



March, 1995

Peak Climbing Section, Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter

Vol. 28, No. 3

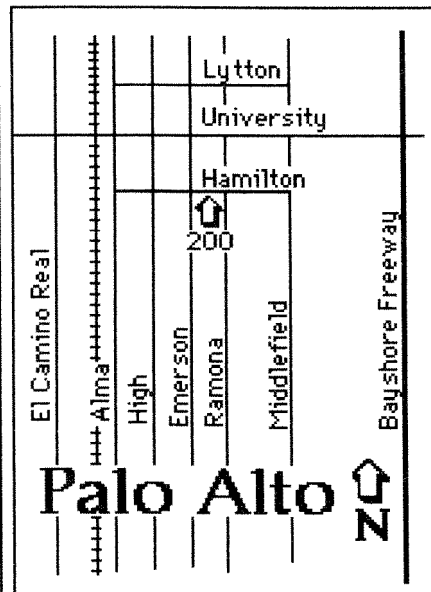
## NEXT MEETING

**Date:** Tuesday, March 14

**Time:** 7:30 p.m.

**Place:** The Pacific Mountaineer  
300 Hamilton Ave.  
Palo Al to

**Program:** Royal Robbins: 40 Years of Adventure. See article at right for more details. A \$5 donation will be requested at the door to support the Climber's Access Fund. Note: All business items will be tabled until the April meeting. Members are invited to join officers for dinner and discussion of pertinent business issues before the meeting at the Cood Earth Restaurant on University in Palo Alto.



# Royal Robbins

**T**HE NORTHWEST Face of Half Dome. The Salathe Wall. The North American Wall. Tis-sa-ack. In the Golden Age of Yosemite climbing, Royal Robbins stamped his name on the vertical landscape like no one else. What Ansel Adams was to Yosemite photography, Robbins was to climbing.

His collection of firsts is too numerous to list. A few highlights, though: the nation's first 5.9, the Open Book route at Tahquitz in 1953. The first Grade VI, Half Dome, in 1957. The first solo ascent of El Capitan, the Muir Wall in 1969. Robbins didn't invent chocks, stoppers or nuts, but his early adoption of them was crucial in ushering in the era of clean climbing in Yosemite.

More than anything, Robbins' bold climbing style and respect for the environment was influential in establishing the ethics for more than one generation of American climbers.

As a 14-year-old Boy Scout in Southern California, Robbins got his first taste of the mountains on a backpacking trip to the Rae Lakes area. It was on this trip that he was introduced to rock climbing. He found that it came to him naturally and instinctively, like nothing else had before.

After a "foolish" accident broke

his arm, Robbins learned safety techniques from a local Sierra Club chapter. Soon he was tearing up Tahquitz, putting up the hardest rock climbing routes in the country while still in his teens.

After a stint in the Army and a short career as a bank teller, Robbins resolved to spend his life in

the mountains. He worked as a ski instructor at Sugar Bowl from 1960 to 1964 and spent the rest of the year climbing and traveling.

He made the second ascent of El Capitan, shaving 38 days off Warren Harding's time.

His 1961 El Cap route, the

Salathe Wall, is today considered perhaps the finest rock climb in the world. His ascent of the North American Wall in 1964 with Tom Frost, Chuck Pratt and Yvon Chouinard, was considered the hardest rock climb in the world.

(More at our level, Robbins' 1967 five-pitch climb, the Nutcracker, is considered by many to be one of the world's finest moderate climb.)

With his wife Liz, Robbins now runs the clothing firm that bears his name. It draws less publicity that the clothing firm run by his erstwhile rival and partner Chouinard (Patagonia), but Robbins' company is (please see page 5)



# UPCOMING TRIPS

## X-C SKIING CABIN TRIP

March 11-12

Leaders Vreni and Greg Rau  
(510) 582-5578

On Saturday we'll ski in the vicinity of Grover Hot Springs, so bring your swimsuits! On Sunday we'll attempt Markleeville Peak or Red Lake Peak. This trip is for intermediate skiers. Co-listed with the Bay Chapter Ski Touring section.

## TELEMARK/X-C WEEKEND

Friday night, March 17 to Sunday, March 19

Leader: Bob Suzuki

This is the fourth annual skinny ski outing at the Apres Ski Lodge, Kings Beach, North lake Tahoe. You are also responsible for your own activities on Saturday and Sunday. I plan on telemarking at Mt. Rose. *Space is limited so sign-up now!!*  
Cost: \$45 for two nights lodging, two breakfasts, two lunches and one supper plus \$10 extra/person weekend for semiprivate room, if available. Also \$10 for non-members of the Sierra Club. *Non-refundable unless someone replaces you.* One house chore required per weekend. Send check made out to:  
Ron Lingelbach  
1492 Pine Grove Way  
San Jose Ca, 95129  
408/253-8036 (h) at 9-10 p.m.  
e-mail: lingel@convex.com

## EARTH WALK '95

May 7

Earth Walk '95 is a 10-kilometer fundraising walkathon in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park that will benefit not only the Sierra Club, but other Bay Area environmental organizations. To protect and improve the environment, please call (415) 923-WALK for registration information.

## Ahead this spring and summer

Mark your calendar. What follows are the results of the spring/summer trip planning meeting. Thanks to Paul Magliocco for making it happen and springing for the pizza. Remember that all trips are tentative until the leaders receive their permits. This is for advance planning only. Full descriptions, including leader names, will appear as the trips draw closer.

