

<http://peakclimbing.org> - www.facebook.com/peakclimbi

General Meeting

Date **October 11, 2011**
Time **7:30 – 9:30 pm**
Where **PCC**
 3921 E. Bayshore Road
 Palo Alto, CA
Program **The Heck with Reading**
 Lolita in Teheran, Let's
 Climb!
Presenter **Tim Terpstra**

In September 2010, a group of climbers from the Alpine Club of Iran visited Wyoming to climb in the Tetons with members of the American Alpine Club. This past June the second half of the climbers' exchange was completed when a group of Americans journeyed to Iran to explore its mountains and experience Iranian culture and hospitality. The premise of the trip was simple: to bring together people with a shared passion for climbing, in spite of the differences in politics, religion, and culture.

During their stay, members of the AAC managed to go bouldering above Tehran, put up a few first ascents below Alam Kuh and on

the Sangsar Sol Wall, climb the highest peak in the Middle East (Damavand, @ 18,400'), and make a first non-Iranian canyoneering descent. In addition to climbing some members of the AAC delegation participated in a cultural/historic tour as well. Please join Tim Terpstra, a full time farmer and part-time climber from Washington state, as he shows slides and talks about the four weeks he spent with the AAC delegation to Iran.



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 and enter in the back of the building.

Google <http://tinyurl.com/28ngaw>

Editor's Notes

We have some awesome trip reports this month, so be sure to check them out! And many thanks to our contributors for laying out copy, photos, perfectly, and thus making my job easier.

And now let's get ready for snow. See you soon on the slopes! Judy

Chair Column

Using Climbing for Good instead of Evil!

Nearly 6 months into the ACL saga. I have to admit the reason you haven't seen Chair Columns the last few months is because my mind is inhabited, hopefully temporarily, by a Tasmanian Devil of negativity and frustration. Despite the assurances that "you are fit, strong and driven...you will bounce right back!", my recovery has been less than straightforward and I have yet to experience a pain-free day. It's been tough leading a group of climbers when I cannot climb, and although I have been told my achievements have been inspirational to others, I feel that "If I can't inspire myself, how on earth can I inspire others???"

I looked around to see where I could find inspiration to draw upon and it was so easy it was ridiculous. In seconds I thought of four absolutely amazing women that are having major impact on the world – on at-risk youth, on women who have experienced violence in the Congo, on people everywhere who struggle with loss and tragedy, and on women in Uganda who have no means of financial independence. So, I am letting myself off the hook and sharing what each of these women is doing to take their climbing and use it for good.

Georgina Miranda – Climb Take Action 7 Summits Challenge raising \$2.2 mill to benefit war-torn Congo

If you couldn't make it to the August meeting, you really missed out on an inspirational talk given by Georgina Miranda, a businesswoman by day and adventurer by night. After reading an article in *Glamour* in 2007 about the violence against women in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgina founded Climb Take Action in order to empower women in the region by climbing to raise funds and awareness of their suffering. Thousands of women have been neglected, murdered, abducted, brutally raped, tortured, and overall forgotten. Congo Wars have claimed more lives than any conflict since the end of World War II, yet the crisis has received little attention outside of central Africa.

She is climbing each of the highest mountains on each continent as part of her "Climb Take Action 7 Summits Challenge." Her goal is ambitious at \$2.2 million and she can use your help! Go to <http://climbtakeaction.com/>

Abi Rankin – Raising \$5,600 to climb Cotopaxi to benefit Big City Mountaineers Summit for Someone which supports at-risk youth

Climber, mountain rescuer, and nurse, Abi Rankin, has been helping support at-risk youth through Big City Mountaineers' Summit for Someone program. In Abi's own words from her fundraising page –
"For as long as I can remember nature and the outdoors has provided me with great perspective, insights and inspiration. The transformation that can occur while conquering mental and physical challenges in mother nature's setting is pretty close to magic. Big City Mountaineers provides at-risk urban youth with the opportunities to experience this magic and to discover new strengths within themselves and new perspective from which to approach struggle. Summit for Someone climbs do this for me.

This is why, for the third time, I am participating in one of their climbs to raise money for the Big City Mountaineers program and this time I pushing myself for a bit more of a challenge as well by climbing Cotopaxi, the second highest summit in Ecuador at 19,347'.

On my last summit, I struggled with fear on the descent, but decided that as scared as I was, it couldn't have been as scary or difficult as some of the challenges that youth face out on the street today. I am up for the challenge but I will need your help. So if you feel that you can forego this week's \$20 movie ticket, a \$50 dinner out or even one day's \$5 latte, you will be changing life of a teen, and mine too."

Abi still needs to raise \$3,600. To donate, go to <http://bit.ly/nbGNej>

Alison Levine – Empowering women in Uganda to be financially independent through Climb High Foundation

Alison Levine is a climber who has completed the "Grand Slam" – climbing all seven summits and skiing to both poles. Like the other women above, Alison decided to do some good in the world through climbing. Through the foundation she established, she teaches women in developing countries to work in the lucrative climbing industry. From her website...

"The Climb High Foundation is dedicated to teaching women in developing nations the skills that will enable them to benefit from climbing and trekking-related tourism. We focus our work in geographic areas where women have subordinate social status and as a result have little or no access to education, healthcare or jobs.

