



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

## Next General Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, January 13

**Time:** 7:30 PM

**Program:** Climbing the Obscure: Zoroaster Temple, Grand Canyon, Arizona. A slide show by Rick Booth

Join us for a slide show describing an ascent of a route well off the beaten path: the Northeast Arete of the Zoroaster Temple in the Grand Canyon.

**Location:** Any Mountain, Cupertino  
20640 Homestead Rd.  
Cupertino, CA 95014

**Directions:** From I-280, exit DeAnza Blvd/Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. Follow signs toward Sunnyvale. Turn left onto Homestead Rd. Any Mountain is on the left.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 1/25/2004 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

## Wilderness First Aid

To help trip leaders and would-be leaders get the required First Aid certificate, the Chapter sponsors an 8 hr 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, Jan 17 and Sunday, Jan 18 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, call Health Education Services, 650-321-6500, reserve a spot for Sat. or Sun., and authorize a \$45 charge on your credit card—or promise to bring \$45 in cash to class. Cancellations 48 hours in advance without penalty or if a substitute attends. For more information, call 650-321-6500.

• Marg Ottenberg

## Wilderness First Aid Class

February 7-8, 2004

The Sierra Club requires that outing leaders be trained in first aid (<http://mitchell.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/FirstAid/index.asp>). For simple outings, 6-8 hours of training every three years is considered sufficient. The Loma Prieta Chapter has been offering such classes for some time; they are also available through the American Red Cross. For more challenging outings, a 16 hour Wilderness First Aid or 80 hour Wilderness First Responder class is either recommended or required. The Chapter's first 16 hour WFA class will be taught by Bobbie Foster of Foster Calm in February 2004.

Foster Calm Wilderness First Aid teaches patient assessment and response to such conditions as shock, bleeding, head and spinal injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, wounds, heat, and cold in a non-urban setting.

Bobbie has been involved in outdoor recreation/education for 12 years. As an employee of the University of California at San Francisco Medical School outdoor program "Outdoors Unlimited," she served as the coordinator of the whitewater canoeing program and was a back country skiing leader/instructor, a back packing leader, budgets manager, publicity coordinator, and risk management supervisor. In 1994, she found her true passion in the field of first aid. She served as OU First Aid Coordinator and Lead Instructor from 1994 to 2001, when she set up her own instructional company. Often assisted by her husband Atwood and several graduates of previous classes seeking additional training as volunteers, she teaches a range of classes at various locations (often including OU) throughout northern California. For more information, see <http://www.fostercalm.org>.

The Loma Prieta Chapter WFA class will convene at 8 AM, Saturday, 7 February, 2004, in the Raptor Suite (large, first-floor meeting room) at the Peninsula Conservation Center, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto (for a map, see <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/directory.html>). The Saturday class will run until 5 PM with a one-hour break for lunch. The schedule Sunday will be the same except that part of the afternoon will be devoted to 'scenarios' in which students will practice their skills, and there will be a test.

To enroll in the class, complete the application and send it with a check for \$80 payable to "Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter" to

Dick Simpson  
3326 Kipling Street  
Palo Alto, CA 94306-3012

To the extent possible, applications will be processed in the order received except that Sierra Club members will receive priority until two weeks before the class. You will be notified of your status when your application has been received. If accepted, the instructor will mail you a packet of materials a couple weeks before the class

If you have questions or must cancel, contact Dick Simpson (see below) as soon as possible. Your refund (if any) will depend on when you cancel and whether there is a qualified replacement available to take your place.

Class Coordinator: Dick Simpson [rsimpson@stanford.edu](mailto:rsimpson@stanford.edu) 650-494-9272

## Wilderness First Aid Class

February 7-8, 2004

Application

Please complete and return with a check for \$80 payable to "Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter" to:

Dick Simpson  
3326 Kipling Street  
Palo Alto, CA 94306-3012

Applications will be handled as nearly as possible on a first-come, first-served basis except that Sierra Club members will receive preference until two weeks before the class.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (desirable) \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Sierra Club Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_

Are you less than 18 years old? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your wilderness interests (backpacking, peak climbing, river running, etc.)?

If you are, or have been, a Sierra Club outing leader, please summarize that experience:

If the class is full, would you prefer to be kept on a waiting list or have your application canceled and your check returned immediately (circle one)?

Wait List                      Cancel

## Snow Camping Seminar

This Snow Camping Seminar teaches snow camping and survival for day skiers or snowshoers caught overnight. Participants must be experienced summer backpackers since this course teaches winter camping, but not basic backpacking.

