more than fleece jackets and an old wool blanket. The "gentle wilderness" of the Sierras is often forgiving toward fools -- the low temperature that night was an amazingly warm 45 degrees -- about 20 degrees warmer than you'd expect at 10,000 feet at the end of September.

Our group of eight gathered back in camp around 5 p.m. for an early supper, and by 7 we were all in our sleeping bags. Maybe one reason climbing trips are so enjoyable is that they sometimes let us revert to childhood -- we get to play all day and then go to sleep at 7 p.m.

But things were different on Sunday morning -- David had us up in pitch darkness at 5:30, and rolling by 6:30. We strolled up the valley toward Ritter as dawn flamed the east faces of Banner, Ritter, and the Minarets, and by 8:30 we were at the cliffs leading up to the Banner-Ritter saddle. David and Nicolai zig-zagged up the rocks in the center of the cliff band, while the rest of us climbed the easy snow couloir at the right end, which was frozen neve but pitted with sun cups and no more than 35 degrees steep.

Gathering at the saddle, we realized that Alfred was suffering from altitude sickness and lagging behind, so we decided to split the group, with Paul, Zander, Nicolai, and I going ahead to scout the route. David straightened out our confusion about the left- and right-hand gullies described in Secor -- the left-hand gully

heads up from the highest snow of the North Ritter Glacier, while you enter the right-hand gully via a 30-foot long ledge leading right from about 100 feet below the highest snow. The glacier leading up to the gullies was icy, but again pitted with suncups and no more than 35 degrees steep, so a self-arrest would've been pretty easy.

I led up the right-hand gully, which gave us fun class 2-3 climbing on solid rock and rubble-covered ledges. With a bit of care, it was possible to climb without knocking anything down. It was a warm, clear day with a light breeze, and except for Alfred's sickness, the climb was going great and proving much easier than expected. At the top of the right-hand gully an arete leads left, and on the other side of it we were surprised to find a class-1 scree terrace. We strolled up that until it and the arete were blocked by a large tower. I climbed past the tower to the left and came to the top of the classic north face route, with its class 3-4 headwall and an ice-covered ramp leading up and left.

Paul checked to the right of the tower and found a broad class 2-3 gully leading up to the apparent summit. Could this be it? He, Zander, Nicolai, and I scrambled up the gully and topped out at 11:30, just 20 feet left (east) of the summit. We were amazed at how easy the climb had been -- about 80% of the rock was really class 2, and there was not a single move I'd call exposed. Obviously, we went a different way from John Muir, approximately following the "Starr Variation" to the north face described in Secor.

David, Cora, Roy, and Alfred soon joined us on top, and we relaxed in the warm sun for the usual photos, snacks, and identification of distant peaks in the clear fall air. After an hour or so, it was down the scree slope to the southeast and down the loose but easy gully onto the Southeast Glacier. Alfred was really suffering, and David, Cora, Roy, and Paul stayed back to help him out. Zander, Nicolai, and I waited for them for an hour on the rock island in the middle of the southeast glacier, then talked to Cora and Roy and decided to hike out, figuring that Alfred would feel better as he descended. Zander, Nicolai, and I had a nice hike out in the late afternoon, getting back to camp at 4 and out to the cars just after dark at 7:30.

Meanwhile the rest of the team was having a bit of an epic. Cora took a short fall in the gully above the southeast glacier, bruising her hip so severely that she later started going into shock. And Alfred continued feeling very unsteady. David, Paul, and Roy rallied the team, and Cora, in a lot of pain, recovered enough to hike out carrying all of her gear. The five of them hiked out by headlamp and got to the cars at 10:30 p.m., then went to the hospital in Mammoth to have Cora looked at. David, Cora, Roy, and Alfred finally got home to Pasadena at 5 a.m., just in time to start another work week. Mt. Ritter treated us to a great climb in beautiful conditions, and to another lesson in mountaineering -- even when the summit is won and the descent seems easy, the unpredictable can happen and we need to be prepared.

