



October 2004

Peak Climbing Section, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Vol. 38 No. 10

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

Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 12
Time: 7:30 PM
Where: PCC
Program: Backcountry Skiing in the Sierra Nevada by Bob Akka

Bob Akka has been enjoying backcountry skiing and mountaineering in the High Sierra wilderness since the early 1980s. He currently hosts a website about Sierra ski tours, and occasionally leads multi-day ski treks.

Bob will be talking about what backcountry skiing is all about, and how summertime mountaineers can get into it.

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 10/31/2004 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Trip Planning Meeting

PCS Trip Planning Meeting is scheduled for 6 PM, October 12 just before the regularly scheduled meeting at the PCC. Please bring your planned trips and schedule them to work with other trips.

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.

Mt Stewart and Lion Rock

Peaks: Mt. Stewart (12,200', class 2) & Lion Rock (12,360', class 3)
Dates: Oct. 8 – Oct. 11 (Fri. - Mon.)
Maps: Lodgepole 7.5 & Triple Divide 7.5
Leaders: Charles Schafer c_g_schafer@yahoo.com (408) 354-1545
Bob Evans robtwevans@msn.com (408) 998-2857

Please contact Bob.

Friday we'll hike from Crescent Meadow along the High Sierra Trail. Saturday we'll finish the hike to a lake just beyond Kaweah Gap, and climb Mt. Stewart. Sunday we'll climb Lion Rock, then start the hike back out. Monday we'll finish the hike out and drive back home.

The High Sierra Trail has an amazing view of the Great Western Divide. The area around Valhalla, Hamilton Lakes, and Kaweah Gap is especially scenic. The view of the Kaweahs from Kaweah Gap is astounding. In other words, you'll get pretty good views on this trip, as well as a couple of pretty good peaks. Come on along.

Tower Peak

Date: Oct 2 - 4, 2004
Peak: Tower Peak (11,755)
Difficulty: class 3
Maps: Tower Peak 7.5
Leaders: Dee Booth rdbooth@att.net, Linda Sun LINDASUN@sbcglobal.net or 408-378-7533

We will climb Tower Peak by the northwest face route which is described in the "Sierra Classics" guidebook. Its distinctive summit rises above the northern boundary of Yosemite National Park and rewards the climber willing to make the roughly 13 mile hike in with reputedly some of the best class 3 climbing in the Sierra.

Starting at Leavitt Meadows we'll hike to Tower Lake and make camp. On Sunday we will make our summit attempt and on Monday, hike out. You must have experience on class 3 rock and be in good shape.

Whorl Mountain

Date: Oct 16 - 17, 2004
Peak: Whorl Mountain(12,029)
Difficulty: class 3
Maps: Eastern Sierra
Leaders: Pat Gallery, haishan1@yahoo.com, (650) 255-8169

We planned this in November last year and got snowed out, so this time we'll try a couple weeks earlier. We'll hike, light & fast,

over Horse Creek Pass on Saturday to position ourselves for a climb of the infamous "chockstone" route on Sunday. Return home on Sunday. Participants must be comfortable with exposure on Class 3 rock. Requires liability waiver.

First Aid Classes

Wilderness First Aid (Palo Alto)

Dates: October 16 - November 21 (not Oct 30/31)
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.

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

USGS To Close

For years the retail map operation at the United States Geological Survey in Menlo Park has been an invaluable resource to hikers, climbers, and other outdoors people. It is the only place in the Bay Area that you can reliably find 7 1/2 minute topographic maps of any quadrangle in the state, as well as maps of other areas. It is a joy to be able to browse among the maps there and find what you need.

Now the USGS may quietly shut down the retail operation in Menlo Park, perhaps as early as October. Another option we've heard of is that they may replace it with self-service kiosks that will provide REI-style computer printouts. Experience with these printouts has shown that they are inferior to regular USGS maps in almost every way - they're dark and low-resolution, are heavier, use a non-standard scale, take a while to print, and once you hold the actual map in your hand, you may no longer have the option of not buying it.

It would be a great loss to the climbing community if the USGS closes down its retail operation. And it would be a loss to USGS as well; the map room is their main connection to the local community; if it goes, public access to the USGS will be limited to a perhaps once-a-year open house. The closest USGS office that will sell maps is in Denver.

Limited retail operations would be better than none at all.

