

World Wide Web Address: <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/pcs/>

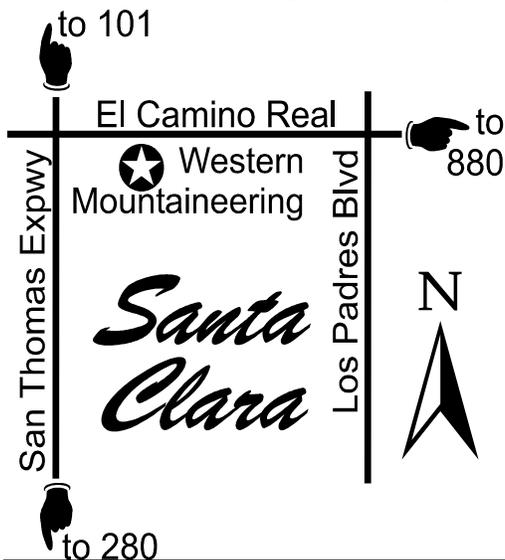
Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, January 14
Time: 8:00 PM
Program: Mt. Kilimanjaro (Machame Route) by Danial Dorr

This presentation features Mt. Kilimanjaro's Machame Route; often known as the "Whiskey Route" for its intoxicating views. We will discuss what it was like for us as "week-end warriors" to tackle something as difficult as Kilimanjaro. Also pictures of Serengeti.

Location 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. Limited parking back.



Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 1/26/2003 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

California State Quarter

Put John Muir in Yosemite Valley on the quarter now! The design of the California state quarter is up for a vote by the public, and we need you to vote for John Muir hiking through Yosemite Valley. Do you really want our state to be represented in coin by an expensive toll bridge? A filmstrip? No way! Put the Sierra Nevada on the quarter! Vote for design #1. The California quarter polling site URL is <http://134.186.46.107/>

• *Aaron Schuman*

Roster Update

Update Your Information

Have you heard from your climbing buddies lately? No? Maybe your contact information is out of date. PCS membership must also be renewed each year

Update your information on the web at <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/pcs/join/joinPCSform.asp> or send a note to the PCS Treasurer. Tom Driscoll, 2149 Junction Ave #3, Mountain View, CA, 94043 (650) 938-2106. The PCS roster will be published in the April Scree. If you do not want information published, contact the PCS Treasurer.

• *Tom Driscoll, Treasurer and Membership Roster*

William Mark Leiker

Newest PCS Member

At 5:20 am Monday, December 16 Baby Leiker decided to enter the world. His name is William Mark, he weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and is 19 inches. Maggie started going into labor around 9 PM on Sunday. Rich, Maggie and William are all fine.

Congratulations Rich and Maggie!

The aunts are Landa, Nancy and Sarah.

• *Aaron Schuman*

In Appreciation of Rick Booth

Out going Publicity Committee Chair

We would like to thank Rick Booth for two years of dedicated service to the PCS as publicity chair. Besides the usual duties of getting the "Scree" to the printer every month and coordinating with Bob and Paul he made the "Scree" a newsletter people actually want to read. His many useful articles have been read by people inside and outside the PCS, he introduced us to Bote Anchour, and under his watch, we got a great website. His articles on technical climbing gave us great advice and information on rock and ice climbing gear and on rock and ice climbing destinations. His 'Guide to Climbing Mount Whitney via the East Face' is as good of a route description as any other route description written by professional guides and his excellent article on the many rock climbing routes in Joshua Tree is a labour of love. So, thanks for a job well done Rick.

•*Dee Booth and Arun Mahajan, PCS Pubcom Chair*

New PCS PubComm Chair and Webmaster

Roger Detloff has volunteered to handle the PCS website. This is welcome news: the technical nature of the website makes it difficult to find computer savvy individuals with the time and interest to perform this task. I had even resorted to attempting to find a volunteer at one of the local universities!

Please thank Jim Curl for designing and building the present PCS website. It is far and away the best of the Sierra Club sites in addition to being a standout contribution to the climbing community.

Finally, Arun Mahajan has agreed to handle the chores of PCS PubComm Chair.

Many thanks to both Roger and Arun and please offer your help and appreciation to both of them.

•*Rick Booth*

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.

Junipero Serra

Peak: Junipero Serra Peak, 5862 ft, Class 1
Date: Sunday, January 12 2003.
Maps: Junipero Serra 7.5'
Leaders: Arun Mahajan, (h) 650-327-8598,
arun.mahajan@att.net
Ron Karpel, (h) 650-594-0211,
ronny@karpel.org

The venerable padre, Junipero Serra, is said to have whipped himself, on occasion. Why did he do this? Was this atonement? Or was this a painful, but still, strangely pleasurable act? And who in this group has been having beans for dinner on the night before?