April 1 S-1 6: Southern Sierra rock climb

April 22-23: Craig Peak  
April 2X-30 Mt. Williamson

May 6-7: South Fork of Merced  
May 13-14: Big Sur car camp  
May 13-14: Dewey Point  
May 21: Deer Camp, W. Fall Meadow  
May 19-21: Tehipite, Spanish, Three Sisters  
May 27-29: Cherry Creek Canyon  
May 27-29 Mt. Shasta - Clear Creek Route

June 2-4 : Mt. Abbot, Mt. Dade

June 3-4: Olancho Peak

June 10-11: Mt. Conness

June 15-19: Kaweahs

June 17-18: Silliman/ Alta car camp

June 23-25: Matterhorn Peak

June 24-25: Dana Plateau

July 1-4: Mt. Ansel Adams

July 1-4 Cherry Creek Canyon

July 3-8: Volunteer Peak, L'ettit Peak

July 1-9: Ionian Basin

July 8-9: El Capitan - Tamarack Flat

July 8-9: Split Mountain

July 15-16: Red and White

July 21-23: Mt. Haeckel, Mt. Wallace

July 29-30: Mt. Bradley, Independence Pk

July 29-30: Round Top, Red Lake Peak

July 29-31: Mt. Lyell, Mt. Maclure

August: S-6: Temple Crag

August: 6-13: Evolution Basin & peaks

August: 10-11: Kings Kern Divide &

**Peaks**

August 12-13: Mt. Irvine, Xlt.

Mallory

August 12-19: Gannett Peak (Wind Rivers)

August 19-21: Mt. Russell

August 26-27: Red Slate ice climb

Sept. 2-4: Polomonium Peak

Sept. 2-4: Mt. Winchell

Sept. 9-10: Gayle Peak - Chiquito Pass

Sept. 16-17: Vogelsang Peak, Fletcher

Sept. 23-24: Mt. Langley

Sept. 30: I: Homers Nose

Sept. 30-1: Crown Point

## Additions to membership roster



Please add the following e-mail addresses to your PCS roster:  
Roger Crawley:  
RogCrawley@aol.com  
Carol Greenstreet and Randy May:  
Maystreet@aol.com  
Warren and Dixie Storkman:  
Dstorkman@aol.com

# YODELS

LAURA SEFCHIK SAYS HI ar-flung PCSer Laura Sefchik checks in from her home in Yosemite: "Now that dear old Sally (Glynn) is in the Grand Canyon, I'll act as our chapter's Yosemite connection. I'll try to lead some day hikes and plan some potluck dinners.

"I'll be starting my third season with Le Conte Memorial, leading nature hikes and presenting evening slide programs. My 'Climb the Mountains' program includes many PCS trips. I invite all PCS members to come to LeConte for a visit and to check the Yosemite guide and flyers for additional information (May 1-Sept. 30)"

"Please add me to the membership roster:

Laura Sefchik  
7405 Henness Ridge Rd.  
Yosemite West, CA 95389  
(209) 372-4542.

"P.S. Thanks to Eugene Miya for the gift subscription to Scree and to Phyllis Olrich for the Christmas gift!"

## STUPID PET TRICKS

A stray dog climbed Aconcagua, the tallest mountain in the world outside the Himalayas, and rescued two lost climbers before disappearing, according to a Buenos Aires newspaper.

The daily Clarin quoted Austrian mountain guide Armin Liedl as saying he and four German climbers were beginning their ascent of the 23,000-foot peak in the Andes separating Argentina from Chile when a mongrel began to tag along. The dog wandered off but later returned and Liedl found

it one morning shivering in the snow outside his tent.

"Then I decided to climb with him up to the peak and, if we made it, to call him Summit," the guide said.

At 21,000 feet, he said, the dog helped save two lost Argentine climbers who were stricken by altitude sickness, barking to alert

Liedl and his companions, who went to the aid of the pair.

The dog vanished after accompanying Liedl to the summit of Aconcagua. But the guide said, "In the next few days I'm going to go back to look for it and take it back to Austria."

- Neuter

## SPANKIN' THE POW?

We've always enjoyed reading the "Buzzwords" feature in Newsweek's trendnuggets section, Periscope. The idea is to reveal the *patois* of a particular occupation or subculture. But we've always suspected that a high percentage of these terms were made up. After reading a listing of terms supposedly used by telemarketers, we're almost sure of it.

Have you ever heard anyone utter these?"

\***Square heads:** "Nordics who invented telemarketers."

● **Telly hellics:** Helicopter pilots who drop telly skiers on back-country

trails."

\***Friendship tour:** "Telemarking under a lift to show off to the ignorant masses."

\***Death cookies:** "Chunks of frozen show; bad for tellies."

\***Spankin' the Pow:** Newsweek uses this as a caption under a picture of a telemarker. Apparently it's supposed to mean carving a tele turn.

## WHAT, NO POWERBARS?

Bob Stafford, the state's black bear specialist, told the San Francisco Examiner that he has discovered the strangest things in bear stomachs, like an unchewed cantaloupe in one,

and an entire yellow jacket's nest in another. In one pile of bear droppings he found a large kitchen sponge.

## Now YOU KNOW

How did the highest mountain in the contiguous states get its name? In 1864, Clarence Ring, a member of the California State Geological Survey climbed Mt. Tyndall, what he thought was the highest peak in the area. From the summit he saw two peaks that were clearly taller. Ring named the highest for his boss, survey chief Josiah D. Whitney, an act described by writer John Skow as "either boundless admiration or a spectacular case of brownnosing."

## THE LAST WORD

An adventure, an old mountain-climbing compadre of mine used to say, is simply an everyday trip with incredibly poor planning and execution."

- Rob Schulteis

# ARMCHAIR MOUNTAINEERING

*Ascent's greatest hits  
keep you at the edge  
of your seat--or bed*

*THE BEST OF ASCENT, edited by  
Steve Roper, Allen Steck; 380pps;  
Sierra Club Books; 1993; \$25*

Having been a good climber this past year, Santa was good to me. (O.K., O.K., I wasn't really a good climber, but I was good.) At any rate, on Christmas morning I awoke to find my stocking stuffed with my favorite present-books. Specifically, mountaineering and adventure books. What motivated me to write this review-besides a desire to not allow J. Flinn to have all the fun yacking up what his latest good read is -was my desire to share with our little climbing community the joy of reading a new book by those venerable word-smiths of the climbing world, Steve Roper and Allen Steck.

Yes, the same two guys who have singlehandedly created the phenomenon of 50 crowded climbs, and whose vague, confusing and just plain inaccurate route descriptions are responsible for more PCSers getting lost on numerous Sierra peaks than any other pair. This time however, their course is true as they've edited a magnificent compilation entitled "The Rest of Ascent: 25 years of the Mountaineering Experience."