If you believe that the USGS should keep open its retail map sales in Menlo Park, it may help to express your opinion to these individuals in a letter, email, or phone call:

Dr Charles G. Groat, Director
U.S. Geological Survey, M.S. 119

National Center
Reston, VA 20192

Congresswoman Anna Eshoo
<http://www.eshoo.house.gov/>
her local office:
698 Emerson Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301
650-323-2984
FAX 650-323-3498

• Roy Lambertson

Michael Minaret

Michael Minaret, Eichorn's Chute Variation

July 10, 2004

One of the things I love about the drive back from the eastern Sierra is the dramatic view one gets of the Ritter Range near Mammoth. Those dark jagged pinnacles have an alpine quality that seems more reminiscent of the Aiguilles of Chamonix than of the gentle Sierra. On closer inspection, The Minarets take on a blacker, more sinister appearance. Climbers know that the range has a reputation for loose rock. The truth of the matter is, the rock quality is wonderful. The dark metamorphic stone that one finds there is bulletproof; it really couldn't be any harder. Admittedly, those very solid rocks aren't always connected that well to one another. But loose or not, Michael Minaret had been calling to me for some time. And so despite doctor's orders to stay off an ailing foot, I hobbled off one weekend to climb it with my friend Bob.

The standard route up Michael is rated class 4. Bob figured we'd just solo it and I had entertained similar thoughts. Last year, when I read about a group planning to head in to place a memorial plaque and search for Starr's grave, I'd had the mischievous idea of day hiking and soloing the climb in order to plant some beef bones or maybe a glow-in-the-dark plastic skull up there. You know, just as a little joke. I never got around to it.

It was kind of windy when we awoke at our camp up above Lake Ediza, but we figured there was no rush in getting started in the morning. After all, how long could it possibly take us to polish off a class 4 route? Even with our less than alpine start, we planned to climb Dyer Minaret the same afternoon and still be back in time for cocktails. We hiked up through The Gap, mostly on rock, but also across some gentle snow slopes. Then we traversed through the jumble of talus and snow on the west side to reach the base of Michael by midmorning.

"Look Bob, snow in all the chutes. How about that?" And had we brought crampons?? Well... no. Not too smart I suppose. But the face to the left of Eichorn's Chute looked just fine, maybe better than dealing with that big ugly chockstone lodged in the chute itself. We scrambled up a little ways, then broke out the rope for a few pitches of class 4/5. The rock was actually pretty good, considering. This took us to the top of a vague buttress, and from there we hiked easy loose junk up the left side of the chute all the way to its top.

The route description indicated a traverse on the right side of two towers to reach The Portal, but it wasn't at all obvious to us. I pointed to what looked like might be a big cairn on a ledge. Bob dismissed it as a pile of rubble and instead suggested a small notch in the rib below that. Since we'd left our ice axes at the base, I stabbed my nut tool and edged my approach shoes into the hard snow while Bob belayed. After crossing the

couloir I placed a piece and headed down towards the notch. The rope ran out and I was forced to stop, dig some mud out of a crack to get a good nut placement, and set up a belay.

Bob prepared to follow. "Is that a good hex over there?", he asked. Figuring we'd be mostly soloing, I had decided not to bring any camming devices on this trip. At home I had pulled out my old copy of "Learning to Rock Climb" (by Michael Loughman) and paged through it until I'd found his example of a typical lead rack, circa 1981: "ten stoppers and five hexes". I left the biggest hex behind, packed one 8.5x50 rope and smiled at how light it all felt. Now that I was here fiddling with stoppers in parallel cracks and wondering how I'd ever dreamed that I could day hike this peak without a rope, my smile was less apparent. I looked up at Bob. "The hex??", I repeated blankly, unable to conjure up even a hazy image of the placement I'd so recently made. "Yeah, it's good!"

Now Bob's a solid mountaineer, so when he stepped onto the hard snow without brandishing his nut tool, I just figured it was because he's so well balanced. And when he raised his knee high like a drum major and took a big unlikely looking step, I had to chuckle at how he makes this sort of stuff look so darn easy. Shoot, I was still busy pulling in the slack, trying to catch up with him and there he was hotdogging across the steep snow. So I was more than a little surprised when his legs shot out from under him and he abruptly began zipping down the couloir like a runaway toboggan. I hauled in another foot or so, locked off, and waited to see if that hex would hold. The rope came taut after Bob had gone about thirty feet, stopping him above some rocks. Note to self: Practice self-rescue techniques when you get home.