Maybe we can ponder on some of these weighty questions as we take an enjoyable and mildly strenuous (6 miles and 3900 ft

gain, one way) tramp to this peak on the Santa Lucia Peak trail that goes all the way to the top.

Carpool suggestions from Bay Area: Meet at the Carl's Jr. that is at the Dunne Avenue exit on 101 in Morgan Hill at 7 am on Sunday, January 12. We will carpool from there. Non Bay Area People: Contact the leader for directions to the trailhead.

It may also be noted that there is a 5\$ adventure-pass-fee per car, to park at the trailhead.

Mt. Diablo Conditioning Hike

Peak: Mt. Diablo (3,849'), class 1
Date: Sunday, January 19
Leader: Kelly Maas, 408-378-5311,
kellylanda@earthlink.net

Come for a desperate ascent of the dread north face of Mt. Diablo. This conditioning hike is a good, moderately paced trip suitable for aspiring peak climbers as well as veterans. No ice axe or crampons required! We'll meet at the end of Mitchell Canyon Road on the north side at 9 am and hike a loop that will include the summit. Expect about 14-17 miles and 3500'-4000' elevation gain. No host carpool leaves McCarthy Ranch shopping center at 8 am. Go east on 237, exit McCarthy Blvd. before 880. Go over 237 into the shopping center. Go toward the north end and park by Wal-Mart. Contact the leader for driving directions from other directions.

Bôté Anchouré's Lexicon of Climbing Terms and Expressions

G through N

By *Arun Mahajan, Jim Curl, Tom Curl and Rick Booth*

G. **GPS.** Green pika snout, usually found in abundance above 11,000 feet.

GPS. Global Positioning System. A device to tell you how lost you are. Also useful to guide the sorry butts of dumbass climbers back to their tent after they have left it in the middle of the night to answer nature's call.

GPS. Fancy technology common to dumbass climbers. Most useful for Bôté in locating the beer buried last night in the snow.

H. **Hoarfrost.** When you are so ugly that you even get the cold shoulder from the professionals.

Himalaya. What a typical climber does to his date after buying her dinner.

HAPE - High Altitude Penile Edema.

I. **Ice screw.** A bad date.

Icy Side. A slippery and cold side of the mountain. Also seen on a pissed off date (I saw his/her icy side).

Italian Hitch. A marriage performed in Italy

J. **Jugging.** Technique pioneered by Warren Harding which involves freeclimbing, but only if the grade of the route you are attempting is less than the jugs of cheapass, rotgut wine you've consumed in the last 2 hours.

Jugs. What Britney Spears climbing partner is thinking about.

K. **Karpel Tunnel Syndrome.** Something that happens to your wrist when you do too much ice climbing. When you are in the carpool lane and the road goes under a tunnel, it is the Karpool Tunnel Syndrome, which is different.

Kabul Klimbing Klub. Modern day Afghan climbing club started by Ali Qeda, Ali Qat, Ali Babba, Ali McBeal, Adis Abbaba, Babba Louie, and Abba Dabba Doo.

L. **Lavatory Retriever.** A breed of dawg from the Burmese Oberland. Skilled in retrieving dumbass climbers who have left their tents in the middle of the night to answer nature's call and are lost on the way back. Now made archaic by the GPS (see **GPS**), but still used in some remote parts of the Hindu Kush and the Kun Luns.

Lemon Luna Bar. A food product meant for women climbers. Some men climbers enjoy it in the secrecy of their tent-closet. There are unverified reports of these men having developed feminine attributes as a result and they have therefore chosen to remain in the said closet.

'Ell'. See the debate on 'Illiniza' or 'Iliniza'. Elle McPherson is a double ell. She can be-lay me any time.

Line of Weakness. Long involved explanation for not attempting a route.

M. **Mahajan Minaret.** Obscure bump located near Adams Minaret.

Mono Recesses. Odd Sierra features named for notorious Mammoth Lakes hooker, Irene Mono.

Mount Moran. Classic peak in the Tetons made popular by Steve Roper and Allen Steck in "Fifty Classic Climbs of North America." Not to be confused with Mount Moron, first summited by a dimwitted flight attendant who, after failing to lock the plane's door, fell out and landed on the top of the peak.

Munter Hitch. A marriage performed in Munter.

N. **Nuts.** Oddly shaped pieces that hang out of cracks. Just as cracks come in various sizes, so do nuts. A nut for every kind of crack, therefore, when you take to crack, remember to rack your nuts. But sometimes, a nut gets wrongly inserted into a crack or is just not the right size for that crack. Then it becomes tough to remove. This is known as a 'tough nut to crack'. See "**Nut Tool**".

Nut Tool. When it is hard to remove a wrong sized nut from a crack (see above), a thin wedge shaped piece of metal is inserted into the crack to get the nut out. This is known as a nut tool. Sometimes, you just cannot do without it, as Mr-T has said, "I pity the fool who does not use his nut tool".

