



**September, 1999 Peak Climbing Section, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club Vol. 33 No. 9**

World Wide Web Address: <http://www.climber.org/pcs>

## Next General Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, September 14

**Time:** 8:00 PM

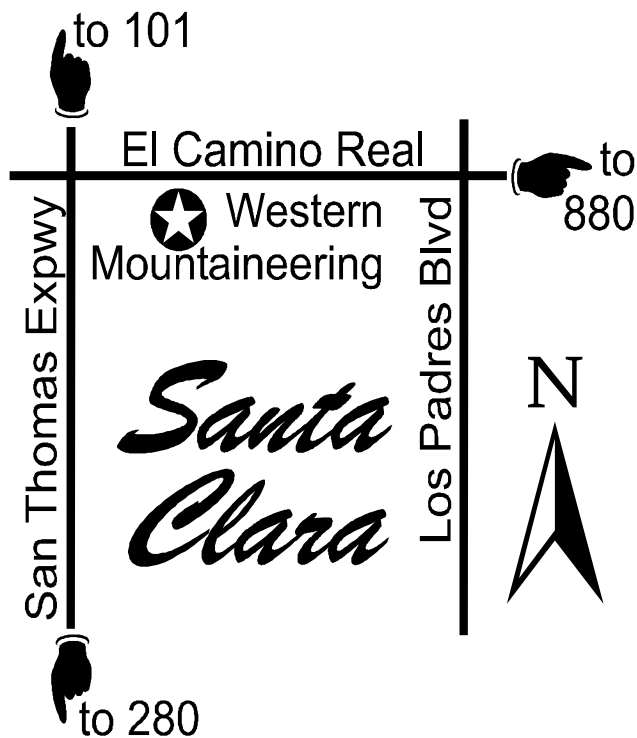
**Program:** Nepal

Bruce Bousfield will show slides of his Nepal trip.

**Location:** Western Mountaineering, Santa Clara

**Directions:** 2344 El Camino Real, Santa Clara (between San Thomas and Los Padres), parking in the rear.

From 101: Exit at San Thomas Expressway, Go South to El Camino Real. Turn left and the Western Mountaineering will be immediately to your right.



Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 9/26/99 Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.

## PCS Trips

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

### Yosemite: Pettit, Piute, and Volunteer

Peaks: Pettit, Piute, and Volunteer Class 2  
 Dates: Sep 4-6 (Sat-Mon) Labor Day weekend  
 Leader: Steve Eckert <eckert@climber.org>

A one-way walk through northeastern Yosemite should provide some of the best early fall scenery available. Hopefully the mosquitoes will be dead or dying, and hopefully it won't have snowed yet. The plan is to enter at Saddlebag, exit at Twin Lakes (requires car shuttle). There is a bit of cross-country travel at the beginning and some 2nd class near the peaks, but basically it's a lot of trail walking (15 miles/day) with an average of about 4000' of gain per day. To avoid a dawn-to-dusk sort of trip we'll need to move fairly quickly, but skipping one or two of the peaks or adding a fourth day could provide an easier trip if desired

### Bagg Gabb

Peak: Mt. Gabb, class 3, 13xxx ft.  
 Dates: Sept. 4-6 Sat-Mon  
 Leaders: Kelly Maas maas@idt.com  
 H 408-279-2054, W 408-330-1717

Gabb is a big 13er, set off just a bit from the Sierra crest. It should have great views of adjacent Abbott, Mills, Dade, Bear Creek Spire, etc. The real excuse for this trip, however, is to hike up the second Mono Recess. The west side approach is via ferry across Thomas Edison Lake, followed by a hike up Mono Creek and then the second Recess.

### Mt. Dubois

Peak: Mount Dubois, 13,559', Class 2  
 Dates: September 25-27, 1999  
 Map: Boundary Peak 7.5'  
 Leaders: Bill Kirkpatrick H (408) 293-2447  
 Wmkirk@earthlink.net  
 Ahmad Zandi H (408) 255-4233  
 Zandi@zandi.com

If you've wondered about the White Mountains, join us on this climb of the second-highest peak in the range. We will hike from the Fish Lake Valley on the Nevada side, near the Chiatovich Creek.

## Kern Peak

Peak: Kern Peak (11510) LIST FINISH!  
Dates: Oct 2-3 Sat-Sun  
Leader: Steve Eckert <eckert@climber.org>  
Co-Leader: Erik Siering

Help the leader celebrate finishing the SPS Peaks List in good style. The 9-mile pack in, over almost-flat terrain with uncrowded camping, should give rise to a nice party Saturday. A quick 7-mile romp to the peak on Sunday and we're back in camp for the stroll back to the cars. Reserve a spot early and pack the good stuff (for the mother of all happy hours)! Co-listed with the Angeles Chapter SPS.

## On Guard, Brewer!

June 25-27, 1999

We had perfect weather, with no bugs except a few between 9k and 10k (especially good since we camped bug-free and frost-free at 10500'), and we got both destination peaks plus we were home in time for dinner. I'll just post a few notes on the route and the climbing, especially since the PCS Mountaineering Committee had some concerns about allowing 3rd class rated leaders to attempt North Guard.