Three evening classes, held in the Stanford area, on Tues, 1/13, Thurs 1/15 and Tues 1/20. One weekend field trip on Feb 7-8, 2004. Limited to 40 participants for the evening sessions, and 25 participants on the outing.

\$40 cost includes books, instruction, and some common equipment used on field trip.

To sign up, send \$40 check, payable to BSCS, to P.O. Box 802, Menlo Park, CA 94026. Include your name(s), phone #, email,

postal address, Sierra Club member number (if oversubscribed, preference will be given to members). Upon receipt, we will acknowledge and send info and directions.

Questions? Contact Chris MacIntosh at 650/325-7841, [cmaci@attglobal.net](mailto:cmaci@attglobal.net), or Tom Wolf at 650/961-2682, [tom.wolf@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:tom.wolf@stanfordalumni.org).

Leaders:

Karen Davis, [karen@sequence.stanford.edu](mailto:karen@sequence.stanford.edu)

John Langbein, [langbein@usgs.gov](mailto:langbein@usgs.gov)

Chris MacIntosh, 650-325-7841,

[cmacintosh@attglobal.net](mailto:cmacintosh@attglobal.net)

Kelly Maas, [kellylinda@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kellylinda@sbcglobal.net)

Charles Schafer, [c\\_g\\_schafer@yahoo.com](mailto:c_g_schafer@yahoo.com)

Tom Wolf, 650/961-2682, [tom.wolf@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:tom.wolf@stanfordalumni.org)

• *Stephane Mouradian, 2002/2003 PCS Chair*

## Certified Avalanche Safety Class Level I

Date: February 21-22, 2004 (Sat-Sun)

Goal: Certified Avalanche Safety Class Level I

Difficulty: I Rated, snow travel

Location: eastern Sierra Nevada (vicinity of Bishop)

Sponsor: Outdoors Club

Contact: [http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Ken\\_Murray.html](http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Ken_Murray.html)

Contact: Kurt Wedberg, [kurtwedberg@hotmail.com](mailto:kurtwedberg@hotmail.com)

Bishop guide Kurt Wedberg (Everest '95), has graciously agreed to teach his popular Avalanche course for the Outdoorsclub. ([www.outdoorsclub.org](http://www.outdoorsclub.org)). He is doing the course for the highly discounted price of \$150 (usual fee, \$245). We want to extend an invitation to our friends at the Peak Climbing Section, to join the Club, and to participate. We already have people coming from NorCal, Carson City, and many from SoCal, so perhaps a convenient carpool can be arranged. Comfort with travel on snowshoes/ backcountry skis is helpful but not required. COURSE DESCRIPTION Level I Avalanche Course This avalanche course is appropriate for all types of winter enthusiasts who enjoy skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and winter mountaineering. This course follows the Level I curriculum endorsed by the American Institute for Avalanche Safety and Research (AIARE) and satisfies requirements for ski patrollers, mountain guides, and all other outdoor professionals. TO

SIGN UP, AND OTHER COURSE DETAILS, GO TO:

<http://www.outdoorsclub.org/Calendar>, click on SoCal, go to Feb, click on the trip listing.

## 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

Date: January 11th, 2004 (Sunday)

Leader(s): Arun Mahajan 650/327-8598 (H),  
[arun.mahajan@att.net](mailto:arun.mahajan@att.net)

This peak is the highest in Monterey county. The walk up is strenuous with an altitude gain of 3900+ ft in 6 miles, one way, but the view is well worth the effort. There may be snow on the

summit, so please dress properly and wear proper hiking boots. Pouring rain cancels.

Carpool: We usually carpool from the Carl's Jr. at Dunne Ave exit from 101 in Morgan Hill at 7:00 a.m. and caravan from there.

Note: There is a need to have an adventure pass, per car, to park at the trailhead which costs 5\$. One of the places to get this permit is the El Camino Liquor Store at the junction of El Camino and Elm in the town of Greenfield. Take the northern-most exit for Greenfield from Highway 101. Turn right at the exit. You are on El Camino.

Keep driving till you cross Elm. The liquor store is on the right hand side and is open early enough to get the permit on the way to the trailhead from the carpool point.

