



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

General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, January 11
Time: 7:30 PM
Where: Peninsula Conservation Center
3921 E Bayshore Rd
Palo Alto, CA
(see below for directions)

Program: *Trekking and Climbing in the Peruvian Andes*
A slide show by Kelly Maas

Experience the drama of high snow covered peaks. Find out what vicuna and vizcacha are. See Siula Grande, where "Touching the Void" took place. See six PCSers gasping for air! Decide if you would rather spend three weeks on Denali, or take 54 hours (hotel-to-hotel) to climb a similar elevation in the Andes. This trekking and climbing took place in the Cordillera Huayhuash and Cordillera Blanca in Peru.

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.



A New Mountaineering Committee!

For my term as Chair, I would like to announce the PCS will have a new Mountaineering Committee (MC), and they are:

Dee Booth, Chair

Chris Prendergast

Rick Booth

Scott Kreider

I want to thank the outgoing MC Chair, Aaron Schuman, and MC members, Linda Sun, Charles Schafer and Stephane Mouradian, for their contributions this last year.

A New Webmaster!

The new PCS webmaster will be Rick Booth. Rick takes over from Roger Dettloff and I would like to thank Roger for doing a great job maintaining and updating the PCS web page for the past two years.

A New Editor!

After serving the PCS as Scree editor admirably for the past seven years, Bob Bynum is moving on to perform the role of the PCS Treasurer this new year. Debbie Benham will be the new Scree editor.

Welcome everybody and I am looking forward to working with you while PCS Chair. Please note: I am continuing to look for a PCS Publicity Committee Chair. If you are interested, let me know!

-- Arun Mahajan

PCS Trips

PCS trips must be submitted through the Scheduler (see back cover for details).

Junipero Serra Peak

Date: Sunday, January 9, 2005
Peak: Junipero Serra (5862 ft, Class 1)
Map: Junipero Serra 7.5'

Leader(s):

Ron Karpel: (h) 650-594-0211

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[This is a joint trip between the PCS and DHS (Dayhiking Section)]

This is an enjoyable and mildly strenuous tramp to the top of this peak, the Monterey County high point, by the Santa Lucia Peak trail that goes all the way to the top. It is 6 miles and 3900 ft gain, one way. There may be snow at the top. Wear appropriate footwear; bring warm, layered clothing and wind layers besides food and water and other day hiking stuff. Carpool: Meet at the Cottle and Hwy 85 Park 'n Ride, ready to go at 7am. We will caravan from there to get the Adventure Pass permit, then on to the trailhead. NOTE: There is a need to have an Adventure Pass, \$5 per car, to park at the trailhead. 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 Hwy 101. Turn right at the exit. You are on El Camino. Keep driving until 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.

Wilderness First Aid Classes

These are great classes for learning and practicing wilderness first aid skills in an outdoor setting. In addition to a half day of outdoor scenarios practice of first aid and leadership skills, there is a focus on wilderness first aid topics, such as: 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 certificate is available upon successful completion of this course and passing a written wilderness exam. There are pre-class reading assignments. For further information on Foster Calm, go to www.fostercalm.com, or contact Bobbie Foster, 530-265-0997.

Dates and Places: January 22-23, 2005 – Palo Alto
January 29-30, 2005 – San Francisco

Climbing and Trekking: Everest Region of Nepal

Island Peak (6165m/20,550ft)

Kala Patthar (5550m/18,490ft)

Part 2 of 2

This was a trip organized by Warren Storkman who has been climbing peaks all over the world and has climbed and organized treks in Nepal for several years. In Nepal, we used the services of Mountain Experience (www.mountainexperience.info) run by Tamding and Chhuldim Sherpa.

Our support staff in the climb were: Sirdar and climbing guide: Shyam Pun, assistant sherpa: Tenzing, cook: Lakhpa Sherpa, cook boys: Lakhpa Sherpa, Norbu, Ganesh and Ashok and Sherpanis: Lakhpa Dolma and Lakhpa, to herd the five sterling Zopkios, the cross between a yak and a cow. There were several Lakhpas but we were never confused.

