



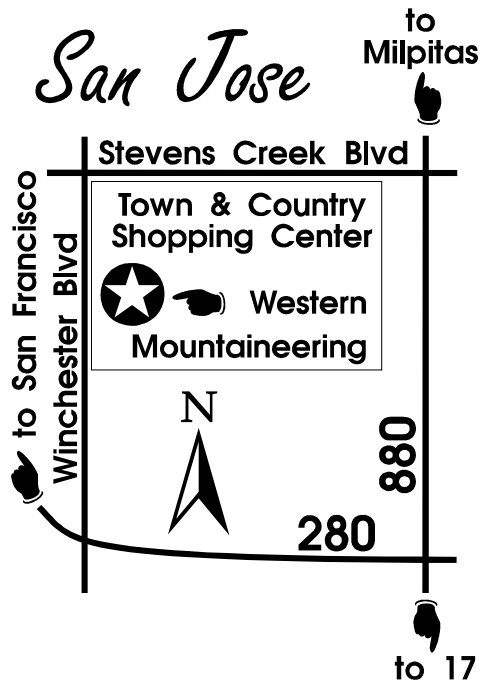
## Next Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, February 11

**Time:** 8:00 PM

**Program:** California-Sierra Near Death Marches in the 70s!

**Location:** Western Mountaineering Town & Country Village, San Jose



**Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 2/23/97. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**

We need people to provide refreshments at the March (and later) meetings. Donations are taken at the meeting to reimburse your expenses. Contact Warren Storkman if you are willing to take on this crucial task!

## Diamonds On The Shoes Of My Soul

*From rec.climbing, with author's permission to print in Scree. This is sort of the flip side of last year's "Why I Quit Climbing" article.*

I've been trying to analyze the reasons I climb for a while: lately, I've been analyzing my climbing too much, I think. I've lost confidence in my climbing, partly due to this, and partly due to the fact that life isn't too climbing-friendly lately. Tonight, however, I think I found out why I climb.

My friends and I are watching a tape of Sat. Night Live music performances right now. I can hear Willie Nelson crooning out a tune in the next room: a little before, we watched Paul Simon sing "Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes" with Ladysmith Black Mambazo. It's a great performance, but if you watch Mr. Simon's face as he sings, you can see the enormous peace and satisfaction the man gets from singing his song. He smiles a lot and looks around, but when he sings a difficult part, he slowly closes his eyes and puts special effort in the piece, removing himself from the rest of the stage for the duration of the part.

I was thinking to myself when I was watching this: this is why I climb. Like for Mr. Simon, it's the fun all around, but when you find the piece that strains your abilities, there's the urgency in the matter. You must concentrate and pull through, stop looking around at other people and work. Afterwards, Mr. Simon would smile. So would I.

It's not even the hard stuff that makes me appreciate climbing: the sense of personal satisfaction I get is worth more than any number, any grade. Sure, cranking on some hard pitch is fun and rewarding, but nothing tops the feeling of cruising some all-gear multipitch in the middle of nowhere. For me, there's always one point in a climb where the entire experience hits me, like a shot of rum- it's like talking with a girl, and at some point, suddenly realizing you're in love. That love for me happened feet before the final anchor on the Grack, and on the umpteenth pitch of Royal Arches. It happened on Serenity, it happened on Renaissance Direct in Phoenix. It happened on Moby Dick in the Stronghold. I love climbing. Every time I climb, I hope to be reminded of this. I hope you all feel the same.

- Robert "Reboston" Ternes <rternes@u.arizona.edu>

## Church Sierra Club

Following is but one of the things I've seen that I referred to this morning in our conversation regarding the club's proposed outright ban of climbing bolts and the changing direction of the club. There is no mention of outings as we have known them for 100+ years.

This is part of why I refer to the club becoming an environmental church: People whose egos drive them to be in control of others (what Richard Hughes calls the oligarchy and I believe to be completely at odds with the fundamental freedom of the wilderness), and those who need to believe in something and enjoy being inculcated with dogma so they don't have to think for themselves -- those who enjoy being told when to write a letter or cut a check. (If you're a church member, Sierra Club or other denomination, who may be offended by my belief stated here, my apology in advance. But please respect my freedom to believe what ever I want, as I do for yourself.)

I wonder how long it will be before the powers that be move to formally change the club's written purpose of 1) Explore 2) Enjoy 3) Protect Wild Places..., to Rabid Protection being #1? In the end (I mean another 100+ years), all the environmental programs won't mean diddly squat without our society coming to grips with the fundamental realities of unchecked population growth vs. the fact there is only so much planet Earth. Either we use our brains to totally plan for a humane future, or the planet will do it for us; in some rather ugly, painful ways.

– David E. Bybee <103275.155@Compuserve.Com>

**TO: Sierra Club Leaders 12/10/96**  
**FR: Adam Werbach, President**  
**RE: Organizational Goals of the Board of Directors**

At the last meeting of the Board of Directors, we identified organizational goals for the Sierra Club. We found considerable agreement in the following six goals. They do not supplant our conservation mission, our number one goal by any standard.

These organizational goals reflect our efforts to ensure that the Sierra Club will be able to carry out our mission effectively for years to come. Please consider how these goals fit into your own work with the Sierra Club. Only together can we create a Sierra Club that our children can count on to protect their future.

This is the first step towards a larger planning process that the Board of Directors will look to you to shape.

Organizational Goals:

1. Improve our financial health and build greater capacity to raise non-deductible (c-4) funds for the Sierra Club.
2. Grow the pool of Club leaders who are trained, motivated and capable of operating on a broad spectrum of issues, including volunteer leadership, conservation activism, management, and development.
3. Enhance the media profile of the Sierra Club to undergird both the Club's conservation work and organizational development.
4. Imbue members with the Club's culture and tradition to increase our sense of common purpose and ability to work together harmoniously.
5. Increase our outreach to new constituencies to become more inclusive and to increase our effectiveness in reaching our mission.
6. Implement an annual evaluation process of the governance of the Sierra Club at the national level, with emphasis on continuously improving decision-making and achieving results.

