



November, 2004

Peak Climbing Section, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Vol. 38 No. 11

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

Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, November 9

Time: 7:30 PM

Where: PCC

Program: Denali the Magnificent
by Charles Schafer

Climbing Denali is an amazing adventure requiring commitment and sustained effort. But the environment is unlike anything I've ever experienced, and the views are exceptional. Come join our climb.

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

Directions: 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 11/28/2004 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Annual Election of PCS Officers

The nominating committee is pleased to announce that candidates are in the process of being selected for 2004-2005. Election of PCS officers occurs at the November meeting and additional nominations, if any, will also be accepted from the floor, at the meeting. As of the publication of the Scree, the slate of officers has not been finalized.

Elected officials take office right away.

The PCS Nominating Committee

Kelly Mass
Pat Callery
Stephane Mouradian

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.

Snow Mountain

Peak: Snow Mountain East & West (7056' & 7038'), Class 1+
Dates: November 13 Sat
Maps: Fouts Springs, Saint John Mtn, Crocket Peak, Potato Hill 7.5" USGS quads
Leader: Kelly Maas 408-378-5311, kellylanda@sbcglobal.net

Never heard of Snow Mountain? Can't find it at climber.org? That's all the reason I need to seek out the high points of this wilderness area (est. 1984) in Mendocino National Forest, north of Clear Lake. There's a trail to the top, and it looks like 12-14 miles & 4000 feet - a good day hike. Guess it's a 4-hr drive from the south bay. Snow on the upper half is expected, so bring snowshoes just in case. Bad weather cancels.

First Aid Classes

Wilderness First Aid (Palo Alto)

Dates: Until November 21
Description: Wilderness First Aid - 20 Hours
Pre-requisites: None
Contact: Bobbie Foster, bobbie@fostercalm.com, 530-265-0997

This is a great class for practicing wilderness first aid skills in an outdoor setting. In addition to a half day of outdoor scenario practice of first aid and leadership skills, this class focuses on practicing skills and covers wilderness first aid topics: patient assessment, shock and bleeding, head and spinal injuries, wounds, musculoskeletal injuries, heat and cold illnesses and much more. A three-year Wilderness First Aid certification is available upon successful completion of this course and passing a written wilderness exam. There are pre-class reading assignments. Cost \$78

For more information on Foster Calm go to www.fostercalm.com.

Other Dates and Locations

Date: December 4-5
Location: San Francisco
Description: Snow Camping Emphasis
Date: January 22-23
Location: San Francisco

Description: Private Class

Date: January 29-30

Location: San Francisco

Description: 16 hour Wilderness class

Contact: Erin 415-476-2078

For Sale

North Face VE25 expedition tent: Sleeps 3. with large Vestibule \$125 (retail new \$500) Good shape. Rain fly has a few small tears that have been repaired. Contact Tim Hult, 408-970-0760, or timothy.hult@gd-ais.com

Lowe Expedition Pack: A huge hauler for your next expedition to McKinley. Quite a few miles on this monster classic sack, with a few more trail miles on it. One side pocket. Blue. \$50. Contact Tim Hult 408-970-0760 or timothy.hult@gd-ais.com

Sierra Designs Glacier Tent: Sleeps 2. 4 season. Older tent with some wear. Used for winter mountaineering. Good for base camp on peak climb. Contact Gregg Hamm 209-295-4810

Mt Rainier

Ingraham Glacier Route

Article courtesy of Richard Hughes and Los Alpinistas

Visit www.alpinistas.org

The incentive to climb Mt. Rainier came earlier this year when the Chofu Vikings, a high school alumni group from Japan, invited me to join their Pacific Northwest Reunion. They invited me to their reunion after I made a temporary discussion forum for them on my website. They normally use my discussion software, but their own website was down. When I learnt that the reunion was to be held just .5 mile west of the Nisqually Entrance to Mt. Rainier National Park I immediately thought that this would be a great excuse to climb Mt. Rainier. When we mentioned to Nancy Harris that we planned to climb Mt. Rainier in August, she wanted to join us. Our British friend, Paul Johnson, who now lives in Vancouver, Canada, also said he'd like to join us. A month or so before the climb, however, Paul (who used to live in San Diego) flaked out, deciding that he couldn't take more vacation time after just coming back from a holiday in the U.K. Just ten days before we were due to fly to Seattle we met Tommy Ramsden at Dad's, a pub/restaurant in Poway where we regularly eat and drink after Wednesday evening climbing with Los Alpinistas. This particular Wednesday, however, Nancy, Patsy and I had been practicing prussiking so we only met the group for dinner. Tuck Russel introduced us to Tommy, who'd just arrived that morning from Sheffield, England, for a three week holiday in San Diego. When Tommy mentioned that he might fly to San Francisco, Patsy and I asked him if he'd like to join us instead, and fly to Seattle to climb Mt. Rainier, figuring that he'd make a great replacement for Paul. Tommy had never before hiked above 3,000'.