### Mt Diablo

Peaks: 4 Peaks of Mt. Diablo (3,849'), 4E, class 1

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004

Leaders: Bob Suzuki, 408-259-0772(H)

[SuzukiR@sd-star.com](mailto:SuzukiR@sd-star.com)

Sue Leeder: 831-457-9555(H),

[SueLeeder@OneBox.com](mailto:SueLeeder@OneBox.com)

Carpool Time: 7:00 AM

Carpool Location: No Host at Cubberly High (Middlefield & Montrose) in Palo Alto

Time at Trail Head: 8:15 AM

Trail Head Location: Rock City near South Gate (opens 8 am)

Enjoy an 18 mile loop in this beautiful East Bay park. Wear boots as sections of trail may be muddy. Heavy rain cancels. Co-listed with the Day Hiking Section.

## 2004 Winter/Spring Trip List

This is the list of trips planned for Spring and Summer. Please do not contact the leaders until the trips are announced in the "Scree" or on the broadcast list.

DATES	PEAKS	LEADERS
<b>JANUARY</b>		
Sun 11	Junipero Serra	Arun Mahajan
<b>FEBRUARY</b>		
Sat 14-Sun 15	Mt. Diller	Stephane Mouradian
<b>MARCH</b>		
Sat 6-Sun 7	Lone Pine Peak	Aaron Schuman
Sat 13-Sun 14	Mokelumne Peak, 9300+, ski/snowshoe	Pat Callery
Sun21	Roundtop	Arun Mahajan
<b>APRIL</b>		
Fri 2-Sun 4	Birch Mtn and Tinemaha Peak	Aaron Schuman

## Clyde Minaret

July 19-20, 2003

'5 a.m.,' came the quiet call from Bob Suzuki, and the six of us in our camp stirred to life in the pre-dawn gloom. The big thunderstorm from the night before was gone, leaving a clear, peaceful morning.

We didn't have to look far for our climbing objective -- less than 100 yards from our camp near the outlet of Cecille Lake in the Minarets, the beginning class 2-3 slabs of Clyde Minaret (12,264) rose out of the bouldery meadow. We headed up the slabs at 6 a.m., finding them unusually smooth, no problem now, but probably a bit tricky if we had to descend in the rain.

Driving up to the mountains on Friday night, Bob, Eddie Sudol, and I had realized it was not going to be a normal weather weekend when we got rained on west of Yosemite and again at 'Camp 9' near Tioga Pass at midnight. We had pushed on, finally finding a place to sleep under clear skies at Deadman Summit on Highway 395.

Saturday morning, we'd met the rest of our team -- Gary Craig, Bob Evans, and Doug Ross -- at Agnew Meadows, and hiked in at a good pace, arriving at Ediza Lake at noon and Cecille Lake at 1:30. Just after that, the dark thunderclouds overhead cut loose, and we put up our tents and dove into them for some nice rain sleep.

The rain had let up around 4 p.m., giving us plenty of time to dry our rain gear and cook supper. Soon after getting into our sleeping bags around 8 p.m., a second, bigger thunderstorm rolled in right on top of us, blasting the nearby peaks with lightning strikes and thunderclaps so loud they hurt the ears. But our camp was well protected and we all stayed dry, so it was great just to relax and experience a thunderstorm from what felt like right inside of it.

As we headed up the peak on Sunday morning, we looked over at the two-person near our camp for signs of life -- the night before as the storm closed in, we'd heard two climbers calling back and forth high above, as they descended a technical route on the southeast face. We figured that they'd waited out the storm on a ledge, descended in the dark, and were still asleep in their tent.

At the top of the smooth slabs, we put on crampons and headed up and left on the steepening snowfield, with Bob Evans kicking steps in the lead. At the top of the snow, we had to step across a deep moat onto smooth downsloping slabs covered with gravel -- an awkward move. From there we scrambled up and right on rock and found the ledge leading further right over to the 'Rock Route.' The ledge was easy -- 5 to 10 feet wide with even some flat grassy patches -- and so was finding the spot to leave it and head up the gully of the Rock Route, because the ledge continues just a few feet past the gully and then ends abruptly in a dizzying drop down to the Northeast Glacier.

We headed up the steep gully, which was hard class-3 with three short vertical class-4 steps. We climbed the first one on the left side and the second one right up the middle. The gully

was free of snow except for one tiny patch that later helped us identify the gully from below, as it's hard to spot the route from the bottom of the peak. When we reached the gendarme where the Rock Route merges with the Starr route, we stayed to the right of the prominent rib for another 3-400 vertical feet instead of joining the other route. This section was sustained class-3 on a narrow face that slanted off to the right and then dropped off hundreds of feet to the glacier below. It was not actually exposed, but not a place to relax either. Above that section, the rib merged into the face above, which steepens noticeably, crossing the boundary from class-3 to class-4 and ending in a short headwall.