Bob climbed up to the notch and reported that it was a dead end. So he down led and then tension traversed back across the snow; I followed in like manner. This put us back where we'd started but with quite a bit of lost time. I led out and headed for the ledge with the rubble pile, pulled onto the ledge and... "Hey! It's The Plaque!" The memorial party from the previous year had bolted a forty pound bronze plaque onto the rock. For some reason I was expecting to see it when we got to The Portal, but there it was in front of me. There was also a small plastic box, fastened with four metal screws. We hadn't thought to bring a phillips head screwdriver with us, but as luck would have it there was one already sitting there next to the box. Opening it, we found a small register book. And being peak baggers we instinctively signed it.

Michael's Chute divides into two gullies up there and Bob headed off, third classing down into the first gully, then placing pro up another rib and over into the other gully. From there we scrambled easily up to The Portal, a very cool place to be. I headed out left on a weird class 4 traverse over ledges. Bob then led a mid class 5 pitch that tended up and right. A final pitch over mostly easier terrain brought us, with a tiny bit of simulclimbing, to the sunny summit.

It was 4pm. We'd gone past our turn around time and now we were wondering if we were going to pay for it. But of course we had time to hunt for the register. It was placed by Vern Clevinger in the late 80s and had a dozen or so entries including both Peter Croft and Josh Swartz (the most recent entry at two years ago). I wondered if some parties fail to find this box. There was a fairly new looking rappel sling up there that certainly had not been placed Josh.

A little downclimbing and two rappels brought us to the top of The Portal. We decided to retrace familiar ground rather than descend over the multiple chockstones in Michael's Chute. So I belayed Bob on a short pitch around a corner onto a rib. After

another rap, we revisited Plaque Ledge, down climbed and rapped again, belayed across the snow in Eichorn's Chute, and then trudged down the junk to the top of the face/buttress we'd climbed earlier. I was all set to rappel that way, leaving gear if necessary, but ever prescient Bob insisted on looking around the corner towards Starr's Chute. His report: "One short rappel, then class 3." I didn't believe him, but it turned out to be true.

We were back at the base at 7pm. Dyer would have to wait. Much to Bob's disgust, I insisted on returning via Ritter Pass as I wanted to avoid snow or tricky terrain as the light faded, even though it meant hiking farther and ascending a bunch of really loose scree. Bob followed, sulking I think. He wanted to go over an unnamed gap in the ridge. We arrived back in camp just before it got dark.

I have to admit that we underestimated Michael. Route finding slowed us down a bunch and our chockcraft was inefficient. A few TCUs would have been really nice to have, but if I'd known that we'd be climbing 8 pitches (10 counting the dead end) I'd have racked differently. We were also concerned about the rock, but it actually wasn't that bad. There was a lot of shattered junk laying about, but the steeper sections were generally pretty good. In fact, as time goes by the rock seems better and better in my memory. Yes, it was a very nice climb, and the rock was amazingly good.

....Did I mention the part where Bob knocked down a fusillade of boulders?

• *Jim Curl*

Charlotte Dome

South Face Route (5.7/8)

July 3-5, 2004

The South Face Route on Charlotte Dome is one of those climbs listed in Steck and Ropers "50 Classic Climbs", or as some call it, "50 Crowded Climbs". This route, however, is an alpine route and as a consequence it was hoped that the difficulty in getting to Charlotte Dome would make this objective less popular than others for a long July 4th weekend.

At about 11 AM Saturday morning, July 3rd, Dan Clawson and I headed up from the Roads End trailhead in Kings Canyon to the Bubbs Creek Trail. In about four hours we had covered the seven miles to the junction of Bubbs Creek and Charlotte Creek. During this time the sky went from partially cloudy to completely clouded over. Worse, thunder was rolling in from somewhere.

The so called trail up Charlotte Creek is really only a faint use trail used by Charlotte Dome climbers and cross country nuts traversing from Charlotte Lake to/from Bubbs Creek. The start is absolutely unrecognizable. In any case, Dan and I headed up on the right side of Charlotte Creek where it meets the Bubbs Creek trail and within a few hundred feet Dan spotted a duck on the left side of the creek and we headed for that, using a couple of logs to cross the creek. This more or less identifies the trail and we followed the ducks and trail uphill to about the 8200 foot level and found the bivy sites which are there. There is a pretty good site for two and one site near a tree and one or possibly two down a few feet below the tree on a rock ledge. This took another hour and it was now raining. This was accompanied by thunder and a couple of solid lightning strikes.