While this book will never top the "classics" category by itself, it does contain several notable classics in the mountaineering literature which first appeared in the periodical *Ascent*. It also includes three interesting appendices, all of which make it an interesting reference text: *Ascent's* contents, year by year; *Ascent's* contributors, listed alphabetically; and a section that contains short biographies about the contributors to this compilation.

Here then is a wonderful collection of stories, accounts, narratives

fantasies and histories written by some of the sports' most notable authors and climbers: Lito Tejada Flores, Chris Jones, David Roberts, Galen Rowell, Steck, Chuck Pratt, Jonathan Waterman, Royal Robbins, Doug Robinson, and Kitty Calhoun.

Beyond these luminaries, however, lies the joy of discovering a new writer whose prose resonates within you. Someone who captures better than you ever could, the mood, or feeling you've had of being in a particular place, or in a similar situation. So real (and funny) was Eric Sanford's portrayal of legions of neophyte climbers attempting Denali in his "Roughing It on Denali" that I had to remind myself I was in the "Whimsy" section, not the autobiographical area-what whimsy means

in this case is anyone's guess, probably a collection of tales resulting from his and others' experiences while on the peak.

Best of all, this book was put together for readers just like me - tired and lazy. You see, I do most of my reading propped up in bed just before going to sleep, and can usually dust off no more than 20 to 30 pages before my concentration wanders and I'm truly ready for dreamland. Fortunately, "The Best of Ascent" is chock full of stories 10 to 15 pages in length, just the right prelude to dreams of endless high altitude alpine ridges on crisp days, picturesque summits and warm granite slabs above green high country meadows.

— Tim Hult

## *A memoir of Yosemite's Golden Age*

*CAMP 4: RECOLLECTIONS OF A  
YOSEMITE ROCKCLIMBER, by  
Steve Roper; 237 pps; The Mountaineers; \$24.95*

Find yourself a seat by the camp fire and fill your Sierra Cup with some Red Mountain burgundy. Make yourself comfortable as Steve Roper spins tales of the Golden Age of Yosemite climbing.

Parts of Roper's new hook do indeed read like a gossipy fireside remembrance; other parts seem more like a scholarly analysis. The overall effect is a solid and enjoyable history of Yosemite climbing.

Golden Ages, of course, are somewhat subjective. According to Roper, Yosemite's began in 1947 with John Salathe and Axe Nelson's first ascent of the Lost Arrow Chimney and ended in 1971 with Warren Harding and Dean Caldwell's 27-day circus on the Wall of the Early Morning Light.

Most of the book focuses on the 1960s, when Camp 4 was home to the men who virtually invented big wall climbing: Harding Royal Robbins,

Chuck Pratt, Yvon Chouinard, Tom Herbert - and Roper. (And yes, they were all men As Roper points out, women had little impact on the sport during these years.)

Armchair mountaineers may know the general outline, but Roper - a wonderful storyteller - enlivens it with great anecdotes. Many of us, for example, have heard the story of Allen Steck and John Salathe's battle with thirst as they made the first ascent of the North Face of Sentinel Rock over a scorching July 4 weekend in 1950. What most of us didn't know until now, was that a parched Salathe used his very last swig of water to soak his dentures.

When there was the unlikely collection of climbers assembled for a 1957 ABC Wide World of Sports segment about Yosemite climbing. Hob Swift, John Harlin and Jules Eichorn were recruited for the cameras. The latter, judged "clumsy looking" was instructed to stage a fall, which he did. Watching all this, but not invited to participate, was  
(con't on next page)

## Book review

(con't from previous page)

(Gaston Rebuffat

Roper sets the record straight on some important points. Many writers, including Roper and yours truly, have repeated the story of Salathe fashioning the first hard steel alloy pitons from the axle of a Model A. Alas, this is probably apocryphal. Roper points out that axles were extremely difficult to work with, and bars of the steel alloy would have been cheap and easy for Salathe to obtain.

At times the book strives a little too hard to be the official record. It's hard to imagine, for example, that anyone except the participants care that Gary Colliver and Chris Jones made the eighth ascent of the Salathe Wall in 1969. Instead, I could have used a few more TM Herbert stories.

Overall, though, "Camp 4" is a wonderful read and a great addition to any mountaineer's bookshelf. Roper does a masterful job of capturing a magical time in the history of our sport.

- John Flinn

## Robbins

(con't from page 1)

no less committed to making the world a better place. Every employee devotes at least one hour a week to community service, usually by helping out in the classrooms of local schools. Ten percent of his company's net profits are donated to environmental causes. employees are paid to walk, bicycle or carp001 to work.

Along the way, Robbins found the time and energy to explore many wild and scenic rivers, including the Nio Bio in Chile. He has made numerous kayaking first-descents of whitewater rivers. His biography, Royal Robbins: Spirit of the Age, was written by climbing partner Pat Ament and published in 1992,

These days Robbins tours the country presenting his "40 Years of Adventure" program to raise money for environmental causes. This show will benefit the Climbers' Access Fund.

- John Flinn

## ASK GASTON

**D**ear Gaston: Can you explain to me why we American mountaineers have to use hard-to-pronounce French words to refer to features of American mountains? Instead of Mt. Sill's Swiss Arete, why not the Swiss Ridge? Why not the Dana Gulley instead of the Dana Couloir? By the way, I don't glissade gullies, I butt-slide 'em. (Signed) French Fried.

*My dear French Fried:*

*Gaston, who does his glissading while standing up, has always wondered why you Americans insist on using the French name for the Grand Tetons.*

**D**ear Gaston: What's the deal with the alpine starts? Why would any sane climber want to head



out on a climb at 2 a.m.? (Signed, Sleepy)

*My dear Sleepy:*

*Because that's when the bars close, you nitwit Say hi to Sneezzy and the other dwarves for me. Now go and trouble me no more. Gaston has spokm!*

## CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE: Only used twice Fischer Revolution Crown Striding Skis with Salomon bindings and poles. Excellent condition. Price for complete package is \$125. Debra Sloane. W: (408) 285 1424 e-mail: Sloane-debra@tandem.com.