Climbers/trekkers from the west: Warren Storkman, David Meinhardt, Arun Mahajan and Ron Karpel (Calif, US), Azfar, Jennie and Stewart McNeill (the UK)

14th October 04: BC to HC, 5682m/18,920ft: Sky looked bad. Surprisingly, I was feeling very good. After breakfast, we headed up the talus fields following a trail. It began to snow. Slowly at first but then picking up to be a full fledged storm. We stopped at some flattened platforms. It took the porters a little while to come up to us in the snow and we sat around, huddling inside our Gore-Texs. Finally a single porter and cook came up. The rest had remained at BC. They set up the cook tent. This would serve as cook tent, dinner tent as well as a tent for sleeping for Shyam, cook Lakhpa and the porter, Norbu. Lakhpa ran off (rightward, when looking down) to find water. Apparently there is a trickle someplace. But otherwise, this is an unfriendly place. There were tent platforms at various places nearby. The porters and Shyam, with some help from Ron and I, set up 2 more tents. One for Ron and I and the other for Stewart. As we waited in our tents for dinner, we were hailed by the arrival of two more people who would be joining our party, Azfar, who lives in London and his guide, Lobsang. After introductions, Azfar was put in Stewart's tent. He and Jennie had walked from Lukla to Chukung in a much quicker time than us, so he had even lesser time to acclimate. Amazing! At dinner call, Ron decided to skip since he wasn't feeling too good. Azfar, Stewart and I enjoyed a hot meal of noodles and sherpa-stew (a kitchen sink of stuff like potatoes, vegetables, yak meat and whatever). Lobsang, who had summited Cho Oyo, twice (in this year alone!) was not feeling well at all and seemed to have caught a bug and decided that he would

go down to BC tomorrow and not go for the summit with us.

15th October 04: HC to summit and back to BC: Up at about 2am and after breakfast and gear check, moving at about 3.15am or so. Stewart decided to stay in the tent as he was really unwell, so it was Shyam our intrepid sherpa-guide, Ron, Azfar and me. Ron and I had put on crampons right away as there was snow on the talus. It was cold and I had light poly pro layers and then down on top and a heavy gore-tex jacket above it. The climbing was steep as we zig-zagged up into a gully as just as the sunlight was breaking out over Makalu, we topped out near a chorten adorned with prayer flags and onto the glacier. This was the top of what looked like an ice-fall but nicely covered over with deep snow. We all roped up. Ron on lead and then Azfar and me and Shyam with the rest of the rope, behind. It was a beautiful day.

Far ahead, we could see the large party of Germans who had overtaken us and further ahead, to the right, we saw the steep headwall that led to the long summit ridge of Island Peak. Lhotse was in the view, dominating everything as usual. The summit of Island Peak is at the end of a long long ridge. One may get to the ridge in multiple ways. For us, this time of the year, the smooth headwall presented the best option. It may have been 45-degrees or so, but it was all snowy. We followed a trail in the snow from the climbers before us and were soon at the base of the headwall which had a few fixed ropes from the various parties. A party of climbers guided by Mountain Experience from the day before had left their fixed rope for us so we put on our harnesses and clipped in our jumars into our fixed rope. The rope that we jumared into was a strange polyster type pool line. There was a 7mm climbing rope parallel to it but we did not jumar on that. There were three rope lengths (not sure if it was 60 or 50 meters each) and were attached to snow stakes driven deep into the snow. It felt exhilarating to climb this high angle slope. Momentarily anyway, my altitude sickness vanished. The route was well stepped out and the axe was sinking in nicely and the jumar was there to back us up, so it was not really difficult to climb. The biggest problem was the exertion at that altitude. However, this is a steep slope, so it should not be taken lightly, especially when it is icy. Ron and Shyam got to the ridge top probably twenty or thirty minutes before Azfar and I.