O. **Oops.** Most commonly uttered last words among mountaineers.

Oscar Meyer. Danielle Massetti's climbing partner.

Vision Quest

July 2002

I call my long, week-after-week hikes in the High Sierra "Vision Quest. This year's VQ was 17 days, from Piute Pass to New Army Pass. Greg Vernon scheduled an SCMA* trip to Gemini and I offered to be his assistant if he would pick me up at the Golden Trout Trailhead near Horseshoe Meadows (where I would leave my car) and drive me to North Lake. He readily agreed. (*Southern California Mountaineers Association and not "Sierra Club My Ass." This is the name of the "new" Angeles Chapter Rock Climbing Section, no longer affiliated with the Sierra Club.)

Day 1, 19 Jul 02: Daniel Kinzek, Randy Kirkpatrick, Greg and I hiked from North Lake over Piute Pass to a relatively mosquito-free site above Hutchinson Meadow. 9.6 mi, +2,100', -1,700'.

Day 2, 20 Jul 02: We hiked down to Hutchinson Meadow, found a crossing of Piute Creek and went up East Pinnacles Creek to Aweetasal Lake. The south ridge of Gemini didn't look very appealing and an attempt to climb the east ridge ended against a cliff, which we were not prepared to overcome. I spotted SPSers Greg and Mirna Roach high on the peak during this exploratory and we exchanged shouts and waves. We finally descended the east ridge to the tarn between Stough Pass and Gemini and ascended the cirque to a steep, loose, and muddy chute on the east side of the peak that led up to the north ridge and on to the summit. No one wanted to descend that muddy chute, so we moved further down the north ridge and descended a shallow, rocky chute or ramp that led back down to the cirque. We returned to our campsite with plenty of time to collect lots of wood for one of Greg's famous campfires. 10.0 mi, +3,700', -3,700'.

Day 3, 21 Jul 02: I lingered around our camp, saying good-bye and mooching the surplus food and fuel that Greg, Randy, and Daniel gave me. I hiked down Piute Canyon to the John Muir Trail and continued to the mouth of Goddard Canyon, where I dropped my pack and climbed Mt. Henry. The air was very smoky from the McNally Fire, far to the south in Kern Canyon. The smoke interfered with my planned photography. I only shot twelve photographs during this year's VQ. On last year's thirty day VQ I took almost 90! 13.6 mi, +4,400', -5,600'.

Day 4, 22 Jul 02: Hiked up Evolution Valley, signed the hiker's register at McClure Meadow Ranger Station, and continued to the turn-off to Darwin Bench, climbed Mt. Goethe and camped at Evolution Lake. 12.3 mi, +5,400', -3,000'.

Day 5, 23 Jul 02: Attempted Mt. Mendel. Instead of taking the Southwest Chute, I climbed the chute that leads to the low point of the Mendel-Darwin ridge, hoping to follow the ridge to the summit of Mendel. I found some ducks along the ridge, but my duck hunting turned into a wild goose chase. I gave up, descended the chute and hiked to Sapphire Lake. One good thing about this day is that it was windy, clearing the smoke away. 4.2 mi, +2,500', -2,500'.

Day 6, 24 Jul 02: Climbed Mt. McGee, returned to Sapphire Lake, with lots of smoke that night. 9.2 mi, +2,800', -2,800'.

Day 7, 25 Jul 02: Climbed Mt. Mendel, via the tried and true Southwest Chute route and camped at Sapphire Lake. 5.2 mi, +2,900', -2,900'.

Day 8, 26 Jul 02: Climbed Mt. Huxley, hiked to Helen Lake. 6.0 mi, +2,700', -2,100'.

Day 9, 27 Jul 02: Climbed Mt. Fiske, checked-in with the volunteer at LeConte Canyon Ranger Station, hiked to Grouse Meadow. 12.1 mi, +1,800', -5,300'.

Day 10, 28 Jul 02: Climbed Observation Peak (too smoky to photograph the Palisades), hiked to Palisade Lakes. 14.2 mi, +6,300', -3,700'.

Day 11, 29 Jul 02: Hiked to Pinchot Pass, meeting wilderness ranger Bob Kenan. 10.7 mi, +3,400', -2,100'.

Day 12, 30 Jul 02: Climbed Mt. Wynne and Mt. Pinchot, spoke with the Rae Lakes wilderness ranger, hiked to Woods Creek. 9.3 mi, +1,900', -5,400'.

Day 13, 31 Jul 02: Hiked to the lake just below Forester Pass, signing the hiker's register at the Rae Lakes Ranger Station along the way. 17.0 mi, +6,400', -2,800'.

Day 14, 1 Aug 02: Called home from the top of Forester Pass and had lunch with the Tyndall Creek wilderness ranger. Hiked to

Crabtree Ranger Station, signed the hiker's register. 13.7 mi, +2,500', -4,100'.