We strung Dan's dilapidated space blanket between a couple of trees and set up for dinner underneath the makeshift tarp. Dan and I sat under the tarp and fired up the stove. While listening

to the raindrops bip on the tarp the conversation went something like this:

Rick: "You know we just have the single 60 M rope."

Dan: "Uh, yeah?"

Rick: "Well, rappelling off this thing will be a drag if we get nailed with this weather on the route."

Dan: silence (a rare event in Dan's case)

Rick: "The only way I know to predict the weather for tomorrow is to say it will be the same as today. This means rain at 4 PM which means we had better be at least past the no-pro friction pitch when this stuff rolls in again."

Dan: "Uh, the ranger I talked to today on the trail thinks it will start earlier tomorrow since it will be even warmer in the central valley."

Rick: "That's nice....(slight editorial paraphrasing here)."

Dan: "We should get an early start."

Rick: "Uh, ok, how about 3:45 and be hiking by 5 AM using headlamps for the first half hour or so?"

Dan: "Lets call it a quarter to four. It doesn't sound so painful then."

Rick: "We may have to ride out a storm by hanging off a belay for a couple of hours if we are up too high, ya know..."

Dan: "Too far to rappel and may as well go up. Scary. What if the rain doesn't stop?"

Rick: "We are in a bad situation (more editorial paraphrasing here)."

Dan: "Scary. And cold."

Rick: "Yep, if we go, we will have to keep going to the top, one way or the other. Agreed?"

Dan (resignedly): "Agreed."

Dan and I looked at each other. It might be "agreed" but neither of us liked it. At about 6 PM the rain stopped. This meant we might have to ride out about two hours of rain on the route. I was depressed.

The wind blew gently through the bivy site all night which kept the few mosquitoes at bay. At 3:45 AM Dan and I were up and by 4:55 AM we were heading up hill towards Charlotte Dome. We were at the base of the route by 6 AM. The sky was crystal clear.

The South Face Route has about as many variations for a route as any I have seen. The start for this route is described in Secor's Sierra guide book, Crofts guide book, Moynier and Fiddlers guide book, and in the SuperTopo High Sierra guide book. They sort of agree on the start except for Secor who puts it considerably further to the right. What a pain. We decided to go with the SuperTopo description.

Dan and I soloed the first 5.6 pitch, roped up at the tree belay anchor at the end of this pitch, and blasted off for the next three pitches. This put us on a small ledge system which was about 25 feet long. As expected, details from the SuperTopo description were not encountered, such as a 5.5 chimney, so essentially we had no real idea where we were. However, we were on a reasonable ledge so we assumed we were close.

All this time Dan and I were carefully eyeballing the sky. It was about 8:30 AM now and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. This was a good sign and we decided to go for it. Below us a team of three was preparing for either the South Face Route or Charlotte's Web. Dan and I looked at each other and marveled at the hubris of these guys. Didn't they read any weather

reports? And why were they starting so late? We kept looking for "the dudes" the remainder of the day.

The SuperTopo description warned against heading straight up from the right end of the ledge, that is, if you are on the right ledge, and the next pitch was supposed to be a short cruise up a 5.7 layback flake followed by a stepover to a ledge/stance. Being good boys we avoided heading straight up from the right end of the ledge and started up about 15 feet to the left. This went up a mixture of several cracks including an upward sweeping right curving crack. I was about 100 feet out now on a supposed 90 foot pitch and none of the details of this pitch were evident. I headed right from the upward sweeping right curving crack for a corner which was sporting a couple of pieces of fixed pro. The face move to get into the corner was about 9+/10-. The corner was easier but somewhat sustained. This was followed by a bunch of mixed no pro face climbing and mantles and intermittent cracks. This ended when I found a decent place to set a belay and bring up Dan. This pitch was about 160+ feet. From this belay Dan headed up and dog legged around an overhanging block and set up a belay in the crack on the right side of the block. We were now just below the so called 12 inch white/pink dike. Up across the dike was a crack shooting straight up. It was full of lichen and looked like it had never been climbed. I headed up this crack and it went for about 150 feet and ended below what I assumed was the "no pro" face. At this point we had done three pitches from the SuperTopo description in only two pitches.