By the time I got to the top, Shyam had already fixed rope on the ridge, all the way to the summit. The summit was clearly visible from this point. A nice, narrow cone with a narrow beaten path leading to it via the narrow ridge falling away steeply on both the sides. A hand-line was not at all necessary here but Shyam was doing all he could to make it easy on us. While the summit was not far away now, it was a series of 3 bumps to get to, the second

one being the steepest, sort of like three Mt Shasta Misery Hills for those familiar with Mt Shasta. I started up, followed by Azfar and Shyam. Ron was already at the top by then and in another thirty minutes I reached the top, slowed down by exhaustion. I figured that it was 9.30am by then, six hours from high camp. The day was clear. The south wall of Lhotse soared almost 8000 feet higher from us, to the front and left, completely blocking out Everest. To the right-front (north, north-east) was the red tinted wall of Makalu (5th highest peak in the world) with snow blowing off the summit, dead right was the wall of Baruntse (7129m) and south of that, a beautiful ridge system culminating in the summit of Ama Dablam. Directly behind us was the barren plain leading to Chukung which was ringed by the summits of Kantaiga, Tamserku, Tawoche and Cholatse. In the distance, left of Lhotse, was the summit of Cho Oyo, 6th highest peak in the world. Shyam pointed out Mera Peak. It would be hard to top this view...certainly the best I have seen. We took photos and posed. It had been 30 mins at the top.

I started to feel dizzy and disoriented due to the altitude combined with the head cold and cough that had been bothering me for the past few days. So, we headed down. Back to the ridge and to the point where we had topped out on the fixed rope. I was feeling quite weird and disoriented by now and knew that I had to really focus on the down climb. We decided to rap off on the fixed lines. After a cautious rappell, especially at the junctions where one fixed rope ended and the other began, we all met at the bottom and roped up for the glacier traverse. I requested Ron to go slowly on the descent and after a little bit, we were at the point where we had to descend down the gully. We got off the ropes and the crampons came off as well. Ron stayed with me all the way down the descent to high camp, for which I was very grateful. It was hard to shake off the feeling of disorientation but I got better as we rested a little at high camp. Some one served up some hot tea. Felt like the best thing in the world! Then we all dragged ourselves down to base camp. It appeared to have grown more populated with more climbing parties. We hardly looked the part of returning heroes as we stumbled into our tents. It had been a 13 hour day at altitudes higher than 16k feet. Ron went to sleep right away and slept for 15 hrs and no amount of prompting from me would make him get up to see yet another stellar sunset. We learnt that Stewart had gone on to Chukung with Lobsang and Jennie hiked up from Chukung to meet Azfar at BC.

16th October 04: BC to Dingboche via Chukung: We hiked slowly to Chukung. It was another beautiful day but I was past caring. I just wanted to get down where the air was thicker. We lunched at Chukung where we met up with Stewart who was feeling a little better and he congratulated us on our success. We were all concerned about Lobsang and he decided to go, post haste, to his home in Khumjung and get himself checked out (he

would be OK). It was a jolly party, me, Ron, Shyam, Azfar, Jennie and the porters, that made its way after lunch to Dingboche. On the way, we saw a most amazing sight, a large avalanche took off on the west face of Amadablam. Ron and I were able to get a few photos off. At Dingboche, we also met Dave who had come back triumphantly after summiting on Kala Patthar.

17th October 04: Dingboche to Devoche via Pengboche: The next day, from Dingboche to Devoche, via Pangboche had its share of uphill climbing but there was more downhill. We lunched at Pangboche and spent some time at the old Gompa there. We had heard stories of a yeti scalp being present at the small Gompa in Dingboche but it was shut when we were there.