Day 15, 2 Aug 02: Climbed Mt. Hitchcock, hiked to Guyot Pass, climbed Mt. Guyot (the register is on the benchmark at the southwest end of the ridge, not on the high point), camped at Guyot Creek. 12.2 mi, +4,800', -5,100'.

Day 16, 3 Aug 02: An interesting day for me and a very interesting day for everyone else. I climbed Mt. Newcomb and noted in the register that Doug Mantle had summited the very same day. I scanned the ridge leading to Mt. Chamberlin looking for Doug while I called my parents on the cell-phone. It was a garbled conversation and I suddenly spotted Doug moving toward Chamberlin. I said, "I'll call you back," and then shouted "DOUG!" I hurried over to Doug and wouldn't you know it, I was unable to call my mother back. Doug and I climbed Chamberlin and I hiked with him back to the Pacific Crest Trail. I hiked down to Rock Creek and then up Rock Creek, checking-in with the wilderness rangers at the Rock Creek Ranger Station, and camped. 13.2 mi, +4,500', -4,400'.

(But all my mother heard was "I'll call you back," and an unintelligible scream. She was afraid that I had fallen off of the mountain and was in desperate need of assistance. She called the Inyo County Sheriff who called Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks who then called me back, leaving a message on my voice mail, which I received two days later when I had returned home. The next day, my mother called Bob Rockwell of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group who then notified the rescue team to be ready for a call-out the following morning. Fortunately, I was able to call off the dogs that morning, and just to make sure, I sent an email to the Sierra Nevada and California Mountaineering Club list servers not to go looking for me because I was safe at home.)

Day 17, 4 Aug 02: I hiked over New Army Pass to Horseshoe Meadows, where my car started. 10.2 mi, +2,000', -2,400'.

Notes:

Mileage: 182.7 miles according to TOPO!

Body weight: I started with 166 lbs. and finished with 151 lbs., losing 15 lbs.

Pack weight: 20 lbs., not counting food, water, or fuel. I started VQ '02 with 22 lbs. of food. In the summer in the Sierra, with a thin sleeping bag and minimal extra clothing, I can stuff 18 days of food into a 4,400 cubic inch pack.

Boots: K-mart had a deal last year: two pairs of hiking boots for \$20.00. The new pair I wore began to fall apart after 100 miles. (I have had better luck with boots from Target.) The socks I wear (Thorlo) cost more than these boots!

Solo trips: A Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness Ranger disappeared in 1996 while on a routine park patrol and his body was found in 2001. His big mistake was not telling his colleagues where he was going. I leave a detailed itinerary with my parents and make it a point to check in with the wilderness rangers, either in person or signing the hiker register at a vacant wilderness ranger station. I also carry a cell phone on solo trips and try to call home every day, typically from the summit of a high peak. With these tactics, should I become overdue, I hope that this information will help the rescuers narrow their search down to a reasonably sized area.

I would rather not go alone. I invite a few select friends to join me each year, but not very many can get away from two to four weeks at a time. I usually make arrangements to meet other climbers (i.e., belay slaves) sometime during VQ, but no one could join or meet me this year.

But I was never entirely alone while on the John Muir Trail. This year, I frequently passed a delightful Swiss couple and a charming mother-daughter team. The 42 year-old mother was retracing her own VQ, taken 20 years ago, with her 18 year-old daughter. Our last camp together was near the Crabtree ranger station. While her daughter went to the bear box, the woman asked me if there was a Mrs. Secor. "Yes," I replied. "My mother."

• *R.J. Secor*

Ritter Redux

Mt. Ritter North Face

September 14-15, 2002)

A fall trip to the north face of Mt. Ritter (13,157) led by Dave Harris two years ago was so scenic and enjoyable that I decided to lead a repeat trip this past fall.

After a couple of last-minute cancellations, Fi Verplanke, Steve Eckert, Mike McDermit, Mike McCurry, and I met at the Agnew Meadows trailhead on the morning of Sat. Sep. 14. We'd slept in the woods next to the parking lot to avoid the 7 a.m. deadline for driving to the trailhead -- after then, you're required to take a shuttle bus, which is fine on the way in, but a disaster if you get back to the trailhead after 5 p.m., when the last shuttle departs.

We headed up the trail at 8:30 on a beautiful fall morning, arriving at Lake Ediza around noon. After a lunch break in a small meadow just above the lake, we considered changing our plans and doing the climb that afternoon, but lack of enthusiasm and a siesta soon put that idea to rest. Having walked past the established campsites in the trees just above the lake, we wandered up the beautiful alpine valley toward Mt. Ritter and decided to camp near the bottom of our south face descent route, which would shorten our day on Sunday slightly. At 2 we found a nice flat area next to the creek, right at the bottom of the use trail heading up to the south face route.