Our programs enable these women to work as trekking guides and porters in their local mountains and national parks so that they can maintain an adequate, sustainable living wage and can make meaningful, long-term improvements to their quality of life. Our goal

is not only to help them achieve financial independence, but also to provide a catalyst for social change in their communities."

In July and August, I organized a gear drive for Climb High Foundation. The Peak Climbing Section, Snowcamping Section, and Bay Area Mountain Rescue Unit together contributed 2 backpacks, 3 pairs of boots, 1 pair of crampons, 1 pair of snowshoes, 2 ice axes, 1 tent, and a variety of clothing and accessories. Alison sends her gratitude on behalf of the women of Uganda.



If you would still like to donate directly, the website is <http://www.climbhighfoundation.org/>.

Marissa Krupa – The Spoken Coast: Stories of hope from Alaska to Chile

Marissa Krupa, an avid rock climber and backcountry skier, has embarked on a journey to foster support and hope to those struggling through a major life challenge, who may not be receiving the support they need in their communities. She lost her inspiring and adventurous brother to cancer at the same time her mother was also diagnosed with the same cancer and she lost her job. Marissa struggled to find the support she needed during these challenging times and came up with the idea of The Spoken Coast project to help others by sharing stories of triumph over tragedy.

From her website describing The Spoken Coast project –

“Have you ever gone through a major life challenge and not felt supported? Have you ever wondered how some people seem to thrive during these hardships, while others suffer?”

The SpokenCoast project gathers personal stories of successful transformation to those struggling from a major life challenge. The SpokenCoast project will capture these stories, along the coastline of both North & South America, and offer them in a book anthology.

While on this quest, Marissa Krupa – the project's creator and interviewer, will summit several significant peaks to honor her mountaineer brother. A memorial will be left at the top of each peak. In this way, Marissa hopes to transform her loss into something that can benefit others, via the documentary film of the journey.”

Marissa can also use your support. For more info about her project and to support her, go to <http://www.spokencoast.org/>. She is seeking monetary support to assist with her budget, Alaska Airline miles, and is selling a chapbook called “In the Present Moment.”

I hope this inspires you to help support these amazing women and their efforts, or maybe even start your own!

Climb strong, be safe, and do some good!
Madame Chair, Emilie

Fall/Winter/Spring Planning Meeting

Wednesday, October 12 at 7:00 pm

Meeting Location (click for directions):

[Louise's House](#)

The time has come to meet and plan our trips for the next 6 months. It is hard to believe that summer is gone and winter, with all its spectacular beauty, is soon to arrive. We need snowshoe and ski trips as well as local

peak-bagging trips. Bring your calendar and your appetite. We will have pizza, salad and wine. Please bring a dish to share or a \$5-10 (depending upon your consumption) contribution to the kitty.

This meeting is targeted at trip leaders, but others are welcome to come and request trips they want to do. If you cannot attend, send email to [louisewholey AT gmail.com](mailto:louisewholey@gmail.com) with your proposed trips or trip requests, to be placed in a shared Google spreadsheet.

PCS Trip Calendar

These are required statements.

Note: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

Note: All Sierra Club trips require you to sign a Liability Waiver.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/signinwaiver.pdf>

October 1 - San Joaquin Mountain
Leader: Daryn Dodge

PCS Trip Details

San Joaquin Mountain Quadruple List Finish Celebration

Goal: San Joaquin Mountain (11, 598')

Location: Eastside of the Sierras, Mammoth area

Date: October 1

Leader: Daryn Dodge

Difficulty: Class 1

This trip is sponsored by the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club.

Louise Wholey and Chris Libby have just completed the SPS list. In addition, John Hooper and Greg Gerlach will coincidentally both complete the list on Mt. Gardiner by the end of summer. We will have a celebratory list finish dayhike climb for all 4 list finishers on San Joaquin Mtn (about 2700' gain and 9-12 miles from Minaret Summit area, or 1600' gain

and 5 miles from Deadman Pass via 4WD road) on Sat Oct 1. Immediately following the climb will be a potluck party at John's place in Paradise. Send e-mail or SASE with conditioning and experience to Leader: Daryn Dodge, Co-leaders: Kathy Rich, Bob Wyka Contact Daryn Dodge: Daryn.Dodge AT oehha.ca.gov.

Private Trip Calendar

Important: Private trips are not insured, sponsored, or supervised by the Sierra Club. They are listed here because they may be of interest to PCS members. Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree editor.

October - Mt. Kailash, Nepal/Tibet
Leader: Warren Storkman

October 8 - November 6 - Makalu Base Camp to Khumbu Trek
Leader - Tom McDonald

October 22 - 23 - Trans-Sierra Dayhike
Leader: Jeff Fisher

November 11 - 13 - Pinnacles
Leader - Jeff Fisher

Private Trip Details

Mt. Kailash, Nepal/Tibet

Goal: Mt. Kailash - Lhasa
Location: Nepal/Tibet
Date: October 2011
Leader: Warren Storkman

October is generally the best month to travel in Nepal and Tibet - for weather and holiday events and particularly for the Kora around Mt Kailash.