Secor's book says to go up the right (west) side of the Sphinx Creek drainage after crossing the creek on the Avalanche Pass trail. We went up that way, sloshing through bogs and climbing boulders in brush, with great slabs to walk on higher up. We came down entirely on the east side. Except for one boulder field around 9600', the east route is mostly shaded duff or grassy slopes that make for a much better walk in the park. On the way up, you can leave the trail just before entering the wet zone near the creek (8700') and stay well away from the water.

There are great campsites near the outlet of Lake 10514, and lesser campsites at the lake above. We were content with 5500' of gain with packs, and opted for the better view and sheltered spots, leaving 5000' of gain with daypacks for the next day's peak bagging and a half day of hiking out on the third day.

Don't expect to see obvious "chutes" on North Guard's south face, despite what the books and various reports say. The notch to shoot for is about a tenth of a mile west of the summit, and the slabby "chute" gets tough about at the place where you can cross left into a 2nd class sandy "chute" that leads directly to the large notch... which is distinguished by a bulbous projection akin to a tall mushroom. There was an astonishing view and some ducks from the notch, and we added a few ducks of our own. The climbing is third class, with some exposure in places but they can generally be worked around if you are willing to drop 30 or 40 feet and climb back up.

When you get to the summit, which is claimed to have a thin 20' summit block hanging over the east face at "an embarrassing angle", you may agree with me that men just can't help exaggerating the size of such things. It's 10' of 3rd class, not 20' of 4th. It takes two easy friction steps (and I hate friction climbing) to reach a nice foot ledge, from where I sat on the summit bump after flipping a sling over it while the others were still fiddling with the rope. If this is 4th class, Hooper, Tehipite, and others must be also... and perhaps Bear Creek Spire is 5th. Roper said there was a 4th class crack to the easy summit area, but my guess is that there's been some inflation in the rating: the SPS just raised the peak from class 3 to "3s4" meaning a class 4 summit, but we all thought a light-weight half rope and two slings would do just fine, and that the entire climb was really class 3.

Since this was Richard's first climb of the season, he sat out Brewer while the other three of us stormed up snow and rock to the summit register... which is on the lowest of three bumps, but clearly the named point. The register is completely full, with front and back covers used also, if anyone is heading there soon. Take another book! We needed ice axes for Brewer, but left them strapped to our packs everywhere else.

On the way out, we saw one "black" bear (actually brown) out for an afternoon stroll and several fresh piles of dung, indicating to me that people don't usually go on the east side of the stream. The bear ambled along quite unaware of us for close to a minute while we took pictures and talked about it, then suddenly caught our scent and wheeled in the opposite direction. Greg's first bear encounter was a pleasing one!

Participants were Steve Eckert (leader), Richard Vassar (coleader), Pat Callery, and Greg Johnson.

• *Steve Eckert*

## Bolton Didn't Go This Way!

(or, How I Climbed Birch Mountain)

Aug 1-3, 1999

From Birch Lake, we hiked into the cirque just west of Birch Mountain to find towering spires, permanent hard snow attached to the mountain side, and 45 degree gullies with partially filled snow, all directly in front of us. Given our time frame, lack of equipment, energy levels, as well as considering others' opinions and thoughts, with a tinge of disappointment, we bid *arrivederci* to B. Brown. So, with mountaineering aplomb and *savoir-faire*, we headed for Birch Mountain at 13,665'. Attaining the ridgeline then onto Birch's summit, looking back, we could see the wide plateau just NE of Bolton, and his eastern edge jostled with spires and pinnacles. A lovely day with views, once again, magnificent: Split Mountain, Disappointment Peak, Middle Palisade, Mt Sill, Polemonium, Winchell, and, Mt Humphries.

Personal Highlights of the Trip:

On the use trail toward Birch Lake, we saw glorious wildflowers emerging from underground springs and tributaries in this eastern high desert; wild rose, Indian Paintbrush, columbine, shooting star, Ranger's Buttons, Sierra Angelica, and sky pilot, higher up, near the lake. On the southeast side of Birch Lake, Paul and Will discovered remnants of a possible airplane crash(?) as they found a tire and shards of metal. Birch Mountain was a high point for the Brit on our trip, Jeremy. Congratulations! With more to come, I'm hoping Elmer discovered a gross mountaineering error in Robert Ludlum's thriller, 'The Aquitaine Progression', p. 570. Some of us spotted it:) The only wildlife on our trip was a wild mouse at campsite! Paul wrangled with the critter inside his bivy bag (!) for a bit, and, once food was out, so was wild mouse.

Kudos: to Paul who assisted with route finding; to Will who stopped every time I wanted a water break; to Jeremy who delighted us with his Euro perspective; and to Elmer who said, "This isn't a trail!"

By-the-Bye: Birch Mountain was named by Chester Versteeg in 1936. The original Paiute name was Mountain of Stone (paotkung).