We lay around and rested on the grass, then watched as a helicopter circled repeatedly in front of Volcanic Ridge (11,501), the broad peak just south of Lake Ediza. After some calls from its loud hailer, it descended behind a low ridge and landed, then stayed on the ground for almost two hours. Apparently a rescue, but in an odd place, about halfway between Lake Ediza and Clyde Minaret, and not on the trail between them. Maybe someone got hurt climbing the crumbling face of Volcanic Ridge.

I strolled around the beautiful uplands above Nydiver Lakes and took some photos. The peaks were still dusted with snow from the storm just after Labor Day, giving them a more serious and alpine appearance than usual. As we were cooking supper, a solo climber from the Czech Republic dropped by -- a former star hockey player in to try Mt. Ritter. Once the sun set, the temperature dropped quickly in our exposed camp, and we were all in our bags before 8 p.m.

Sunday we got up in the dark at 5:30 and got rolling about 6:30. It was clear but cold as we worked our way up the scree toward the snowfield and couloir below the Banner-Ritter saddle. Two young lads the day before had said they had turned back at the couloir because of icy conditions, but we found nothing too challenging, though the snow was definitely icier than two years before. After a break at the Banner-Ritter saddle, we cramponed up the North Glacier. Snow from the recent storm had filled in the suncups and crusted over, providing good purchase for crampons, but in between the suncups were large areas of hard ice, which demanded careful climbing.

Thirty feet below the top of the glacier, we exited right, took off our crampons, and traversed right about 75 feet on a snow-

covered ledge into the right hand gully on the north face. The class-3 rock in this gully was harder than two years before -- all of the easy little ramps and ledges were covered with frozen snow, forcing us onto steeper dry rock (crampons were not really feasible because the snow was so discontinuous). About halfway up the gully, we traversed right on an exposed ledge that was definitely class-4.

Things got a bit easier after that, and we arrived on the crest of the northwest arete at 11 a.m., just left of an obelisk-like tower. From there we crossed an easy scree terrace and a smaller secondary arete at a notch marked by a duck, then started up the broad northwest gully. Again, this section was harder than two years before, with all of the easy parts covered in frozen snow. But it was still class-3, and we worked our way up the snow patches and smooth black boulders and slabs, finally pulling over the rim just 10 feet left (east) of the summit.

Fi had had no idea we were so close to the top, and was overjoyed to be off the north face and done with the hard climbing. When Steve let us use his cell phone and she reached her son and husband back in the Bay Area, she became so euphoric that she appeared about to levitate upwards off the mountaintop.

Views were great in the clear fall air, especially south to the icy upper reaches of the Southeast Glacier and the snow-dusted Ritter Pinnacles and the Minarets. After snacks and photos, a stiff wind came up, and we headed down the south slope toward the main south gully. After we descended this loose class 2-3 gully, Steve of course glissaded right from the top of the steep snow slope down onto the Southeast Glacier.

I was amazed at the shrunken state of the glacier in September of this dry year -- the rock island in the middle of the glacier, normally about 200 feet across, had expanded into a vast ledge system over 1000 feet long. In fact, according to the bulletin board back at the ranger station, it was now possible to climb Ritter via the south face route without once touching snow. We waited on the rocks for one member of our party who was getting really tired, then headed down the middle of the ledge system, weaving around to avoid class-3 areas on the smooth, glacier-polished rock.

We then angled down past the southeast corner of the glacier and into an easy gully with a small cliff on its south side and a use trail in its lower part. Reading over non-PCS trip reports on the Web, it's surprising how many people do not take this easy route up to the Southeast Glacier, choosing instead either to ascend near the large dome 1/4 mile to the south and then do a high, rugged traverse, or else climb directly up the cliff to the north near the waterfall, as described in Secor.

By the time we took a break in camp, pumped water, and packed up our gear, it was 4:30. Our plan to get out before dark was blown, but we didn't really care -- it was actually nice to hike out a leisurely pace and watch the unfolding progress of late afternoon, sunset, alpenglow, evening gloom, and then full darkness as we hiked the last mile uphill through the forest, finally arriving at the cars at 8:45 p.m.

• *Jim Ramaker*

Cathedral Range

August 21, 2002

4:00am. The alarm sounds, a shrill piercing shriek that slices through my warm cocoon of sleep like a cold steel knife. I don't want to hear it, don't want to believe that it's really time to get up. Prying open thick, heavy eyelids, I squint blearily into the still darkness, dimly searching for an excuse, some reason to call it off while still saving face. All I want is to sink deeper into the warm folds of my bag, to return to the safe, comforting womb of blissful sleep and wait fetus-like for the sun and the birth of a new day; to dream of awakening to a blazing sky and the smell of eggs and bacon on the fire; to indulge in that third cup of coffee while basking in the lazy warmth, casually perusing the guidebook before finally setting off at half past ten...