Reason for starting the plans early:
To give the opportunity to arrange vacation time for the 21 day trek, the 7 days in KTM and air travel.

There will be two separate flights within Nepal. The first flight will take us west to a large

lowland airport with a hotel overnight. The second day we'll fly in a smaller (20 seat) plane and upon landing will start the trek. There will be 6 nights of camping, then on the 7th day the group crosses into Tibet with an interesting army border check. This entry is by foot - no roads in this area.

The group will then stop camping and use a hotel on the 14th night.

For those wishing to skip Lhasa a return to KTM is on the 16th day. The Lhasa group will return to KTM on the 21st day by international air.

Without a commitment or obligating yourself just let me know if this trip is of interest to you. If you change your mind, I'll drop your name. I'll e-mail more information and try for an early trip cost. Contact Warren Storkman (650-493-8959) or email: dstorkman@aol.com

Makalu Base Camp To Khumbu Trek Over East Col, West Col, and Mera La (6000+m passes x2)

Goal: Mera Peak (optional ascent) 6476m

Location: Nepal

Dates: October 8 - November 6

Leader: Tom McDonald

Difficulty: This is a rigorous 4-week trek, with sustained altitudes over 5000m

I'm trying to put together a small group of like-minded folks for the "world's highest trek" in Nepal- the traverse from Makalu base camp to the Khumbu. Two passes over 6000M, option of ascending Mera 6476M. I'm a physician at PAMF and have no commercial interest in any trip. A few of my "patients" (fitter than me!) are members of the Loma Prieta peak climbing section. I will provide medical backup in route but will not be in any official role- just a participant. I have contacts with several Nepali guides and will act as intermediary for setting up the trip *without* any financial interest at all. I've recently trekked with a large mixed group that was ill-suited for the challenges we faced- I'm hoping to put together a great group with a good Nepali Sherpa crew.

Trek info: A rigorous 4 week technical trek with sustained high altitudes over 5,000M. Two passes over 6000m and option of ascending Mera Peak at 6400+M. Roped descents of two passes. Alpine experience with fantastic view of Makalu, Lhotse, Everest, Chamlang. and Baruntse. The road much less traveled into the over-traveled Everest area. Experience at altitude and glacier travel essential.

Maps:

<http://www.nepaltravelandtours.com/Trips/Nepal/Makalu+Arun+Valley/Trekkin...>

Leader and contact info: Tom McDonald;
mcdonald_tw@yahoo.com

Trans-Sierra Dayhike

Goal: Lake Thomas Edison to Rock Creek or vice versa

Location: Lake Thomas Edison or Rock Creek

Date: October 22 - 23

Leader: Jeff Fisher

Lake Thomas Edison to Rock Creek. 22.5 miles. 6,000ft + or- gain on Saturday going west to east, or 3,600ft + or - gain going east to west on Sunday. We will be going over Mono Pass at 11,000ft. going either direction. There will be 2 groups. One on Saturday Oct. 22 going from Lake Thomas Edison to Rock Creek trail head(west to east). They will be picked up at the Rock Creek trail head by the group that will be traveling east to west the next day, Sunday Oct. 23. Everyone will camp together Saturday night. After dropping the Sunday group off at the trail head the Saturday group will drive the east to west groups cars back to the bay area. The east to west group will pick up the other cars and drive home Sunday evening. The West to east group will have to have 2 sets of sleeping gear, one that they will bring to the trailhead on Friday night and one the second group will bring over for them to use on Saturday night. Please contact me if you want to go and which direction. Also if you can drive, carpool or either. Jeff Fisher 650-207-9632, e-mail; jeff_fisher_5252@sbcglobal.net E-mail is best, because I have a written record.

PLEASE NOTE: This hike is entirely voluntary and participants assume the full risks associated with the activities. It is each hiker's responsibility to ensure that he or she is in sufficient fitness and health to participate in a strenuous hike, with the appropriate water, food, clothing, first aid, and navigation equipment for the conditions. The individual hike organizers make no representation or warranties about the quality, safety, or supervision of these activities.

Pinnacles

Goals: Climb, hike, bike - your choice

Location: Pinnacles National Monument (East Side)

Date: November 11 - 13

Leader: Jeff Fisher

Hiking, climbing and/or biking. Your choice. Come down for a weekend of climbing and/or hiking or even biking. There will be climbers of varying abilities. Group site #134 has been reserved for 2 nights at the Pinnacles campground on the east side of the park. Holds total of up to 20 people (We've had more). Shoes, harness and helmet needed if you are going to be climbing. You can stay 1 or 2 nights (preferably both) or just come down for one of the days. The cost for the camp site is \$75/ night for up to 10 people and \$110/night for up to 20. Leader; Jeff Fisher 650-207-9632, E-mail; jeff_fisher_5252@sbcglobal.net

Trip Reports

Mills (13,775'), Abbot (13,893')

June 24 - 27

By Stephane Mouradian

It was quite disappointing to drive to 10,000' Mosquito Flat and find it free of snow on this early season trip. What? Are "they" going to make us carry skis and snowshoes when 8600' Carson Pass still has 3' of snow? Carry

we did, up to 11,000' Ruby Lake where continuous snow started for good. We continued up to just below Mills Lake and pitched camp on snow, Linda Sun and Scott Kreider in a tent and Terry Cline, Arun Mahajan and myself in a Megamid. Our camp had all the convenience of the perfect snow camp: running water nearby and a few rocks to sit on. It was 2pm and we spent the rest of the day sleeping, scouting and...sleeping. The night was windy and in the 30's.