The weather was holding and it was still bright and sunny. The few clouds that were forming didn't look too enthusiastic about raining on anything. From the stance Dan headed up the "no pro" face. This was accompanied by non stop muttering, occasional down climbing, and slow upward progress. Eventually Dan salamandered his way up to a vertical running crack good enough to hold decent pro. This was a long way to the right of the so called furrows pitch area of the rock. I headed up the cracks above the stance and worked left over to the furrows section of the route. Dan had to simulclimb a few feet in order for me to reach a decent belay spot just below the alcove. At this point I think we were finally on route, or at least, we were on somebody's version of the route! The last two pitches were uneventful and we finally unroped within 50 feet of the summit at 4 PM. Below us it was another story. "The dudes" were heading for an epic. The leader of the pitch below the "no pro" face made a tactical error and bypassed the belay stance and headed up the "no pro" face. No pro, no belay anchor in sight, huge rope drag, and lousy communication with the belayer required a simulclimb. I don't know if they ever got it. The hollering and cursing was non stop.

Sitting out of the wind and eating lunch I looked at Dan and pointed at the sky. Some clouds here and there but none of the massive blanketing storm clouds from the previous day.

"We're sittin' in butter!", I said.

"I would rather be lucky than good.", Dan replied.

High fives all around and we headed over to the summit, signed the register, and headed down. The hike down was brutal. Once clear of the slabs protecting the east flank of Charlotte Dome there was no clear way down hill towards the belay site. We didn't want to have to go all the way back around to the route we took up hill, which would have been difficult to do in the first place, so attempted to find a way down to the supposed use trail near Charlotte Creek. It was a manzanita and brush thrash. Maybe there is a use trail in there but I don't know. At 7 PM we finally arrived in camp. The descent took 2.5 hours. Unpleasant.

Monday morning Dan and I packed up and headed home. On the way out we were able to follow the ducks all the way to the Bubbs Creek Trail. This intersects the Bubbs Creek trail about 100 to 200 feet before Charlotte Creek. We took it upon ourselves to reconstruct a couple of dilapidated ducks and built a duck next to the Bubbs Creek Trail marking the start of the Charlotte Creek Trail. The hike out took about four hours including the duck engineering projects.

The nice ranger at the backcountry office asked us to fill out a climbers evaluation form on the way out. She informed us that it had rained every day in the afternoon for the last week and one half.

Final Notes:

Approach.

There are two ways of getting to Charlotte Dome. One is to go over Kearsarge Pass and head down to Charlotte Lake and continue down the use trail. This supposedly requires about a mile of bushwhacking to get to the bivy site. Dan and I went in from Roads End in Kings Canyon. This requires about seven miles of hiking and about 2200 feet of elevation gain to get to the junction with Charlotte Creek. About four hours. The trail starts about 100 to 200 feet before the point where Charlotte Creek crosses the Bubbs Creek Trail. There is a small trickle that comes out onto the trail just about at the point where the trail starts. Dan and I built a duck on the left side about 10 feet off the trail. This point is at the end of a big "fern forest". There are a lot of "fern forests" on the Bubbs Creek Trail so don't get too excited when you get to the first one. Or the third one. The trail winds its way up hill from this point. The bivy sites are about a mile and 1000 feet in elevation up from the Bubs Creek Trail and takes about one hour to get there. This is at approximately 8200 feet in elevation. Water is available from Charlotte Creek below the bivy site. The SuperTopo suggestion is to camp at the junction of the Bubbs Creek Trail and Charlotte Creek. This is a dank mosquito infested area and makes a singularly unpleasant camping area. Go uphill. It is a little loose but it is worth it to gain the extra elevation and chop another hour off the start and end of the climbing day.

Route.

The hike to the start of the route goes pretty much straight up from the bivy site. It may require shifting to the right to get to a slaby section and then moving left to the base of the route. As for the start of the route itself, use your preferred route description. I am not sure where the real route is. It is easy to get lost up there. Be prepared for route finding problems. Be prepared to climb harder than the route rating. We used a single 60M 10mm rope. I would recommend using a 60M rope whether or not it is single or double. There is a lot of junk left behind on the first four pitches indicating lots of people have bailed off from there. Above this there is nothing. There are no fixed belay stations. Rappelling off from high on this route would be difficult even in the best of conditions. We used a double set of aliens from the smallest to the largest, a set of stoppers, and one #.75, #2, #3, and #3.5 camalot. The #3.5 is questionable, mostly because every time I went looking for it, it was back at the belay where Dan was sitting on it, but we used the rest of the aliens and camalots.