[May Mother Nature forgive their short sightedness. DB]

## Two Hwy 395 Updates

The Floods of 97 have taken their toll. An 8 mile stretch of 395 was not damaged, it was utterly removed from the face of the earth. The stretch in question was the scenic jaunt between the Sonora Pass turnoff and the small town of Walker. When the monsoon came, the West Walker River not only overflowed its banks, but consumed the entire canyon from wall to wall.

Helicopter pictures reveal the immense devastation. The West Walker River has changed its course throughout the canyon in a meandering fashion, gorging out sides of both canyon walls. There seems like no place to put a road, let alone repair one that basically no longer exists.

Mono County officials are meeting to discuss their options: whether to attempt a rebuild or relocate the 395 to a new location. Either way, it will be a while before a new 395 exists. The small towns of Walker and Topaz Lake will be especially hard hit, since the interstate traffic they depend on no longer goes through.

The current alternate route (northbound) is from the east end of Bridgeport, go north on Hwy 182 which becomes Hwy 338 in Nevada. Continue north to Wellington, then go west on Hwy 208 to rejoin the 395 north of Topaz Lake. This route is only 7 miles longer than the old 395 route, but is slower since there are no passing lanes.

– Bob Sumner <bsumner@avistar.com>

As discussed earlier on this [email broadcast] list, the West Walker River totally destroyed seven miles of US 395 in the canyon between Sonora Junction and Walker. The Mountaingate Lodge in Walker no longer exists; people were lucky to get out alive. A number of people are homeless. According to Mono County Supervisor Andrea Mead Lawrence (of Olympic skiing fame), damage in Mono County amounted to \$38 million. The damage in the Lake Tahoe and Central Valley areas was even more severe.

To get to Reno, take the Smith Valley cutoff. Turn east on CA 182 at the south end of Bridgeport and drive to Wellington, NV. The road then returns to US 395 north of Topaz Lake. The West Walker goes under the highway in Wellington, but the bridge was not washed out.

Replacement of US 395 is urgent because the communities of Walker, Coleville, and Topaz, as well as the Topaz Lake Casino in Nevada, depend upon it for tourism.

But there are some questions. The highway has been totally destroyed five times since the 1920's. The severity of the flood is alleged to be partly due to overgrazing in the Pickel Meadows area. If the road is rerouted (requiring a Federal-State right-of-way transfer) replacement will not happen as quickly, but then the road would be safe from flooding and the West Walker could be declared a Wild and Scenic River, ideal for rafting: a new industry for Mono County.

Please write Andrea Lawrence at P.O. Box 43, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546 immediately with your comments so that she can have some backup from highway users to bring to the Board of Supervisors. CalTrans is already going full speed, so there's not much time.

– Owen Maloy <jom@qnet.com>

## Alta & Silliman

November 29-30, 1996: Rich Calliger proposed a Thanksgiving trip to Sequoia a few weeks ago. After extensive discussion of participants, objectives, etc., Rich and all his initial crew did not go but Rich Leiker and I (David Harris) had an enjoyable snowy ascent of Alta and Silliman.

Leiker and I had one of the all-time worst Thanksgiving dinners (dehydrated food and cup-of-soup) at the Lodgepole campground and sheltered through a light snowstorm Thursday night to wake up Friday morning at 4:30 to a campground blanketed with an inch of fresh snow illuminated by a nearly-full moon through the trees! We met Patrick Ibbetson, a student from Davis who had heard about the trip over the PCS broadcast, at 6 am and began the approach to Silliman at first light.

We left the Twin Lakes trail at the stream flowing down from Silliman Lake and began cross-countrying up the drainage. Despite appearances to the contrary, there were never any obstructions to the route and we made good time up to the sharp bend in the creek where it ascends steep slopes toward Silliman Lake. At this point, the temperature was about 15 degrees and we could see winds sweeping fresh powder over the high ridges. Our water bottles in our packs kept freezing shut. Patrick, lacking serious winter clothing, decided to turn back. Rich and I pressed on up the hill.

The snow was everywhere from about 8000 feet up. Snow shoes were never needed. Most of the snow was packed just hard enough that we could edge with our boots while bracing with an ice axe. Parts of the hill were more difficult where several inches of powder covered a harder layer below. The conditions made the climb strenuous but dropping temperatures, occasional blasts of icy wind, and approaching clouds motivated us to move steadily.

We summited at noon after about 5 and a half hours of climbing. The strong winds had miraculously ceased so we enjoyed lunch with a magnificent view of the Great Western Divide and the rest of the Sierra blanketed in white. We put on crampons for the descent which was very easy on the hard-packed snow; in hindsight we should have used them on the way up.

After another 6:30 bedtime and 4:30 wakeup, we packed up camp Saturday morning and looked for Patrick in case he had decided to drive up again from his home in Fresno for a climb up Alta. When he didn't materialize, we drove around the ridge to Wolverton and took the trail through Panther Gap. The trail had been nicely beaten down much of the way by hikers so we didn't have to break trail until past Mehrten meadows. The day was much warmer, starting in the 20's and warming up to the 30's. I wished I could identify more of the tracks in the fresh snow, but we were pretty certain we saw bear prints crossing the trail.

As Tharps Rock came into view the trail was largely hidden beneath the snow and we decided to try climbing directly to a saddle between two Tharps Rock and a lower rock instead of hiking the long way around behind. The angle eventually approached 35 degrees. Most of the slope was good hard snow for side-stepping, but parts were covered with powder and parts were water ice covering steep slabs; getting around the ice proved quite exciting and I had to use the pick of my axe and the front points of my crampons in places. Rich threw one of his crampons but fortunately was near a lower angle spot where he could put it back on; soon after he threw the other crampon and had to inch up a hundred feet of treacherous slope hanging from his axe and one crampon! Overall, the slope turned a class 1 walkup peak into an exciting climb.

We couldn't find the summit register on the ice-covered summit block, but had another lunch with outstanding views and made good time back to the car following the trail.

Alta and Silliman would have been boring walkups in the summer, but were enjoyable in the winter. The combination of easy trailhead access, moderate elevation, and superb snowy views made them great winter destinations.

– David Harris

## Boundary - Montgomery - Glass

We followed a well defined use trail from just south of the saddle all of the way to the summit of Boundary, losing it in just a few places. One of our group decided he had enough exercise for this trip and decided to hang out here while the rest of us went for Montgomery. Three of our group had failed to get Montgomery on a previous trip so they were well motivated.