On day 2, we put crampons on and left around 6:30am after a stove misfire. We headed toward the prominent broad couloir on the east side of Mills. Terry was feeling the altitude and decided to sit that one out. The rest of us took the right-most couloir. It was completely snow covered, along with the famous "chockstone". We progressed up the couloirs kicking steps in steep snow and alternating with a few class 3 rocks.



Toward the top of the couloir, it looked like we could follow the snow traversing left and we thought it "could" be a shortcut to the summit.

As we started traversing left, the snow felt uncomfortably softer and "sugary" as we were kicking and traversing a 40 degree slope above an exposed cliff. Not good, especially considering we were not sure how good that "shortcut" really was. We quickly retreated to the main couloirs and headed toward the top notch described in several reports. The snow was steeper there, maybe 45 degrees, but more solid and we were facing in with feet and hands. This being well baked spring snow, that snow was strong enough to hold our steps but we all realized it would have been very difficult to stop a slide because the pick of the axe only had marginal purchase, so we took it slow and focused on our steps.



At the notch, we briefly looked down the couloir and realized we would not want to wait too long before heading down in yet softer snow. From the notch, we crossed on the West side and followed a system of easy upward ledges for 15-20minutes. One last class 3 move and we were on the summit plateau and on the top 10 minutes later. First ones this year (since 9/2010)! It was 11:45am.



We spent just 15 minutes on the summit and headed down. Back at the notch, we found we could stay left in the couloir for a slightly lower angle but still plenty scary. Scott bravely headed first, downclimbed and slowly kicked steps for Arun and Stephane for a few hundred feet. Linda felt more confident and downclimbed and kicked steps on her own and much faster than the 3 boys. Once we were toward the entrance of the couloir, the snow was even softer but the run out much safer and we could kick steps facing out and glissaded back down to the base of the climb. We were at camp around 2pm. We caught up with Terry while Arun headed back to the TH. Terry decided he would head back the next morning.

On day 3, we left for Abbot at 5:50am. We kicked steps to halfway up the couloir and started in the rocks below a band of green rocks. The class 3 rock route has many ducks and they all seem to work well. Fortunately, we only had a moderate 50' snowfield to traverse and all the rest was on rock. We progressed right and up encountering ducks here and there and eventually reached the ridge. We headed SW toward the summit following the ridge crest. There are two "cruxes" along the ridge. The first one is a large boulder contoured on the left and an airy catwalk. Then you immediately cross right (West) and drop slightly to contour the next obstacle. The correct route for this contouring goes through some obvious "gate" formed by two large standing rocks and this should be visible immediately after dropping from the main ridge.



Unfortunately, we missed this and dropped a little too far down and we kept going below the ridge for a while looking for the way back up. We eventually realized we were off route as the going clearly got more complicated. We briefly discussed turning back and look for the correct route but chose instead to motor our way through some loose class 4 rocks, the kind that looks solid but falls apart at the last minute.

At one point, Scott put his weight on what seemed like a solid boulder but during his move, something went loose and a helmet size rock dislodged and Linda just below barely dodged it while Scott managed to hang on not to fall backward. We were all wearing helmets. We all regrouped on the ridge and were a little spooked. Linda noticed a couple of prominent ducks lower down on the ridge which indicated the correct route. We decided that the lesson for today was to turn back when one realizes she/he is off route. We all knew that but I guess we all need reminders every now and then. From that point on, it was an easy walk up, skirting the summit plateau snow toward the summit, which we reached at 10:30am.

On the way down, we bypassed the ridge on the west side when we encountered the obvious route marked by a couple ducks, going through the rock "gate" mentioned previously. We easily found our way back to where we had left the main snow couloir. The snow was very soft and afforded some fun glissading.

A great trip!

Laurel Mountain (11,812'), North East Gully

July 23

By Arun Mahajan

When Julius had an available weekend for peak bagging and asked me to join him, I thought that I might suggest something moderately edgy so - I picked Laurel Mountain's North East Gully. Julius read up on

it in Peter Croft's book (something about awesome climbs) and was in immediate agreement. I had only heard vague stories of this climb and that it presented route finding challenges and also that it was not a clean climb.

So, with a bit of trepidation, at 7.15 am, we set out to day-hike this mountain. For gear, we carried a small rack, a 60m rope, personal rock climbing accoutrements, helmet. I also carried my rock climbing shoes in my pack and wore my mountaineering boots, whereas Julius preferred his approach shoes.

The approach is well described in Bob Burd's description on the web and it makes finding the route a relatively easy proposition. The north face of Laurel is a complete revelation as seen from Convict Lake. From Highway-395, Laurel looks like a hill of modest proportions, hardly worth a second glance, but from Convict Lake it presents an impressive visage. Wonderful striations, colors and bands mark its wide face and you have to look closely to find any climbable weakness therein.