Trip Participants: Debbie Benham, Will Hirst, Elmer Martin, Paul Penno, and Jeremy Westerman.

• *Debbie Benham*

## Mt Sill

August 7-8

This past weekend Max Nachury, Karin Reif, and myself Mike Rinaldi went on an ambitious trek to climb both Mt Sill and Polemonium. On the Topo they look fairly doable (even correcting for the mislabeling of Polemonium where Peak 13796 should be). Our adventure started at Bishop where we had our traditional pre-trip breakfast at Whiskey Creek. By 9AM we were on the trail head at South Lake. While hiking to Bishop Pass we met half a dozen Goretex and cap clad backpackers coming the other way. They all said that the weather had been cold and snowy the previous day. We were at the tail end of a freak August weather front. As we approached the Pass it got much cooler and windier. We quickly added more layers and were soon at the Pass.

From here we headed cross-country skirting the base of Mt. Agasiz. We wanted to stay on the 12000' contour as much as possible in order to be as close as possible to Thunderbolt Pass (12300). This turned out to save elevation gain/loss but we definitely lost much time. It's much more efficient to drop down to 11700 or so and then back up to T-bolt Pass since the terrain is much more manageable. Once over the Pass we dropped about 300' to a pond.

We set camp here bypassing the lower main Barret Lake. We thought that we would attempt Sill, the next day, by skirting the Palisades and going over the high ridge (east of Potluck Pass). The next day we learned from our previous days mistake. Instead of trying to save altitude at the expense of harder talis travel we dropped to near upper Barret Lake and made for the high ridge east of Potluck Pass. By bypassing Potluck Pass we were able to drop into the Polemonium - Sill cirque at about the 13000' contour. As we studied the face of Sill for our route we heard a tremendous explosion and crash. We quickly turned just in time to see a VW bus size boulder dropping from near the summit crest of the Palisades down into the Sill snow field. The boulder dropped some 1000' making only one bounce!

After our knees stopped shaking we composed ourselves and started up the ridge connecting Polemonium and Sill. Karin chose to stay at the base since she was not feeling well. Max and myself quickly gained the summit with only minor class 4'ish traversing near the top. We could have avoided this by taking a more direct route. Once on top we enjoyed the tremendous view.

We opted to save the ridge traverse to Polemonium for another day since it was late (2:30pm) and some clouds were forming toward the west. On our return trip to camp we decided to take the Potluck Pass route. This proved to be long and laborious. We need to descend over two boulder clad moraines before climbing back up over Potluck Pass. The rest of the hike to camp was uneventful. Our roundtrip from near T-bolt Pass to Sill and back went about 10.5 hours. The lessons learned from this trip were to camp south of Barret Lake toward Potluck Pass. Then climb up and over the ridge east of Potluck Pass bypassing it to gain the Sill - Polemonium cirque. Doing this on the return trip as well will save you much boulder hopping in the Glacier Creek drainage area. Monday we hiked out and had a late lunch, again, at Whiskey Creek. During the trip home we were greeted with rain and a wonderful sunset featuring incredible red hues and cloud formations on the Old Priest grade bypass road.

Happy Climbing!, Mike

• *Michael A. Rinaldi*

## Mt. Warren

August 14-15

On the weekend of August 14 and 15 Noriko Sekikawa and headed to the east side of Yosemite to climb Warren Mountain and North Peak. This is a trip report of our ascent of Warren Mountain.

Friday night Noriko and I drove up to and bivied at Saddlebag Lake. In the morning back at the car we found Kai Weidman and Cecil Ann were parked right next to us. Although we had never met I had seen Kai's slide show at the PCS meeting earlier that week and recognized him immediately. We were soon discussing the day's agenda. Kai and Cecil were on their way to do the West Ridge of Conness.

After breakfast Noriko and I drove to Camp 9 which is at the mouth of Warren Canyon to begin our trip. Even though I had Aaron Schuman's and Steve Eckert's 1998 and 1997 reports in hand I eschewed both. I couldn't see the eastern ridgeline and I didn't want to bushwhack blindly upslope.

Besides from the map I figured we could find a route from the upper part of the canyon. We followed a pleasant trail along Warren Creek up the canyon without bugs and not very muddy. I eventually lost the trail in a small meadow at the upper end of the canyon and began heading NE around a spur through trees where we emerged below a steep W face. We ascended easy talus to the right of the face and just below the spur. At the top of this slope we found ourselves on the plateau below Peak 12177. Contouring N and up we summited to where we could see that an easy ridge dropping to a saddle and up to Warren Peak.

On top of Warren we signed the register, took our summit photos and descended to escape the raging wind. We found a little spot sheltered enough for us to enjoy our lunch before beginning our descent. We followed the snow free drainage down talus to the eastern tributary of Warren Creek.

I was curious as to where this tributary merged with the main creek so I followed it to a large isolated meadow but eventually had to diverge from the creek when the terrain became more steep and the bushwhacking more difficult. Eventually we were following the main creek and soon crossed and were back on the main trail.