We sent in a permit reservation request, \$30 per person plus a \$20 fee for four nights at Camp Muir, beginning Monday 9th August.

We all flew Southwest airlines. At San Diego they forbade my taking the empty (and aired out for one week) fuel containers because they had once, "been in contact with gasoline".

Fortunately, Stefan lives close to the airport and he was able to swing by to pick up the empty fuel bottles. Otherwise we'd presumably have had to throw, or give, them away. Michael

Moore, in "Fahrenheit 911", noted that butane gas lighters were permissible on the airlines, but he failed to document that completely empty fuel containers were not. This is a prime example of FAA, bureaucratic stupidity. We flew into Seattle at 10 pm Saturday night, picked up our Budget rental car and squeezed the gear and all four of us in for the hour-long drive to Snoqualmie, where Hugh Gundry (a Chofu Viking) had kindly invited us to spend the night at his house. Saturday morning, Hugh took us to see the Falls and we ate breakfast before heading to REI's flagship store in Seattle. We purchased two 30 oz. MSR fuel containers and a gallon of "white gasoline" along with some other personal items (I bought a new fleece to replace my treasured "unabomber" fleece) before driving south to "Paradise", Mt. Rainier. We spent the night at Cougar Rock Campground, at 3,180 ft. elevation, sorting gear and drinking beers.

Monday morning we finished packing our gear and arrived at the Paradise ranger station just before the 10 am deadline to claim our climbing permit. It had snowed on the mountain the previous Friday but the weather forecast for this week was all good. We began the long slog up the asphalt path from Paradise and thence onto the Muir snowfield. Suffering somewhat under the heavy burden of our packs we finally arrived at Camp Muir and set up shelter in the gully just east of the ridge. Since the public shelter was closed for renovation this gully was a small encampment of tents, looking like the base camp for an expedition, which, effectively, is what it was. Parties of two to four climbers were setting up tents all over the gully. I'd neglected to bring my snow shovel, figuring that we'd be camping on dirt. We did have to camp on snow and, fortunately, there were many other parties who had brought snow shovels, so there was no problem borrowing a shovel. All four of us crowded into our 3 ~ 4 man tent, snug as bugs.

That night, as we lay in our sleeping bags, we were kept from sleeping for quite a while by the intermittent roar of rock fall. We couldn't always tell where this was coming from. Some of it may have been Nancy's snoring, or Tommy's farting, but at 1 or 2 am we watched the headlamps of an RMI group freeze, and then run across the Cowlitz Glacier.

The next morning the rangers and RMI guides were very blaze about the rock fall. "It happens all the time", they said. "But not usually from over there", they added, pointing in the vague direction of the path to Cathedral Gap. Uh, okay, I guess. We spent the morning practicing self-arrest, belaying and walking as a rope team. Most of the afternoon was occupied by melting snow, enough for two quarts for each of us except Nancy, who carried a gallon. We ate an early dinner and got everything, including a Thermos full of coffee, ready for summit day. We lay down for bed around 5 pm, Tommy sleeping outside the tent.

We actually managed to catch at least a couple of hours' sleep before the alarm clock went off at 11 pm. We shuffled around, numbly, in the cold and dark of the night. Patsy awoke with a bad headache and said she wasn't sure she could do the climb. After taking half a tablet of aspirin + codeine she felt much better and had no further problems. We drank coffee, ate granola bars, visited the toilets, roped up and set off at 12.15 am. One party of two had set off before us, but most parties had headed over to Ingraham Flat the previous afternoon. I didn't want to camp there because you have to carry *everything* off the mountain. Blue bags vs. toilets. Blue bags vs. toilets. No contest. We had already scoped out the path across the Cowlitz glacier the day before, and crossed this uneventfully. The giant was still asleep and the sky was full of stars, i.e., there were no clouds. We roped up. Me in front, then Tommy, Nancy, and Patsy in the rear. We threaded our way up and over Cathedral

Gap and gazed down at the Ingraham Flat camp. Somewhat to my surprise we arrived at, and passed through, Ingraham Flat before anyone there was ready to leave. At the base of Disappointment Cleaver we caught up with the party of two who had set off, ahead of us, from Camp Muir. They were intimidated by the transition from the glacier to the Cleaver, and offered me the lead. It did look intimidating. I couldn't see very far, even with a Halogen headlamp, but there was an obvious drop-off to the right, unscalable cliffs to the left and what appeared to be a snow bridge across a void straight ahead. We weren't going to stand there and wait for an RMI group to show us the way so Tommy put me on belay and over the bridge I went. Everyone followed. "That was a good lead", a member of the other party said. We were in good spirits as we threaded our way up the Cleaver. It was laborious, however, and we were soon overtaken by a fast RMI group of three. "You should be traversing a few feet lower", said the guide, and then added, "I've only climbed this route a few hundred times". It was a first for me and, in the dark, it was never exactly obvious which way to go. The Cleaver reminded me of desert rock. It was a scree slope punctuated with rocky ledges. Down below we could now see what looked like a luminous centipede. There were dozens of headlamps moving across the Cowlitz Glacier many hundreds of feet below us.