N Face of Laurel with our route

The early morning walk went pleasantly enough and we soon spotted the cleft in the face, the NE Gully, with a large band of snow of moderate steepness emanating out of it. This snow was pimpled with many rocks and we put on helmets right away and hurried to get close to the gully. A bit of tricky navigation of the snow, less convenient for Julius in his softer approach shoes, got us into the gully

proper.



View of Gully with snow coming out

The red rocks inside the gully at this point are amazing to look at. The gully is a thin cleft in the rock and it snakes up. We were offered some fun climbing on the rock here. It was mostly class-3. There were some places, too many to describe, where there was a steady stream of water trickling down the gully, bang in the middle of the route that we had to climb. Normally, one avoids climbing in the path of water, especially the 4th class sections and some even low 5th for the usual reasons: boots not getting good purchase and the chance of moss on the rock, adding to the slickness. However there was no moss at all and our feet held positively on the wet rock.



View of water on the route

At one place, adding to the fun climbing and thanks to a heavy snow year, our path was blocked by a huge frozen block of snow, which we were able to crawl under and then out, back into the gully.



Crawling under the snow

Somewhere, mid-mountain, maybe half way up, the gully ended and dropped us onto a muddy plateau. We surveyed the terrain, compared it against the map and photos from Bob Burd's report and headed up on some red slabs. There were loose parts here but it was not too steep and at the maximum, no harder than easy class-3. We continued till Julius decided to veer left and we saw a large open gully and deduced that we were off route. To get back on, we thought that we would have to traverse some very sketchy terrain, go over a rib and maybe the real gully (class-2) would be behind. But above us was a long and wide expanse of very solid looking slab terrain with what seemed to be a dyke running through (shades of the Snake Dyke on Half Dome). We looked at each other. This was decision time. The traverse was unappealing with an unknown gully beyond which, at best, would be horrible, scree-filled class-2. "What the hell, let us try these slabs", suggested Julius and we started climbing. This seemed to go on forever and we were doing moderately steep climbing on solid slabs and - at least three or four times, I remember making solid 4th class moves and some of them even low 5th. But the climbing was always solid and safe and we never felt the need for a belay. Smearing worked very well and neither of us even needed our rock shoes.



Julius climbing the class-4 with Convict Lake behind

The view of Convict Lake and Convict Canyon is superb from here. As we climbed we seemed to be converging on the other gully that we had passed up on and true enough, our fine slabs ended and we were in the gully but fortunately with very little class-2 junk to do before cresting the ridge. We congratulated ourselves on the great call we had made in taking this route instead of the long class-2 junk.

After perhaps 30 minutes of talus and boulder hopping, we were finally at the summit around 1.15pm. It had taken us six hours.

The summit, almost 12000 ft, offers great views of Bloody Mountain and its north couloir and of Red Slate.



Summit photo

We began our long descent (looking down, this was left of the face that we had climbed and curving back right). We found a faint use trail that was steep but on scree+mud and

quite pleasant to descend but would have been horrifying to ascend. Soon our long walk came to an end and we were back at the cars at 5.45 pm, just over a 10 hour day.

This route is much maligned but we think that this is unfair and route finding was not particularly hard either. As Julius put it, it was 20% scree and loose stuff and 80% fine climbing. For any mountain range, those are great percentages and for the Sierra where there is much loose rock, these are exceptional odds and we would take them any day. We would highly recommend this climb and consider it one of the nicest climbs we have done in the Sierra.

Ritter - Banner
July 29 - 31
By Terry Cline

Mt Ritter, Banner Peak, and the Minarets present an iconic skyline from Highway 395 when approaching Mammoth Lakes from either the north or the south. I had visited the Minarets many times, but had never attempted Mt Ritter and had only attempted Banner Peak once on one its east face technical routes (but that's another story). It seemed heavy snow this year might make possible to reach these beautiful peaks with a minimum of talus hopping. Since Monique Messié had heard about the beauty of the area and wanted to experience it, she served as co-leader. We were joined by Jim Ramaker, who can't climb Ritter enough times, Sandrine, Ted Lenzie, and Matt Blum.



Mt Ritter and Banner Peak above Ediza Lake

As many readers of this newsletter know, Mt Ritter and Banner Peak form the north end of the Ritter Range, which includes the Minarets south of Ritter and down to Iron Mountain.

The Ritter Range is actually not part of the Sierras and is an older metamorphic uplifting that occurred millions of years before the Sierra Nevada. The Sierra crest parallels it to the east by a few miles and is separated from it by the canyon of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River. Thousand Island Lake below Banner Peak is the headwaters of the Middle Fork. The geology in this area is quite complex and includes an active earthquake zone and a dormant volcano in Mammoth Mountain on which the big downhill ski resort resides, along with a number of hot springs.