The route out to Montgomery seemed to be much looser than it did when I climbed it on a Maris Valkass trip in 1992. At Montgomery, one of the group became ill and we quickly retreated over Boundary and down to a lower elevation. She did not seem much better but she was able to continue back to the vehicles. Several hours later it became apparent that she had nothing more than a common cold -- must be terrible to have a cold at 13,000'!

We camped at Sawmill Meadow Campground at the base of Glass Mountain Ridge. We expected to meet another DPS group which were doing Patterson & Glass but they never showed. Sunday we got a very late start (7:30 a.m.). The two women decided to head for home but the rest of us ran up and down Glass in less than 2-1/2 hours. The Aspens were changing color and they created a great site from the summit. They contrasted with millions of reflections of light from the black obsidian glass particles which covered the near slopes.

September 28-29, 1996: The group consisted of Devra Wasserman, Keith Martin, Rich Gnagy, Jim Schoedler, David Leth, Gary Craig, and Rose Stein. Thanks goes to John Cheslick for his impeccable assistance.

– Charlie Knapke & John Cheslick

## Standard PCS Email

I created a set of PCS email addresses that would never change, and would always be updated to point to the email addresses of the current PCS officers and committee chairs. Steve has been publishing these addresses in Scree for several months.

My computer was caught in a network domain turf skirmish, and, unfortunately, the eternally unvarying addresses have changed. Beginning now, please use these addresses:

`pcs_chair@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`  
`pcs_scheduler@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`  
`pcs_treasurer@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`  
`pcs_editor@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`  
`pcs_webmaster@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`  
`pcs_mtn_chair@kaweah.mti.sgi.com`

If you have local mail aliases pointing to the old addresses, remember to update them.

– Aaron Schuman <schuman@sgi.com>

# Notes and Requests

## PCS Leader List (12/96)

Here is the list of current PCS leaders. If your first aid card has expired, please contact me with proof of renewal. If your name is not listed here, you cannot lead official PCS trips. If you think you qualify to be a leader, please contact me for information and forms.

Name of Leader	Class of Lead	1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Expire
Benham, Debbie	-----	2 Feb 1999
Bulger, Debbie	-----	3 Feb 1997 ?
Bynum, Robert	-----	2 Jun 1999
Caldwell, Dave	-----	3 + winter Nov 1997
Crawley, Roger	-----	3 Jun 1996 ?
Curl, Jim	-----	3 ?
Dyall, Palmer	-----	3 + winter Feb 1998
Eckert, Steve	-----	3 + winter Mar 1997
? Firth, Sheldon	-----	2 Jun 1997
Ford, Noreen	-----	2 Mar 1997
Gaillard, Anne	-----	2 Oct 1997
Gross, Bob	-----	2 Mar 1998
Harris, David	-----	3 ?
Hult, Tim	-----	4 + Winter Sep 1999
Ingvoldstad, John	-----	3 May 1999
? Ingvoldstad, Kate	-----	2 Sep 1995
Isherwood, Bill	-----	4 + winter Oct 1998
Kramar, Chris	-----	3 Apr 1996 exp
Macintosh, Chris	-----	3 + winter Aug 1996 exp
Magliocco, Cecil	-----	3 Dec 1998
Maas, Kelly	-----	3 + winter Aug 1997
Maxwell, Peter	-----	3 Dec 1998
?Ottenburg, Marj	-----	2 Feb 1998 ?
Ramaker, Jim	-----	3 Apr 1996 exp
Rau, Vreni	-----	3 Jan 1999
Schuman, Aaron	-----	3 Feb 1997
Sefchik, Laura	-----	2 Feb 1998 ?
Shields, Steve	-----	4 Jun 1997
Simpson, Richard	-----	2 + winter Mar 1996 ?
Schafer, Charles	-----	4 Aug 1997
? Stewart, Anita	-----	1 Febr 1997
Storkman, Warren	-----	2 Mar 1997
Suits, Butch	-----	3 + winter Nov 1997
Suzuki, Bob	-----	3 Mar 1998
Van Gordon, George	-----	3 Feb 1999
Wallace, Bob	-----	3 Feb 1998
Wiedman, Kai	-----	4 + winter Mar 1998 ?
? Yager, Chris	-----	4 + winter Mar 1997

– Tim Hult <pcs\_mtn\_chair@kaweah.mti.sgi.com>

## Canadian China Connection

*Note: At this time, the Scree does not collect any fees for advertising, but limits content to ads which the Editor thinks will be of interest to peak climbers. Perhaps someone would like to volunteer as bill collector and fund raiser?*

Happy New Year. We would like to place advertisement with your publications. Please send us by postal service your advertising rate and a few samples of your publications.

CHINA\_HIKING, P. O. BOX 5967  
TORONTO, ONTARIO CANADA M5W 1P4  
[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/china\\_hiking](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/china_hiking)

– Tony H. Pau <105121.1316@compuserve.com>

## Look, Ma, NO STEEL!

If you want a good lightweight crampon for occasional peak-bagging or mountaineering try the Andes crampon. They are an

aluminum crampon and I've never been able to feel any flex in them on snow or nevé. Climb Axe distributes them in the US. (Climb Axe is a small climbing gear distributor in Bellingham WA. Give them a call at 206-734-8433.) Cheers!

– Malcolm Daly <mdaly@trango.com>

## Free Ski Mountaineering Schedule

The officers of the Loma Prieta Chapter's Ski Touring Section have voted *not* to provide an online version of their schedule, but the Angeles Chapter's Ski Mountaineering Section goes to many of the same places and posts their activities on the Web at <<http://www.edgeinternet.com/skimt>>, along with other useful info and links. Both members and non-members are welcome.

