

February, 2002

Peak Climbing Section, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Vol. 36 No. 2

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

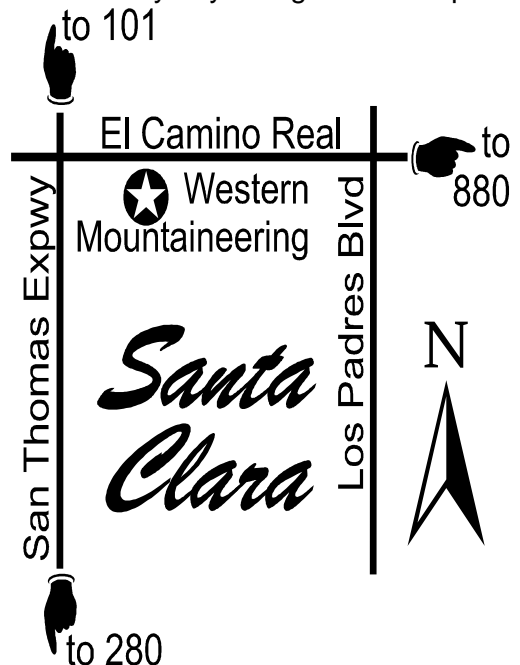
## Next General Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday, February 12  
**Time:** 8:00 PM  
**Program:** Sacred Mountains of China and Tibet by Dana Isherwood

Dana Isherwood has traveled extensively all over the world. Come and see her spectacular pictures of trekking in China

**Location** Western Mountaineering  
 2344 El Camino Real, Santa Clara  
 (between San Thomas and Los Padres)

**Directions:** 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. Limited parking back.



Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 2/24/2002 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

## Rock Climbing Section

The RCS is alive and well, but no longer have their own newsletter or webpage. Also, monthly meetings are not held. The RCS does reserve campsites in Yosemite Valley, and Tuolumne during the spring, summer and fall. Open to RCS members and friends, first come, first serve. Reservations and details are posted on the lomap-rcs-forum.

To subscribe to the Rock Climbing Section mailing list: send an email to [listserv@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:listserv@lists.sierraclub.org) and in the body of the message (the subject is ignored) say subscribe lomap-rcs-forum <your first name> <your last name>.

## Scree Fee Increase

At the PCS monthly meeting on January 8, 2002, at Western Mountaineering, the PCS Treasurer, Arun Mahajan, presented the current bank balance in the PCS checking account.

The treasurer also introduced a motion to increase the annual subscription fee for the hard copy of the SCREE to \$13 from the current \$10 since the cost, per year, per subscriber, comes to \$12 and change. The supporting data (as below) to justify the price increase was presented. This motion was seconded by Rick Booth and a vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously (27 in favour).

Therefore, with immediate effect, the annual subscription rate for the hard copy of the SCREE is thirteen dollars.

### Monthly costs

Printing	\$36.61
Stamps	\$22.77
Labels	\$50
Checking	\$10.00 (monthly fee charged by Wells Fargo)
Total	\$69.88

Total yearly costs = \$838.56

yearly costs per paying subscriber =  $\$838.56 / 68 = \$12.33$

The treasurer wishes to thank the previous treasurer, Scott Kreider, for preparing the annual statement and the supporting data to justify the cost increase. The PCS officers are also thankful to Paul Vlasveld, who takes care of the actual mailing out of the hard copies to the subscribers.

It is to be noted that the subscription fees go towards printing and mailing out the SCREE and maintaining the bank account.

This is followed by a request for an additional \$2 voluntary donation to the PCS, along with the \$13 subscription fees.

• Arun Mahajan, PCS Treasurer.

## Book Review:

### Climbing California's High Sierra

by John Moynier and Claude Fiddler

A Falcon Guide, The Globe Pequot Press, ISBN  
0-7627-1085-3

I have used the book "Sierra Classics, 100 Best Climbs in the High Sierra" for years. The book "Climbing California's High Sierra" is the second edition to the original book by Moynier and Fiddler. Since one of my quirks is collecting guidebooks I now own both of these books. I was curious to see if the second edition was an improvement over the first edition.

The second edition is a different book than the first edition. The first noticeable change is the list of routes has been changed. In some cases routes and peaks were dropped completely and several new routes and peaks have been added. In other cases older routes were replaced with newer routes. The newer routes are all harder than the original routes and there are no longer 100 routes but now 101. In most cases, the routes from the first edition survived to make it to the second edition.