18th October 04: Devoche to Namche via Tengboche: Lunch at Sanasa. This time, Tengboche looked much better without the low clouds during our way in and we could see Everest as well as Lhotse and Ama Dablam. Then, we went directly to Namche, skirting Khumjung and camped near the Sherpa Museum. The museum is a great place to visit and we even saw the picture of one of the owners of Mountain Experience, Chhuldim Sherpa, in the museum as an Everest summitter (twice).

19th October 04: Namche to Lukla: Goodbye to the staff at Phakding. This was a long day. We were also tired and was to be the last hiking day of the trip. At Phakding, we all assembled and said goodbye to the group. This was the last we would see them all together. The porters and cook and the sherpanis had all been so nice and helpful. Ron, Dave and I took off down the trail for Lukla since we had a flight out next morning. Azfar, Stewart, Jennie and Shyam were to go out a day later so they remained for the night at Phakding. The walk seemed endless but eventually the three of us go to Lukla by evening. At the lodge in Lukla, Pawan and his wife served us a large meal and we were more than happy to pay Rs-200 for a shower, first in about 13 days!

20th Oct 04: Lukla to Ktm: The next day, we flew out. The flight out was even more exciting. Now the twin Otter follows the downward slope of the tiny airstrip which ends at the edge of a ravine. Lamenting Lamas! we are going to fall into the ravine...but just as it seems likely, the plane smoothly takes off into the skies and eventually the snowy peaks are lost from view. We went back to the Tibet Guest House in Thamel where we were greeted and congratulated by Warren and the staff. How sweet the thick milky chiya (tea) tastes in Kathmandu...especially after a great trek!

21st Oct 04: Stewart, Azfar and Jennie arrived in the morning and Tamding treated us all to some traditional

Nepali food at the Thamel restaurant as the final good bye.

22nd Oct 04: The Nepali staff at the guest house put scarves around our necks to wish us adieu. The proprietor gave us t-shirts as a parting gift and at the airport Tamding gave us another good-bye scarf and we were off.

While we were there, the only obvious sign of the Maoist insurgency was the presence of military at certain junctions and at the airport. Didn't seem to get in the way of our enjoyment of the mountains. I would happily go there again and perhaps the troubles are a bit overblown. Mountain Experience does a great job of running trips, their guides are some of the best and their support staff, helpful and always cheerful and having Warren, the great Babu, as our organiser, helped out in many ways and made it seem easy.

Thanks to all my friends here in California who gave me great advice about Nepal and the gear to take. Rick Booth lent me a book on Nepal, Dee Booth gave me detailed advice on the gear and on the trek and Dot Riley offered advice on the trekking peaks and routes in the Kumbhu region and on other treks to do while over there.

A big Namaste to all whom we met in Nepal. It is a wonderful country and the people are kind, friendly and generous. They have little but give so much and expect nothing in return. It has been great, or as they would say in Nepali, ramro chha!

References:

1. Lukla to Everest BC Map. Sherpa Maps. 1:50,000 scale. Bought at the well known Pilgrims Book House, Thamel, Kathmandu
2. Trekking peaks of Nepal, Bill O'Connor (borrowed from Rick Booth)
3. Trekking in the Everest Region, Jamie McGuinness, Trailblazer Publications
4. Trekking and Climbing in Nepal, Steve Razzetti, Stackpole Books
5. Trekking in Nepal, a traveler's guide, Stephen Bezruchka
6. Nepali Phrase Book, Pilgrims Book House publication.

- Arun Mahajan

Snow Mountain (East & West)

Date climbed: November 13, 2004

We so often focus on the big mountains of the Sierra Nevada that we tend to neglect other peaks accessible from the Bay area.

Every so often I look at a highway map and wonder about some of the peaks and wilderness areas that I've never been to. In some cases I don't even know of anyone else having been there. The small but real sense of adventure finally manifests itself during that in-between season after the snow starts falling, but before winter arrives in full force.