"Wait up. Just a little bit slower." Nancy was getting tired and requested that we slow the pace. We caught up with the fast RMI group at the top of the Cleaver and stopped for a long break. Above us towered the snowy/icy summit cone. It was still pitch dark, as the moon was very feeble. Only 2,000 ft. to go. We set off again, switch-backing up the snow. The crampon points bit into the icy crust, providing secure footing on the narrow path. The path was now clear again, marked with wands and trodden by hundreds of feet. My headlamp died just as it became light enough to see. The rope tugged. "Just a little bit slower". We started to be passed by faster parties. I was secretly glad to slow the pace. "Umm, just a little bit slower". Soon we were doing an impression of pallbearers. Step, step, rest. Step, rest, step, rest. I was ever so glad to see the crater rim. We crossed the crater and unroped on the far (summit) side. We each huffed and puffed up to the true summit at our own pace. I was so focused on reaching the summit that I missed "Register Rock" and never did sign the register. It sure felt good to be on the summit. Expansive views. No more climbing uphill. Life was good. We lay down to rest and enjoy the ambiance. On the summit I barely managed to eat a granola bar, as I felt slightly nauseous. Tommy reported that he felt very nauseous. I tried to talk Nancy, Patsy and Tommy into joining me on a traverse of the crater rim. I thought at least Tommy would join me, but next time I looked round they were all heading back the way we had come. Alone, then, I began to pick my way along the west rim of the crater. It wasn't so difficult, mostly on gravel. What snow there was, however, was rock-hard and I was glad of my crampons. I fell once, dropping onto one knee, on some rock. Inside the crater rim were the entrances to the "fern caves", entries to the icy cave system that wove a subterranean path beneath the summit ice. Outside the crater rim was the massive expanse of glaciers dropping away from the summit in every direction. Enormous blue crevasses split the glaciers. I reached the others on the far side of the crater rim and we rested some more before starting down. Many parties, both private and RMI, were now ensconced within the crater rim. Soon enough it was time to rope up again. We chose to maintain the same rope order on the descent as on the ascent. The snow was by now noticeably soft and mushy as we began to descend. The rope tugged. "Umm, just a little bit slower". Not again. I was in a hurry to descend now, before the snow

softened any more. It wasn't to be. Directly above the Cleaver we reached a junction. Three paths led away from this point and some argument ensued as to which to follow. I chose the lower right path. A short while later we reached a snow bridge over a crevasse. I didn't like the look of this bridge and opted to climb directly upwards to reach the higher path. We belayed up this steep section and across the upper section of the crevasse. The path then led across a snow bridge spanning the largest crevasse on the route. Fortunately, this was an enormous bridge. Shortly thereafter we reached the top of Disappointment Cleaver where we met up with "The Whistlers", a party of three men who whistled when they exhaled. We couldn't figure this out and we should have asked, but we didn't. The Whistlers asked Patsy if she spoke any Japanese because there was a sole Japanese climber they were trying to dissuade from continuing up the glacier. Patsy managed to strike up a conversation with him. He did have a solo climbing permit and appeared quite competent. The snow was turning into mush, however, and none of us would have wanted to venture onto the glacier unroped. We think Patsy persuaded him to camp at the top of the Cleaver, but we weren't sure and he didn't follow us down. On the other hand he had a tent. He should have camped there and started up early the following morning.

Meanwhile, we unroped and began to descend the Cleaver. Tommy and I took off our crampons, whereas Patsy and Nancy kept theirs on. After about 20 feet, however, Patsy and Nancy had to remove their crampons also. Tommy bounded off down the Cleaver like a mountain goat. I followed not far behind, but then felt obliged to stop and wait after a few hundred feet for Patsy and Nancy to catch up. Tommy reached the bottom of the Cleaver and tied in to The Whistler's rope to cross the Ingraham and Cowlitz glaciers. I stopped and waited, every few hundred feet, for Patsy and Nancy to catch up. The descent was painfully slow. At the bottom of the Cleaver we roped up again. Nancy suggested that here, below the unstable cliff wasn't a good place to stop, but I pointed out that one could at least see the rocks should any come down. The crevasses, on the other hand, could be hidden. We tied in and scuttled away as fast as we could. Below Ingraham Flat we had to regain the lower slopes of Cathedral Rock. These had clearly been pelted by rock fall and I was anxious to cross the area as fast as possible. The rope tugged. "Umm, just a little bit slower". The pace was torturously slow, but the giant slumbered still. It wasn't until we had reached camp that we saw a section of the wall collapse above the path. Tommy, who had reached camp about an hour earlier and was lying in the tent, told us that he had had a close shave with two large rocks that came down. We were lucky to have such good weather, although we were prepared to stay at Camp Muir for one extra day if we had to postpone our climb. As it was, we used this extra day's food to spend one more night at Camp Muir before descending the mountain.