There are many improvements in the second edition. There are more photos with the routes marked out which should make them easier to find. The topos from the original edition also made it to the second edition. These are of average accuracy, however, the topo for the Third Pillar of Dana is better than the one in the Tuolumne guide. The word descriptions are no better than the first edition. In the author's defense, it is their position that the adventure is reduced if super accurate data is provided. I would like to see a hint at any weird gear that might be needed for any of the alpine rock climbs. It is handy to know whether or not a #5 Camalot is needed! The introductory material has been expanded and updated.

So is this guidebook for you? It depends on your interest. The focus of this guidebook is primarily technical alpine routes and the routes are in general difficult. Of the 101 routes only 33 are rated 5.4 or less and this includes the class four snow and ice routes. There are 59 routes that are 5.8 or easier which leaves 42 routes that fall in the 5.9 and up category. This includes the class five ice routes. So, if you are looking for a guidebook that discusses what are probably the better alpine technical routes in the Sierra then this book should work. In terms of finding the routes the second edition should work better. As for route descriptions you are on your own. My approach has been to use the book for suggestions for interesting routes in the Sierras. It is sometimes difficult to find a good route in the main text of R.J. Secor's guidebook without patiently plowing through it.

The price is listed as \$30 but may be available over the internet for less.

• Rick Booth

## Book Review:

### Robert Clunie: Plein-Air Painter of the Sierra

While visiting Bishop last fall I stopped at the Coons Gallery located north of town. During the visit I purchased a copy of Coon's book "Robert Clunie - Plein-Air Painter of the Sierra". Although expensive - \$85.00, it is a great book and well worth the cost. For those who have not heard of Clunie, he was a painter who specialized in paintings of the High Sierra. Clunie, who lived in Bishop, spent a portion of most every summer for about thirty years camped below the Palisades where he would paint. Unlike

most other painters of the Sierra, Clunie actually got up into the high country and painted the mountains that usually only backpackers and mountain climbers see. Clunie passed away in the mid-1980's and his protege, Richard Coons, continues to paint out of the studio Clunie built in the 1940's. Many of Clunie's paintings can still be viewed at the studio. Anyway, it is a great book, full of many illustrations, that tells the story of a painter who passionately loved the Sierra and spent most of his life painting it. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that what Ansel Adams was to photography in the Sierra, Clunie was to painting in the Sierra.

• George Sinclair

## Sunglasses

Editor's Note: This is an email response from Paul Wilson in a thread on Sunglasses last week.

All one needs to do is make sure that the glasses you use meet ANSI Z87.1/CSA Z94.3 which blocks 99% UVA and 99% UVB. While I have not read these specs I understand that glasses that meet these specs have strict control on UVA/UVB and visible spectrum. Further typical glasses quote that they meet ANSI Z80.3 for special purpose which is blocking of 99% UVA and 60% UVB. You get all this info from the box, which the glasses came in. If you do not find this info with the glasses, keep looking.

I read an article in the last few years that said that the cheapest sunglasses available had acceptable UV blocking but were not tested to meet the specs, thus they were cheaper. However just about any safety glasses will cost less than \$20. For activities on snow or at altitude the light that comes in from the sides presents an additional hazard, so find glasses with side shields. Some safety glasses have them but I do not consider them adequate for climbing in winter without additional shielding. The pricey glacier glasses have the best side shields but, IMO, are unacceptable due to the close fit to the face and subsequent fogging which eventually require them to be removed. The glacier glasses are much darker (visible spectrum) than the typical safety glasses, which is good, and they might provide the high blockage of UV. Having said all this, I find that some safety glasses that meet the specs are too dark when hiking on a cloudy day or driving on a cloudy day. So dark glasses that meet the specs are available, just look around.

• Paul Wilson

## Mitten Suggestions

Here's a summary of the discussion last week on expedition mitts. It's taken from the gear list, high altitude list and private emails. I haven't made a final decision as I haven't been able to get my mitts on the mittens, so to speak. I'm leaning toward the North Face, Ortovox and Granite Gear.