## Koflach Ultras For Sale

Size 12 plastic boots for sale, best offer will be accepted no matter how crazy it is. I have a "mature" pair that were kept for spares, and a "younger" pair that I grew out of. The older pair would be great for someone who wanted to try plastic boots without a big investment. These are rigid climbing boots with hinges at the ankle. 415-508-0500 or [eckert@netcom.com](mailto:eckert@netcom.com)

– Steve Eckert

## One Last Bear Story

*Note: This is from rec.backcountry, but could have been included in Butch's recent animal stories if it had been found sooner:*

The grossest story I heard was from a friend and colleague: He was hiking with his little brother in the Sierra (at around 10K up) and his brother got altitude sick and puked all over the thermarest. They put the thing outside the tent for the night. The next morning, they were awakened by their neighbors banging pots to chase a bear away. They went out to help. When they returned, they discovered the thermarest had been licked clean. Mmmm... mmm...

– Sarah Boomer <sarai@u.washington.edu>

## Annapurna in April

Some companions and I are planning on trekking the Annapurna Circuit in April; we are organizing a do-it yourself tour. I am also considering trying to climb Pisang and / or Thorong Peak and wanted to see if anyone out there had experience with climbing these peaks. If you have, I would like to hear about your experience. Please reply directly to me at <[roy@actel.com](mailto:roy@actel.com)>

– Roy Lambertson

## List Finishers Unite!

I am not content to commute on weekends to the Sierra to bag a few peaks, so starting June first (approximately), I intend to relocate to the Sierra to complete a long time goal, the SPS list of some 235 peaks. I am looking for (a) partner(s) interested in all/part of this project. I have done 100 of the more difficult ones already. Please realize, I am in terrible shape so the pace will be slow initially. Call or fax 415-674-8508.

– Steve Brewer

## Official (PCS) Trip

PCS trips must be submitted through the Scheduler (see back cover for details). Trips not received from the Scheduler will be listed as PRIVATE, without recourse.

### Lassen Is Largest

Peak: Mt Lassen (10,457') class 2 - snow  
 Topo: Lassen Peak 7.5'  
 Dates: Feb 15-17 Sat-Mon  
 Leader: Palmer Dyal 415-941-5321  
 Co-Leader: Chris Kramer

This will be an 8 mile snowshoe trip to climb the world's largest dome volcano. Lassen last erupted in 1915; only Mt St Helens is more recent. The elevation gain is moderate and we plan to camp at tree line. There will be time to build snow caves on the first day and view the colorful sunset if weather permits. On the second day we will climb the peak and return via Bumpass Hell to see the blue and green hot pools. If the going is easy we can return on Sunday or if not on Monday. This will be a good trip for beginning climbers.

## Unofficial (Private) Trips

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

### Silliman on Snowshoes

Peak: Mt Silliman snow  
 Dates: Feb 14-16 Fri-Mon  
 Contact: Rich Calliger calliger@infolane.Com  
 Co-Contact: Mike Ranaldi

Mike Ranaldi and I are finally going to make the Sequoia/Lodgepole snowshoe trip the weekend of Feb 14-16 leaving as soon as possible Friday afternoon. We will probably snowcamp near Silliman with the option of car-camping at Lodgepole, doing a day snow-shoe up Silliman then moving the car around and doing Alta. As you know probably this is a very very pretty area in the winter... Anyone else care to join us? Major storm cancels. Light snow/rain is a go.. There is apparently plenty of snow above 8500'. but we will examine exact conditions near the date.

### Mt. Eddy in Winter

Peak: Mt. Eddy (9000') class ?  
 Dates: Feb. 15-17 Sat-Mon  
 Contact: Eugene Miya 415-961-6772

Mt. Eddy is the peak across Interstate 5 from Mt. Shasta. The summit is just above treeline, and the owner of the Fifth Season notes that in a good year, it is possible to ski into the town of Mt. Shasta from Eddy's summit. The intent is to ski the bowls and surrounding cirques. Prior winter experience required. Skiing should be considered advanced and subject to weather and avalanche hazard. Max. party size will be eight. Cross-listed with the STS. Call before Dec. 21 or after Jan. 5.

### Redwoods & Cascades

Peak: Mt. McAbee class 1  
 Date: March 8 Sat  
 Contact: Debbie Benham home: 415-964-0558  
 dmbenham@aol.com  
 Co-Contact: Judith Dean home: 415-854-9288  
 judith.dean@forsythe.stanford.edu

We'll get a chance to enjoy grand redwoods and thunderous falls on this 12 mile hike at Big Basin State Park. We'll start 9am at

park headquarters, climb to the Mt McAbee overlook, then loop round and up to Golden Falls. Carpool point in Palo Alto: Montrose & Middlefield Rd. leaving promptly at 7:30am. Any questions, please feel free to contact leaders.

### Packing It In

Peak: Excelsior (12446'), Dunderberg (12374') snow  
 Dates: Mar 15-17 Sat-Mon  
 Leader: Steve Eckert eckert@netcom or SASE  
 Co-Leader: Tom Sexton

ex.cel.si.or \ik-'sel-se--\*\ n [fr. L, higher, compar. of excelsus high, fr. pp. of excel]ere : fine curled wood shavings used esp. for packing fragile items [Originally a trade name]

Snowshoes and ice axe required for this climb. Great views are promised, and great glissading is hoped for. At least the snow will keep it from being a scree slog! Bad weather delays by one week. We'll try to finish in 2 days, with a third day just in case. Restricted to Sierra Club members. Send email or SASE with experience to leader. Official SPS trip with Angeles Chapter.

### Mt. Ritter From The Back Side

Peaks: Ritter (13150'), Banner (12943') class 2, snow  
 Dates: July 14-19 Mon-Sat  
 Trailhead: Agnew Meadows  
 Contact: Alan Ritter 314-225-7600 x5362  
 jar@storz.com

Leave Agnew Meadows Monday, 14 July, camp near Thousand Island Lake, then hike over North Glacier Pass and on down to Ritter Lakes on 7/15. Approach is on-trail (10 mi) to 1,000 l., off-trail (2 mi) from there. Secor's western approach is Class 2. If assault on Mt. Ritter succeeds 7/16, we may give neighboring Banner Peak a try 7/17, before hiking back out 7/18-7/19. Ice axe and crampons required. Snow camping possible at 1,000 l. very probable at Ritter Lakes. Reference last summer's trip report:

<http://reality.sgi.com/csp/pcs/Reports/ritter9606.html>

**"What cannot be attained  
 should at least be attempted."  
 -- Alexander von Humboldt**

## Advance Trip Schedule

Contact the Editor and the Scheduler if you have a change to this list, or if you wish to have your name listed. Leaders, get your announcements, with trip details and contact information, to the PCS trip Scheduler for the full trip announcement:

Mar 22-23 Ventana Double Cone -----?  
 Apr 5-6 Lamont Peak & Pilot Knob -----Schuman  
 Apr 12-13 Olancho -----SPS  
 Apr 18-20 Gilbert & Johnson (SPS) ----- Eckert/Cohen  
 May 3-4 Spanish Needle & Owens -----SPS  
 May 3-4 Mt. Dana -----SPS  
 May 24-26 Birch, Tinemaha -----SPS  
 Jun 7-8 Bolton Brown, Thumb -----SPS  
 Jun 7-8 Wynne, Pinchot, Perkins -----SPS  
 Jun 21-23 Izaak Walton & Silver (SPS)----- Eckert/Hudson  
 Jun 21-22 Corcoran, LeConte -----SPS  
 Jun 21-22 Black, Diamond -----SPS  
 Jun 28 Mt. Mills -----SPS  
 Aug 9-11 Disappointment, Middle Palisade -----SPS

## Mont Blanc My Way

The sun may also rise over Kilimanjaro, but between August 24 and August 31 [1996] most recently it rarely rose over Mont Blanc. The summary of my encounter with gloom and doom above Chamonix may allow others to smooth the square edges on the wheel I invented during the organization and implementation of my own solitary expedition to the Mont Blanc Massif in the course of which I observed that both culture and elevation must be considered when climbing in the French Alps.

In January of this year I decided to try to climb both the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc in the last week of August. I considered Alpine Skills International whose headquarters is in Donner Pass, California but it would not give me references from its past trips to Mont Blanc and its scheduled trip did not include Matterhorn. I considered the program offered by the American Alpine Institute but its limited itinerary and my past experiences regarding Institute trips eliminated it. I then considered Frank Kelsey's American Alpine Adventures. Frank is based in Chamonix and advertises in *Rock & Ice* and *Climbing*. For \$2,500 in advance he was willing to guide me on both Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn. I called guide groups in Chamonix and was told that he was a guide "aspirant". Whatever he is, I decided \$2,500 in advance with no assurance that weather would permit climbing was too steep for me. I then turned to a French guide from Chamonix I met while climbing water ice with Yamnuska in Alberta in February. He referred me to a friend of his who is a guide in Chamonix. This is when my cultural adventures began.

The friend, whom I will call Guillaume, was a very friendly fellow and communication with him was facilitated by his fax machine at his home. However, after repeatedly asking him for a reference to a hotel in Chamonix and for a list of trip items, itinerary and equipment, all I was told was don't worry and bring sun glasses. Our relationship ended when I called the local climbing organizations to check up on his credentials. When he found out I called about him, he fired me as a client.

Not at all disappointed at being fired by a guide who couldn't refer me to a hotel and who told me only that I need sunglasses to climb Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, I called the *Compagnie de Guides de Chamonix-Mont Blanc*. The *Compagnie* is the first and reputedly finest guide group in Europe founded under special French law in 1821. One wall of the *Musee Alpin* in Chamonix is dedicated to the *Compagnie*. Comprised of about 180 guides, the *Compagnie* is as much of a fraternity as a guide organization. Whenever one *Compagnie* guide meets another *Compagnie* guide in the mountains, it is as if two long lost best friends meet.

The *Compagnie* was a little more informative. It told me to bring boots and a jacket. No long lists of itinerary and requirements were provided, but also there were no commitments, significant deposits, waivers, contracts or any of the usual incidents of deforestation necessitated by American and Canadian guide organizations. With a merry ho ho good fellow well met greeting the *Compagnie* assured me I would have a guide for a week the identity of whom I would learn during the big introduction the night of my arrival on Saturday, August 24. The *Compagnie* charges only for actual climbing at the rate of \$246 per day or \$680 for a Mont Blanc summit climb.

With this somewhat more amorphous than customary guide commitment, I proceeded to search the web for a hotel assuming that weather would prevent climbing on several days and in any event I would need a base. There were remarkable differences in

results between search engines but eventually I retrieved a list of every hotel in Chamonix with its star rating and fax and phone numbers. I faxed a request for a reservation and room rate to the *Le Montagnard* which seemed an appropriate name for a mountaineer's base hotel. We settled on a room value of 250FF per day (\$50) for 7 days and I authorized a charge to my Visa card. The hotel never did charge my card, send a confirmation, or even have me sign in when I arrived, but with the hotel somewhat tentatively out of the way I analyzed the approach. Because of frequent flyer mile award limitations, American Airlines was my preferred carrier so the carrier choice was simple. The bribe to my wife and daughter for allowing me to cavort about the Alps was diversion in Paris while I was in the Alps. Accordingly American flights 48 and 49 coming and going between LAX and Paris Orly was an easy choice.

The route from Paris to Chamonix was more involved. Returning to the Web I retrieved a lot of information on access to Chamonix. Much more information in any event than my friend Guillaume who apparently climbs wearing only sun glasses was able to tell me. Hopefully his ability to find mountain tops is better than his ability to find either Chamonix or a hotel in Chamonix. After several hundred dollars worth of phone calls, I settled on the high speed TGV from Paris' Gare Lyon to Geneva, Switzerland's CFF station. I booked the TGV through Rail Europe, and booked the rail connection from Geneva to Chamonix in Paris where I discovered that Rail Europe marks up the tickets 100% over what they cost in France. The TGV took 3.5 hours to go 400 miles to Geneva and the local French trains got me the next 49 miles to Chamonix in another 2.5 hours with three train changes not counting the change in Geneva which I discovered during the 20 minutes I had for the transfer that the train from Geneva to Chamonix left from a station on the side of town opposite from the side of town in which my arrival station was located.

Arriving finally at Chamonix a taxi drove me to *Le Montagnard* which turned out to be far enough out of town that only a mountaineer could love it. Nevertheless, I had a quite pleasant room with private bath and a balcony overlooking the longest glacier in Europe and one of the most awesome views, whenever the clouds allowed, I had ever experienced. There was no heat in the room at all which made drying wet clothes difficult, but except for drying, no heat was necessary. There were both hot water and electric heat sources in the room but both had been disabled for the summer as I discovered when my references to "heat" were finally heard as something other than "eat".