TRADE: I want to swap my 85 cm Laprade ice axe for a shorter ice axe, preferably something close to 60 cm. My Laprade is a fine tool, and in excellent condition. The shaft is sheathed in hard rubber, an unusual feature that has helped keep my hands warm on many climbs. It would be an ideal ice axe for a very tall climber. Aaron Schuman (415) 390-1901 c-mail: schuman@sgi.com

FOR SALE New! The "Northern Sierra Peaks Guide," by Peter Yamagata covers 71 peaks with 103 routes from Adams Peak to Sonora Peak. All proceeds to the Toiyabe (Chapter of the Sierra Club. To order, send check, payable to the Toiyabe

Chapter, Sierra Club, for \$10 with Sierra Club number or \$11 without, to Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club, Attn: George Churchill, Treasurer, P.O. Box 8096, Reno, NV 89507.

FOR SALE: Two out-of-print books about Norman Clyde, both in good condition. These books are the only books ever written exclusively about Clyde. Note that in the most recent Chessler catalog the second book listed below is priced at \$200. Therefore I think my asking price is reasonable. If you think it is not, please make an offer. Normally I would never part with these literary treasures, except that for me they are both extras.

1. Close Ups of the High Sierra; \$30.
2. Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada; \$150.

Please call George Sinclair at (415) 941-2160.

## The Young and the Grizzled climb Mt. Dana in winter

THE MT. LANGLEY trip scheduled for Feb. 18-21 was moved to Mt. Dana, and the entire group was replaced but the leader remained the same. Borrowing a page from the Dave Ress Trip Report Style Guide, the group consisted of The Grizzled One, The Fair One, and The Young One. A small band, but determined (and competent to boot).

Undaunted by the long drive to Lee Vining in winter conditions, we braved the 60-degree cold for a 10 a.m. Palo Alto start in The Grizzled One's trusty 150,000-mile car, and even with a leisurely lunch of dead chicken we got to our primitive camp by 5 p.m. (OK, it was Murphy's Motel, but The Young One had to sleep on a roll-away! Not even a real bed!) Plenty of time for repacking and phone calls for avalanche details etc.

Pancakes and eggs fueled our post-dawn start up the dry pavement off Highway 120. It was gated at 7,500 feet near the ranger station, apparently reserved for the exclusive use of the Tioga Pass Lodge weenies, who had pickups parked about 3 to 4 miles inside the gate.

Nice grade, but our plastic boots and snowshoes weighed heavy on our backs as we skipped along in trail hiking shoes. The rockfall was our major danger, and we finally got onto steady snow around the now-famous "Camp 9". Snowshoes were not required until Saddlebag Lake, because the Lodge weenies groom the road as a ski trail for their patrons. (I shouldn't be so hard on them... they would not sell us a meal, in spite of the "food/gas/lodging" sign CalTrans provided for them, but they let us fill our water bottles after they called off their dog!)

The Grizzled One chose a camp beside Tioga Lake, at about 9,600 feet, just to the east of the Tioga Pass

entry station. About half of the outhouse was exposed, but there were no picnic tables in sight, leading me to speculate that there was only five feet of snow on the ground. The southern exposures had a lot of exposed rock, and the wind had eroded the snow even on northern slopes. This area appears to have been missed by the heavy snowfall in January, which might be useful info for those planning early summer trips.

Preparing to melt snow for dinner, the MSR performed as expected (it wouldn't light) and the Optimus also performed as expected (it worked fine for the entire group). The sun dropped behind the ridge around 4 p.m., prompting an early dinner. The Fair One tossed it soon afterward, grim testimony to the lack of acclimatization one can expect in winter climbs. Further symptoms did not appear, and we all slid into our bags expecting a warm night after the 50-degree daytime high.

The Young One, having been cast out of the Fair and Grizzled tent sharing pool, peered out of a heavily frosted bivy bag as the pre-dawn light began to grow. Five degrees. Not quite what we expected! Water bottles had become sleeping partners during the night, as we realized how cold it was getting, but we still had to melt water for breakfast.

We left camp around 7 a.m., trudging up the road to Tioga Pass and cutting new tracks to avoid destroying the ski trail. The Grizzled One kept us fairly close to the standard route up Dana (under the outcroppings to the northwest side), and the snowshoes were cutting in a reasonable three inches most of the time. With the full sun came a full wind, 30 mph or so, that kicked up small ground blizzards but kept down the heat we had struggled with the day before.

We switched from snowshoes to boots around 11,000 feet, now on drifts. The Fair One was keeping up, but the toll was heavy from the lost dinner the night before. At 12,000 feet, The Young and The Grizzled left The Fair One to guard the snow-

shoes and quickened the pace in an effort to sprint the remaining 1,000 feet and recover our intended schedule. Some sprint -- the snow grew softer in the bowl, and we had to dodge rocks in the steepest parts (where the wind had blown the snow off).

The Grizzled One grew weary and talked of turning back. The Young One found that following with an extended ice axe provided sufficient motivation, and both had summited by shortly after 1 p.m., an hour behind schedule. Amazing views were admired, comices were avoided, "ooh" and "aah" were said aplenty, and a hasty retreat was made. The wind abated just after we summited, an apparent sign that we had been accepted in this isolation no one could conquer. There was no rocky summit in sight, much less a summit register, due to the waves of wind-packed snow. Maybe next time.

Glissading could be done standing (when the drifts were hard enough), squatting with an ice axe brake (when it was steeper), or sitting (in the softer drifts), making the return fast and fun. We broke camp quickly, and headed back down the road. We cleared the rockfall just before dark, and spread out on the paved part like cows heading for the feedlot. While packing the car, The Grizzled One discovered a missing plastic boot.

The next morning The Young One retrieved the missing boot, for a small fee, having once again rested well at the primitive camp site (but this time on the floor, being denied even the small comfort of a temporary bed). Even with a 6-mile round-trip before breakfast, we managed to rocket The Grizzled One's venerable old car back to Palo Alto by 2 p.m., surely setting some sort of record for unimpeded two-lane travel. The Grizzled One swears he never left the ground, but discussions of welfare and the body politic kept his passengers unaware of actual speeds and routes.