But one look reveals the truth: the starry sky is clear, the moon shows no hint of moisture, and there isn't even a whisper of wind. Cornered with no chance for escape, I pull the hood of the bag up over my face and resort to silent bargaining: Five more minutes. Then I promise I'll get up.

I'm not a morning person.

It's colder than usual for August in Tuolumne, and after the short drive to the trailhead I have to force myself out of the heated car. My breath visible as I load the espresso maker and fire the stove, I move mechanically in the cold darkness, hypnotized by the blue glow of my headlamp, struggling to ignore the voice that keeps insisting that I forget about this and go back to bed.

Off by 5am, stumbling up the trail I know so well, still stupid with sleep and confused by the shadows, I find the Budd Lake turnoff and continue, wondering how I'll manage the climbing when I seem to have so much difficulty walking. I go too far and have to backtrack before leaving the trail, busting through the forest, lost again, my internal compass spinning madly. But as I emerge onto the slabs, the dawn light reveals the way.

The summit of Unicorn Peak: The sun is illuminating the tops of all the high points of my intended route -- Cathedral, Echo Peak #3, Echo Ridge, the Cockscomb, and the Matthes Crest -- all glowing golden in the first light of the day. As I gaze at this, the sun slips above the horizon and casts its rays on me. A good omen? I thought so once before, only to come up short. So I simply enjoy the lovely sight for what it is, smiling as the feeble dawn light takes some of the sting out of the morning chill. The question of what today will bring is still right there, but maybe a little less urgent this time.

For several years I had tried unsuccessfully to get friends interested in three moderate Sierra traverses. My suggestions elicited only blank stares and unanswered emails. One friend even told me I was nuts. I couldn't understand these reactions, for although these proposed outings were long, they were technically easy (5.7 or less) and completely uncommitting. With all the bailoff options, what did it matter if the routes turned out to be too much? They would still be fun days. I was starting to mull over the feasibility of doing these by myself when out of the blue last June (2001), my friend Kelly asked me if I was interested in one of them, the Cathedral Range Traverse. I couldn't say yes fast enough.

If you look at a map, the Cathedral Range stretches across a wide swath of the backcountry and includes peaks from Cathedral to Vogelsang and perhaps Lyell. But to climbers, the traverse refers to a loop of peaklets around Budd Lake. The "Budd Lake Traverse" has many variations. You can go out for a short afternoon scramble of a few of the high points of the area -- Cathedral, Echo Ridge, Cockscomb, Unicorn -- or you can include all nine Echo Peaks and Eichorn Pinnacle in the loop. Add in a

traverse of the Matthes Crest or a climb of its North Ridge and odds are you're in for a full day. Clockwise or counterclockwise, any or all of the peaks, by their easiest or hardest routes, in one day or spread over several -- it's all fun no matter how you do it or what you call it.

Kelly and I set out early one morning, not entirely sure how much we could do, but intent on having a good time. In the middle of the afternoon, on top of our penultimate Echo Peak, we looked down at #4: an intimidating sight. Kelly suggested we skip it.

Kelly outlined his reasons: It would take us too long to downclimb or rappel to it, it would require a belayed climb, and then getting off would be complicated and involve additional rappels. He didn't think there would be time to do all that and climb Cathedral Peak.

"We came to do the traverse", I insisted. "We can climb Cathedral anytime. Besides", I said, eyeing the descent, "I think we may be able to have our cake and eat it too."

Kelly relented. The downclimb was stimulating but not difficult, we easily climbed the peak unroped, and the descent to the west turned out to be trivial. Then after a short walk, we dashed up the Southeast Buttress of Cathedral Peak.

But no amount of arm twisting could convince Kelly to climb Eichorn. He seemed to greatly prefer getting home just a little bit earlier. It had been a very satisfying day, no doubt, but I couldn't help feel some regret over this. Then, a later study of the guidebooks revealed that we hadn't actually climbed Echo Peak #6, but instead had ascended an unnamed bump nearby.

The next time I saw Kelly:

"We have to go back and do the Cathedral Range Traverse again. And this time climb the real #6 and Eichorn Pinnacle and traverse the Matthes Crest."

He smiled, and included a let-me-know-how-it-goes look.

"No really, we can do it! We'll just start earlier and put the pedal to the metal. Simulclimb the fifth class. Come on!"

No way.

So I started thinking again about going alone. The problem with this was that self-belaying would be way too slow, and I'd never actually ascended any fifth class entity unroped before. I'd dreamed about climbing Cathedral Peak with just rock shoes and a chalk bag, and really hoped that I eventually would. Someday, maybe. When I was ready.

I arrived in Tuolumne one Friday afternoon two months later with the traverse in mind, and stopped off at the south flank of Daff Dome to climb a short moderate hand crack that I was familiar with. I'm not sure how good a test this really was, but at least no red flags had gone up.