• Monty Smith

As far as I can tell, the choices are:

- 1 North Face Himalayan
- 2 Granite Gear Lutsen
- 3 Ortovox Antarctica
- 4 OR Pro or OR Expedition
- 5 Mountain Hardwear
- 6 Black Diamond
- 7 Marmot

The comments below are arranged first by specific comments on brands, then by general comments on things to do to keep your hands warm.

Thanks to all who replied, and I hope this is as much use for you as it was for me!

\* I was completely sold on North Face down mittens, and used them on Denali, Orizaba, and Logan. Their newer mittens now have a leather palm and use PrimaLoft or similar in the palms (instead of down). I haven't tried the new ones, but the old ones were definitely the way to go. Very warm. Very compactable. Very light.

\* My OR mitts are big enough so that I can wear one layer of fluffy insulating mitt \*inside\* the double liners. I have never had to do that. And it was cold on Ojos at 4am

\* The Mountain Hardware ones look really good but I haven't used them.

\* I recommend against the OR Pros, which I found lacking on Aconcagua; also don't like the wrist cinch. I'll suggest either the Ortovox Anarcticas or what I now have, the Granite Gear Lutsen Mitts ([www.granitegear.com](http://www.granitegear.com)<<http://www.granitegear.com/>> ).

\* Take a look at Marmot's Expedition mitten made out of PrimaLoft. They worked quite nicely on Denali for us.

\* Black Diamond also makes a Goretex mitt with leather palm, and verylofty, removable PrimaLoft inner liner.

\* I like the Marmot mitts but they are really pricey. The NF mitts have (in my opinion) a goofy thumb design that doesn't fit me well. Granite Gear makes a mitt that is similar to the OR mitt (I think). It's cut really nicely and is a decent price.

\* I'll second R.J.'s recommendation on the Dachstein (boiled wool) mittens. Those with a good shell are equivalent to the Marmot Expedition mitts I recommended earlier. And you can order the Dachstein mitts from [www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com) <<http://www.campmor.com/>> for about \$25!

\* About 4 years ago I bought OR Pro gloves at REI and found them not warm enough even for Colorado winter conditions, even swapping out damp liners with a spare liner I purchased (which was an outrageous \$40). Mittens will of course be warmer, but the felt-like liners were just not very warm. I also did not like the synthetic non-leather palms - they were stiff and not as grippy as leather palms, although maybe more waterproof than leather. The 3-ply Gore-Tex glove material was not seam sealed (too expensive to produce) and after I slowly applied a seam sealer on all internal seams, the gloves were really stiff. Eventually sold them for a song.

\* Next I tried TNF down-filled mittens, and as soon as they became slightly damp from perspiration, they were an ice box. And of course, down is practically impossible to dry in the field. Next I tried Marmot synthetic filled mittens (I think they are Polargard 3D - last year's model) and they were very warm even when damp but extremely bulky to handle gear, ropes, or hiking poles. The 3D and PrimaLoft synthetic insulations feel very slippery when you grip anything as the fibers slide across each other. It gets a little better as you break in the insulation and compress it a bit, but I don't get a really secure grip with the bulky synthetic mitts (or gloves).

\* The Granite Gear gloves and mittens are bomber construction with Pittards leather palms and replaceable fleece liners. Granite Gear gloves are hard to find - Grand West in Denver carried several models last year but has none in stock this year. I use their Ice Sparring glove to ice climb -the knuckle padding and leather palms are great. A primary criterion was to have a shell design that I could pull out and replace damp liners during the day. First warming the replacement liners inside my coat and then replacing

damp ones, I've had good luck keeping warm hands all day with only the weight penalty of a spare pair of liners. The Granite Gear Lutstein mittens are the warmest I've seen advertised are toasty with a double layer wool/fleece liner and at "only" \$85 are a good value (I found them last year at 20% discount).

[http://www.granitegear.com/products/winter\\_gear/mitts\\_gloves/lutsen\\_mitts/index.shtml](http://www.granitegear.com/products/winter_gear/mitts_gloves/lutsen_mitts/index.shtml)

\* I have used OR Exped on Denali and Aconcagua. I have large hands and so can't get a big liner in even the largest OR. I think if they were bigger for me they would work better. I have heard good things here about the NF Down if that 's the Himalayan mitten.