We ended our day by camping in the campground that can be found about an 1/8 of mile in from highway 120 at Camp 9 next to Warren Creek. There was a large group of 10+ people camped in one of the sites but the sites are sufficiently far apart that we barely even notice them.

Warren is more or less a pile of rubble, and probably would be better as ski-mountaineering trip, but the views of Mono Lake and Mt Dana are spectacular.

• *Greg Johnson*

## Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne

Aug 20-22, 1999

I'm so used to descending at the end of the summit climb that I had to admit I was a bit disoriented when we lost altitude and had just started our trip! From White Wolf, we left, full of a scrumptious breakfast eaten at the resort's small and cozy restaurant. While heading down the canyon, a management fire

was underway with a sign strictly forbidding us to go off trail. We saw reduced flames, smoldering ashes and clouds of smoke that hurt our eyes and muffled our breathing. This lasted for a little while, not too long, all in all. Continuing down, we glimpsed the Sawtooth Range in the distance, it's jagged teeth just visible.

Camping our first night at Pate Valley, a refreshing swim and splash greeted us before dinner. A fire kept the bugs away and kept us busy while we debated topical political events, told lewd jokes, listened to paragraphs from the New Yorker magazine, and, said what travels were next on our agendas. The following day was 14 miles to Glen Aulin. Those miles included the Muir Gorge with fantastic waterfalls carving lovely swirls in granite, bluegreen pools of water; elevation gain and loss, gain and loss; swimming to refresh and encourage for the climb up (oh dear!) ahead; with streaming Waterwheel Falls being one of the many cascades seen. Our second night, we were about a mile shy of Glen Aulin in a flat, broad, bush and birch-tree filled arena. Whew! glad to sit down. Reports had it that a bear was patrolling the Glen Aulin area. At about 5:30am, our neighboring campers, just across the way, were heard yelling, pounding rocks, and, making general helter-skelter to scare the bear. Someone in their party had left some food in a backpack, and, bears being as smart as they are in Yosemite, dragged the pack, foraged for the food only, then quickly departed.

As we headed toward the cars on our third and final day, I was once again reminded of the grandeur of Yosemite with a view from Tuolumne Meadows: Unicorn Peak, the Cockscomb, Cathedral Peak, Echo Peaks, and, of course, our end point, Lembert Dome. Thank you to all who participated: Marci Barnett, Debbie Benham (author&leader), Rosalie Frankel, Bob Goeldner, Bill Kirkpatrick (coleader), Matt Smits, Eddie Sudol, and, Jeff West.

• *Debbie Benham*

## Thunder Peak

As part of a week-long tour of the Upper Kern Basin, three of us climbed Thunder Mtn.. While much of the approach was very nice, and the final bit of 4th class quite excellent, the climb of the SE face was a rather abysmally loose exercise in class-3 climbing that pretty much cancels out the "classic" climb assignment for this mountain. Read on for details.

### Introduction

There were three of us: the Cat, der Bergkrabbler, and myself, the newly rechristened Lame Ape. ("Paraplegic" is too strong a term to denote my orthopedic limitations, and I don't want to offend those with more serious disabilities.) We began our sojourn by way of Shepherd Pass, taking two days to reach the headwaters of Tyndall Creek. Part of the Shepherd Pass trail has been recently rebuilt, and the previously heinous climb from Symmes Creek to the Symmes-Shepherd saddle is now, well, almost pleasant, featuring a total of 54 moderately graded switchbacks. The new route, however, has added about 1.5 miles to the trail distance. There was no water between Symmes Creek and Mahogany Flat. We camped at Anvil Camp, which is now much cleaner and more pleasant than it was a decade ago. Fire rings have been removed, and the campsites are no longer so "beaten out" as was previously the case. The final part of the trail over Shepherd Pass itself is in bad repair, with many small rockslides covering portions of the trail. After descending the west side of the pass, we camped at a lake by the junction of the Tyndall Creek and Lake South America trails. We took one more easy day to reach a medium-

size lake (elev about 11000'), located at the mouth of the canyon leading to Thunder Pass, and this was followed by a rest day that featured a pleasant solid-rock scramble to the top of nearby crag. The next day we would attempt Thunder Mtn.

### The Climb

I was surprised! This supposedly "classic" climb looked like a pile of fractured rubbish. I shook my head and denied the obvious -- perhaps the rock was more stable than it looked. Surely Moynier and Fiddler wouldn't have included it as a classic for nothing! Their instructions for reaching the S. summit tower were not explicit: climb the SE face or E ridge. Ascending the E ridge looked silly: the jagged structure looked so tenuous as to collapse upon receiving a good kick. So, I decided to aim for one of the ugly chutes or rock ribs near the East ridge.