The next morning I found myself standing on top of Unicorn Peak as the first rays of sun shot laser-like onto the summit. A good omen, I had told myself. An hour later I wasn't so sure. I was looking down the valley towards the south end of the Matthes Crest and thinking that it was a lot further away than I'd remembered. I had also expected to find water, but the valley was dry. Worse, there was something weighing me down beyond the rope and gear I was carrying, an uncharacteristic sluggishness that couldn't be explained by my lack of sleep. It wouldn't be until the next morning that the illness would hit with full force. But by the time I cached a water bottle, detoured to Matthes Lake to fill up another, and bungled up the slabs to the south end of the Crest, I had fallen far enough behind schedule that I was forced to concede that the full traverse had already slipped away.

I sat there for a while wondering what to do with my day. There were no other climbers on the Crest, at the base, or hiking up the valley. I realized with surprise that although I'd planned to climb

unbelayed as much as I could, I had been unconsciously counting on the presence of other people to buoy up my confidence. Unexpectedly alone, I felt naked and unprepared; the climb appeared dark and frightening.

It was a gorgeous day, clear and sunny, a soft breeze cooling my skin. I looked out at the Tuolumne backcountry, so clean and civilized, with its gentle lines and golden knobby granite, an alpine feel and yet so close to the road. And there in front of me, the Matthes Crest: an incredible fin of granite, a form as improbable as it is beautiful. After about half an hour, my doubts morphed into desire, and I found that I really wanted to climb the Matthes Crest. Right now. It's what I'd come for! As a precaution, I put on my harness, clipped my gear to it, and tied the rope outside my pack: a free soloist with training wheels.

For the first ten minutes I was nervous, as if on a long runout, and I kept searching for nonexistent corners to hide in. But then I settled down and began to really enjoy the climb. There seemed to always be a good hold, a sinker jam, or something completely solid. The short 5.7ish corner below the summit that I'd worried about turned out to be secure and fun. With no reason to hurry, I hung out on top for a while, took off my shoes, wiggled my toes in the hazy sunshine, and tried to shake off the increasing fatigue. Then I continued with the much more aesthetic northern half of the traverse, enjoying it all the more before walking off on the slabs.

I crept up the slopes to the Echo Ridge, just to have a look at Cathedral Peak. By this time, thick smoke from a nearby fire had descended into the Budd Lake basin and Cathedral was nearly obscured. It looked like a scene from hell. With a burning throat and a feeling of exhaustion dogging me all the more, I headed out early and drove home.

"If you wait for the weather, you'll never climb jack".

• Charlie Porter

I wonder what Charlie would have said if he'd seen those black clouds boiling up out of the southwest at 5:30am? This July, I'd headed in at 5am once again, fired with caffeine and hoping mightily that those clouds would burn off. It had rained lightly the day before, and I'd consulted with all available weather prognosticators, official and otherwise. Their consensus: a slight chance of afternoon thunderstorms.

At 7:30am, as I prepared to mantle onto the first of the Cockscomb's twin summit blocks, I saw a lightning strike a few miles to the east. I paused and looked up at the sky -- solid clouds -- and heard the rumble of thunder. Then another flash. Time to get down from prominent points!

Hailstones chased me down Budd Creek and by the time I made the trailhead it was raining full on, cats and dogs. A slight chance of afternoon thunderstorms indeed!

And now it's August and I'm back again, feeling doubtful and somewhat uncomfortable with the spectre of repeated failure. Standing here on the summit of Unicorn, I figure I'll just have fun and see what happens. A quick talus-hop over Mt. Althuski and then I skirt around to climb the easy west side of the Cockscomb. By now I could do this part blindfolded. After a short rest, I drop my gear and water and climb the North Ridge of the Matthes Crest out and back. It's a compromise over the S-N traverse, but a fairly good one: kind of like a horizontal jungle gym. Picking up my stuff, I slog up the Echo Ridge, the high point of the area, and then head down to those nine pesky Echo Peaks.

Echo Peak #9 is the critical bit for me as I'm pretty sure I won't be able to climb it unroped. Along with the 8.5x50 line, I've brought six nuts, six cams, and a handful of carabiners and slings: courage in a rucksack. I scramble the first part to a spike, rig a self-belay, and begin climbing on knobs. It's not difficult, but my vivid

memory of those knobs busting out under my feet the last time I was here keeps me on edge. I move right where I'd headed left before and find the going easier. Then a knob breaks -- or maybe my foot just slipped? -- and I'm reminded that I really can't afford to fall here. After rapping and cleaning the short pitch, I walk cams attached to double slings for a bit until the terrain feels more secure. Back at the base, I check my watch, and for the first time today allow myself to think that I just might finish what I started.