\* I have found that liner gloves worn inside of mittens make my fingers cold. My fingers are warm without the liner gloves. Also, I have found that fleece liner mittens seem colder than wool mittens. I wore wool Dachstein mitts under an oversize pair of OR overmitts to the summit of Denali. I could only keep my hands out of the mitts for about ten seconds while taking photos on the summit.

\* AlpineAscents lists specific brands of gear that one must have to go on their guided trips. As for mittens, they require the OR PRO with double liner.

\* After one has reached the limit of the bulky mittens then one could add more insulating garments to the upper body specifically the head as this is where the warmth is needed at the expense of the extremities. Extra food & fluids also aid due to better blood circulation.

\* Several things to think about that may help.

1 Avoid drugs that will cause constriction of the small blood vessels in your extremities. This list includes caffeine (in coffee, tea, coke, mellow yellow etc) for at least four days before you go into the cold. Chocolate can also be a problem. Herbal remedies containing ephedra are also a problem. The other big drug classes are cocaine and amphetamines.

2 If this is a recurrent problem as your doctor about circulation problems. Diseases that can cause this are: Raynauds, Diabetes, Arteriosclerosis, several of the scleroderma type problems.

\* On the physiology front, there are some indications that taking about 325 mg per day of Gingko Biloba might help with capillary circulation, thereby keeping your hands warmer. Also, a recent French study on Everest indicates that it might help prevent altitude sickness. However, avoid ginkgo if you have any bleeding disorders, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, etc.

\* No amount of clothing we could put on could keep our fingers and toes warm. We had to swing our arms around, swing our legs back and forth 5 to 10 minutes was not uncommon. I was the only one of the group who did not get frost nip. I am fairly confident I did the most swinging of anybody in our group. For example to get the stoves going in the morning for every one minute you spent out of your over-glove you would spend a minute or more swinging arms to get the blood back in them. And don't forget when you take off your gloves to always put them IN your jacket. In extreme environments if both your gloves and your hands get cold its almost impossible to bring them back.

\* Any sort of pressure on your hands and wrists is a big no-no. (I think this may vary person to person; it is certainly true for me.)

\* Wearing insulating gloves inside the mitts defeats the game for mittens, which is to place your fingers in contact.

# Ask Bôté Anhouré

## Mountaineering and climbing Q&A from the famous French Alpinist.

Noted French alpinist Bôté Anhouré has agreed to answer mountaineering and climbing questions from Scree readers when he returns from the mountains. Unfortunately, Bôté has spent the last two months recovering from a serious climbing accident and has not been able to answer your questions. In late November last year Bôté was attempting a new mixed grade route with the American climber, Poot Biner, notorious in his own right for bailing off of many climbs, that would have been the hardest in the world. While attempting to dry tool the 30 meter long roof which required several figure four moves, one figure nine move and an interlocking of a letter b move with a figure six move, a huge chunk of choss broke loose and four pitons blew out causing our hero to crash into the wall at the start of the roof. He has been at a hospital in Paris under the care of Dr. Jacques LeKwaque and is finally healthy enough to answer letters.

**Question #1** There seems to be a raging debate on the existence of Giardia in the Sierra streams and people are making snide references to Marmot droppings as being the cause. Do you really think that I should go out and buy the ridiculously expensive water filter from NeverNeed that weighs two kilogrammes?

Amoebaba from Wrigley Field

Dear Amoebaba,

Bote is dear friends with all the Marmots in the Sierra so please do not insult them. Their droppings, known as Marmolade in scientific circles, is spread very thin. I refer you to the well known study on animal droppings and Giardia there-of by the well known climber and scientist, WhoFlungDung from Port-Au-Potte, Haiti, whose seminal paper on this subject, 'Yabba Dabba Doo Doo' goes into extensive detail on this very same topic. He spent a summer in the Sierra making several hard ascents (with me) and also analyzing Sierra streams. He ends the paper by the powerful statement, 'One may, therefore, conclude, that there is little or no Giardia in the Sierra, only Marmolade'.

**Question #2** I have been following the latest anthrax situation very closely and I am very concerned that this bacteria is found in nature. Does this mean I can come in contact with it in the mountains and other outdoor trips? If so, are there any products that are available that I can purchase that will protect me from this bacteria?