Descent.

The descent is brutal. We did not find any recognizable trail down to the use trail from the east flank of Charlotte Dome. Manzanita and brush.

References:

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

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

Fifty Classic Climbs of North America, Steve Roper and Allen Steck, Sierra Club Books, 1979, ISBN 87156-262-6.

The Good, the Great, and the Awesome, Peter Croft, Maximus Press, 2002, ISBN 0-9676116-4-4

High Sierra Climbing: California's Best High Country Climbs, Chris MacNamara, Supertopos, www.supertopos.com, ISBN 0-9672391-8-4

• Rick Booth

Middle Palisade

July 2/3, 2004

Led by Tom McDonnell and Nile Sorenson, our group of five climbed Middle Palisade from Finger Lake via the standard 3rd class route up the NE glacier and chutes on Friday July 2nd.

From our camp at the outlet of Finger Lake, we ascended the slopes on the west side of the lake to benches and talus above, then stayed mostly on moraine (rather than snow) to the moraine that divides the Middle Palisade glacier into its NW and SE halves. We climbed this moraine to a spot about 100' (vertical) from its top where we moved left onto snow (axes for protection, and kicking steps in the semi-soft snow under the mid-morning sun) for the final portion of the glacier where we easily stepped off the snow at the base of the ramp leading up and right. Those who climb later in the year find that a substantial bergschrund has opened here.

Follow the ramp about 100' into a 3rd class chute. At the "top" of this chute, many reports and guides speak of "traversing" or "entering" the next chute to the right; this is misleading. The chute you are in will indeed merge with the chute to its right, but from the climber's viewpoint you just proceed UP. Do not cross any of the steep blocky fins that divide the chutes, and forget about identifying specific white (or any other color) rocky patches, as they are all over the place. Anyway, at the point where the chutes merge, there is a prominent tower on the climber's right; use this as a landmark for your descent. A few hundred feet below the top, the chute that you are now in does in fact divide; I was struck by the similar appearance of the two choices (both are wide, shallow, 3rd class), and going left (as most guides describe) is correct. This leads directly to the summit area. Our group unfortunately was still trying to find the "traverse right" spot, so we went right, and then crossed right ***again***, following some misleading ducks, leaving us ***two*** chutes to the right of the correct route. We managed to gain the summit ridge in this chute nevertheless, and then enjoyed much tricky routefinding and marginal 4th-class moves to correct our errors, directly along the summit ridge.

We survived all of this and made the summit under partly cloudy skies. Cumulus was building toward a potential afternoon thunderstorm, as had happened the day before as we set up camp at Finger Lake. We spent about 30 minutes on top eating lunch, taking photos, and enjoying the views. Our descent was via the "correct" route, and we enjoyed four nice glissades on various portions of the glacier, speeding our return to camp. The threatening storm did not materialize, at least locally.

This area is known as one of the most mosquito-infested in the entire Sierra. Finger Lake was not too bad, but woe be unto

those that camp at Brainard (or below) anytime soon. There were no bugs at all above Finger.

We had originally intended to attempt Disappointment Peak on Saturday the 3rd, but Tom wrenched his knee while descending the moraine, so after discussing various options while back in camp, we decided the better part of valor was to hike out Saturday instead and save Disappointment for another day. Thanks everyone for a great trip.

• Gary Craig

Cottonwood Pass Peaks

August 23-30, 2004

Muah Mt. 11,016
Mt. Guyot 12,300
Mt. Chamberlin 13,169
Mt. Pickering 13,485

The Cottonwood Pass trailhead is a good place to acclimatize since it is almost at 10,000'. Richard Stover and I spent two nights sleeping in the back of our truck at the trailhead; if you prefer, there are free walk in campsites with communal bear lockers.

We warmed up by climbing Muah Mountain as a day hike. Round trip is about 10 miles and is a fun hike through lovely open forest of foxtail and lodgepole pines. We made a loop by leaving the PCT at Mulkey Pass and descending due south to the valley around Mulkey Creek, then hiking east, crossing the PCT to Muah. We returned on the PCT.