I had carried a compass, Thommen altimeter, GPS with the approximate route pre-entered and both Patsy and I carried tri-band (6m, 2m, 70cm) Amateur Radio transceivers. We didn't have to use any of this equipment. I had a Black Diamond dual light-source headlamp, that provided both an LED and a voltage-regulated halogen light. The powerful, halogen light was really helpful in picking out the route, but it died without any warning. The LED uses a separate Lithium battery. I carried an extra set of six AA batteries (and four more for the digital camera), but didn't need them. We were all very tired and lay down for a while. The warmth of the sun had left our tent sitting atop a 5" platform of snow. Tommy leveled this platform off, and built up the perimeter while I set some water boiling to make dinner. After dinner, I again lay down inside the tent and suggested we postpone eating desert until breakfast. Tommy

was by now quite chipper, however, and offered to make desert in exchange for a joke from each of us. Not one of the three of us could come up with a joke, but we ate desert nonetheless. We slept that night like four logs, unshamedly exhausted.

Thursday morning we awoke at 7.30 or so and set to work melting snow and eating breakfast. The snow around the tent was like an ice rink. We slipped and skidded around, packing up our gear. Nancy polled everyone she could find as to whether or not to wear crampons on the way down. Tommy and I had told her not to, but she decided to wear them anyway, for about a hundred feet. Tommy and I had already taken off down the Muir snowfield before Patsy managed to persuade Nancy to glissade, instead of walk down. We glissaded, but only in discontinuous sections, joined by flatter areas through which we had to walk. Tommy and I waited on a rock, for Patsy and Nancy, just after the path changed from snow to gravel. Another climber came by and told us that they weren't far behind. We spotted them. Patsy's red parka and Nancy's yellow helmet were clearly visible, even from a distance. We watched curiously as Patsy walked to the top of the last, steep snow slope. This was a snow slope that Tommy and I had walked down. Patsy sat down, however. "No way, she's going to do it". All of a sudden she pushed off from the top of the slope, accelerated downhill and shrieked from the joy of it. When they'd caught up with us we asked her why she glissaded there. Another climber had just hiked back up the slope so he could repeat that glissade. He had told Patsy, "You just climbed Rainier; you can do this". So she did, and she had a blast.

Back at the Paradise parking lot we signed out from the climb with Asha, the climbing Ranger babe who'd climbed Liberty Ridge. Asha recommended that we eat lunch at the Paradise Inn. This was an excellent lunch and so I highly recommend eating here. We spent some time at the visitor center before heading down the road, leaving the Park, and joining the Chofu reunion. We had just left one adventure to start another.

Speed

Neither Nancy nor Tommy had ever done any mixed (rock, snow, ice) mountaineering before. For this reason Patsy and I decided that we should be at the ends of the rope team. I led because I've got the most experience. Tommy took to mountaineering like a duck takes to water. Nancy was the weakest member of the team. This is not meant as a slight, as it's inevitable that someone will be the weakest member of the team. I'd have felt a lot more comfortable, however, if we'd been able to get down faster. As it was, both the ascent and descent took 8 hours.

Dehydration

I only drank .5 of a liter of water on the actual summit climb. I felt okay that day and the next, but on Thursday night, even after drinking a couple of beers and a few glasses of Whisky at the Chofu reunion, I couldn't sleep. On Friday morning I felt terrible. I drank a strong cup of coffee and I felt even worse. I waved Nancy, Patsy, Tommy and Paul goodbye as they set off on another hike. I stayed at the lodge and set about rehydrating. I think I drank two gallons of juice and water before I perked up. In retrospect we should have taken more soup, hot chocolate and Gookinaid. I find it really difficult to drink large quantities of water. Beer yes, water no.

Fuel

We carried two full 30 oz fuel bottles to Camp Muir and used about 45 oz. fuel, mostly to melt snow. We had provisioned three ("serves two") freeze-dried meals for the four of us for each night, along with soup and a desert. This was a barely adequate amount of food. We could have used more soup, coffee, and hot chocolate. Southwest Airlines at San Diego refused to allow the completely empty fuel bottles on the plane.

At Seattle airport they didn't even ask, but I'd already left them with a friend.