Thursday night Jim, Matt, and I picked up our wilderness permit at the Mammoth ranger station and searched around for a place in the forest to throw down sleeping bags. We finally found the right dirt road to go in a little ways and pull off out of sight. The night was to be a sleepless one. We were not far beyond a couple of Forest Service campgrounds full of RV's and partying teenagers. After that settled down, a couple of pickups began hourly driving up the road past us and after a short while driving back down. Maybe they were drug runners, who knows? Concurrent with this commotion till about 3:30 am, a guy wA yelling angrily at the top of his lungs at some unknown target and seemed to be wandering the woods. We dubbed him "the crazy guy". At one point he seemed to be perilously close to us. We feared he might be sporting a weapon.

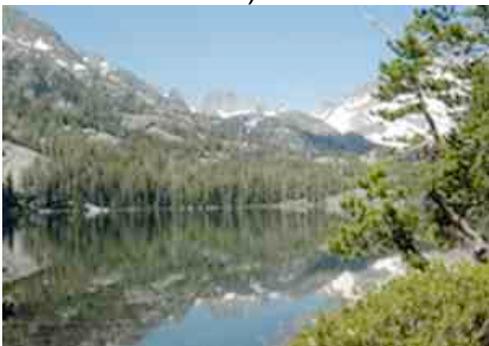
After a short sleep, we got up about 5:30 am to drive to the trailhead. The road from Minaret Vista (a little pass north of Mammoth Mt) down into the Middle Fork canyon is closed to traffic from 7 am to 7 pm and a shuttle bus must be used. We wanted to beat the closure. On the way in, Jim announced that his knee was hurting. It looked swollen and red. Much speculation ensued all weekend about what could be the cause, but he toughed it out with the aid of extra strength ibuprofen from my first-aid kit. It turns out he

had gotten a freak staph-like infection from a fall while running during the preceding week that required surgery after the trip to clean out. Scary.

A 1000' down in the canyon at the Agnew Meadows trailhead, we found Ted sleeping in his Durango. Monique and Sandrine hadn't shown up yet for our 8 am departure time. It turns out they went to an alternative trailhead parking spot. We got that sorted out with a cell phone call after Monique turned on her phone. Once on the trail we had no cell service.

Agnew Meadows sits on a bench above the Middle Fork canyon bottom. The trail starts off rolling across this bench past a large meadow and through forest until it drops precipitously 500' in 0.6 of a mile into the Middle Fork.

After about 0.8 mile along the River Trail, we took the Shadow Lake trail up the other side of the canyon. The rest of the way to camp is uphill for about 1400'. Really pretty, but with three butt-kicker steep sections past waterfalls. In between the first and second sections of waterfalls lies Shadow Lake, a fairly large and scenic lake that drains the glaciers and lakes above in most of the northern half of the Ritter Range (although Thousand Island Lake and Garnet Lake to the north are much much larger and drain into the river further north).



Shadow Lake

After crossing the outlet stream below it on a 2-log bridge, we arrived at Ediza Lake and the start of nearly continuous snow. We followed

around the southern side of this lake to a bench about 400' above its western end and a camp site at the edge of a wet meadow surrounded by snow, rushing water, and a glacier-polished rock outcropping.



Minarets from Ediza Lake

Just below camp, we had to take off our boots to ford a stream, except Monique and Sandrine who found a place to stretch and jump across. My Crocs, which I now carry as lightweight camp slippers, came in really handy for this, although it didn't save me from the ice cold water. Being at the edge of a wet meadow and at the height of the mosquito hatch, the bugs were ferocious when the wind was not blowing. But overall, it was a pleasant camping spot with great views and easy access to the peaks above.



Ediza Lake with Mt Ritter looming above

My Therm-a-rest developed a leak rendering it almost useless, so my two nights in this camp were a bit uncomfortable with almost no padding under me. So it goes. At least it was not on snow.

Everyone got up at 5 am on Saturday for the climb. We were on our way a few minutes after 6; pretty good for a PCS group. We needed to beat the forecasted thunderstorms.

Up a short slope left of a creek flowing out of the glacier above and we were on snow, moderately sun-cupped. There was a lot of red snow surface in the basin. This is sometimes call "watermelon snow" because up close it smells faintly of fresh watermelon. It is actually due to an algae called *Chlamydomonas nivalis*. Apparently Aristotle was the first to write about it. Anyway, it is common in the Sierra Nevada during the spring melt-out (and in Colorado too). It is said to be toxic, causing diarrhea if eaten or the snow melted and drunk. I've never tested this hypothesis.



Approaching the glacier leading to the saddle

The peaks are separated by a saddle at around 12,000' with a small glacier below it and rock bands above and below separating the glacier from the saddle and the lower glacier respectively. A narrow couloir leads through the upper rock band which this year in July was filled with snow. Our route to the saddle was to weave through the rock bands on snow. The top of the couloir had a short steep headwall of about 50-60 degrees of firm snow (not quite ice yet). So the finish getting up to the saddle was exciting, but easily handled by everyone.



Volcanic Ridge across Ediza Lake from just below the saddle

From the saddle, after a brief rest to eat and drink, the climb to the summit of Banner Peak is about 800' of scrambling over talus (and loose gravel in some places) with some places, especially at the top, requiring real rock climbing moves up and over big blocks.

We were all up by 11 am. The elevation gain from camp was about 3,500'. The views were spectacular in all directions.