We climbed two false summits despite warnings in previous trip reports. We should have realized that the third class stacks were not the high points of this second class peak, but it was too much fun. From the top there are grand views of Olancha to the south, Kern Peak to the southwest, and Langley to the north. During the hike we saw a golden eagle, a Northern Harrier, a red-tailed hawk and four young mallards as well as other more common birds.

The next day we backpacked about 14 miles to Rock Creek. Our objective was Mt. Guyot, a wonderful peak perched on the edge of the Kern River Canyon. In the morning we moved camp to a hidden spot on the Guyot Creek drainage and set off to climb Mt. Guyot after lunch.

From the top we could see much of the route of our 9-day backpack last year when we hiked cross country through the Chagoopa Plateau and over Kaweah Pass to the Kaweah Basin and eventually into Kern Canyon. We also spotted smoke from a lightning-set forest fire burning near Rattlesnake Creek. Guyot is an easy, fun peak with a million dollar view. It too, has multiple summits and yes, I climbed several. I knew the true summit was furthest south; but it was hard to tell if you were at the end of the ridge.

The plan for the next day was to climb to the lake at the head of Perrin Creek so as to be well situated to climb the four surrounding peaks. This late August however, we discovered that the lake was not draining, and the upper reaches of Perrin Creek below the lake were dry. Not sure of the condition of the lake above, we traipsed around the lateral moraines between the Perrin Creek and Guyot Creek drainages until we found suitable water on the upper part of Guyot Creek only a mile above our previous campsite! It was great fun. By then it was noon, so we contented ourselves with climbing Chamberlin from the south.

Had we started earlier, we might have had time to traverse the ridge to Mt. Newcomb. Newcomb will have to wait.

Chamberlin's great summit plateau had a great many flat boulders with concave depressions full of water. Here we found a deflated balloon as on every other backpack and observed freshly cut Hulsea leaves drying in the sun for a pica's winter stores. The summit register cylinder was empty. At dusk, as we approached camp, we startled a gray fox. That night we were awakened by a chorus of coyotes.

It was natural history the next day. We rested and explored a lovely pond we had spotted from Chamberlin. The pond housed hundreds of pacific tree frogs colored from bright green to yellow to shades of brown, some as small as my pinkie nail. Every once in a while a Clark's nutcracker would swoop down for a frog snack, taking the morsel back up to a tree branch to consume.

The next day we moved camp to a hidden bench above Rock Creek across from the bowl containing Erin Lake. We were positioned to climb Pickering having noted that the west slope looked icky from the top of Chamberlin.

Pickering's southeast ridge route is a satisfying puzzle. There are hidden ramps to find and cliffs to avoid as you thread your way up. Another register missing-not even a can. I climbed several highpoints searching for the register. Then surprised my daughters by calling them from the summit. We weren't even tempted to traverse the ridge to Joe Devel. It would have taken us much too long.

We hiked out the next day, making a loop by returning via New Army Pass, then cutting south to the Cottonwood trailhead. The trail has been rerouted from that shown on my 1988 provisional topo. In all, a fun week: Four peaks, great views and interesting wildlife.

• Debbie Bulger

Incredible Hulk

Positive Vibrations 5.11

June 11-13, 2004

The west face of the Incredible Hulk is an amazing piece of stone – outside of the Valley, nothing I've seen in the Sierra comes close for sustained technical climbing. Several corner and face crack systems run from bottom to top, starting steep and not letting up for 8 full pitches. The white granite is also the cleanest I've come across in the backcountry.

After that introduction, you might think that a technical climber could have some fun on the Hulk. You'd be thinking right. I climbed Positive Vibrations with Andy Magness a few weeks ago, and I only hope I will be lucky enough to climb another alpine rock route that is even close to as good as this one.

The topo and written description for this route in Peter Croft's book "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome" make route finding easy. Don't even bother bringing the topo in Moynier's "Climbing California's High Sierra," as it's

hard to follow, rates a few of the pitches incorrectly, and is vague on where to start the route. The only detail I would add to Croft's topo: the thin cracks above the bolt on the 6th (crux) pitch are off route, as Secor and Moynier mention in their descriptions.