RMI

This climb, which we undertook in 3 = days, Rainier Mountaineering Inc. (RMI) normally does in 2 grueling days, for \$775 per client. On the first day they climb to Camp Muir, on the second day they waken around midnight, climb to the summit and back to the hut, pack up their gear and descend the mountain. RMI schedules climbs to increase their profitability rather than to increase their clients' chances of success. There is only so much space in the RMI hut at Muir Camp and this schedule allows maximum turnover. RMI also appears to encourage their clients to rent plastic boots (for an extra \$30). We passed many guided groups in which the guides were wearing Tevas and their clients were wearing plastic boots. The RMI guides who've led the most clients to the summit get the pick of the crop. They go around the room, asking the clients what kind of shape they're in and what their conditioning regimen has included, but their only real screening is to see how fast the clients make the ascent to Camp Muir. They appear to take the weaker clients further up to camp on Ingraham Flat for a head start to the summit. Our climb was made much more enjoyable by following our own, more relaxed schedule. Had we followed the RMI schedule we'd likely have suffered much worse nausea and headaches. Besides, we didn't just want to climb the mountain. We wanted to savor the experience. RMI does a great job marking the trail. There's no way we'd have been able to proceed above the Cleaver in the dark without their trail to follow. It's doubtful whether we'd even be able to proceed across Ingraham Flat in the dark without the RMI trail.

• *Richard Hughes*

Clouds Rest

My Favorite Things Route, 510-

September 12, 2004

I have driven the Tioga Road about a million times over the years. Always visible to the south has been Clouds Rest and its enormous granite north face. It seemed likely that there must be climbing on this face but its low angle slabby look and complicated approach probably meant that any routes were either non-existent, obscure, or hard to get to. This meant that if I was ever to get to the summit of Clouds Rest I would have to hike the trail. After all these years I always had something better to do when I was in the Tuolumne.

Out of the blue Jim Curl sent me a link to a route description on the internet that described a route on Clouds Rest and asked me if I was interested. It was smack in the middle of all that granite and would take a determined effort to get to the route start. Furthermore, it was fifteen pitches long, all of them 200 feet long. If this route were to be climbed it was going to have to be done quickly! We made plans for an attempt on Sunday, September 12, 2004.

At 5:30 AM Jim and I headed out on the Clouds Rest trail from Sunrise on the Tioga Road. After approximately 1 mile or about 20 minutes we headed west cross country through the trees. In a short period of time we broke out of the trees and were on the huge slabs that mark the end of Tenaya Canyon as it approaches Lake Tenaya. There is water coming down the far left or south end of these slabs. This was the last water that was easy to get to that was in this part of Tenaya Canyon. The slabs end in a brushy forested area. This is not very dense and is traversed easily. Coming out of this brushy area put us on the slabs

forming the north face of Clouds Rest. We traversed these slabs fairly high above another smallish bench of grass and brush below us. We kept this up until we had to start angling down. This essentially dropped us right at the start of the route. These slabs are pretty easy, however, the last 100 yards or so are fourth class and a little disconcerting. The route starts at a small ledge with brush on it and is marked with a super duck and, unfortunately, some trash. It was now about 9:10 AM and we were climbing by about 9:30 AM.

We blasted this route off in 7 hours including a half hour stop for lunch. That is about 26 minutes per pitch. The lower pitches are mostly slab climbing and the top pitches are a lot of lay-backing on vertical dihedrals. None of the pitches are particularly sustained. On the other hand, there isn't a lot of places for pro on this route either. Some pitches are enormously run out. There is one 5.5 pitch, five 5.7 pitches, four 5.8 pitches, four 5.9 pitches, and one 5.10- pitch, probably about 10a. The ratings are a little soft with the exception of the 10a pitch which is about right in there.

Some notes on the pitches. Pitch 1 is the easiest, about 5.5. Jim lead this out without any pro and I couldn't tell if there was any on it I was moving so fast. The topo indicates a dihedral is there and maybe there is pro there but I don't remember it. Pitches 2 through 6 are mostly slabs and sparse pro. Pitch 5 has a bolt (I think) that is not indicated on the topo. Pitch 7 has a weird section with a nice crack for pro and maybe some stemming between the crack and the face next to it. Pitch 8 requires going past a small water pool to a block and then climbing a 5.9 crack. It is more like a 5.8 move through a bunch of shrubbery. At the end of this it is indicated to move the belay. It doesn't say how far. It is about 35 to 40 feet. Pitch 11 that starts above the brushy knoll is the crux pitch. This requires undercling liebacking around an arch and the crux move is a fingertip layback move to finish this off. The fixed pin is missing but it isn't needed. After that it is a cruise to the top up to the last move which requires some stemming or some gorilla work to get up a corner to the belay.

Above this it is third class for about 1200 feet to the summit ridge on Clouds Rest and a short stroll to the top. We left the summit at 6 PM and headed down the trail to Sunrise arriving a little after 9 PM. Total trip time was about 15 hours 30 minutes.