The SE face was precisely as ugly to climb as it had appeared from below. Stable talus below the face gave way to broken and unstable rock ribs that drained quantities of small, loose debris into adjacent gullies. The ascent was an unpleasant alternation of delicately climbing the unstable rock ribs, and "swimming" through the steep loose gullies. My compatriots were significantly dismayed by this effort. The Cat puffed herself up a bit and began growling about the tedium of this pileish ascent. Der Bergkrabbler, who was completely new to this kind of blatant intimacy with dangerous alpine garbage, was basically just scared out of his wits. "This is too tough for me" he moaned. I thought to myself: "nonsense, this is just too ugly for anyone with sense!" But, being a sado-masochist, I did my best to encourage them onwards, and eventually the horrible rock gave way to the south summit tower.

I had to break out the rope to get der Bergkrabbler up the final bit of 3rd class. The rock adjacent to the tower was so fractured as to make it difficult to set a reliable anchor. Der Bergkrabbler climbed past me and stood, uncertainly, upon the boulders of the S summit tower. "Off belay?" I asked hopefully. He looked scared, then minced his way carefully to the most unexposed part of the boulder pile, and then quietly allowed himself to go off belay.

So, now we could see the final "airy" traverse to the N summit. I was thrilled: it looked like good, solid rock for a welcome change. Unfortunately, my companions were unimpressed by the view, and declined to continue.

The Cat professed an interest in preening herself and taking a nap, while der Bergkrabbler was so petrified that he wouldn't even consider moving from his boulder burrow, much less begin an exposed traverse.

So, I had to solo it, and, fortunately, it wasn't particularly difficult. With careful route finding, there were only two short bits of 4th class, the first during the descent into the notch, and the second being a muscular move on the way up the summit block. which is just large enough to stand upon. This remote mountain does not get a lot of traffic; ours was the sixth ascent this year.

We found an easier way down. The western margin of the SE face has lower angles and broader ledges than toward the E ridge. It was still ugly, but, at least, not quite as nauseatingly loose. Der Bergkrabbler had substantially calmed down during my traverse to the N summit and back, but he most certainly wanted a belay to begin the descent. Two belays, together with substantial coaching from the Cat, got him down onto somewhat gentler 3rd-class terrain that he could handle without a rope. The Cat has a marvelous way of purring instructions that can alleviate the fears of all but the most desperate.

The tedious loose ledges finally gave way to screeable gravel, then firm talus. All that remained now was to reverse the lovely approach.

Total time for the climb was a leisurely 11.5 hours. We concluded our climbing day by jumping in the lake.

### Denouement

The next day, we continued our leisurely traverse around the Upper Kern Basin, studiously avoiding use of any trails. We camped at a small lake just below the saddle where the Lk. South America trail crosses into the Tyndall Creek drainage. We had meant to go farther, but couldn't bear to leave this lovely high country! Instead, we took a quick stroll to view the precipitous scenery surrounding Harrison Pass. On the morrow, we took a combination of trail and cross-country walking back to Shepherd Pass, then descended all the way to Mahogany Flat. There is really only one campsite here, and, though it was already occupied by a ranger, she graciously allowed us to share her site. Anvil Camp is by far the preferable camping when ascending or descending Shepherd Pass. On our final day, we somewhat unwillingly covered the 6+ miles from Mahogany Flat to the trailhead under welcome cloudy skies that allowed us to mostly avoid the desert heat. On the way up, we had observed the substantial crop of elderberries near the trailhead (outside the wilderness), so, coming out, we collected some berries that will very soon become jam and pie. Yum!

It was raining in Tuolumne Meadows as we made the long drive home.

• *David Ress*

## Tabula Rosa: Red Slate Mountain

August 22, 1999

I'm writing the report for the PCS climb of Red Slate Mountain and I wasn't even on the trip. Kelly Maas led a group up the peak on the weekend of August 22, 1999. His party was comprised of Greg Johnson, John Hossack, Bob Evans and Landa Robillard. Charles Schafer and I organized the outing but didn't participate, instead climbing the same peak on our own private trip.

We hiked up the Convict Creek trail. A couple miles up the trail, we gingerly stepped across the creek on partially submerged rocks. Charles and I tried this trail once before in June of a heavy snow year, and were stymied by the crossing. I recommend that you avoid this route any earlier than August or September. We walked underneath bizarrely twisted cliffs of red, white and black metamorphic rock, past Mounts Laurel, Morrison, Bloody and Baldwin. That evening we made camp at lovely Lake Witsonopah.

Before the sage grouse bellowed out their belligerent morning song, Charles and I walked up to the snowfield at the base of the implausible north couloir of Red Slate Mountain. The PCS group awoke shortly afterward and scurried up the long scree slope on the west side of the peak. They summited at around 9:30 a.m., while Charles and I were still hacking and crawling up our ice chute.

The frozen crystals yielded to the points of our crampons. The hefty ice tool I borrowed from Kelly sunk into the surface, but my underweighted dragonfly ice axe tended to bounce off. On the steepest part, which exceeded forty degrees, we maintained a

running belay protected with pickets. We were also able to anchor on the side cliffs by slinging horns and chocking cracks.