We reached the headwall at 9:30 and tried an awkward overhanging chockstone, until Bob Suzuki found a crack and ledge leading up and right. We roped up for the first time here with our half-length rope, because the ledge, while pretty easy, was exposed to a 100' fall. Roping up here worked well, because the first 30 feet or so leftward along the summit ridge was blocky and pretty exposed also, so we could just stay roped and do that section.

After that came the 'class-4 downclimb' mentioned in Secor, which I thought was easier than the section just before it and did it unroped, like most of the rest of the party. It really amounts to just one long stepdown move to a hidden foothold. Shorter people might appreciate a belay or a person spotting them from below. By 10:00 a.m., we were on top.

There were some clouds in the sky, but they didn't look threatening as on the day before, so we relaxed on the summit for almost two hours, looking down on the sharp spires and beautiful alpine terrain of the Minarets. On the descent as on the way up, we belayed along the exposed part of the ridge and down the first 20' or so onto the face, then unroped. The next 200' down were mostly class-4 -- good holds and cracks, but exposed to a long tumbling fall. Once again we crossed to the north side of the rib 300 feet or so above the gendarme, and slanted down the face, weaving around carefully to find class-3 terrain. We soon found the gully -- going back down it was straightforward, though we had to be careful of rockfall with our party of six, and we did one very short belay at one of the vertical steps. By 2 p.m. we were back to where the ledge meets the gully -- it's important to memorize this spot on the way up, because continuing down the gully past it gets you into class-5 terrain.

We cruised back across the ledge, struggled down the smooth, wet, gravelly slabs onto the snowfield, and then downclimbed and glissaded down the snow to the rounded slabs below, where we took a long break. About 3:30, we stepped back onto the grass at the bottom of the peak, having completed the climb without a hitch, and without even knocking any significant rockfall down near one another -- quite an accomplishment for a group of six.

Bob Suzuki and I had planned this as a three-day trip, but since we were down earlier than expected, Bob suggested we hike out now and try to get home a day early. Since he had done a great job leading the hardest parts and setting up the belays and rappels, the group was happy to oblige.

We departed at 4:30, and except for some horrendous bugs near Shadow Lake and just east of the San Joaquin River crossing, the hike out was uneventful. We reached the cars at 8:30 p.m., and then Bob, Eddie, and I had a late supper at McDonald's in Mammoth and hit the road. Instead of forcing the drive all the way home, we just drove across Yosemite and then pulled off on a side road near the Tuolumne River bridge west of the park. Bedding down in a warm, golden meadow about 1 a.m., we drifted off to sleep with the crickets chirping around us and the Milky Way wheeling above us. A 20-hour day, and definitely one of my best days ever in the mountains.

• *Jim Ramaker*

## Norman Clyde Peak

August 29-31, 2003

As a devotee of challenging class 3-4 Sierra peaks, I had long had Norman Clyde Peak (13,855') on my list. Judging peaks by their easiest route, it's one of the hardest peaks in the range, and as Secor says, referring to the NNE Ridge route, 'many outstanding climbers have been defeated.' The trip reports for this route are all over the map -- with Ron Hudson reporting a trouble-free climb that was done at 3:30 p.m., and others describing epics that lasted until 10 p.m. or even ended in forced bivvys.

Bob Suzuki and I agreed to try Norman Clyde on Labor Day weekend, and Ron Karpel joined us. After a pleasant night at Deadman's Summit, Bob and I met Ron at Schaat's Bakery on Friday morning, drove down to Big Pine, and finally left Big Pine Creek trailhead (7800') about 10 a.m., our packs weighed down by two 50-meter ropes and a good-sized rack of climbing gear. We toiled up the beautiful trail over the unnamed pass at 9800' and up through the forest to Finger Lake (10,800'), where we arrived about 3 p.m. We camped in a small meadow at the far end of the lake, with Ron managing to find the exact flat spot where he had slept on the Middle Pal trip that he had led back in June.

We tried napping, but the narrow, fiord-like valley made the sun feel hot, until it dipped below the canyon wall at 4 p.m. and left us in pleasantly cool shadow. By 6 p.m. we had cooked and eaten, and by 7 we were in our bags, expecting a big day to come.