Most of the remaining Echo Peaks are almost an annoyance. After climbing them all last year (twice) their charm has faded. One by one I tick them off and then plan to descend to Budd Lake for some needed water and a snack. But voices high on Cathedral Peak seem to beckon me. I spy a pair of hikers below the base and run to them to beg some water. One of them pulls out a two liter bottle in which a one liter block of ice rattles around, along with a few scant ounces of water. I graciously accept a tiny ice cold drink out of this odd maraca; then head up to the base where I manage to wash down half an energy bar with the remaining swallows of water in my own bottle.

Cathedral Peak -- the climb of my dreams not so long ago. In some ways I suppose it still is. I remember a Tuolumne trip with friends one September about ten years past. Most of us were hiking to Cloud's Rest, but Kelly had split off with a friend to climb Cathedral, and I was so envious. Someday, I remember thinking, if I can just become a solid 5.7 leader, the world will open up to me.

TM Herbert told me last year that he's climbed the Southeast Buttress 250 times. I don't think I'll ever match that, but after 7 or 8 ascents, I continue to find it a great joy. It's a good line, the rock is clean and the climbing fun and easy -- "practically cuddly", as Peter Croft has written. Although the North Ridge of the Matthes Crest was wonderful, Cathedral is hands down the best part of the traverse for me and climbing it this way is maybe one of the most fun things I've done. I pass a party near the chimney and then, to my surprise, run into a bit of a crowd at the summit. After seeing no one all day until the two hikers at the base, it is odd to encounter this large group at 5:30pm on a Wednesday. There are two parties of three, sort of gummed up by the lack of a fixed rappel station on top. I chat with them for a while and eventually find my way to the top and then over to Eichorn Pinnacle.

The North Face of Eichorn can't properly be compared to it's West Pillar route, but for an eighty foot 5.4, it's a really good climb and a nice way to finish the day. I top out on the heels of a party climbing the Pillar and although I've brought my own rope this far just to rappel from the top, I happily accept the invitation to be first to rap off of theirs.

"Wait -- don't you want to sign the register?", one of them asks as I lean back into the rappel.

"The box is empty", I say. "At least it was last time I checked." He opens the box. "Here it is. There's even a picture on the front."

"No, I think I'll pass. I know I was here. Besides", I say as I start down, "there are two ice cold beers waiting for me below."

Back to my car before dark, 7:30pm. Thirsty, tired, happy.

A nice day out.

• *Jim Curl*

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.

Silver Peak

Peak: Silver Peak (8424) snow
Dates: January 26th, 2003 (Sunday)
Maps: Tahoe City
Leader: Ron Karpel, ronny@karpel.org
Co-Leader: Kelly Maas, kmaas@amcc.com 408-378-5311

This Silver peak is the one near Squaw Valley. We will ski or snowshoe to the summit and return the same day. Distance is about 10 miles round trip, and elevation gain is about 2400 feet. Contact leaders for more information.

Wanna get High in Mexico!

Peaks: Three volcanoes in Mexico: La Malinche 14,600; Iztaccihautl 17,100; El Pico de Orizaba 18,400
Date: Jan 21 - Feb 2 (Tue-Sun)
Location: Area about 140 miles SE of Mexico City
Contact: Vaughan Wallace (vaughanw@shaw.ca)

Looking for a climbing partner (or partners) to complete ascents of three of Mexico's volcanic summits. I've completed a number of climbs up to 5.7 in the Canadian Rockies, numerous ski ascents and glacier crossings. Am now looking to move to the next level of mountaineering, extreme altitude. I'll be in the region from January 20th until February 5th. Any one interested, let me know. Cheers!

Nepal - Tibet

Goal: Kala Patthar (18200'/5545m), Mera Peak (21100'/6437m), Tibet
Date: Apr 12 - May 12 (Sat-Mon)
Difficulty: Peak Climbing - mixed
Location: Nepal - Tibet
Contact: Warren Storkman dstorkman@aol.com
650-493-8959

April 2003 - Nepal Two trips running simultaneously, both will be in the Khumba area. One group will climb Mera Peak 21,100 ft (6437 meters) then cross Amphu Lapcha and do Island Peak (Imjatse) 20,300 ft (6189 Meters) returning through Namche. The other trekking and climbing group will trek to Lobuche 16,200 ft. with options of Everest Base camp or walk up Kala Pata 18,200 ft. (5545 meters) Then over to do Island Peak (Imjatse) -- with a layover day for the trekkers.

May Option - Tibet: There will be a two day lay over in KTM (Kathmandu) after trek / climb before going to Tibet. We fly to Lasha and motor back to Nepal. This is 8 days - 7 nights of hotels.

Will include full board. (no camping) My wife will arrive in KTM with some trekkers wives, and others, for Tibet trip. As in the past I do not ask for any of your money. You pay the provider.

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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 1/26/2003. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.



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

First Class Mail - Dated Material