Auntie Social from Uptite, Wisconsin

Dear Auntie,

You can come in contact with just about anything you want in the outdoors. Beware of climbing and mountaineering companions carrying packets of white powder, in particular. In fact, you shouldn't share anything with your mountaineering companions. This includes pots and pans, cooking utensils, and even stoves. You will need a special tent to sleep in. There is a new tent from the Trojan Tent Company called the Prophylactitent, which will keep you from breathing anything floating in the air. It is, of course, a one person tent since you must not be sharing any air space with your mountaineering companions.

**Question #3** We are out here in the Afghan desert and would like to do some climbing on the cliffs near our home here. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of money to spend on climbing equipment. We are considering using anti aircraft ammunition as pitons. Do you think this will work? Also, what do you think of making a new bouldering grading for bouldering moves on tanks?

Taliban Tony  
Kandehar Kenny  
Kabul Klimbing Klub

Dear Tony and Kenny,

Unless you are interested in a new face I would not recommend pounding on the back end of live ammunition. In the old days John Salathe made pitons from old model T axles. There should be plenty of Toyota pick up trucks in your area that no one is using anymore. Try making pitons from the truck axles. As for the bouldering grades I would expect that the ratings would be similar to the V rating in common use now, however, I would add one grade for every problem worked out on a moving tank.

**Question #4** Would you please tell me if I should send in my application for a permit to the Mt Whitney Ranger Station or to the Bishop Ranger Station if I have to make a summer time day hike of Tora Bora, which happens to be on the SPS list?

Ryan McNali from Bald Boa.

Dear Ryan,

Buy a map, Cortez. You are probably thinking of Tunnabora, the most boring peak, this side of Kabul. That is indeed on the SPS list and is a festering mound of the most obnoxious scree. Bôté makes it a point to not climb such peaks and hence is beneath him to offer advice on it and other list peaks. By the by, Tora Bora is not reachable by any trailhead in Bishop nor the Whitney region for that matter and is certainly not dayhikeable.

## 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.

### Echo Peaks

Peak: Echo Peaks (11,000 - 11,160+) class-3/4/ and maybe 5

Dates: June 16th, 2002

Maps: Tenaya Lake 7.5' or Tuolumne Mdws 15'

Leader: Ron Karpel, [ronny@karpel.org](mailto:ronny@karpel.org) 650-594-0211

Co-Leader: Jim Curl, [jhcurl@pacbell.net](mailto:jhcurl@pacbell.net) 415-585-1380

This is a restricted trip of the Sierra Club. Participants must be experienced in class-3 and 4 climbing.

Late last season, a debate about identifying a few of the peaks lead me to make an unplanned day trip to the area, and to realize that the 9 Echo Peaks are an attractive day trip destination.

We will set ropes for peak #4 which is 4th class. If we have enough skilled climbers, some of us may climb peak #9 which is rated 5.7. The rest of the peaks are 3rd class.

Send your Sierra Club member number along with a climbing resume to the leaders.

### Rock Climbing Practice

Dates: Thu. April 15th (evening session), San. April 21st (practice)

Leaders: Ron Karpel, David Ress

Contact: Ron Karpel, email: [ronny@karpel.org](mailto:ronny@karpel.org) 650-594-0211(H)

This is a restricted outing of the Sierra Club. To participate, you must be a Sierra Club Member. Participants must be experience on class 3 terrain and will be required to use a helmet.

Our practice will emphasize safe rock climbing using rock climbing gear. The goal is to cover the kind of rock climbing situations one might encounter during mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada. We will practice climbing rock routes of class-4 and easy class-5 (up to about 5.4) levels. Participants will train in general use of ropes,

tying knots, using harnesses, using protection devices, setting anchors, using slings and biners, providing belay to leaders top rope belay to followers, tying in to a belay station, using belay devices, and practice rappelling. We do not intend to train in leading rock climbing.

The theory session will take place in the Peninsula Conservation Center. The practice itself will take place in the Pinnacles National Monument.

## Picacho Peak (3382 ft)

### Southern Arizona

December 25, 2001.

Participants: Arun and Ravi Mahajan.

Both me and my brother, Ravi, who lives in Tempe, Az, had heard a lot about this peak and had wanted to climb it for a long time. I had been under the impression that it was moderate fifth class and so, it was with some trepidation that we set out for it since we did not have rope or pro.