This is a very nice route in a spectacular location and is highly recommended for solid 5.9 climbers with enough experience to deal with the lack of pro and typical Tuolumne run out. The views and continuous fun, clean, climbing are hard to beat.

Final Notes:

A 60 meter rope system is mandatory. The suggested gear list is a little conservative. We would not double up on the smallest (black) alien or triple the mid sizes but go with a single black alien, double sizes up to red alien, two .75 camalots, and single #1, #2, #3 camalot. There are bomber double bolt belay anchors at the end of every pitch. Rappelling can be done all the way down, however, only the bottom five pitches have rappelling style bolts. The other belay bolts had rap slings but some of them looked pretty tatty. A double rope system would be needed for this and some more rap (poot) slings.

References:

The only reference is the following URL. This link has a very good topo.

<http://www.mindspring.com/~thharper/>

• Rick Booth

North Palisade, Polemonium Peak

September 2-5, 2004

On the morning of Thu. Sep. 2, after a restful night at Deadman's Summit, Bob Suzuki (leader) and I (co-leader) met Ron Karpel and Bob Evans for breakfast at Jack's Restaurant in Bishop, then joined up with Kirsten and Stephane Mouradian at the South Lake trailhead. We hiked out about 9:45, enjoying the cool breezy weather as we hiked past the numerous beautiful lakes on the way up to Bishop Pass at 12,000'. Our goals for the trip were North Palisade (14,242'), and Polemonium Peak (14,080+').

Instead of leaving the trail right at the pass, Bob Evans suggested that we hike down the other side for about 1/2 mile before heading cross-country to the southeast. This route seemed pretty optimal, as we found a series of grassy benches and easy slabs, avoiding the up-and-down of the higher route. But there's no avoiding the boulders going up to Thunderbolt Pass (12,400'), where we finally arrived at 4 p.m. There's a small campsite about 20 minutes below the pass at some tiny tarns near 12,000', but Bob S. wanted to try to find water closer to the LeConte gully, our climbing route for both peaks.

After wandering around on the boulders below North Pal, we decided that there's no water to be found there except maybe early in the season, and we ended up descending to the largest Barrett Lake at 11,500', where we finally arrived at 5:30 p.m. The lake is 500' lower than the tarns, but on the plus side, it's a beautiful place to camp, with spectacular views both of the west face of the Palisades and westward over the lake, as well as a clean sandy beach and sandy bottom for swimming. But swimming was not on the agenda this night -- after supper, the temperature quickly fell below freezing and a stiff breeze came up. For most of us, it took all of our clothes inside our sleeping bags to stay warm, and water bottles left outside froze nearly solid.

Nevertheless, on Friday morning, we were up in the dark at 5:30 and on the move at 6:40. We headed straight up the large talus slide toward the base of North Pal -- a mistake, because when the angle eases off at the top of the slide, the boulders increase to car and even RV size, making for strenuous going. Much better to do what we did the following morning -- circle a bit to the southeast, climb up alongside a long, low cliff, and then continue up an easy scree slope. In any case, we reached the bottom of the LeConte gully and headed up it, feeling cold in the deep shade despite our upward exertions. Finally at 9 a.m., we found a patch of sun near the start of the catwalk ledge and took a welcome break. Above that, we passed the first chockstone via a class-3 slot just to the left, and the second one via a hard class-3 move just to its right, or if you prefer, an easier ramp about 40' to the right.

About 10 a.m. we found a ledge leading left out of the gully marked by several large cairns. The Clyde variation? Nope, but I didn't figure that out until studying Secor's guidebook back at home. We climbed what Secor calls the Moore variation, a ledge about 500 lateral feet or 240 vertical feet below the U-notch. The Clyde variation is only about 130 lateral feet (according to Secor) or about 50 vertical feet (according to Steve Eckert) below the notch.

In any case, the Moore variation is great -- one exposed class-3 move takes you up to a long ledge with plenty of room for several people to put on harnesses and rope up. From there, a

gently rising class-4 traverse takes you leftward around an arete and into the next gully. One nice feature is that the roped section takes just under half of a 60-meter rope, so if you have a number of people in the climbing party, the second can tie into the middle of the rope, do the pitch, and then the next person and each succeeding person can pull the rope back and tie into the middle again (the leader can't throw the rope back to the next climber because it's sideways around a corner).

Once in the gully, I was a bit surprised to see the 50' wide summit mass of North Pal a few hundred feet above us at the top of the class-3 gully. That was it?? Since I still thought we were on the Clyde variation, I was expecting the complex weaving around described in the trip reports, as we worked our way up to the summit ridge. But all we had to do was climb the gully, pass two large chockstones via strenuous moves on the right, climb up into the low-angle bowl below the summit mass, and then do the summit. If you go the right way, it's class-3 all the way with no need for a rope.