— The Young One

## Perfect conditions on a winter ascent of Mount Shasta

**I**F WE were hoping for full conditions for a winter ascent of Mt. Shasta, we were to be sorely disappointed. The weather on Presidents' day weekend was fantastic and the snow conditions were better than that; as good as any I've ever climbed on. The cramponing was firm, just like standing on stiff Styrofoam.

One of the fellows (Chris Jones) got sick (flu) and Dave Rlockus went down with him, leaving Dan Tupper (Mr. Shasta), Brian Boyle, Steve Shields and me. We built a McKinleyesque snow shelter for the night at 10,000 feet and enjoyed "I can see forever" views from our perch on Green Butte Ridge. With a full moon that night the views actually improved under the canopy of starlight with the shimmering outline of our ridge sweeping upward toward a glowing white summit set against a riot of stars.

Our alarm didn't go off on time, and we got off to a "late" 630 a.m. start. As the sun rose, silhouetting our ridge in a warm orange and yellow glow, all I could think of was this is my fantasy ridge! Sweeping views of a wild alpine-scape on either side and a commanding view of the Siskiyou high country behind me.

So much snow has fallen on Shasta's flanks that only the tallest gendarmes were showing above the ridge line, each one presenting an interesting mixed climbing problem. With steep snow chutes falling away on either side, these ice-encrusted rock combs posed routefinding and alpine climbing challenges we here in California seldom experience.

At one point I was forced to make several rock climbing moves as I th my feet while hooking my ice axe into an icicle for leverage. One challenge after another left us not tired and beaten but exhilarated and thirsty for more. This was a climb worthy of the best!

Dan and I moved out in front of the others at a steady pace, making route finding choices and the first steps in otherwise perfect snow flutes, sculpted and hardened to perfection by gale force winds. Each obstacle required the full measure of alpinist choices: route finding, rock climbing, hazard avoidance, front pointing, all manner of axe positioning and physical endurance.

Green Butte was throwing every trick at us it could muster, and we laughed at it using all of our experience. I swear that at one of these gendarmes all I could think was how much it resembled "the Hillary step" on Everest.

Where Green Butte ended at the Red Banks, a new kind of snow pattern emerged. Here the snow fields endured the constant blasting of hurricane force winds, often carrying large amounts of moisture, these winds blasted into the rock formations, depositing long horizontal tentacles of ice onto the windward faces. So strong and so moist are these winds that even the snow on the ground is covered with these textiles of ice. As they grow longer, these ice tentacles break off, casting their shards of ice on the ground there to roll around in the wind. Repeated millions of times, these shards roll against one another, shaping them into round and oval shaped frozen spheres covering the ground in great heaps of white and blue gem stones.

Misery Hill once again earned its name as Dan and I trudged up its featureless hulk that has so often discouraged first-time climbers with its false summit promises. Once on the summit plateau, we found ourselves in the company of nearly 15 other climbers converging from either the Avalanche Gulch or Cassaval Ridge routes.

The surprising calm of the plateau contrasted sharply with the steady strong winds on the summit. The new register served to record my sixth ascent and Dan's twentieth, as well as tell us no one had climbed the peak in the months of November, December, or January.

In fact only a few parties had proceeded us, but nearly 25 people that day w odd summit. Truly an amazing number considering this was the middle of winter.

The decent was uneventful except that the snow conditions were so ideal, so consolidated, Dan and I decided to skirt Avalanche Gulch's sides on the way down and regain our ridge much lower on the mountain. Quickly packing my gear, I domed my Randenee skis, locked them down and managed snowplow survival turns all the way down the hill, meeting Dave and Chris at 530 p.m. at Runny Flat. Truly a climb to remember.

- Tim Hult

## Chunder on the equator: A messy ascent of Kilimanjaro

**P**EOPLE vomit with an accent. Trust me on this one. I've become something of an expert. Camped outside the 15,200-foot-high Kibo Hut on Kilimanjaro, I spent an evening listening to an international troupe of mountain sickness sufferers stagger out to recycle their suppers into the darkness.

First was a miserable-sounding woman who retched and groaned with a thick cockney inflection. Clearly an Aussie. The second victim sounded American, but her soft vowels gave her away as a Canadian. Urduugggg-hhhhhhhhh eh? Next up was a guy sputtering and moaning with whatever the opposite of *joie de vivre* is. Definitely French. Ratting cleanup was someone with the unmistakably clipped intonation of an upper-cmst Englishman.

This went on until midnight, when a beeping watch announced it was time to crawl reluctantly out of my toasty sleeping bag, gulp down a cup of heavily sugared tea and head out into the frigid blackness. Fataeli, a member of the Chagga tribe of Tanzania and our chief guide, lined us up and counted heads. We

(con't on next page)

(con / from previous page)

had 19 summit aspirants and one non-starter — Kay, the Australian woman I'd heard earlier. Clammy-faced and glassy-eyed, she was sensibly heading down immediately.

An ascent of 19,300-foot Kilimanjaro it turns out, entails three pleasant days of hiking through varied and interesting terrain — and one shivering, nightmarish slog up an interminable scree slope in the middle of the night. Overall, the rapid climb to altitude is brutal. In 72 hours you ascend nearly 15,000 feet. It was no wonder most of our group suffered greatly from acute mountain sickness. At least they were better off than the Brit we saw being carried off the mountain with what I assumed to be cerebral edema.

Me, I was gulping down Diamox tablets like they were M&M's, I felt fine.

"Ready?" said Fahtaeli. "O.K., let's go. *Pole-pole*." That's Swahili for "slowly." Fahtaeli has been climbing Kilimanjaro for 20 years, and he estimates he's reached the summit some 3,000 times. (Although I suspect an extra zero might have sneaked in there.) His father and grandfather were Kilimanjaro guides, and he is grooming his eldest son to be one, too. Fahtaeli has never set foot on another mountain.