After an hour's drive from Tempe, we were at the Picacho Peak State Park, having enjoyed a view of the peak for the past 40 miles or so in our drive. The peak is short but startling and distinct because of its left-tilting conical-section like top. A ranger at the park told us that since this was Christmas Day, the \$5 fee had been waived.

We were off at 9.15am. Nobody else around except a solo hiker whom we saw, much further along on the trail from us. The Hunter Trail starts off from the parking lot and switch backs among the brush and Saguaro till the base of an impossible looking rock wall and then turns right to a saddle that has a small sign board. We did good time and were at the saddle in about 35 mins. From there the trail drops down to the back side where there are cables/rails to assist people on the rock and then, in a circuitous fashion, climbs up via more cables till a small amphitheatre that is right behind the imposing rock wall. The trail climbs to the top by staying right where there are a couple of hard class-3 sections which are greatly aided by the presence of cables. Without the cables, one would rate them as hard Class-3 or maybe even easy fourth class. There is also a small traverse over a short down sloping ledge but it is well protected by cables and what looks like a fence of mesh wire. It is an easy slaughter to the summit from the top of this traverse and we were on the summit (no register) at 10.30am. We had great views all around of the desert landscape interspersed with sharply rising peaks. We chatted with this solo hiker and then came down to the top of the cables but then Ravi pointed me to the surrogate summit and we took a short side trip to bag it also (rusty tin can register) and then back down via the cables. Now we started seeing several parties coming up, some even had children amongst them.

We were back down to the cars at 11.45. Some trip reports on the DPS web page speak of 5th class climbing whereas others call it no harder than class-3.

Either they are talking about different peaks or different routes on the same peak.

Nonetheless, we had a short but enjoyable outing on a crisp and sunny Winter day in Arizona.

• *Arun Mahajan*

## Martis Peak

December 30-31, 2001

Following the suggestion in Michael White's "Snowshoe Trails of Tahoe," my wife Carla and I snowshoed the 8 mile round trip from Highway 267 to the top of Martis Peak. The trail was moderately steep, rising from 7,000 ft to 8,740 ft at the peak over densely-packed snow and well-marked trails.

Even on the New Year's weekend, the trail was not crowded, and we encountered only a few others on skis and snowshoes (although we did see two snowmobiles along the way).

The real treat, however, was the fire lookout at the top of Martis Peak, courtesy of the California Division of Forestry, which provided a glass enclosed shelter with a beautiful 270 degree view of Lake Tahoe and the valley to the west. Well, some of the time, anyway, when the clouds and fog would dissipate! The CDF even thought to provide a table and some chairs, providing a place to rest a hot cup of tea or a glass of wine while you soak in the scenery and recover from the hefty winds at the peak.

The hike is a great hike for beginners, with easily distinguishable trails, and is fairly sheltered everywhere except the last few hundred yards from the peak. White's book provides a very good trail description, and a map, although you'll want to buy or make your own topo before you set off.

We took a leisurely 3 hours to make it to the top, and about 1 1/2 hours to make it back down.

• *Bruce Beauchamp*

## Stealing Summits and Dogging Drops: The Kaweah

July 4, 2001

Summits are climbed. Summits are conquered. Summits are done and summits are summited, but summits are also stolen. Stolen from circumstance by the will to conquer and prevail.

Certainly neither Rich Leiker, Charles Schafer or myself had any such grand thoughts that our trip to climb Black Kaweah over the July 4<sup>th</sup> week 2001, would prove any more note worthy than any other moderately difficult Sierra peak. A two day slog over Sawtooth then Black Rock passes to our base camp at Big Arroyo was uneventful with the exception of Larry Sokolski falling ill on the second day with a stomach ailment. Perhaps we should have all turned home when he did.

Those first two days were under gloriously sunny skies with moderate temperatures and my biggest concerns were how much sunscreen, bug repellent I had on and how much water I could drink. First camp at secluded Spring Lake proved a treat in this off-the-beaten-trail area. The trout were biting and fresh trout were easy to catch. A bear bag was hung, but deer repellent would have been more appropriate as we were plagued by the hoofed thieves all night long as the sought salt from our sweaty clothes, semi-clean dishes, and even trekking pole hand straps.