Seven o'clock on Saturday, August 24 was the appointed time for introduction to my guide at which time I punctually presented myself and met Pascal Dufour, a pleasant Frenchman of obvious physical propriety for a guide. He had perfected his English as a skiing instructor at Aspen years ago. Again there were no papers to sign, no inspection of equipment, only a hearty "see you at 7:00 tomorrow morning for a conditioning climb".

At 7:00 Sunday, the 25th, Pascal appeared and informed me as to the obviously inclement conditions prevailing in the mountains above Chamonix. He drove us through the Mont Blanc tunnel which terminates in Chamonix to Courmayeur, Italy, a distance of 5 miles. We took the tram from Courmayeur, at 4,600 feet up to Pnte Helbrouner at 11,355 feet and walked across the glacier at the top of the Mont Blanc Massif under a clear sky 5 miles away from the Massif on the French side which was completely obscured by clouds.

The conditioning climb on Aguille de Toule turned out to be an exam for a climb of the Matterhorn as well as of Mont Blanc. Half way up two crags connected by a ridge I commented that the climb looked more like a Matterhorn climb than a Mont Blanc climb. Pascal obliquely commented that Matterhorn climbing was similar to what we were doing. This climb was not anything with which any serious Sierra Club peak bagger would have a problem. Rated at about 5.2 with mixed rock and ice it was mild crampon and hand climbing except that the exposure on one side was 9,000 feet down without a bounce on the way and on the other side was about 3 trillion cubic meters of ice full of crevasses about a thousand feet below. The difficulty wasn't great but the spincter factor was about 8.5 on a 10 scale. Typical of European guides, Pascal belayed me on a rope which generally he held coiled in his hand keeping me on a three foot tether. Going across crevasses or ledges three feet apart on a rope never made much sense to me but that's what European guides casually and traditionally do.

On Monday the 26th we took the tram to the top of Aguille du Midi above Chamonix, Europe's highest tram stop at 12,601 feet in the heart of the Mont Blanc Massif. From there we walked through an ice tunnel onto a knife edged ridge of ice with the usual and customary exposure into a complete whiteout in driving snow. The spincter factor at this point made even my goggles loose. Forty minutes later we were at the Refuge des Cosmiques at 11,854 feet which is managed by the Compagnie. This is a four star hut. Completed in 1989, it sports flush toilets, thermostatically controlled heat, spacious quarters and typically fantastic French food. A group of Americans and British from London were using it as their climbing headquarters for acclimatization and climbing and basically treating it as their vacation hotel. On a clear day it has a southern view of the Grand Jorasses, Mont Blanc du Tacul, and almost all of the rest of entire Mont Blanc Massif.

On Tuesday morning the 27th at 2:00 we traversed the Col du Midi and started up the east shoulder of Mont Blanc du Tacul. This is a 2,000 foot 60 degree ice fall topping out at 13,900 feet which feeds Glacier des Bossons which falls all the way to the valley floor at 3,000 feet. Our destination was Mont Blanc on the Grand Traverse which is an eight hour traverse of Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit to Mont Blanc. We got to the top of the Tacul shoulder at 13,900 feet along with another Compagnie guide with two clients who were on the same route. The wind and cold were severe. I took off my glove shell on one hand for less than a minute and my hand froze, even though I had a knit glove on, requiring a painful recovery as it regained feeling. At the top of the shoulder it was apparent that a storm was moving in and the wind ruled out any attempt at continuation. The guides aborted the attempt and turned back to Chamonix.

On Wednesday the 28th it stormed. I spent the day watching such classics as "Alerte a Malibu" (Baywatch) and American westerns I remember seeing 25 years ago dubbed in French and drinking wine at Cafe LImpossible. At that point the guide ruled out any attempt on Matterhorn because the hut at the route beginning was under a foot of snow and he wouldn't risk a climb of Matterhorn in icy conditions. Having seen a Swiss TV video I bought on a typical climb of Matterhorn and after looking down 9,000 feet into Italy off a series of typical Matterhorn moves on Sunday, I agreed with the guide's assessment.

On Thursday the 29th in general humid gloom we took the les Houches-Bellevue Telepherique up from Les Houches near Chamonix to La Chalette from which we took the Mont Blanc

Railway to 7,780 feet. Originally the railway was intended to go all the way to the top of Mont Blanc. This objective for the railway was abandoned because of "objective difficulties". These I was soon to discover included the last 2,500 feet of elevation to the Refuge de Gouter which rises in less than 2,000 feet of horizontal distance with the last 1,000 feet of altitude virtually straight up supported by fixed steel cables and steel handholds. The guide books indicate that helmets are mandatory, but few were wearing them on this day because everything was frozen solid. Nevertheless there was loose rock and ice and on two occasions my helmet saved my head not from falling rocks or ice but from hitting my head on overhangs as I went up.

The Refuge de Gouter at 12,564 feet is an infinite departure from the Cosmique hut. Because the summit can be done in 6 hours round trip from Gouter this is where 150 bodies cram into sleeping bunks built for 120 bodies. This was like being in a pack of angry chimps speaking at least a dozen languages from Japanese to French. I had a Japanese guy sleeping on one of my arms and a German girl sleeping on my other arm - not next to - on. The rooms were so filled that the windows were left wide open because the bodies were generating enough heat to warm the rooms above 80 degrees with the windows open even though it was 20 degrees below zero with a wind in the open windows. However, the wind was not much of a factor in the rooms because there was a 30 foot ice wall against the window side of the building which had been cut back 3 feet from the building.

At 2:00 Friday morning the 30th everybody started the stampede to the breakfast line to get the completely inadequate breakfast of tea and bread. Bring your own oatmeal or don't get much for breakfast in mountain huts in France. There were two near fist fights over sitting places.