Guiding on Kilimanjaro, it turns out, consists of bunching your charges into as tight a line as possible and then herding them along at a ludicrously slow pace. I've stood in lines at Disneyland that moved faster.

Fahtaeli went first with a lantern, and a cadre of assistant guides fanned out behind him, taking up positions like border collies behind a flock of sheep. Our sniffing noses were almost literally rubbing up against the backpacks of the people in front of us. When I tried to leave a little space in front of me I was physically shoved forward to close the gap.

For five hours my world consisted of my headlamp beam illuminating the feet of the person ahead of me. For diversion there were periodic splotches of frozen vomit along the

trail. Around 3 a.m., Sandra, an IBM saleswoman and mountain bike racer from Oakland, stepped out of line and made a fresh contribution, her third of the morning. If I had felt as bad as her and some of the others I would have turned back long before.

My headlamp beam dimmed rapidly and went out, a casualty of the cold. I pulled my water bottle out of my parka. Its neck was choked with ice. We were moving so slowly it was impossible to get warm.

"This is what hell must be like," said a voice in the darkness. "No," replied another. "This is what it's like when hell freezes over."

We were just below the crater rim when a band of dark blue appeared on the horizon. Over the next half hour it turned grey, then silver, then pink, then orange. Finally the yellow ball peeked over the sub-peak of Mawenzi and I imagined we were catching the very first rays of the new day to strike the African continent.

I had no way of knowing whether this was actually true, but it was a pleasant thought at this point and I needed a new one. Crunching up the loose scree trail at 18,000 feet, I found that a single thought would suffice to occupy my altitude-addled mind. But after chewing on one for half an hour it would lose its flavor like a wad of worn-out Doublemint. So every so often I'd have to come up with a fresh thought to take its place.

The spot where the trail hits the crater rim is called Gilman's Point. It's 18,600 feet high and looks and feels like the top. There are all sorts of signs to make it look official, and most people are happy to stop there. (One member of our group arrived at Gilman's, accepted a hearty "well done!" and spent the next 10 minutes vomiting into the crater.) For reaching Gilman's Point, they even give you a certificate when you get back down the mountain.

But the inconvenient fact is that the actual summit, Uhuru Point, is nearly two miles around the crater rim and 700 feet higher. After perhaps half an hour, Fahtaeli said in a barely audible voice: "Anyone for Uhuru?"

He was nipping at a pint of cheap Tanzanian whiskey and clearly would have preferred to head down.

Much to his disappointment, eight of us were eager to go on. The others descended with an assistant guide. For non-mountaineers, they had put in a pretty impressive performance to reach Gilman's.

As it turned out, it was during the walk along the crater rim to Uhuru Point that Kilimanjaro's stark beauty emerged in full. As fleecy clouds boiled up from the plains of Kenya below, we picked our way along a narrow ridge with views of awesome ice cliffs and near-equatorial glaciers.

Diamox coursing through my veins, I felt surprisingly chipper—at least physically. Hut the oxygen-thin air at 19,000 feet reduced my already-limited mental capacity to almost nothing. I plodded along in a dull, dreamlike state, pausing occasionally to point my camera at something but forgetting to focus.

The summit of Africa is not much to look at. It's just a rounded, rocky point along the rim with a collection of signs and plaques. There is an impressive ice cliff nearby —or at least my summit photos show one. I don't really remember it.

I vaguely recall sitting down, chewing on a frozen Snicker's bar and staring straight ahead. After a while someone mumbled, "Maybe we should go down." I looked at my watch: We'd been sitting there for nearly an hour, and nobody could account for the time.

Before descending, we all autographed the summit register. It didn't occur to me to look at the recent entries. If I had, I would have found that Martha Stewart (yes, she of the immaculately set holiday table) had reached the top of Kilimanjaro a couple weeks before me. So much for macho points.

— John Flinn

## Three peaks and aspens on the side in the season's last trip

A GOOD trip starts with good planning, and leaders Debbie Benham and Phyllis Olrich went all out in planting this early October trip to Virginia Peak (12,001 feet). They studied maps, interviewed trip applicants, interrogated all known PCSers who've climbed in the area, and consulted their own vast alpine experience.

Anticipation rose to a fever pitch during the week before the trip, with flurries of phone calls and e-mail notes burning up the South Bay telephone lines. Debbie and Phyllis even sent out an official looking "data sheet before the trip, containing detailed directions to the trailhead, vital statistics and personality quirks of each participant, and an admonition to be at the trailhead *later than* 6:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 1.

The 10 lucky and gender-balanced participants felt very privileged indeed. Besides Debbie and Phyllis, they included Paul and Cecil Magliocco, Dan Tischler, Larry tester, Patty Haight, Steve King, Nancy Fitzsimmons and me (Jim Ramaker).

So there we all were at the Green I Lakes trailhead at the appointed time — packs packed, breakfast eaten, boots laced, sunscreen on — and no sign of Phyllis and Debbie. We waited and waited. They finally pulled in about 9 a.m., hunched down in their seats in the hope that we wouldn't see them. After suitable apologies, they were forgiven, and we stood around and watched them get ready. Phyllis was definitely the catalog girl on this trip, with a perfectly color-coordinated purple and teal ensemble of jersey, vest, parka, tights, and hat. Nancy got honorable mention for her combination of flowered tights with a flower pattern fleece jacket.

With the fashion competition decided, the ten of us headed up the trail about 9:30. A major storm had swept over the mountains a few days

before (and Paul, climbing in the southern Sierras with a friend, had been caught in it), but this morning was clear and beautiful.

The yellow and orange aspen trees stood out against the bright blue sky, and the colorful east side rocks and cliffs glowed in the morning sun. We stopped for lunch at the old miners cabin in Glines Canyon around noon, and we reached Virginia Pass about 1.

Virginia Peak comes suddenly into view at this point, usually looking a bit steeper and bigger than you expect. From the pass, we left the use trail, descended across the alpine valley of upper Virginia Canyon, and arrived at our camp at the beautiful lake at the foot of Virginia Peak at around 2. Cecil, Paul, Nancy, and Dan soon dashed off to climb Grey Butte (11,200 feet), the granite pyramid south of Virginia, while the rest of us napped or read.