Saturday we were up at 5:30 and rolling at 6:30, heading up the gully to the alpine lake above us along with a party on the way to Middle Pal. From there we could see the magnificent NNE Ridge or Norman Clyde, rising steeply, more like an arete than a ridge, to the summit. We toiled up a long boulderfield onto the long, nearly level ridge that leads northeastward from the peak at the 12,500' level. Ron bailed out at this point with altitude sickness -- he was feeling weak and didn't want to slow us down. Bob and I arrived at the sharp 40-foot notch in the ridge visible from below and were surprised to find no rappel point, until we located a circuitous class-3 crack leading down over to the left.

At 10 a.m. we reached the point where the ridge suddenly steepens, and we scrambled to the right onto the north face. As with Clyde Minaret, it's important to memorize this spot for the descent -- looking at it from the north face, the crossing point has a small scree shelf with a lightning-bolt shaped crack in the boulder above it. The face looked impressive -- a vast expanse of steep slabs, cracks, and ribs with no major distinctive features -- and the two route variations in Secor and the half

dozen or so trip reports on the Web all seem to describe a slightly different way up it.

We traversed right about 100 feet until the slabs above us looked doable unroped, then headed up, with a discontinuous steeper buttress on our right. The thing that makes this route fascinating is the continual routefinding choices and the sustained steepness -- it's a real challenge to weave around and find the easiest holds and cracks so that the climbing stays more class-3 than class-4. The angle can get disorienting -- at one point higher up, I was studying some smooth interconnecting ramps above and was heartened to see that they seemed quite easy and no more than about 45 degrees steep. Then I turned around to look out at the horizon and reorient my brain, and realized that they were much steeper than that.

At about 3/4 height, the face steepened slightly and became pretty much continuous class-4, and after Bob led up a smooth little dihedral, I asked him to lower a rope. I followed the pitch of 100 feet or so, and then, since we were roped up, we decided to just head more or less straight up instead of searching around for the easiest way. Bob led two more similar-length pitches, and then headed up a near vertical crack on one last pitch to the summit ridge. Belaying on a ledge around a corner, I couldn't see Bob, and I started freezing my butt off in the deep shade of the north face as the rope stopped moving for almost 30 minutes. This on a day when it was close to 100 degrees down in the Central Valley!

Bob called down that he just couldn't get a piece in to protect a hard move with loose rock just above him. Some rocks cascaded down past me as he struggled with it, refusing to give up. Finally, after taking a short fall, he gave in to my pleas to downclimb a bit and try another line to the left. A few minutes after that he was on the summit ridge, and I soon joined him there, grateful for the sudden warm sun and the tremendous views. We belayed a little ways leftward on the ridge, then unroped and continued along the airy, blocky ridge, with a 50 foot drop on our right and some really big air above the Eagle Face on our left. Around 2 p.m., we were up. What a great climb! Views were spectacular on a beautiful clear day, especially along the airy, jagged ridge over to Middle Pal.

At 3 p.m. we rapped off the ridge about 50 feet west (left, looking down) of the NNE ridge. Two more moderate-length raps and we unroped and started carefully downclimbing. We'd been told to expect rap slings all over the face, but we saw almost none both on the way up and the way down, and so had to leave our own. No, we did not exactly retrace our complex route on the way up, though we did intersect it several times as I recognized certain cracks and holds. About halfway down the face, we were stopped by a steep slab just below us, and instead of reascending a bit and traversing to find an easier way down, we decided to do one more rappel. The rope stuck when we pulled it -- often a problem on a less-than-vertical face like this one, but I managed to scramble up unroped about 20 feet and free it. After that, I led down a bit more to the left (west) than on the way up, and things went pretty easily, until at long last I spotted the lightning-bolt shaped crack off to our right and a discontinuous ledge system leading over to it. At 5:30 p.m. we traversed right and ended our long adventure on the north face.

But we were not quite done with the challenges -- instead of retracing our steps along the ridge top heading to the north, Bob wanted to try rappelling down off it to the right (east), to get down to easier ground more quickly. It looked like a long way down to me, longer even than a double-rope rappel with Bob's two 50-meter ropes, but after working our way down on

some ledges to where the face dropped off vertically, we found a rap station with about six slings, plus another six in a pile beside it. And 30-40 feet below that, down on some class-4 terrain, was a second rap station with another six or so slings (for those with shorter ropes). It almost looked like someone had stripped slings off the north face above and deposited them all here. We rapped off the upper anchor, and Bob, going first, had to hang in the air halfway down to untangle the ropes below him. Finally, at 6:30 p.m., I floated down onto the talus below, with the 50-meter ropes just barely reaching the ground. After a tired but happy talus slog, we pulled into camp and greeted Ron at 8 p.m., just as it was getting dark.