I was encouraged that several other people quickly expressed interest, despite the fact that it would be a day hike, not very close to home. I had originally envisioned a backpacking trip to properly see the wilderness area, but the trails to the summit are very day-hikable.

By shortly after 8:00 Saturday morning, eight of us had assembled at the easy-to-miss Deafy Glade trailhead. This is much lower than the Summit Spring trailhead, and by the looks of the trail, much less used. Look for a small trailhead sign off the right side of the road. It's less than a mile past the Dixie Glade campground – which is very well signed – on road M10 out of Stonyford. Dixie Glade is a small, quiet and convenient campground, and several of us stayed there Friday night.

It had showered Friday night, but the clouds parted sooner than forecast and we could tell as soon as we started hiking that we were in for a fine, if brisk, day. We soon forgot the morning chill as we entered the forest at 3,300 feet, first passing a fallen alder which had carpeted the trail with its green leaves, then dropping very gradually to a creek crossing. While most of us were preoccupied with trying to keep our boots dry while crossing, someone noticed on the far side that the orange color on the rocks wasn't lichen; it was thousands of ladybugs. The more we looked, the more we saw. They were on the rocks, coating the trunks of thin pine saplings, even clustering inside acorn cups! It was the largest grouping most of us had ever seen.

The trail then climbed steadily for the next 3.5 to 4 miles. This trail gets just enough use to remain visible, but it still has a couple of places where it's possible to get off-track. After 2.5 hours we intersected the Summit Spring trail on the south ridge at about 5,400 feet, probably not far from that trailhead. Here we passed through an area that burned during a large fire in 1987, but it wasn't long before we re-entered the forest and saw the last of the oaks and manzanita.

There was a large variety of trees, changing with altitude. The black oak leaves had some lovely galls: a beige sphere with red spots, and a raspberry-colored 'crown'. There were several different conifers, which provided a puffing pause while the naturalists debated long 3-needled vs. medium 5-needled pines. Ponderosa, sugar pines and Douglas fir, as well as spruce, were identified.

True to its name, there was some snow on the mountain from storms at the end of October, in a flattish bowl below the peaks. At less than a foot deep, it didn't seriously slow our pace. Initially looking for the trail forward, we noticed old footprints or snowshoe tracks and followed those. We skirted the east side of the west peak and ascended to the saddle. Looking up at the west peak, we were amazed to see a genuine cornice of snow on the ridge! The east peak appeared less snowy, so that's where we headed for lunch, arriving at 1:00. Views from the top are 360 degrees, except where it's blocked by the other summit. We'd expected crystal clear skies following the weather front, but we were disappointed that we had to squint to make out Shasta and Lassen through the haze. The Sutter Buttes, a peculiar group of peaks erupting from the east side of the Sacramento Valley, were much more visible. We debated whether or not the sizable peak to the south might be Mt. Diablo. As we settled in for lunch at the East Summit, a flock of birds swirled in like a gust of wind – gray-crowned rosy-finches! We didn't know they occurred in the Coast Ranges. Later on, some American Pipits arrived.

After a lazy lunch, we saddled up and trotted over to the west summit before descending. Even with my altimeter I couldn't tell which peak was higher, but the USGS says the east (7056') is higher than the west (7038'). Doug suggested we then traverse the ridge to the southeast then drop east to pick up the trail. This sounded like a good way to avoid the early season snow. It worked great and probably saved us a little time.

Again rosy-finches flew in and perched on tree tips. Among them we suddenly noticed blue color - a handful of Western Bluebirds.

From the West Summit, everyone took off like cows heading for the barn. We hiked at our own paces, but some people were clearly faster than others on the downhill. The last of us arrived at the cars just after 5:00, moments before we would have needed headlamps.

Chris treated us to homemade guava bread, and we decided to rendezvous in Williams for dinner. An hour and a half later we were ordering burritos at a small stand. They really hit the spot. Total driving time to the trailhead from the south bay, with no traffic-induced delays, is about 4 hours.