Back in camp that evening, Debbie entertained us with a fascinating collection of vulgar jokes, including the one about the woman with four husbands, and the one about the French recipe for peaches.

The frosty October evening sent some of us to bed around 7:30 p.m., and by 8:30 p.m. things were silent in camp except for the occasional thump thump of deer prowling around, and a few far-off screams of coyotes. After 10 solid hours of sleep, we awoke in the frosty dawn for our non-alpine start. We left camp about 7:30 a.m., and by 8 a.m. we were climbing up the narrow gully leading to the rockbound lake just north of Virginia. Our plan was to do Virginia and then split into two groups, with five of us traversing over to do Twin Peaks (12314 feet). From the rockbound lake, we followed Debbie up the easy scree slope to the saddle between Virginia and Twin, and then climbed the fun class 2 northwest ridge of Virginia.

The trail blazers topped out at 9:20 a.m. and soon we were all on top. No stragglers on this trip, even though Debbie and Phyllis flogged us along at a pretty fair pace all week-

end. Despite being fairly steep on all sides, Virginia has a flat summit area about the size of a suburban living room, and we all relaxed, snacked, and took summit photos.

This trip had an interesting camera procedure — whoever started taking a picture of the group immediately got a pile of about seven cameras at his or her feet, followed by much whirring and clicking.

With the amateur photography completed, the professional fashion work began. Debbie readied her camera, and Phyllis posed on the edge of the precipice, a vision in purple and teal, face thrust upward in a heroic pose, silk scarf floating on the alpine breeze. Negotiations for a photo spread in "Vogue" magazine are ongoing, with the "Loma Prieta" and "Girljock" magazine as backups.

With great reluctance, the Twin Peakers tore themselves away from this spectacle, bade farewell to the Virginia-only folks, and descended back to the saddle. The five of us (Cecil, Paul, Nancy, Dan, and me) traversed along the ridge to Twin Peaks, starting with a class 1 stroll on scree, then a class 2 talus hump, then some class 3 climbing past some pinnacles near the summit.

According to the summit register, we were only the second party (and most likely the last) to climb the peak this year. That's a bit surprising as it's higher than Matterhorn, but on the other hand, it doesn't have a catchy name and it looks like a black hulk with no easy approach, so I guess that explains it.

For the descent we took the 1500-foot scree gully that drops from the summit into upper Virginia Canyon. About this gully the less said the better, except that it makes you very glad to finally step onto the soft grass and beautiful alpine meadows at the bottom.

The other five folks were long gone of course, and we packed up and hiked out in their footsteps, savoring the alpine scenery, the fall colors, and what for most of us would be the last climbing trip of the year.

-Jim Ramaker

## A tale of pinheads powderhounds and jacuzzi potatoes

**D**ESPITE SNOW-clogged driving on Interstate 80, a group of eight Sierra Club members had a ball telemarking through wondrous snow in the Truckee area on Jan. 21-22. Tim Hult Brenda Bowman, John Langbein, Karen Davis, Pat Cecil, Andy Hudson and Andy Skumanich joined leader Butch Suits on this powdery pilgrimage.

We stayed at Brenda and Tim's cabins in Tahoe City. At least one car skirted the "metering" roadblock on Highway 80 by taking 49 north and 20 east to rejoin 80 at Emigrant Gap.

On Saturday we skied Silver Peak. The trailhead is a plowed area about 2 1/2 miles north of the Squaw Valley turnoff. The snow-covered roads that ascend Pole Creek and the neighboring ridges offer great skiing for intermediates; for inveterate peak baggers and telegeeks, the ridgetops are the place to go.

We were fortunate to start about 1/2 hour behind another strong party. They broke trail for us all the way to the summit. As we left the snow-covered road for the steep shoulder of Silver Peak, the gray clouds cleared and, to the southeast, Lake Tahoe lay glittering in the sun.

Near the top, spectacular vistas opened in all directions-notably the Squaw Valley peaks to the south and the lovely snowy cirque of upper Pole Creek to the northwest. Some of the slopes we crossed were steep, but the avalanche hazard was low. The previous weekend's rains had refrozen and added strength to the snowpack.

After lunch near the summit, we skied over the top, enjoying a delightful powder run down the mountain's west flank to the next saddle on the ridge. We tried to ski directly over the next peak, but at the summit we found cliffs everywhere except the way we came up. Skiing back down this northeast slope was

pure bliss. Our skis turned almost effortlessly in a foot of dry snow. Waves of powder whispered from our edges.

It was time to go down. We completed a loop by tracking more virgin powder to the bottom of Pole Creek canyon then following a low-angle road back to our trailhead.

That evening three of us soaked in the hot tub at Tim's complex, wedging ourselves in with a bunch of raucous post-adolescents. Later the conversation was much more intelligent when we retreated to Brenda's cabin for a group spaghetti feed. We had a birthday cake but no birthday boy. Dave Giese had to work this weekend, so we sang Happy Birthday to him over the phone as we devoured his cake.

Sunday we awoke to snow flurries. Instead of battling a blizzard on the open slopes of Castle Peak, we decided to go powder prospecting at a

more sheltered area. From the Blackwood Canyon snowpark south of Tahoe City, we ascended the north slopes of Blackwood Ridge-a steep, wooded climb of about 1500 feet. Breaking trail in the deep snow was tiring, but Pat Cecil got us off to an energetic start. Later, our labors lessened when we found a trail made by skiers the previous day.

At the top we traversed the short, bare ridgetop which forms the summit. Spindrift howled across the crest-what the Scats call "full conditions." Soon, however, we were out of the wind, swooping joyfully through the open forest on the mountain's northwest flank. As the flurries returned, muffled hoots of glee could be heard from skiers surfing the powder wave. In 14 years of Sierra skiing I've never had better snow.

- Hutch Suits

## A word to the wise: climb if you must, but beware of X-rays and food coloring

**J**ust how risky is our sport? It depends upon whom you ask. The general public takes a somewhat more alarmist view than so-called risk assessment experts.