From the top of Black Rock pass, Black Kaweah looms large. The left handmost peak in an inspiring chain of monsters. A mountaineers peak from first glance. Even from 10 miles away the trained eye can see no easy way to gain the summit and the untrained eye imagines only horrors among the steep crumbling ramparts. Yes, this is a mountaineers peak. A worthy peak. A

peak to be climbed, conquered, and summated. While fewer people have stood atop it's summit block than have stood atop Everest, the three of us hardly thought we would have to steal it to claim the same honor.

Summit day. Up at 4:30, on the trail by 5:30 climbing into the basin at 11,600. This means there is nearly 2,000 ft to gain before one even gets to the true mountain! Early on, a beautiful and surprisingly lush forest here on the 30 deg slope deep in the Sierra is a welcome respite for scree trudging and talus hoping. That will come later in spades as Black Kaweha has its defenses layered in depth. At the first tarn, the route comes into view and dueling guide book descriptions are consulted. "At the boomerang wedge of snow...." Except this year there is no snow! "Under the water stain." There are two of them! Gad. Better to read the mountain yourself.

The route is up under the obvious water stain (from a waterfall) directly in line below the summit. Yes, the summit can be seen from the lakes beneath it. Fifty feet up this access chute, we swung left into a steep third class couloir formed by the mountain and a fin. This scree-filled chute stretches perhaps 100 feet at 40 degrees until it terminates in an obvious left access to an upward exit at a smooth, but heavily broken rock section forming a direct gully leading to the summit. This gully can be seen from the lakes below as the one that leans right. Once in this gully, don't be tempted by the direct 4<sup>th</sup> class pitches seen along the way as all difficulties may be surmounted by 3<sup>rd</sup> class work arounds. In general, the climbing is both sustained 3<sup>rd</sup> class and straight forward. The route follows the gully proper, but weaves back and fourth to follow a rough stream course. Our party of 3 experienced and careful peak baggers was optimal for the climb. Many more and the rock fall danger would have been extreme. Helmets are as mandatory as is good technique. At the direct top of the gully the knife edge summit ridge is gained with a few 3<sup>rd</sup> class moves over loose, dangerous blocks. The descent follows the same route. Best to mark your path on the way up to avoid confusion.

While studding the peak from below, we noticed a strands of cirrus clouds forming in the tell-tale band of front moving in. On and off the summit by noon we said. So it was no surprise when as Rich and I were making the final moves onto the summit ridge it began to spit rain and the sky directly overhead darkened. As I worked my way around a boulder on the final summit ridge with a thousand feet of air beneath the soles of my boots, it moved. Its balance was so delicate any wrong move would have caused it to slip and given me the unholy choice of leaping out of the way and down a thousand feet or standing there as it crushed my foot, which would cause me to jump in pain down that same thousand feet. My plodding deliberations and delicate moves were interrupted with a blinding flash and an immediate boom that sent me up and over the obstacle. No time to spare. Up and down by noon was right!

Rich already had the most famous of summit register boxes open. The original, 76 year old bound book placed in 1924 by the Sierra club. Names of famous Sierra mountaineers adorn the pages: Elikhorn, and Norman Clyde, then there is WS Starr Jr's signature written in blood because he didn't have a pen. In total, less than 200 names, written in a book that seems as if it were purchased yesterday the pages are in such good condition. It was raining now in earnest and we didn't want to get the precious book wet. Putting it in a new zip lock bag and locking it in the box, we headed down. Total time on the summit: 10 minutes. I was last off as the storm closed in around us and was aware that if I got struck I would either be killed outright or the induced epileptic seizure would toss me off into the abyss on either side. Move fast, but

carefully I said to myself taking large, measured breaths to control the nervous energy.

Finally off to relative safety and into the gully. Down the same pitches working faster with gravity than against it. Down into the smooth water course rocks, down over the waterfall ledges. Down the friction sections getting wet with large, cold drops. Down the gravel ledges of sand now wet and goeey. Down. Down. Down. A race with what we knew was a bad storm closing in on us, until it was foolish to race anymore. With water now filling the exit path and rain turning to 1/8 in hail, we decided to shelter in place on a series of table top sized ledges and wait it out. The storm intensified, we had to shout to one another to be heard. Mini streams to frozen hail flowed down the mountain, a torrent of water pushed rocks and boulders over our heads and down the gully, hail drummed on our helmets. We waited. We waited for the hail to stop. We waited for the rain to stop. We waited for the rocks to stop falling. We waited for the flash flood in our exit route to subside. We waited and we got cold. We waited for 3 hours. We waited until Charles found a "do-able" 4<sup>th</sup> class escape move off the ledge.