Back down at the saddle by noon, we pondered the north face route on Mt Ritter. It looked much steeper and more difficult standing right below it than from a side view down in the basin. It had a lot more snow on it than normal. Jim had climbed it already a couple of times. But our real concern was the forecasted thunderstorms. Threatening clouds were building fast over the crest. We decided we didn't want to be high on the mountain when the lightning hit, so we called it a day and began our descent the way we came onto softening snow. Down on the lower glacier, the thunder began and a few light sprinkles. Good decision.

Back at camp shortly after 2 pm, the rest of the afternoon we watched the alternating show of thunder, clouds, sprinkles, and sun. Ted hiked out to see if he could join a family event back home on Sunday. Saturday night we got a real rain down in camp (which made getting up in the night for nature calls fun).

Sunday we slept in till after 7 am (well, the ladies did, but the guys were up earlier), had some breakfast and broke camp for the hike

out. We almost immediately had to take off boots and wade the stream again. After that, the hike was mostly uneventful, but very scenic. We also met several parties on horses coming up the trail when we hadn't seen any coming in two days before.

It started to rain in earnest coming up out of the canyon to Agnew Meadows, making it cooler and more tolerable. Thunder could be heard back on the peaks. By the time we drove up to Minaret Vista and down to Mammoth, the rain and clouds had moved in so we could not even see the mountains.

While we sat in a restaurant in Mammoth eating the most delicious hamburgers I've had in some time, it rained hard, gradually phasing out by the time we reached the turn-off into Yosemite on the way home. Back down in the central valley, the temperature was over 100 degrees.

We arrived home around 9 pm happy about a successful trip, though we didn't get both the summits we wanted.

My First Climb Of Mount Rainier

August 5 - 8, 2011

By Sonja Dietrich

I sure hope it will not be the last! After the annual [American Association of Physicists in Medicine](#) conference, two lost jackets, a cancelled hotel room, one missed talk, a ride to nowhere and a flooded bathroom, the three of us took off for Mount Rainier (14,411 ft/4027 m):

Magdalena, Czech, adventurous athlete, McGill graduate, research instructor in medical physics at Stanford and the biggest glissade fan I have ever met. She is to be credited for the trip idea and securing climbing permits.

Matt, Stanford Applied Physics alumni, QA engineer at Accuray, calm and unflappable, excellent rope team leader, sustains his

climbing stamina with chocolate-covered espresso beans. Being male & American made him the minority representative in our team.

Sonja, also a medical physicist at Stanford, happy middle member and tortoise of the rope team (makes everybody else feel really strong!), always ready with a precocious comment.

We got our climbing permits and blue bags at Paradise Valley at 1 pm on Friday and took off at 1:30 pm. Due to the high snowfall and cold spring, mushy snow was with us from the beginning. Matt was almost bowled over by a glissading tourist, whom he elegantly deflected to a different direction with a firm shove. The thick cloud cover started just above the trailhead. Soon, we were in the clouds with very limited visibility, but limited tourist exposure as well. Our hair and clothing gathered so much moisture that I pondered the possibility of moss or algae starting to grow on us if we took a rest break. We took our late lunch at Pebble Creek, having reached the upper level of the clouds. There was, indeed, a mountain above the clouds, and what an impressive one! I had seen glaciers in the alps, but nothing compared to the masses of ice and snow looming above us.

Lack of sleep from the conference and the missing first night at 6000' caught up with me, so I let Matt and Magdalena forge on ahead to work my way up the Muir Snowfield slowly at my own pace. Soon, the fast climbers were ahead, the day-hikers had turned around, leaving me by myself in the stillness of the cool mountain air. To my left, the Nisqually icefall entertained me with almost constant rock and ice falls, kicking up sprays of ice and dust clouds. The debris from the [huge ice fall in June](#) was clearly visible.

At 7:30 pm, I too arrived at Muir Camp, last climber of the day. My companions had generously prepared a bivy platform for me already. I quickly rolled out my bivy, put on all my clothes to ward of the chilly 20 F/-7C night air, crawled in my sleeping bag and barely finished a hot cup of tea before falling fast asleep. So far, I have not encountered any of the typical sleeping problems at altitude; on the contrary, my body seems to demand lots of sleep to adapt.

Saturday was planned as an acclimatization day. I woke up at 8 am, had breakfast, took another nap. Around noon, I joined the others on their perch halfway up Muir Rock to take my afternoon nap. In the late afternoon, we prepared our gear for the next morning, and had an early dinner to be ready for bed as soon as the sun disappeared behind Gibraltar Rock at 6 pm. We had planned for getting up at 30 minutes past midnight, but our neighbors were so loud getting ready for their climb even earlier that we just got up and going as well. There were two large guided groups and a few other private rope teams on the traverse across Cowlitz glacier when we started. After we had passed beyond the bottom of Cathedral Rocks to arrive at the switchbacks to Cathedral gap, we stopped with another rope team to shorten the ropes for the ascent. Quite suddenly, a good-sized rockfall came down from Cathedral. In the dark night we could not see what was going on, but there were at least a half dozen small rocks plus one boulder on their way down from the sound of it. Yells of "rock" echoed over the Cowlitz glacier. With all the rope teams on the move, it was incredible luck that the team behind us had just pulled close enough and the next team was just enough behind to be out of harm's way.