About 500 feet from the top, the couloir appeared to exhaust itself, but we turned a corner to the right and found its continuation. To get back on the ice, we had to cross a stretch of the loosest, steepest, least defensible rubble I've ever known. The rock is completely unlike the classic

Sierra granite we love; slate shatters into millions of pointed shards. We were finally climbing in sunshine, and I was able to refill my water bottle from a merciful ice drip.

We walked out of the couloir directly onto the summit at 1:30. Unforecasted clouds were building rapidly, so we hustled down the west ridge before the lightning storm blew in from Lake Thomas Edison. We met our carpool partner John at the lake. He told us the others had evacuated as soon as they saw us attain the summit.

We three ate, packed, and hiked the down trail. Slowed by our tiring ascent, we were overtaken by the weather. For twenty minutes or so, we were pummeled by hailstones so large that I considered putting on my climbing helmet.

Beyond the stream crossing, we slowed down so much more that we were enveloped in the blanket of night, and reached the trail's end under clear skies and the light of the moon.

• *Aaron Schuman*

## Merced Beaucoup (Merced Peak Trip Report)

August 27-29, 1999

Fire off Hwy 120 with the road closed 10 miles east of Groveland; road closure of Hwy 140 from 10:30 at night to 6:30am; a campsite in Yosemite Valley reminiscent of crowded family picnics in neighborhood parks on Fourth of July; what to do?? Go climb a mountain, far and away!

First day was long and sleepy what with 12 miles in to Lower Merced Pass Lake. We pitched our tents and made camp with vestiges of a bear-bagging rope hanging from a nearby tree. That evening, we ate dinner followed by songs around the campfire. Folksongs, French children's songs, Broadway musicals, and a rousing rendition of 'Yellow Submarine' - you name it, we tried it.

WARNING: do not put your MSR fuel bottle in your bear canister-all food will be drenched irregardless of baggie packaging!

The next morning, we arose to a beautiful, cool, summer day's beginning, and, our hike to the summit. Passing Lower Ottoway Lake, then off trail, around Upper Ottoway Lake, we caught a full view of the northeast ridgeline of Merced Peak. Hideous exposure. Heading toward the saddle between Ottoway Peak and Merced Peak, called Snow Pass by the by, we crossed snow bands and meadow grass, and splashy, tiny waterfalls over granite talus. It is important to note that to attain the Class 2 route, climb directly from the saddle onto the ridgeline; otherwise, you run into Class 3 climbing (thank you Anouchka!). Newcomers learned to yell "Rock!" rather than "OH NO watch out!!". Once on the summit, the sharp fin of Mt Clark engaged me, with Lyell & McClure, Roger's Peak, and, of course, the rest of the Clark range in view.

Retracing our steps back to camp, two runners passed us on the trail. They had come up from the Valley floor and were heading

toward Glacier Point that evening and would probably reach it past 9pm. Simply amazing! It had been a long day for us (12 hours) and we were pooped. Not too long of a fire that evening, as we all took to bed as soon as supper was over. Our party almost lost Linda and Anouchka that night! As they were retrieving water from the lake standing on an old crumbly log, the log collapsed, and Linda managed to step off into shallower water, with Anouchka stepping on a firmer portion of tree.

On the hike out, Sunday, we managed a swim, which, actually, Arlene had been doing each day! Refreshing, and much needed for the uphill switchbacks to Glacier Point. Thank you to all who participated: Debbie Benham (author&leader); Arlene Blum; Anouchka Gaillard (coleader); Chris Kerr; David McCracken; Steve Shun; Linda Smith; and Matt Stanton.

• *Debbie Benham*

## 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.

### Clarence King & Gardiner

Peaks: Clarence King and Gardiner.  
Dates: Sept 3-6  
Contact: Rick Booth at 408-354-7291 or  
rick\_booth@worldnet.att.net  
Dee Booth, rdbooth@worldnet.att.net

Pack in from Onion Valley over Kearsarge Pass and Glenn Pass into Rae lakes and eventually into Sixty Lakes Basin. Estimated distance is 10 miles. This is kind of a chug.

Clarence King has a fifth class summit block requiring a few moves of about 5.4. Gardiner has a longish fourth-class summit ridge.

Requirements: Both peaks require rope and modest rock climbing skills. You should know my wife or myself.

### Middle Pal & Norman Clyde

Peaks: Middle Palisade (14,040'), Norman Clyde (13,920'), Class: 3, 4  
Map: Mt. Goddard 15' topo  
Dates: Sept. 4-6 (Sat-Mon)  
Contact: Bob Suzuki day: 510-657-7555  
>8pm: 408-259-0772, bobszk@bigfoot.com  
Rich Leiker <2pm: 408-378-9522  
>3pm: 408-453-4253  
leiker@san-jose.tt.slb.com

This 3 day outing will be tough, but good. Saturday we'll drop our packs at our basecamp near Finger Lake then tackle the northeast face of Middle Palisade. We'll take all of Sunday to try our luck with a class 4 route on the north-northeast ridge or north face of Norman Clyde Peak. Only fast, strong peak climbers with previous class 4 and roped climbing experience will be considered for this outing.