• *Jim Ramaker*

## Ice Climb

### North Peak (12242 ft), the north couloir. Class 4-5, ice.

October 1, 2000

Participants: Ron Karpel and Arun Mahajan. Ron Karpel was rightfully tired of North Peak. He had climbed both, the right and the left couloirs in years past but had not tagged the summit because he had run out of time, so with the summit goal in mind and doing it the way of the left couloir, we decided on doing it as a two day trip and so we hiked in the three or so miles from Saddlebag Lake to Cascade Lake in about two hours on late Saturday evening, just as darkness fell. Sunday, up before dawn and rolling by 6.30am, we climbed to the toe of the steep left couloir. By 8.30am we were ready to go and Ron soloed three fourths of the first pitch on the icy slope and belayed me up, having found a secure place on the right wall. I took the first pitch after that which was mostly neve and angled diagonally to the left wall needing to set up two screws on the way. Hard ice nearer the rock, but I made it to the rocks, almost running out the rope. Ron then took the next pitch and brought me up and I continued on, past him to a more secure spot, traversing some more horrible ice to the rocks on the left. I belayed him on the 3rd pitch and he stayed on the centre of the couloir willingly going to the steeper and icier sections. After a while, he moved to the right wall at the point where there was a flake met by a band of lighter coloured rock. Ron also led the fourth pitch, staying on the steep right side (probably 50-deg), sometimes dropping into the gully between the ice and the rock, ending at a huge rock behind which he set up for belay. The area near this rock looks superficially as neve but underneath is hard ice and sometimes chunks of ice fracture off. I took the fifth pitch, staying to the centre and this was much clement and I did not have to front point and a little after noon we had topped off, enjoying the warm sun. Great ice climbing and then warm sunlight at the top, blessed California! From there we traversed on the rock staying below the top-off point for the right couloir. We were hailed by PCS-er, Tim Hult who had just topped off the right couloir. I gathered later on that Jim Curl and Dot Reilly, also of the PCS had climbed up the right couloir and the summit after Tim. Traversing on, we found a spot to dump ice gear and went straight up a gully to the ridge and then to the summit at about 1.30 pm. Back down to get gear and then traverse behind and below the couloir to a plateau and then down a rock gully which soon turned into steep ice. The angle was easier than the main couloir that we had just climbed and we were in no mood to do technical stuff coming down. Ron down climbed with his tools and crampons. I asked for a rapel and very soon after that, we were back at camp(3.45 pm), packed and headed out to be at the cars at 6pm.

Some details from Ron: Excellent neve in the centre of the couloir, tools sink with ease and cramponing is good. Pickets go in with some effort. Hard ice on both the sides and sometimes in the centre. There is a lot of dinner plating and screws go in well but there is some fracturing. Lots of opportunities to set rock pro on both the sides. Couloir is 40 to 45 degrees with some 50-degreespots. The top is somewhat melted out from his memory of it two years ago. There is no bergschrund.

• *Arun Mahajan*

## 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.

### Argentina - January 2001

Peaks: A Seven Summit Mountain  
Aconcaqua 6959 m  
Contact: Warren Storkman, 650-493-895

### Denali

Peak: Denali, 20,320 ft.  
Date: May-June 2001  
Contact: Tim Hult 408-970-0760, Timdhult@aol.com

Looking for qualified partners for this major, no nonsense peak. Must have extensive experience in the following: high altitude climbing (18,000 ft +), excellent winter camping skills and equipment, proven ability to get along with partners on a multi-week trip. Ice climbing and crevasse rescue will be taught if required. Prefer those with the ability to ski or willingness to learn how to ski with a pack on - need NOT be an expert! Serious inquires only.

## Leavitt and Blackhawk

October 4, 2000

### Leavitt

The short version: I followed the PCT south from Sonora Pass to where it turned left under a snowbank below the south shoulder of Leavitt. From there I followed the excellent use trail to the top.

The ammo box register is in good shape with even an extra empty notebook. In retrospect, Leavitt might have been a mistake. It is one of the easiest SPS peaks and would have made a good list finisher, assuming I ever get near that point.

Drove down 3000 feet to the west and spent the night at Deadman CG near the Kennedy Meadow resort. The campground was amazingly almost full.

October 5, 2000

### Blackhawk

The previous day I got permission to park up by the store. Apparently this is always okay for day hikers. Off bright and early following the trail up past Relief Reservoir. The section between the two bridges is quite rocky and tedious. Also, just after the first bridge, there is a sign "trail" pointing left. Follow this, not unsigned right turn.