I found the hike very enjoyable and would recommend it for mid October to mid November, especially after a rain. The lower stretches would also be nice in the spring, but the upper mountain would probably be pretty snowy. In the summer it would be a scorcher, though the trail from Summit Spring to the top might be tolerable on a cool day.

Participants were: Doug Bardsley, Chris MacIntosh, John Wilkinson, Marina Keating, Lisa Barboza, Arun Mahajan, Dee Booth and Kelly Maas.

Another good write-up is found at the following link. However, their description of it as a half-day hike is rather optimistic.

http://www.summitpost.org/show/route_link.pl/route_id/1760/object_id/1958

By Kelly Maas with additions from Chris MacIntosh

Bear Creek Spire, NE Ridge, First Winter Ascent

Date Climbed: 01/01/03

By Doug Robinson [drobinson@movingoverstone.com]
This report was originally posted on climber.org and is reprinted with permission from the author. 'Summit Blue Flash' is a new addition by the author.

In January, 2003, Michael Thomas and I skied up from Little Lakes Valley and camped at Dade Lake. Leaving our skis at Peppermint Pass, we third-classed several hundred feet with ice axes, leading to one of those classic moments of tiptoeing into the harness, wishing we'd roped-up sooner. Nice Fourth Class led us to traverse onto the East Arete as early as possible, where we found some 5.6 (entertaining in duck-billed 3-pin boots) on the way to the summit, just at sunset. Our hurry off the summit block was interrupted by noticing the most strikingly intense, neon-like violet shadows just before the sun set. Quickly, descending the NW ridge, we were relieved to find relatively little postholing back to our skis.

Summit Blue Flash – Bear Creek Spire

The Blue Flash

I don't go in for painting word pictures of sunsets, not after Robbins got slapped for calling one "better than Mozart," which gave Kor the perfect opening to counter that "it wasn't even as good as Fats Domino." But this is what happened; can't help it.

Ten minutes before sunset and the light shifted in a way I've never noticed before. Dramatic enough that it kept distracting me from climbing up and down that superb white granite. Bear Creek Spire. Dead of winter. It reminded me of stories surfers tell of -- at rare times -- a green flash on the horizon just after the sun sinks. Feldspar crystals in the granite -- think Tuolumne, think any of the knob pitches on the SE buttress Cathedral Peak. Now push it up to 13,713' and tip the calendar on its ear. Three weeks after the winter solstice, and so clear that the Coast Range of California stands out sharply over tule-fog filling the San Joaquin Valley. But still climbing, and miles to go before even getting back on our skis, so focus back to 5.4 in ancient tele boots. Sun so low it's snapping shadows behind those knobs. And it's the color of those shadows -- liquid blue shadows -- that has me frozen in wonder. Probably should note that there's no recreational pharmacology involved; nothing for days, I'm guiding. But we have just tuned our senses up by a first winter ascent of Clyde's fine old NE ridge. And now -- drown me in tiny pools of that light. So strong it's translucent, like the light is pulsing out of the shadows. Electric. Neon, maybe. Finer than deep blue neon sparking across black desert. Almost purple. But it's not like a color at all as much as a glow, a shocking presence. Yeah, translucent.

But we've got to focus. Get on up, tag the summit, descend the west face. Coming down it's still there, sucking my attention. Only now I've tossed off the rap rope and am soloing, hurrying, so I really need to focus. The sun drops, and that glow finally vanishes. I can concentrate on across to free the rope. Seven hundred feet lower, we're tumbling down the west face milking

last light from the sky. Just as red finally burns to ash on the horizon, suddenly there is also shadow in front of us: moonrise over our shoulders. Calm precedes us backing down the snow-steep headwall.

The Middle Finger from Middle Palisade

Date Climbed: 9/23/04

By Romain [wacziarg@gsb.Stanford.edu]
This report was originally posted on Summitpost.org and is reprinted with permission from the author who lives (and climbs) locally.