### Capitol Peak, Colorado

Peak: Capitol Peak, Colorado (14,130'), Class 3-4  
Dates: Sept 4-6 (Sat-Mon)  
Contact: Bill Isherwood, 925-254-0739 (h)925-423-5058 (w)isherwood2@llnl.gov

This is a class 3-4 climb up one of Colorado's more difficult 14'ers, noted for its exposed knife-edge ridge. The plan would be to fly to

Denver Friday evening, drive to the mountain and hike in to a high camp on Saturday, make the climb on Sunday and hike out, staying overnight in the Aspen area. We would return to the Denver airport on Monday for return home. Roped climbing experience required. Contact leader for coordination of travel plans.

### Needsaw, Hamtooth

Peaks: Needham (12467), Sawtooth (12343) class 2  
Dates: Sep 18-19 (Sat-Sun)  
Contact: Steve Eckert <eckert@climber.org>

Depending on who signs up, we'll do the standard grunt to Needham over the top of Sawtooth, or we'll skip Monarch Lake and go directly to Needham (which might involve a bit of class 3 scrambling on an unscouted route). This area is great in the fall, when the bugs are dead and the marmots have their fill of salt bush (so your car doesn't look like a buffet). Needham could be done as a ver

### Annual Tuolumne Group Camp

Peaks: (Need volunteer to lead day trips)  
Dates: September 18-19  
Contact: Cecil Ann (408) 395-4525  
cecilann@earthlink.net

Join us Friday night through Sunday for the annual PCS group camping trip. Historically, we've had fabulous dayclimbs/dayhikes and this year will be no exception. Camping will be at a group site in Tuolumne campground. Children, seniors, non-climbers, etc. are welcome.

### Mt. Dana: Introduction to Peak Climbing

Peak: Mt Dana (13,056') class 1  
Date: September 18  
Contacts: Bob Bynum (510) 659-1413;  
rbbynum@aol.com; Gretchen Luepke

Have you been attending PCS meetings and viewing slide shows of beautiful places, but never actually climbed a peak? Then come on this relatively simple climb and experience all aspects of peak climbing. I will take people to the summit and Gretchen may take people back to the trailhead who only want to go to the 11,500' saddle. This trip is being run in conjunction with the Tuolumne car camp listed above and we will start from there.

### Mt Thompson 13494'

Peak: Mt Thompson, Class 3  
Date: September 17-19  
Contact: Peter Maxwell (408) 737 9770

We'll hike in from Lake Sabrina to Sunset Lake on Friday, do the peak on Saturday and hike out on Sunday. Ice axes and crampons may be necessary. This is a private trip and participants should be experienced in class 3 climbing and at ease on steep, hard, icy snow.

### Whitney the Easy Way

Peak: Mt. Whitney (14,495'), class 1  
Dates: Oct 22-24, Fri-Sun  
Contact: Nancy Fitzsimmons (408)-957-9683  
Pkclimber@aol.com

Co Contact: Adrian Van Gorden 408-779-2320

Climb Mt. Whitney by the regular trail; enough of that mountaineers stuff. We will spend Friday night at Outpost Camp at about 10,300', and on Saturday start early and go all the way to the top. Back to the cars before noon on Sunday. Significant snow

in the days preceding will cancel. Ice Ax and crampons may be needed.

### **Mt. Clark & Starr King**

Date: Sept. 24-26

Peaks: Mt. Clark and Starr King

Contact: George Sinclair 650-941-2160; geosinc@aol.com

Description: Join the leader as he returns to the peak he first climbed 25 years ago when he first began leading Sierra Club trips. One peak, and perhaps both will require the use of rope. Interested people should have some experience doing class 3 and know how to rappel.

### **Cherry Creek Canyon**

Peak: None - Cherry Creek Canyon

Date: October 9-10

Leader: Kai Wiedman (650) 347-5234

Don't miss this adventure backpack into one of the most beautiful granite canyons near Yosemite. Witness Cherry Creek charge forcefully through narrow slots. Gaze at granite domes in the distance. The scenery of this 25-mile loop backpack will dazzle you as you experience one of the Sierras' best kept secrets.

### **Nepal October 1999**

Peak: Chulu West, 20,500Ft

Date: October 1999

Contact: Warren Storkman

Phone 650-493-8959

dstorkman@AOL.com

## **Mt Gilbert (13106 ft).**

August 29, 1999

On Sunday, the 29th of August 1999, Scott Kreider and I, Arun Mahajan walked up Mt Gilbert. As walks go, it was rather long and our round trip time was a little over nine hours, five to summit, an hour of dawdling time at the top and the rest for the slog back to the car.