By three we were slogging up the ice under a full moon in a clear sky and a 10 mph wind. The humidity even in these cold temperatures seems to prevent any evaporation. The water I customarily need in the Cascades or the Sierras is far more than I needed in the Alps. The cold in the Alps is a wet cold which seems to cut through whatever you have on. I had on insulated La Sportiva K3's with Dachstein Himalayan wool socks and neoprene socks on Charlet Moser Super 12's with snow plates. My feet were about just right but within an hour I had put on everything I had and was wet, cold and with an intolerable back ache probably attributable to the chill I got from the climb the day before. I had on REI expedition underwear, North Face Windbloc fleece anorak, light-weight Mont Bell Gortex jacket with hood, a moonstone Gortex Bib, an L.L. Bean Primaloft jacket and hood rated for -20F and an REI Windbloc hat - and I was wet and cold with an enormous backache.

I tried to stop to take a couple of aspirins for my back at which point Pascal started a dance to keep warm. He was dressed for a continuous six hours of motion only. There is something disconcerting about being tied on a short rope to a guy doing a dervish dance at 14,000 feet. About two hours after we started, at about 14,175 feet according to my Avocet, without the ability to stop even long enough to take an aspirin, I aborted the climb and we returned to the Gouter hut, much to Pascal's relief. On Rainier the RMI guides may drag you to the top, but don't expect that from an Alpine guide. Just whisper turn around and you'll be on the way down. After a two hour rest during which my body heat returned, we fell down the ridge to the train within three hours.

Back in Chamonix Friday afternoon I changed my TGV reservation for Sunday to Saturday and on Saturday morning at 6:00 a.m. I pulled my gear into town to the station. The 49 mile

ride to Geneva took 4 hours with three train changes. There were no taxis at the hole in the wall train station in Geneva so I heaved a 10,000 ci duffel bag on foot across Geneva to the TGV station following a British couple who said they knew where they were going and it turned out they did know.

The taxi fare to Orly from the Champs Elyesse is only \$30 but I opted to use an unused subway ticket to the Denfert Rochereau Metro stop and catch the Orly Bus express from there for \$6 arriving at the same time as my wife and daughter whose airport transfers were included in their hotel package. The taxi fare is only \$36 but the Metro and bus are more fun. All in all a very interesting adventure. The French people were much more friendly than my encounter with them in 1965 after which I waited 31 years to encounter them again. Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn are still on my wish list, and next time the spincter factor will be a lot less and my clothes a lot more.

Two Germans disappeared on Thursday. I have great pictures of the French search helicopter passing over me about a hundred feet away. As of Friday night they were still missing and presumed dead. They, like many others, did not use a professional guide. Anyone who wanders into territory like this for the first time without a professional guide has bigger ovaries than I do and a small brain. The Alps should not be taken for granted. Mont Blanc should be treated with the same respect with which McKinley should be treated, particularly on the Grand Traverse route we attempted on Tuesday morning which requires ascents of three peaks near or above 15,000 feet with Mont Blanc at 15,700, three glaciers and total round trip time of at least 14 hours from and to the Cosmique hut. If you aren't going to stay at the Cosmique hut on the way back add at least an hour more to get to the tram which is about 750 feet higher and was a very tiring slog even at the end of our excursion to Mont Blanc du Tacul on only one-third of the whole Grand Traverse route.

– Elmer Martin <edmiit@worldnet.att.net>

## Signal Pk, Mt Ajo, Arizona

Between Christmas and New Year's while animals were boarding an ark in Santa Cruz, Richard Stover and I had a high and dry holiday on the desert. High is a relative word. These peaks are both under 5000 feet (4877' and 4808' respectively). They are class 2 but far from easy.

Both are DPS peaks. Signal is the high point of the KOFA National Wildlife Refuge, and Ajo is the highest point in Organ Pipe National Monument. Both are located in the beautiful Sonoran desert replete with saguaro cactus and in Organ Pipe, chainfruit cholla and the namesake organ pipe cactus.

Signal Peak is the site of Palm Canyon, the only remaining place in Arizona where native palm trees, (*Washingtonia arizonica*) grow naturally in an almost unreachable spot. Apparently all the others in the state were set afire by arsonists years ago. There is free primitive camping in the Palm Canyon dirt parking lot where we spent three enjoyable nights (fire rings, no outhouse). One night we spotted a gray fox hunting for supper.

We were there a while because it took us three tries to reach the summit. Since we were unable to obtain an Arizona topo before we left on the trip, our only guide was the greatly reduced (almost unreadable) map from the DPS Guide along with the DPS route descriptions. Short days dictated that we err on the side of safety, so we bailed early in the afternoons to ensure getting back to level ground by sunset.

Our first attempt was up the four palm canyon route. We ascended the wrong drainage and were stopped by a wall. The consolation prize was the startling of three bighorn sheep who certainly didn't expect climbers to be off route. They escaped over a side ridge.

The next day we found the correct drainage. Two thousand vertical feet of the densest, thorniest brush I never hope to climb again. It took three hours. I vowed to descend to the west even if it meant walking around the whole range. When we reached the ridge top we enjoyed our Santa Cruz oranges before I was led astray.

I knew there was a reason I hate ducks. On the ridge I saw a line of ducks traversing to the left. The DPS guide said to traverse. My instinct was to go up where the visibility was blocked but the brush must have tired my brain. Stupidly, I followed the ducks, climbing down a dry waterfall (definitely not second class). Richard followed and I then scouted up another canyon which ended in a fourth class move to a blind keyhole. Definitely off route. By then it was time to bail if we were to make it back before dark. We descended what I later found out was the exposed third class Route C-but better than the brush on the ascent.

Three days later we returned to finally make it to the summit. We took the easy way which required a three-mile drive on a 4W drive road. Hey, that's what we bought our new truck for! The view from the summit was worth the effort. Instead of Sierra peaks, we gazed at miles and miles of desert mountains like waves in a windy ocean. The rugged Kofa mountains which stretched before us contain approximately 1000 bighorn sheep. We were back at the truck by noon.

In the intervening three days we had traveled to Organ Pipe, climbed Mt. Ajo, and camped by an amazing array of petroglyphs. Mt. Ajo is a joyful climb on a good use trail through the Sonoran desert. The trail begins at the back country register two miles from the road at the "Bull Pasture"- not the place where PCSers compose trip reports, but the rather improbable place where someone ran cattle in the olden days. Don't go downhill to the spring as the DPS guide instructs. Rather, the trail heads eastward skirting the valley just below the cliffs.