• *Jim Ramaker*

## **Mt. Hopkins from Lake Edison**

September 9-11, 2003

This was a fun three day trip, out of Lake Edison. The climbing leader was Jim Clement, owner of Vermillion Valley Resort. We had 6 people, including two novices, the rest quite experienced. We drove up the nite before, and stayed the nite at Vermillion, a backpacker's haven. After a hearty breakfast at the resort, we took the water taxi across the lake, and enjoyed a nice hike about 14 miles up Mono Creek, cutting off at the Hopkins Lake cutoff, about the only steep trail hiking. We hiked in a nice meadow area across from Hopkins, just above the stream. The evening was spent in examining one of the groups gear, whose hiking philosophy is 'heavy and slow!' Three spotlights were quite enough. The next morning, three went up the easy class three ledges and scree, for a nice two hour climb to the summit of Hopkins, from the west. One person continued to climb the other peaks in the area, until about 4am. The other two came down, and joined two who had stayed in camp, and hiked up the canyon, went over the 3rd class col over into the Grinnell Lake basin, where they camped for the nite, after two waded chest deep across the lake. I headed down from the first nite's camp, after exploring the Hopkins basin, and camped at the junction of Grinnell Creek and Mono Creek. So, we had two solo groups, and a group of four, in three different areas. Next morning, we had agreed to meet at the boat ramp at about noon, and all three groups arrived within 15 minutes. After the boat taxi back, we were just in time for fresh pizza back at the resort! It's great hiking with partners who know themselves in the Outdoors. We saw no other hikers the whole three days, surprising, as the area is so nice. Hopkins sees little traffic from this side, although a fair amount from the northeast side, class two from the Pioneer Lakes.

• *Ken Murray*

## **Epic on Mt Mendel, Right Mendel Couloir**

October 24-26, 2003

As the result of a series of e-mails with Steve Aho of the CMC, a southern California based mountaineering club, I learned that Scott Johnston was looking for a partner for an attempt on Ice Nine, the Left Mendel Couloir. I contacted Scott and he graciously agreed to haul me along, in spite of having never met or climbed together. I was pretty stoked since I had long

thought that Ice Nine was probably the top of the Sierra ice climbs and I figured to never have the skills to lead its difficult sections, which include some dry tooling around a chock stone.

Various scheduling constraints meant we had to head for the Sierras on Thursday night, almost immediately after my return from a week at Indian Creek, Utah. Thursday night we arrived at the nearly deserted North Lake parking area and crashed for the night. It was amazingly cold that night and we awoke to the rattle of fishermen heading down the dirt road we were sleeping on. Friday morning we headed up for Lamarck Col. We chugged our way up the trail towards the Lamarck Lakes and took the un maintained trail heading for the col. At the top of the col a sign informed us that we were at 12,880 feet and requested that we should leave both our dogs and our firearms behind. I reluctantly stashed my bazooka behind the sign. We headed down the backside of the col into Darwin Basin and found a nice camp spot near the inlet to the second lake there.

At 3 AM we were up and getting ready to go. It was an amazingly warm night, a marked contrast to the night at North Lake. About 4:30 we were off and quickly thrashing around headed for the wide gully on the west side of the north face of Mendel. We more or less stayed in the gully but ended up drifting too far east in the dark. A little more thrashing around and the saving grace of early dawn light and we were at the base of the ice sheet that fills the couloir heading for both the Left and Right Mendel Couloirs. We could just see the Left Mendel Couloir and it was looking dubious already. There appeared to be very little ice in the upper chimney beyond the chockstone. We headed up the ice anyway and figured to climb the right couloir if the left looked out of the question. Four 200 foot pitches later we were hanging off the ice screws trying to get a look into the left couloir which was another pitch away. There appeared to be a runnel of ice in some parts of the chimney but not in others. This meant the possibility of hundreds of feet of dry tooling which Scott was going to have to lead since I wasn't even sure I could follow hundreds of feet of dry tooling without hurting myself, let alone lead any of it. We punted on Ice Nine.

Two and a half pitches later we were through with the ice on the right side. This last few hundred feet was made more complicated by the fact that Scott dropped one of his ice tools which went whizzing past my sorry noggin. Scott finished leading the pitch with one tool and didn't seem to miss a step. Amazing.