Wednesday, September 22nd: The Approach.

Driving down from Mammoth Lakes after a comfortable night in a motel, Rene and I set out on the South Fork of Big Pine Creek at 9:45am. We had decided to go light: no tent, just a single wall nylon tarp; minimal amounts of food, sufficient for one night only; no rock climbing gear except rock shoes and a helmet each; no ice/snow climbing gear such as crampons and ice axes; and sneakers instead of hiking boots. As a result, our packs weighed no more than 20 pounds. Expecting a short approach day, we took our time. We stopped for an hour long lunch above Willow Lake, in full view of the Palisades. This was followed by a short hop to Finger Lake, where we spent another hour enjoying a short nap. We continued up cross-country to a tarn above Finger Lake, just beneath Middle Palisade, where we set up a nice camp. We enjoyed the rest of the evening, packed for the next morning's climb and ate a big dinner...

Thursday, September 23rd: The Climb.

We woke up at 6:15 and left camp at 7:25am, after hot tea and breakfast. The sunrise greeted us with a beautiful view of our destination. I was feeling a bit nauseous at first, having had difficulty eating breakfast, but the feeling soon subsided. We made our way up the scree and talus above camp, to the moraine below the Middle Palisade glacier. The talus was partially covered with snow, making progress slower than normal as we had to pick a line that was relatively snow free. We anticipated at that point that snow would hamper our efforts on the route itself; there was not sufficient cover for proper snow travel (we lacked the equipment for that anyway, since we were both hiking in sneakers), and the powdery layer covering the talus made progress dangerously slippery and uncertain -- it was impossible to say what lay below the snow layer.

We made it to the end of the central moraine that divides the Middle Palisade glacier at 9:30am, a bit later than we had expected, but not late enough to create problems. We were worried more about the snow than about timing. Surveying the route above us, we found a chimney system rising from the central moraine, which seemed a good substitute for the ledge system generally used by climbers. The ledge system involves walking onto the glacier for some distance, and we had planned not to do that. Instead, we had read about an alternative 4th class chimney system in one of Bob Burd's trip reports. This proved to be an excellent alternative, with relatively solid rock, moderate exposure and great (if easy) moves. It was also free of snow. We were soon at the intersection with the "normal" route,

which traversed right into the main chute. Straight above us, however, we saw that the chute immediately to the left of the normal Northeast face chute was largely snow free, especially on its South facing right side. We opted to ascend this chute since the advantages of being snow free seemed to far outweigh the risks of a slight increase in difficulty. Our variation consisted of mostly 3rd class climbing with sustained portions of 4th class when we were forced right toward the top of the buttress.

About 2/3rd of the way up the face, at 11am, the increasing steepness of our chute forced us right into the “normal” chute. We climbed 4th class rock to the top of the buttress that divides the two chutes, and dropped down a few feet into the regular route. That gully was full of snow, treacherous powder covering the North-facing rock on the left side of the gully. We started climbing this chute, avoiding snow patches whenever possible, with Rene in front. After a few feet, we reached a large patch of snow which Rene started climbing. Toward the top of the snow patch, he slipped on a rock beneath the snow, and slide down the snow patch. I was only a few feet below Rene, and saw him fly by. I extended my hand to grab the straps of his pack, only to realize that this would probably result in two of us being sent to our deaths instead of just one. I quickly withdrew my hand, watching him bounce off rocks and snow. I thought he was going to go all the way down, but thankfully he was stopped after about 30 feet in a slightly flatter bowl of snow. I yelled “Rene, are you OK”, as he stumbled to regain his balance and composure. He had to do a quick check to make sure that all his limbs were intact, and yelled that he was fine. He did not immediately notice the 4 inch long wound in his lower left leg, caused by a rock scraping his leg all the way to the tibia bone.