Starting at 7:40am at South Lake in Bishop and following the trail to Treasure Lakes, we were quickly at the top of the lower Treasure Lakes. The trail gets a little sketchy after the lakes but is clear enough till it gets lost near a short flat area where we took our first break to study the route near the right fork of a small stream. Continuing on further over boulders above this stream, we were at a tarn at approximately 11300 ft. Johnson was straight in the front and Treasure Col was to it's right. We climbed over the tarn on the right over more boulders heading to the ridge. One way to top this ridge is to do the Treasure Col but that looked unappealing due to the scree and sand so we picked a small rut in the rocks (it has a dark brownish color and is spottable if you look hard enough) to go to the ridgeline. This was class-3 and surprisingly at the top of this was a cairn. There are many possible ways to get to this ridgeline and ours was a nice clean route. There was nothing loose on it.

We could see this ridgeline, now climbing up but we stayed at the same level, traversing along and then we curved left and started the climb over sandy and talus-ridden slopes towards the high point, the summit of Gilbert. It is best to traverse up and left till the ridge line and then one meets the gentler plateau of Gilbert that is easier to walk on. At 12:40pm we were at the summit. Lots of haze in the distance but good views of the nearby peaks. We departed after spending nearly an hour at the top.

The hike back down to the Treasure lakes was tedious and long but then it was trail all the way back to the placid waters of South

Lake where the disjointed voices of the fisherfolk in their boats calling out to each other under the warm sun and the gently circling birds overhead evoked such strong feelings of timelessness and somnolent leisure that I did not want to ever return back to the madding crowd and the hectic life of the Bay Area.

• *Arun Mahajan*

## **Mt. Hoffman**

"On no other Yosemite Park mountain are you more likely to linger." John Muir

According to The Complete Guidebook to Yosemite (Steven P. Medley, Yosemite Assn., 1991) Mt. Hoffman is the geographical center of Yosemite National Park. It was named in 1965 for Charles F. Hoffman, one of the threesome who made the first ascent the year before.

In between rock climbs of the Tuolumne Meadows area, we decided to do a little hiking or peakbagging. I pulled out Secor's High Sierra guide and realized Mt. Hoffman was a Class 2 walk-up. We stopped at Olmstead Point, took photos, acted like tourists, and marveled at the sublime view: Tenaya Lake and a multitude of domes to the East, Yosemite Valley to the West - dominated by the imposing Half Dome. With binoculars, we could clearly see folks headed up the cable route.

We drove to the May Lake trailhead, and told my brother (wh would just day hike to May Lake) we could do Hoffman RT in three hours, even though it seemed to loom so high overhead. We stuck to our return time of three hours and started hauling ass. We x-countried to a gully which seemed to offer the only reasonable approach before reaching May Lake (a little Class 3 scrambling) and sure enough, we hit the "trail". From there it's totally straight forward to the summit (and the radio repeater !!!!) on it.

Outstanding views, as concurs Secor. Mt. Hoffman has a virtually vertical north face for at least 1000 feet straight down to some lakes (didn't identify). A dizzying view. 360 degree views to Triple Divide Peak, and many peaks south and East, Minarets, many others to the North. We leisurely enjoyed the summit alone, even though Secor says many hike it (the "trail" shows it - damn cairns every ten feet, even though the "trail" is quite obvious). Pete Yamagata had placed a brand new register just 2.5 hours before our arrival. We were the third or fourth entry.

We blazed down, taking a "short-cut" which wa kinda the wrong way. We had to traverse around the half the flank of the mountain, then pick our way through easy but improbable looking cliffs (linking up ledges and ramps) and dropping back into the basin. Still had to cross a creek and find the trail.

Continuing, practically running, we hit the trail and actually passed three people who passed us on descent while we were still on the way to the summit. Hit the truck in right around 3 hours RT. I was impressed with my partner and myself. Never have I more haphazardly x-countried a Sierra peak and been more right on. I didn't pull out a compass once, and only looked at the map one time. We hauled ass on the thing, and looking back at the peak from the parking lot, it didn't seem possible.

If you're in Yosemite NP, especially on the Tioga corridor, do yourself a favor and spend a couple of hours to do Hoffman. The views are sublime.

• *Michael Gordon*

## Elected Officials

### Chair:

George Van Gorden / pcs-chair@climber.org  
408-779-2320 home  
830 Alkire Ave, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

### Vice Chair and Trip Scheduler:

Ron Karpel / pcs-scheduler@climber.org  
650 594-0211 home  
903 Avon Street, Belmont, CA 94002

### Treasurer and Membership Roster (address changes):

Dee Booth / pcs-treasurer@climber.org  
408-354-7291 home  
237 San Mateo Avenue, Los Gatos, CA 95030

## Publicity Committee Positions

### Scree Editor:

Bob Bynum / pcs-editor@climber.org  
510-659-1413 home  
761 Towhee Court, Fremont CA 94539-7421

### PCS World Wide Web Publisher:

Aaron Schuman / pcs-webmaster@climber.org  
650-943-7532 home  
223 Horizon Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043-4718

### Publicity Chair:

Steve Eckert / pcs-listmaster@climber.org  
650-508-0500 home  
1814 Oak Knoll Drive, Belmont, CA 94002-1753

**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.

**Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 9/26/99. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.**



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