The key is not to head for the low point on the summit ridge 100' or more right of the apparent summit, which leads to airy class-4, but instead head for the large blocks about 30' right of the summit. Here you negotiate a series of four deep slots at right angles to the ridge, chimneying out of the first one, then going to the east end of the second one and doing a class-3 step-around move into the third one, with some big air and the Palisade Glacier below you. From there, you can either climb over a fin, or walk around the west end of the third slot into the fourth and last slot. Standing in the bottom of it, the summit platform is about 6' above your head, and the key to this move is to squirm upward and get your left foot up onto a large foothold next to your left ear. Some shorter members of the party had trouble with this contortion, so we quickly set up a daisy chain of slings to provide a couple of artificial hand- and footholds.

We arrived at the summit right at noon as white stuff began falling from the sky. Seed pods? After all, it was supposed to be about 100 degrees down in the Central Valley today. Nope -- snow, and plenty more coming, by the look of the endless bank of dark clouds to the east and south. We signed in and quickly departed, descending the class-3 gully to our rope-up point. A rappel back into the first gully looked like it would be a very long one, possibly longer than our 60-meter ropes, so Bob led the class-4 pitch downward in a steady snowfall, placing plenty of pro since the holds were now snow-covered.

Once everyone was across, we coiled our ropes and headed down the first gully, taking a much-needed break halfway down about 4 p.m. as the snow finally began to let up. From there, we downclimbed the chockstones, regrouped on the large ledge at the bottom of the LeConte gully, and then descended the scree chute that heads slightly to the southeast of Barrett Lake, finally arriving back at our camp at 5:45. When the sun dipped below the ridge to the west about 6:30, the temperature again plummeted, and most of us were in our bags before 7:30.

On Saturday morning, we had a brief discussion about whether to bail out and go home, or re-climb the entire LeConte gully in order to attempt Polemonium. Most of the team was gung-ho to try it. Bob S. had injured his ankle while descending the previous afternoon and had hobbled into camp, but after taping it, he said that he would at least start up the hill with us. 'If you start out with us, you won't turn back,' said Bob E., and Bob S. of course proved him right.

So we headed up the scree slope and once again up into the cold and shadowy LeConte gully. As on Friday, we took a break at the first sunny spot about 9 a.m., near the area of wall-to-wall

slabs about 1/3 of the way up. After that, it became noticeably warmer and less windy than the day before -- back to summer conditions instead of the premature blast of fall. We passed the Moore variation about 10:30 -- the 500' or so from there to the U-notch are especially loose and ugly, so care is required with a group.

At the notch, we roped up and Bob S. led the first pitch -- 100' of 4th class or easy 5th up and slightly right. From there, a wide class 2-3 ledge leads right about 60' right to a notch in the southwest ridge. The ledge is like a blocky, uneven sidewalk with one 6' section missing, and since it's pretty airy, we belayed across the missing section. After the usual delay belaying everyone up the first two pitches, Bob S. led the third and hardest pitch -- up around the arete and out of sight for about 100' of 5.6. Big-time exposure and lots of rope drag here. I followed and belayed the rest of the team up, and we were all on top by 2:15. The last 50' or so to the summit is class-3, and the summit area is nice and spacious. The nearby 14,000' summits of North Pal, Starlight, Thunderbolt, and Sill were spectacular, with the dusting of fresh snow giving them a forbidding alpine quality.

For the descent, we did a double-rope rappel for about 150', all the way down to the sidewalk ledge. For those carrying only one rope, there's an intermediate rap station on a large platform about halfway down. Below this platform is an overhang with a short section of free-hanging rappel, which not everyone on the team liked.

Down on the sidewalk ledge, Bob clambered out to the west end of the ledge (exposed class-3) and set up the last rap, about 100' straight down to the top of the U-notch. By 4:20, everyone was safely down on the rubble and very happy to have climbed this small but challenging 14'er. Most of us had left our packs at the notch, so we had a long-delayed snack break, and as usual, we looked on in envy as Kirsten and Stephane made tuna sandwiches with those new vacuum-packed envelopes of tuna and packets of mayonnaise (they were nice enough to share).

To descend the gully, three of us went down each side and stayed closely bunched, and we had no close calls with rockfall. By 5:30 we were at the bottom of the gully, and by 6:15 we were washing up at our camp in the waning rays of the sun. From Barrett Lake, Polemonium is an insignificant little dome, dwarfed by the soaring battlements of North Pal and Sill, but it's still an interesting and challenging climb. In any case, it's a named 14'er, so it must be climbed. Doing North Pal and Polemonium on successive days as we did was not very efficient, but climbing them both on the same day would be a real challenge for a group, though it should be no problem for a fast-moving team of two or three.