I guess there are several variations for the start, but the one in Croft's book is the most direct. Start by climbing the thin steep cracks on the left side of a huge, roughly triangular slab. There is a 5.11+ crack variation with a bolted anchor just to the right of this start - you'll know you're starting in the right place if you see some dark slings hanging at the end of this difficult-looking crack.

After that, follow cracks up for eight pitches, roughly following the arete dividing the west and north faces. Only one pitch is short (pitch 3), and we guessed the average pitch length to be about 150 feet. All of it is sustained technical terrain, with a few short and well-protected 5.11 sections. Few moves on the route are easier than 5.9 - we brought a lot of gear and used most of it. One great thing about this climb is there are no wide sections - one 3.5 Camelot is the biggest you'll need.

The route has rappel anchors from the 5th pitch down to the ground (brand-new cold shuts - weird to see in the backcountry). I think there probably are rappel anchors all the way up to the summit ridge, but at the 5th pitch the rappel route veers off from the climbing route so we couldn't see them. If I did the route again, I'd bring 2 ropes and descend by rappelling from the top of the ridge, assuming I could find the first rap station.

We tried the Southeast Arete on Outguard Spire the next day, but bailed after 2 pitches - the rock quality was poor and the route hard to follow. Probably about average for the routes listed in Moynier's book, but disappointing compared to the Hulk.

Additional details on Positive Vibrations are located at Supertopo.com, but you have to purchase the High Sierra e-book to get them, so I don't know if they add anything to Croft's description. But as I mentioned, this is the only guide you really need for this exceptional route.

PITCH-BY-PITCH DESCRIPTION

We followed Croft's belay position recommendations and they worked well. All pitch lengths are approximate.

1 - Thin and hand cracks up and slightly right, sandbag 5.9+. (170 feet)

2 - Very fun, short 5.10 finger crack leads to easier climbing. (140 feet)

3 - Easy crack in corner leads up to first 5.11 section - traversing straight right to gain a left-facing corner. The 5.11-move involves trying to find a decent foot edge on an otherwise blank slab. The short corner above the traverse is also difficult. (100 feet)

4 - The chimney pitch. Awesome bridging with hand-sized pro will get you through this one. Intimidating, but not as hard as it looks at 5.10-. (180 feet)

5 - Work your way up and left through discontinuous cracks, to a two-bolt anchor on the crest of the arete. This is the only section where pro is a bit sparse at times. The pitch ends with a very fun handcrack that goes on for quite a ways. Give the camera to the leader before this pitch because a photo of the follower jamming the crack up to the anchor is great. (5.9+, 160 feet)

6 - Crux pitch. Steep corner right off the anchor takes very thin gear, solid 5.10+. More sustained 5.10 climbing around a roof and straight up a finger crack to a single-bolt anchor. If you still have enough gear and motivation, now pull the 5.11 crux by traversing about 7 feet left from the bolt, then moving up to the crest of the arete. We broke this pitch in 2 by belaying at the

bolt. The crux is thin, vertical face climbing, protected by small Aliens and HB offset nuts in discontinuous cracks. (160 feet if done in one pitch)

7 - Awesome straight-in finger and hand crack on the crest of the arete, 5.10-. After a 10-foot traverse right, the pitch ends with a flaring, steep finger crack, 5.10+. (170 feet)

8 - Maybe the best pitch on the route, if you still can enjoy it after so much sustained climbing. Very secure 5.9 handcrack in right-facing corner leads up to a small roof, then more hands to a point about 15 feet below the crest of the arete. Traverse right, then straight up a great 5.10- finger and hand crack to the crest of the ridge. (190 feet)

• *Craig Clarence*

Short Joke

A priest, a minister, a rabbi, a duck, a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, two blondes, three penguins and a box of hammers walk into a bar. The bartender says "what is this, a joke?".

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.

Matterhorn Day Hike

Date: Oct 10, 2004
Peak: Matterhorn
Difficulty: class 2
Maps: Northern Sierra Nevada
Leaders: Amit Bedajna: 650 996 7653
 abedajn@yahoo.com

Secor describes this as a Class 2 scramble (Southeast Slope from Horse Creek Pass). We'll do this as a dayhike. Should be a about 10-12 miles round trip. We'll drive up to Bridgeport on Oct 9 night, on Oct 10 Sunday climb and drive back to Bay Area.

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

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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 10/31/2004. 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