American Demographics magazine, in its December 1994 issue, published a chart ranking the 30 most dangerous activities, as rated by the general public and risk assessment experts. The League of Women Voters were used to represent the general public. The magazine didn't say who the "experts" were.

Mountain climbing ranked 15th

on the list of the LOW's top-30 fears, slightly more dangerous than spray cans (?) and one notch safer than bicycling. Nuclear power, motor vehicles and pesticides were all deemed a bigger threat than climbing.

The experts ranked climbing 29th out of 30, one spot more dangerous than power mowers and one safer than skiing. S-rays, electric power, contraceptives, food preservatives, food coloring and prescription antibiotics were cited by the experts as more dangerous than climbing.

### RISKIEST ACTIVITIES AS JUDGED BY:

#### League of Women Voters

1. Nuclear power
2. Motor vehicles
3. Handguns
4. Smoking
5. Motorcycles
15. Mountain climbing

#### Experts

1. Motor vehicles
2. Smoking
3. Alcoholic beverages
4. Handguns
5. Surgery
29. Mountain climbing

# PRIVATE TRIPS

*Private trips are not insured, sponsored or supervised by the Sierra Club or the PCS. They are listed here as a courtesy to the organizers because they may be of interest to PCS climbers.*

## MT. SHASTA

March 18-19  
Green Butte Ridge  
14,162 feet, Class 3+  
Organizer: Kai Wiedman  
(415)347-5234

The symmetry of the Green Butte Ridge has attracted mountaineers for years. It soars skyward to meet

Sargents Ridge just below Thumb Rock. The Green Butte can be a quick and safe winter approach to the upper reaches of Sargents. Come join us for this airy, challenging and scenic climb. Participants should be in good condition, for our summit day will gain 4,700 feet.

## MT. WILLIAMSON

April 28-30  
14375 ft., Class 2 snow climb  
Organizer: Tony Cruz (408) 944 2003

Join us on a 10-mile snow hike and climb of the second highest

peak in the Sierra. We will hike along George Creek and set camp at a meadow at 11,200 feet. We will summit from the east, on the least technically difficult route on the mountain (normally Williamson is climbed after crossing Shepherd Pass, but we will avoid the pass). Our route is described as "one of the classic bushwhacks of the Sierra," but it may be better with this year's snow pack. Bring ice axe, crampons, snow shoes and winter camping gear. This is one of the few periods during the year when the Forest Service allows people into this restricted big horn sheep area.

## Attention trip leaders

When submitting a trip announcement for publication in Scree, please include all of the following information. The information should be delivered (by telephone US mail, or e-mail) to the trip scheduler. The trip scheduler will collect all trip announcements, verify official PCS trips versus private trips, and forward the announcements to the Scree editor. To eliminate confusion, please do not send trip announcements directly to the Scree editor, who's a bit thick.

For those using email, simply fill in the information to the right of each item and e-mail it to the trip scheduler. The equivalent can be done by hand if using US mail.

For calendar 1995, deliver your trip announcements to:  
Trip scheduler: Paul Magliocco  
Phone: (408) 358- 1168

Address: 15944 Longwood Drive  
Los Gatos, CA 95032

E-mail: pmag@ix.netcom.com

Thanks in advance!

## MAY BE THREE PEAKS

Warren Storkman and Steve Eckert will be doing Three Sisters as a day hike, followed by Spanish Mtn and Tehipite Dome as an overnight backpack on May 19-21. The Friday day hike is optional, but visits a seldom-climbed area. All three peaks are on the SPS list, and all are Class 1 except a short portion of Tehipite that is Class 3. Mark your calendars and watch the Scree for more information

## SIERRA SOLITUDE

The Fourth of July Weekend is usually crowded, but this year Warren Storkman and Steve Eckert will be taking you to the most remote place in the Sierra: Over Hell-For-Sure Pass, across the Ionian Basin, down the Enchanted Gorge, over the Black Divide, and exiting over Bishop Pass. This one-way crossing goes past many desirable peaks, but if you don't have an entire week, join us for a three-day climb of Mt Goddard and you can make it back to work on Tuesday! We will probably hire mules to ferry food up to Martha Lake, so pack weight will be less of a problem.

Trip name (peak name)

Trip date

Elevation of peak(s)

Trip class (class 2, snow, etc.)

Leader(s)

Leader(s)' phone number(s)

Topo maps

Trip description (a few sentences)

**CHAIRPERSON**

Debbie Benham  
1722 Villa St. #2  
Mountain View, CA 94041  
4 15) 964-0558 (h)

**VICE CHAIR/SCHEDULER**

Paul Magliocco  
15944 Longwood Dr.  
Los Gatos, CA 95032  
1408) 358 1168 (h)  
e-mail: pmag@ix.netcom.com

**TREASURER**

Phyllis Olrich  
750 Homer Ave.  
Palo Alto, CA 94301-2907  
(415) 322-0323 (h)  
(415) 725-1541 (w)  
e-mail: PhyllisO@forsythe.stanford.edu

**SCREE EDITOR**

John Flinn  
133 Promethean Way  
Mountain View, CA 93043  
(415) 968-2050 (h)  
(415) 777-8705 (w)  
c-mail: Jnflinn@aol.com

Scree is the monthly journal of the Peak Climbing Section of the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter. Subscriptions are \$10 per year. Checks, payable to the PC'S, should be mailed to the treasurer, Phyllis Olrich. To ensure an uninterrupted subscription, renewal checks must be received no later than the last Tuesday of the expiration month.

**For change of address, contact Paul Vlasveld 789 Daffodil Way, San Jose, CA 95117; (408) 247-6472 (h), (408) 257-7910 x3613 (w)**

PCS meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month. See Scree for location and program information.

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. A rope may be used occasionally.
- Class 4:** Requires rope belays.
- Class 5:** Technical rock climbing.

**Deadline for April issue: Tuesday, March 28**



Please recycle



*Peak Climbing Section  
789 Daffodil Way  
San Jose, CA 95117*



**First Class Mail**

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