It turned out the end of the ice was not a good thing. This put us at the start of what turned out to be about 200 feet of so called third class climbing in what is without question the loosest, most shattered, dangerous chute/chimney I have ever been in. Flat nasty. We emerged from the top of this horror show on what we think is the West Ridge. It was now about 5:00 PM and we had about an hour of sunlight left. An hour to figure out how to get up over the summit and locate the rappel spot "several hundred yards down the Southeast Ridge". That seemed improbable so the question was what to do from where we were. We could see down below us the John Muir Trail in Evolution Basin. It didn't look so far so we opted to go down the southwest face towards Evolution Basin. This involved a bunch of third class down climbing and three rappels, the last of which was right at the very end and occurred right as it got dark.

Unfortunately we were still way above the trail in Evolution Basin. The southeast face of Mendel is probably 1000-1500 feet longer than the north side. We eventually thrashed our way down to the trail and determined we could head back to

the northwest on the trail and intersect a lake with water. Once at the lake we ate most of our remaining snacks, drank some water and contemplated what to do next. It was now about 9:00 PM. We figured there was a trail that came down from the Darwin Bench and intersected the John Muir Trail. We just didn't know where since it wasn't marked on the map. We headed down the JMT until it started to go down hill somewhat. This caused us some considerable consternation and we trolled back and forth over several hundred yards of the JMT looking for a missed cutoff to the Darwin Bench Trail. This didn't happen. Again we sat down for a discussion as to what to do next. It was now after 10 PM and extremely warm, fortunately. About all I wanted to do was crawl over to the nearest rock, boot the bear out from underneath it, crawl under the rock, curl up in a ball, and pass out. The ever energetic Scott argued we should head back to camp, if we could find it. We decided that it was likely we had not gone quite far enough, even though we were gradually going down hill. So we headed further north on the JMT. In our headlamps it appeared the trail took a sharp left and started to head steeply down hill. Right at the apex of the turn was the sought after trail coming in from Darwin Bench. It was now 10:30 PM.

We followed this indistinct path up to Darwin Bench. Scott held his headlamp at knee level in order to illuminate the slight shadows made by faint footsteps and we eventually found our way up to the Darwin Bench. This turned out to be the easy part since now we had to work our way up the bench to our camp at the second lake. This involved a lot of big boulder hopping, climbing around house sized boulders, and in some cases a retreat or two. At 3 AM we flopped down on our sleeping bags at the inlet to the second lake. Twenty four hours, sleeping bag to sleeping bag. Like they say on the TV show "24", it was the longest 24 hours of my life.

Sunday morning we packed up and headed up over Lamarck Col, picked up my bazooka, and headed for home. Scott raced ahead of me in order to cop a snooze in his car and I dawdled my way out in the usual wasted effort to save the pounding on my bad knee. It was the last good weather of the season. By the following weekend the first of the Sierra storms had moved in and the Tioga Road was closed.

Final notes: We used a 60 meter double rope system, eight ice screws, and an alpine rack with one of everything in it up to maybe #2 camalot. The rock is so shattered in the right chimney that only small stuff like stoppers are useful in there.

#### References:

Climbing California's High Sierra, second edition, John Moynier and Claude Fiddler, The Globe Pequot Press (A Falcon Guide), 2002, ISBN 0-7627-1085-3. Good photos of the route.

The High Sierra, Peaks, Passes and Trails, second edition, R.J. Secor, The Mountaineers, 1999, ISBN 0-89886-625-1

The usual word description but has critical beta on rating of climb from end of right couloir to summit: 5.6

• *Rick Both*

# A Thor-n in my side

December 17-18, 2003

On Wednesday December 17th I drove up to Lone Pine in hopes of climbing Thor Peak. My original idea was to start hiking by mid morning on the Whitney trail, camp near Mirror Lake and ascend Thor Peak the next day. Unfortunately it did not work out this way.