The following ascent to Cathedral Gap was uneventful. We lengthened the ropes again for the traverse across Ingraham Glacier. The large private group "Team Tortoise" behind us, we, the newly christened "Physics on the

Rocks", forged ahead. Soon we reached a short bridge over a bottomless crevasse. What fun! The headlamps of the roped teams on Disappointment Cleaver (DC) outlined the mountain above us. High up, we could not tell where the strings of headlamps ended and the starry skies started. Several times, Matt spotted shooting stars.

Just at the base of the DC, we encountered a situation we were unprepared for. A small rockfall started from the DC coming down a narrow chute just above me. Instinctively, Matt in front and Magdalena in the back moved away from the rock fall, which left me stuck right in the middle on a taut rope, unable to dodge any rocks. Again, Lady Luck was gracious and I just got pelted with a few pebbles that had not gathered a lot of speed yet. We have our homework cut out for us: research what the appropriate response would have been.



The ascent of the DC was uneventful. No fixed lines, but a well-worn path on hardened snow with good bite for our crampons. The slope looked steep at night. Dawn started to light up the horizon. We rested for 5 minutes atop the DC to pull on layers, drink, and get ready for the next traverse onto the ridge. A couple hours of hard, consistent work got us high up on the mountain. The sun came up deep red over the Cascades behind us. Just above 13,000 ft/4000 m, the three of us almost simultaneously fell into rest step.

Beyond the end of the ridge, another traverse and the second fun, exciting crevasse. While the trail had woven mostly between crevasses, with the exception of the first bridge, this crevasse at 13,800 ft/4200m had to be jumped, uphill no less! With Magdalena and myself anchored securely, Matt took a leap, landing a safe step beyond the rim, quickly stepping up to the anchor and sling a climbing ranger had set above. Now it was my turn. My somewhat shorter legs and lack of energy required me to use the anchored rope for gaining the extra momentum needed to clear this obstacle. Magdalena, of course, did fine.



Only 600ft/200 m left! This was the point at which I had hit the wall on Shasta two weeks before, but today I felt strong. The rocks of the crater rim in sight and the summit almost ensured, a boost of excitement gave me the kick and up we went. What a joy to stand on the rim!!! We dropped down into the crater where we left our rope and ice axes. Matt spotted the steam vents. Magdalena took a rest, while I forged ahead for the last 200 ft up to Columbia Crest. It was good to have some alone time; the summit tears for my mom flowed quite freely. That 4th climbing pass would for sure not have gone unused if she was still around!



All smiles and excitement on Columbia Crest! About a dozen very happy mountaineers cheering, snapping pictures, enjoying their achievement. We did not stay long, because we wanted to get as far down as possible before the snow softened too much in the hot sun. Magdalena's stomach gave its usual opinion about the altitude as well. Jumping down the crevasse was much easier, although I did stumble a bit on landing. Philip the ranger met us for the second time. Yes, he did two ascents of Rainier that morning, heading down another way. The first ascent from Camp Muir to summit and back took him 4 1/2 hours, solo. We mere mortals proceeded downhill at about 1000 ft/hour, shedding layers along the way, until we reached the top of the DC. It was here we the hardest part of our climb started. The snow was mushy, the sun was hot, the slope steep, and the rope team above us voiced their opinion on the descent quality which we were only thinking - an opinion definitely not fit for print.



At the base of the DC came the long traverse below the Ingraham ice fall. Ranger Philip had to mention the evening before that statistically, this area is the most dangerous section of the whole mountain, where once a rope team of 10 had been lost in an instant. Yikes. I think this was the first time ever Matt had me fuss at him to hike faster! Neither of us liked this section; we were sure glad we had not been able to see those seracs on our ascent at night! The rest of the descent was uneventful. Around 12:30 pm, we were back in Camp Muir with a sunny afternoon to relax, enjoy the views and bask in our achievement. Our knees were quite thankful that they did not have to continue on to Paradise Valley. That was left for the next morning.

The descent was fun, [plenty of safe glissade chutes](#) provided us with a speedy way down. The Nisqually let loose with another serac fall. Without the clouds, we got a good look at the Fuehrer route, which a few people were taking. High up on my list for next time :-)
Surprisingly, there are no showers within 25 miles of the park entrance. Now here is a business opportunity. Dirty as we were, we stopped by Whittaker Mountaineering anyway. Later on, we found a campground with showers to make ourselves presentable enough to not annoy our seat neighbors on the plane. A pizza, lost jacket retrieval, and Latte later, we were at Seattle-Tacoma airport. I used the wait time to read John Muir's essay on his Rainier climb, dreaming off more volcano climbs to come.

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PCS Announcement Listserv

If you join the PCS Announcement Listserv you will receive announcements and updates of trips and meetings. Use the <http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?A0=LOMAP-PCS-ANNOUNCE&X=&Y=> web page.

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: Climbing using hands for balance.

Class 3: Climbing requires the use of hands, maybe a rope.

Class 4: Requires rope belays.

Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Trips may also be rated by level of exertion: easy, moderate, strenuous, or extreme.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Tuesday , October 25. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.