After supper, we retreated to our bags for another clear, frosty night with thousands of stars and the wide swath of the Milky Way wheeling overhead. We had little trouble falling asleep. On Sunday, we labored up the hill to Thunderbolt Pass, across the boulders and slabs to Bishop Pass, and then out on the trail. We gathered for a late- afternoon lunch at the Whiskey Creek Restaurant in Bishop, then enjoyed the drive up the Owens Valley and across Yosemite in the late afternoon light.

Mallory and Irvine

Disappear in the Mist.

A flight of Fancy.

September 18/19, 2004

On Saturday morning, led by Scott Kreider and Arun Mahajan, four explorers (Linda Sun, Fi Verplanke, Steve Curry and Dmitry Nechayev) set out to find Mallory and Irvine, initially identified by Norman Clyde and had been reportedly found by several other explorers since then but mountaineering being such a personal thing, we had decided that we had to find them for ourselves.

We flew up the Meysan Lakes trail with Dmitry leading the way and by mid-afternoon were at this jewel of the Sierra desperately searching for a shielded spot to camp as the wind was blowing hard and the temperatures were falling. After building meagre wind breaks and setting up camp, some of us went to scout the route.

The traverse past the lakes to the base of the two snow tongues on the horrible looking scree field, we called the First Step, the chute between them, the Second Step and the plateau above, the Third Step. We hoped to climb to the Third Step in the morrow and to get to Mallory and Irvine for, the Third Step was the place from where they could reportedly be seen. At camp, we mulled on these difficulties over some Kendall Mint Cake.

Would that the mountains yield their secrets so easily! It got progressively colder in the night and there was snowfall and the water in the bottles froze overnight. Regardless, we were up early and moving at about 6 am on Sunday. We walked to the First Step and then Dmitry led the way through the dangerously loose chute, the Second Step. The clouds flirted with the weak willed sun which refused to shine. Once in a while a snow flake would flutter down.

Besides this energy sapping cold, some team members began to feel the effects of the altitude. Meanwhile Dmitry and I had proceeded to just a hundred feet or so before the Third Step. As we waited there, the rest of the party came up. As some of the clouds lifted, we saw a summit to our right and separated by a saddle, another. Mallory and Irvine? we wondered. But the altitude problem had still to loosen its vice grip on one of the team members. As leaders, we were faced with a difficult decision. To go or to not. It appeared that Mallory and Irvine were partly visible and tantalizingly close. The cold, the bad visibility due to the low clouds and the altitude sickness, which was the last straw, made up our minds. We decided to call off the climb. Mallory and Irvine would have to remain a mystery till the next time. We still had the chute to descend to get back to the First Step and had to guide the team member back. Everybody in the team was remarkably understanding of this decision.

I suspect that Mallory and Irvine are still there somewhere, just past the Third Step, hidden by the clouds. We think that we even saw them. It hurt to turn back, especially after having done ninety percent of the work but Scott swore to go through the whole permit process, the fees and the bureaucracy once again next year and to renew his search.

OK, so I was taking some trip-report-writer's license with this.

That wasn't Kendall Mint Cake that had been passed around. It was Lindt Chocolate, not quite the same cachet.

• 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.

Montara Mountain

Date: November 6, 2004
Peak: Montara Mountain
Contact: Aaron Schuman, 650-968-9184,
climberaaron@comcast.net

We'll hike from the seashore north of Half Moon Bay, through McNee State Park, clipping the corner of San Pedro County Park, to the edge of the San Francisco Water Department Peninsula Watershed, up trails and fire roads to the 1898 foot north peak of Montara Mountain. If we are lucky enough to have a day without fog, we will see everything from Mount Tam to Mount Diablo. 9 miles round trip, 1900 foot elevation gain.

Trip participants may contact the trip leader in advance, but are welcome even if they just show up unannounced but on time at the carpool site or at the trailhead.

Meet at **7:00 a.m.** at carpool site #6, the Page Mill Park-n-Ride. Exit I-280 in Los Altos Hills at Page Mill Road west bound. The lot is right next to the freeway.

Some trip participants will find it more convenient to meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the trailhead at Martini Creek, the south entrance to McNee State Park. Follow the directions at <http://climber.org/DrivingDirections/MontaraMtnSF.html>

Details about McNee State Park, with a botanical perspective and some logistical tips, are at <http://plants.montara.com/mrsp.html>

Aconcagua 22,800 Argentina

Date: December 28, 2004
Peak: Aconcagua
Contact: Warren Storkman, dstorkman@aol.com

A difficult walk-up to the highest peak in South America sumptuous views, we'll hike out. Must be comfortable hiking cross-country.

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Rock Climbing Classifications

The following trip classifications are to assist you in choosing trips for which you are qualified. No simple rating system can anticipate all possible conditions.

- Class 1: Walking on a trail.
- Class 2: Walking cross-country, using hands for balance.
- Class 3: Requires use of hands for climbing, rope may be used.
- Class 4: Requires rope belays.
- Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 11/28/2004. 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