After a three hour drive from my home in Tarzana, I got to Lone Pine with marvelous blue skies and calm winds. I had high hopes about this day. As I drove up the Whitney Portal road I could see several cars going up the switchbacks, so I assumed it would be no problem getting up. Unfortunately as I went around the last corner before the switchbacks I noticed a Lone Pine police cruiser parked in the middle of the road. I stopped and asked the officer what the situation was. He told me that there was a Lexus commercial being filmed on the road and the only way I was going to get up there was to come back when it was dark. Seeing as it was ten o'clock in the morning this seemed a bit harsh, but I wasn't about to try anything funny. Feeling rather heart-broken I drove turned around and went Independence. I decided to try and get to Onion Valley in hopes of getting something out of this day. The road was clear until about 7500 feet, but there were only a few inches of snow on the road even at this point. Thanks to four wheel drive I was able to make it all the way to Onion Valley. Here I practiced my snowshoeing technique and took several pictures. After several hour of meandering through the eighteen inches of pure powder, I drove back down in hopes of making it out before the road iced over. I camped at Independence campground and went to sleep in hopes going back to the Whitney area the next day.

On the 18th I got up and drove right back to Whitney Portal road. I had waited until the sun had been shining on the road for close to an hour before I drove up, hoping it would be less icy. This time there were no Lexus commercials being filmed and I was able to drive to the trailhead. I got my ice ax, food and water and set off up the trail before nine. The only goal I had was to see how far I could make it, as I was uncertain how favorable the snow would be. There had been two other people to go up the trail since the last snowfall and their footsteps, as well as the trail, were not very difficult to follow. The snow was quite firm and relatively easy to walk on, even without snow shoes. I was able to make it to a very frozen Mirror Lake before noon. I decided that I had enough time to make an attempt at Thor Peak.

I skirted across to the north side of the lake and began to ascend to north slopes. It was here that I realized how hot it was. Until I began ascending this slope I was in the shade. Once I got into the sun it became clear I was well overdressed. Wearing three layers of all black the fifty degree temperatures and blazing sun were going to take away all my energy fast. Nevertheless I continued up. Not surprisingly most of the snow that got sun exposure was totally melted and all that was left was the sand and scree underneath it. This made the ascent just that much slower as every couple steps up resulted in a slide down a step or two. At first I traversed slightly left to avoid one small rock wall. Then I traversed right to the lowest point of another rock wall. Here a couple of easy 3rd class moves were encountered. After I went up the easy class three there was a series of chutes. The first one looked truly awful so I skipped it. The second one did not look that bad at a distance so I decided to give it a shot. What a mistake that was. The bottom of the chute contained a few tricky class three moves. From here however the only way up was a very dicey forth class face which involved balancing on an increasingly

narrowing ledge. I wanted no part of this and carefully went back down. I remembered an earlier trip report which said the fourth chute was a good one. So I traversed through the sand and scree looking for the fourth chute. I came across the third chute and discovered a vertical rock wall that blocked the third chute from the forth chute. It seemed the only way to get to the fourth chute from here was to go back down to where the rock wall ended which was far below where I was. I decided to go up the third chute instead. This proved to be challenging, but not impossible. There is one section at the beginning where a couple easy third class moves are encountered. This section is not much harder than the third class at the first rock wall. From here there was a nice section of surprisingly stable scree, and finally a section of exposed third class. This section is a bit challenging, but nothing truly impossible.

I was now at the top of the ridge looking down at the Owens Valley. The peak itself was to my left. The only way to get to it however was via the backside of the ridge I was on. I began my traverse and quickly discovered how hard this would be. In the summer I'm sure this is an easy second class traverse, but right now there was waist deep power everywhere. I very slowly made my way over until I came to a notch. Lo and behold I was standing at the top of the fourth chute. From where I was standing I was no more than 100 yards away from the summit and no more than 100 vertical feet from it.

It was here I made the wisest decision of the day. I turned back. Seeing as the sun had been eating away at me for the last two hours at least, not to mention it would have taken me probably half an hour to go the last few feet, as well as the fact that I was almost out of water and it was getting late I knew I had to get back to the car. So, I set off down the fourth chute. Soon I discovered that about two-thirds of the way down there is a small gap in the rock wall separating the third and forth chutes. I missed it going up, but it is actually quite possible to get to the fourth chute and this way is no more than second class. I continued going down and traversing left until I got to the first rock wall. Going down this section seemed much easier than going up it for some reason. About halfway down I began to feel quite ill. I concluded that I was not only exhausted, but also getting dehydrated as I had run out of water at the beginning of my descent. I slowly made it all the way back down to Mirror Lake where thankfully I could get some water. I gulped down much cold creek water and slowly made my way back down the trail. I was able to hike all the way out before it got dark and was back to my car at 4:45 after a truly exhausting day. If only Lexus had decided film another day I would have been able to complete my ascent, but alas, such is life.

• *Will MollandSimms*

## 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. There are no private trips for January.

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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 1/25/2004. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**



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

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