Further on, there is now a sign for the left turn to Kennedy Lake. Continue straight past the large green PG&E building. Beyond the reservoir there is a "T" junction, now signed. Take the left, reading "Lunch Meadow". Going around the reservoir, Granite Mountain, with its lenticular shaped black summit and horizontal snow patch is visible. Then near the far end of the reservoir, Blackhawk itself, comes into view briefly, with the same appearance.

I had both the Steve Eckert and Mark Adrian writeups with me, to compensate for no map. Steve mentions the "sandy meadow where the trail turns sharply east" which is supposed to be a mile or two beyond Saucer Meadow.

I am hiking along and hiking along and not finding Saucer Meadow and becoming concerned about the time. Around a corner and there I am in the "sandy meadow", more of a sandy area. Above the famous "class two defects" were visible. I continued up the trail, as Mark had, maybe another 0.3 miles and started up the slabs. These were easy and fun in my five-tennies, although I kept getting forced left by small headwalls. I finally finished up the slabs going up thru a long square slot, maybe 8 feet wide and 15 feet deep. This deposited me in a flat sandy area just below the first subsidiary summit. The flat sandy area continued south around the subsidiary summit and the true dark summit of BlackHawk came into view, surprisingly close. Two more very easy square slots, some meadows and easy sand led to the summit. 90 minutes up from the trail. I was on the summit 30 seconds, only long enough to sign the register. Saw the entry from Aaron's crew a few days before.

On the way down, I met the only person I saw all day, also coming in to do Blackhawk.

Round trip stats: 19 miles, 4600 feet ( 300 gained and lost around Relief Reservoir ), 10 hours 40 minutes.

At this moment in Mammoth Lakes it is clearing with four inches of new snow on the ground.

• *Eric Beck*

## Telescope Peak

October 28, 2000.

Susan Carlsson & I left LA at about 4AM.

Hit the trail at Mahogany Flats at 8:40.

Mostly clear skies with only a small cirrus cloud on the horizon.

Susan led all but 100 feet of the 14 miles.

During the first hour she tells how she isn't feeling energetic and I started wondering if I should have brought a second flashlight.

At the saddle south of Bennet peak the sky was covered with cirrus.

At 10000 feet we had lunch and Susan had a coughing spell that set us back about a half an hour.

I was thankful for the break as I was eating No-Doze like candy trying to keep up with her.

We arrived at the summit at 1:40.

Kern was already hidden by low clouds and now there were lenticular clouds forming up and down the Sierra.

After chatting with the only other six people on the trail that day we left. Without stopping except to look at the rocks, trees and birds we made it back at 4:25 with plenty of daylight.

Susan whipped that mountain into submission like it was a lazy thief.

All night long the jet stream intermittently swept down and tried to blow up off the ridge.

High of 42 Saturday and low of 38 that night.

Cruised back to LA through Death Valley visiting the geological spectacles there.

What a wonderful trip.

• *Ed Lulofs*

## Elected Officials

### Chair:

Rick Booth / pcs-chair@climber.org  
408-354-7291 home  
237 San Mateo Avenue, Los Gatos, CA 95030

### Vice Chair and Trip Scheduler:

Dee Booth / pcs-scheduler@climber.org  
408-354-7291 home  
237 San Mateo Avenue, Los Gatos, CA 95030

### Treasurer and Membership Roster (address changes):

Bill Kirkpatrick / pcs-treasurer@climber.org  
408-293-2447 home  
435 N. Second St. #217, San Jose CA 95112

## Publicity Committee Positions

### Scree Editor:

Bob Bynum / pcs-editor@climber.org  
510-659-1413 home

### PCS World Wide Web Publisher:

Aaron Schuman / pcs-webmaster@climber.org  
650-943-7532 home  
223 Horizon Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043-4718

### Publicity Chair:

Steve Eckert / pcs-pub-chair@climber.org  
650-508-0500 home  
1814 Oak Knoll Drive, Belmont, CA 94002-1753

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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 11/26/2000. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**



Peak Climbing Section, 789 Daffodil Way, San Jose CA 95117

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

**First Class Mail - Dated Material**