Before we found the trail, we headed cross-country as the directions state and, to our delight, surprised a herd of javelina (peccary) which had been munching on the spiny Engelmann prickly pear. These strange animals resemble pigs, but the ranger later told us they are more closely related to the deer.

The Mt. Ajo summit register box contained an old pipe register (which we couldn't open) inscribed with the name Mt. Rosa. Apparently an earlier name for the peak.

Our trip was a smashing success. Besides climbing two new peaks, we spotted several birds which we had never seen before. These included the gray-breasted jay, Lewis' woodpecker, and the white-winged dove. Birds, petroglyphs, bighorn and summits. All signs and signals of a great trip.

– Debbie Bulger

## Lightning Detectors

We likely would've realized sooner what was going on if we'd just climbed Long's Peak or been somewhere else on the Front Range. But we'd spent the arid summer day on the west side of Crater Lake, and had just enough time to watch the sunset from the top of Crater Lake if we drove up, so we did. (sorry, not really b-c, but the physics is the same!)

Not a cloud in the sky. Teenager, adults, and a 2 year old sitting in the truckbed eating supper. Put fleece jacket on 2 year old

because it's getting chilly. Kid slides around on plastic bed liner for fun.

Suddenly every time he takes a bite of his sandwich from his dad, he gets a shock -itty bit of static electricity discharge. We look around, no clouds in the sky, but it's very dry. Must be caused by the fleece and plastic truck bed liner. "Quit sliding around with your fleece on, you're building up a charge." Time for science education and admonishments about \*not\* putting metal items in electrical sockets at home. "See, this is what happens. Electrical shock. Zap!"

"Look, if you both touch the metal bed of the truck before feeding the sandwich, you're "grounded" to the same floating ground." Funny, only dad seems to be differently charged. "Does it make a difference if you stand up instead of sitting down?"

Two year old is not convinced and insists that someone other than his dad feed him. No one else seems to have any problems with potential differences. Two year old happily continues with supper. Suddenly he starts to get zapped by the second adult. He is tired of science experiments. "No more shock baby," he pleads.

Adults look around again. Clear sky \*above\* but Crater Lake itself, which is to the side but below us has been entirely covered by ominous looking clouds. Nothing is glowing blue yet, but we're the tallest thing around. Now we know where the static electricity is coming from. Rapid packing of supper and people into truck and down to lower elevation, diaper change can wait. The ice pellets (sleet) start falling around us, we see lightening behind us. Still trying to figure out the different charge build-up rates - surface area or body mass related?

Two year old has just learned there are at least three kinds of "hot" food. Haven't yet introduced him to radioactivity.

Interesting lightning detectors, two year olds. Next time I think I'll take a furry rodent-like creature instead. That must be what Marmots are for.

- Jeannie Williams <jeanniew@optegen.ultranet.com>

### **"Zazen On Ching-t'ing Mountain"**

**The birds have vanished down the sky.  
Now the last cloud drains away.**

**We sit together, the mountain and I,  
until only the mountain remains.**

- Li Po

## **Shasta Roads**

Some friends and I were unable to approach the south sides of both Lassen National Park and Mt. Shasta last weekend due to mudslides that had closed both roads. The Lassen slide appeared to be almost cleared, so that road may be open soon. The Shasta mudslide was more serious--more like a mudflow--and probably seriously undermined the Everett Memorial Highway. The debris included dozens of big trees stripped of branches, big boulders, crumpled drainpipes, etc. There's no telling when this road will be fixed. Better call ahead to both parks if you want to access these roads.

We did find good access to the snow in the Mt. Eddy range (west of Mt. Shasta) from the Stewart Springs Road (exit just north of Weed on I-5). The only drawback is the upper road is not plowed so you

take your chances of getting snowed in if you leave a car there overnight. A totally unrelated note: There's a good Mexican restaurant, Jose's, in Williams off of I-5. Once you exit the freeway, follow the main drag west of I-5 a few blocks until you reach the first (only?) traffic light Turn left here (this is the main downtown road) and drive a few blocks to the edge of town. Jose's is on the left.

- Butch Suits

## **Mexican Topo Maps**

Prior to our Thanksgiving weekend expedition to Baja, a group of OPSers (Obscure Peaks Section) ventured to Tijuana, Mexico to visit the government publications office there. This is the place to go to purchase Mexican 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 scale topographic maps. They cost N\$ 20 (pesos) (\$2.56/per) which is much cheaper than buying them locally here at the Map Centre in San Diego where the last reported price was \$9.00 (per map).

Our venture started by taking the San Diego Trolley from Old Town to the International Border, then walking for about half an hour into downtown Tijuana. The office is officially called Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI). Their address is:

**Calle 2da. y Constitucion #8083 Antiguo Palacio  
Municipal Zona Centro C.P. 22000  
Tel. 85-15-70 Tel/Fax 85-67-86 Tijuana, B.C.  
web site: <http://www.inegi.gob.mx>  
main office email: <usuario@cis.inegi.gob.mx>**

Calle 2da. is also known as Benito Juarez Office hours are from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. Monday through Friday. The building is on the southwest corner of the intersection across the street from a Calimax store and the small office is in the northeastern corner of the two-story structure. We were assisted by seniorita Maria de los Angeles Cuautle T., a very patient lady.

Their collection of maps for Baja was fairly complete and maps they didn't have could be ordered. It would be a good idea to know some Spanish and to bring shipping materials in case they have to forward ordered maps to your home address. I would presume you could order maps for the mainland (anyone going to Orizaba?) as well. We found their 1:50,000 scale maps to have accurate topo information, but several of the roads were outdated and some were not even shown. Nevertheless, this added to our adventure. We spent several days climbing range highpoints around Bahia de los Angeles, about 370+ air miles south of San Diego. I will eventually write a complete trip report on this expedition.

- Mark Adrian <mark.adrian@ebbs.cts.com>

**Scree** is the monthly journal of the Peak Climbing Section of the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter.

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### Rock Climbing Classifications

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

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

### In Upcoming Issues:

Trip Reports: Mexican Volcanoes  
Compendia: Restaurants  
(the Editor promised we'd clear the backlog, eh?)

**Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 2/23/97. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**



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

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

**First Class Mail - Dated Material**