We held a quick discussion as to what to do next, and took a half hour pause to tend to Rene’s injury. Is would did not seem to prevent him from walking or climbing, but it was bleeding profusely. Rene was worried that his leg would go numb before we were able to complete the descent. Looking up toward the summit, we saw that we were right below the point where the Northeast face route branches left toward the summit blocks – perhaps only 200-300 vertical feet from the top. It was tempting to go on, but we also looked ahead at more snow patches for at least another 100 feet. It was too dangerous to keep going, and comparatively safer to go down the snow-free rock that we had ascended. We meticulously and slowly reversed our steps, reaching the base of the climb around 1pm. From there, we set out to reach camp, pack everything up and hike out as fast as we could, so as to reach a hospital as soon as possible.

Thankfully, Rene’s wound did not seem to hamper his ability to walk, despite some fairly continuous bleeding, so we were able to return fairly quickly. We left camp at 3:30 and reached Glacier Lodge a little bit after 7pm, taking a slightly longer route back, through Brainerd Lake (the route was a bit longer but more consistently on a trail). I ran for much of the last mile so I could retrieve the car from the overnight hiker’s parking lot and meet Rene at the trailhead. At 8pm, he was at the Bishop Hospital emergency room, and by 11pm his injury had been tended to...

Gaston’s Back!!

[Editor’s Note: Talk of the Town will return next month!]

Gaston Rabbitface has just returned from the outer reaches of the Spantik-Sosbun Mountains in Pakistan with his climbing partner, Giangietto Angelonitto (from Club Alpino Italiano). They attempted the north face of Tarci Peak, but were stopped by bad weather. He brings his special, mountaineering insight to bare on questions of relationships, peace in our time, and gourmet recipes. He’ll be in town for the month of January, then he’s off again to climb the north face of Chuchubalstering II (6000m).

Dear Gaston,

My new boyfriend, Vladimir Khazkastan, loves to climb. But, he climbs mountains with snow ON TOP! I hate being cold, but I love Vladimir and want to join him when he asks. He wants me to climb somewhere in a country called Hindu Kush (spelling?) next month. What should I do??

Confused in California

C. in C.,

Zhis Hindu Kush is a mountain range in zee country of Pakistan and iz very very VERY cold. So cold zhat zee body parts fall off if not covered. To maintain peaceful and harmonious sentiment between our Slavic neighbors and zee U.S. of A, you may vish to hire a surrogate female or buy one of zhoze fake humans one can buy at zee speciality stores in San Francisco. He vill never know zee difference what with all zat cerebral edema and hypoxia! Bon chance.

Dear Gaston,

Do you have any beta on sautéing snails above 4500m? Also, how long should I let the merlot breath (same altitude)?

Thanks, Dave the Dude

D. the D.,

Ah! You have asked ze right dude! Zere is a vunderful zhop on the Rue St. Jacques in Paris (rive gauche) zat sells dehydrated snails. Vunduhbah taste after you rehydrate in salted, boiling water, and remember to use a drop of le extra virgin olive oil before boiling le water. Por le wine, uncork at 3000m and, careful to not spill while climbing, continue up and begin to drink at 4500m. Caution – zhis does not work for ze chardonney.

Dear Gaston,

I love going peak bagging with my boyfriend, but, he always wants to help me; always wants to carry the stove, fuel, and tent; always wants to kissy-face when we’re on belay; always wants to zip the sleeping bags together in the tent (and it’s even more frustrating when we’re in our bivy bags!); and always wants to you-know-what and on top all the time!! You’re a manly mountaineer. What should I do??

Frustrated in Felton

F. in F.,

Ah mademoiselle, zhis is a question of timing, mais oui? Zhis requires my personal touch as it is a matter of delicacy, yes? Si vous plais, if you would, contact me via email at my temporary address : prusik_bight@gastonathome.com

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To Be Announced shortly

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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 Friday, January 28th. 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