The sun never did come out and dry the rocks, but we did get down and back to camp around 9:30 PM, exhausted but knowing we had stolen our summit. One of the most elusive in the Sierra.

Gluttons for punishment, Charles and I hiked up the amazing high Sierra trail to the foot of Big Kaweah the next day and climbed it's second class slopes in near identical weather. This time we didn't have to wait for subsiding waters or do tricky 4<sup>th</sup> class moves. We just walked off – in hail, rain and flashes of lighting. Which is what we did the following day as it rained yet again on the way out. While these storms were spectacularly beautiful and certainly added to the drama of our adventures, we've come to expect the Sierras to be more or less dry by July 4<sup>th</sup>, and the prospect of climbing Triple Divide peak in similar conditions seemed to be pushing out luck so we decided to take the victories we had and hike out. Our decision was vindicated several times on the hike out as heavy storms lashed out across the range for both days of the hike.

The mountains weren't going to let us have our triumphs without one last trial however. As I arrived back at the parking lot, I noticed some movement under Charles truck. This was surprising as we had carefully surrounded the bottom of his vehicle with chicken wire mesh to keep the Marmots from chewing the belts and hoses. Apparently Toyota hoses are the best of the bunch however as upon inspection I found both upper and lower radiator hoses had been chewed through. Fortunately, the ranger station is very familiar with this problem and gave us the number of the one service station that will come the 40 miles up a dead end road for such emergencies. Having AAA "plus" is a real plus here.

• *Tim Hult*

## 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.

### Freezin on a Fourteener

Peak: Mt Langley (14,026')  
Date: Feb 8-11, 2002 (Fri-Mon)  
Difficulty: class 2, snow travel, snowshoes, skis, ice axe  
Location: eastern Sierra Nevada (Mt Langley map)  
Contact: Steve Eckert  
([http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Steve\\_Eckert.txt](http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Steve_Eckert.txt))  
Contact: Kai Wiedman, 650-347-5234

How high have YOU been in the dead of winter? On our way back from the Grand Canyon, we decided a pre-spring-conditions trip above 14k was a good idea... and the early snowpack looks nice and deep. Participants should be comfortable camping and climbing on snow. There is only one really steep stretch, but we'll be one or two days in before we get there. Snowshoes or skis are welcome. A longer winter approach and a cautious attitude caused us to schedule a 4-day trip, but there is a chance this can be done in 3 days. It depends on how far up the road we can drive and what the snowpack is like. Contact either of us to sign up (and don't be offended if we ask whether you can navigate on your own during a winter storm).

### Pyramid Peak and Mt Price

Date: Mar 9-11 (Sat-Mon)  
Peaks: Pyramid Peak (9983) , Mt Price (9975)  
Difficulty: class 2, ice axe, crampons, skis, snowshoes, snow travel  
Location: northern Sierra Nevada, Off Highway 50 (USGS Pyramid Peak map)  
Contact: Stephane Mouradian  
[smouradian@hotmail.com](mailto:smouradian@hotmail.com),  
[http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Stephane\\_Mouradian.html](http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Stephane_Mouradian.html)  
Cocontact: Steve Eckert  
[http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Steve\\_Eckert.html](http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Steve_Eckert.html)

Pyramid Peak is a PCS winter classic. We will spice it up with a traverse over to Mount Price and maybe a side trip to Ralston Peak on the way out. Trailhead is TwinBridges on Highway 50. Crampons and ice axe experience required to sign up for this trip.

### Joshua Tree National Park

Dates: Sun, March 17 – Thur, 21, 2002  
Place: Joshua Tree National Park  
Indian Cove Group Campsite #4  
Difficulty: Class 5  
Leader: Hal Tompkins [tompkins@SLAC.Stanford.EDU](mailto:tompkins@SLAC.Stanford.EDU)  
Coleader: Joan Marshall [jmarshall@legato.com](mailto:jmarshall@legato.com)  
650-210-7551

No scheduled daytime activities. Free choice. Since the entire week was not available, a second site has been reserved in the family campsite area of Indian Cove, for Saturday, March 16, and for Friday, March 22. Bring firewood.

Those interested in rock climbing must have a climbing partner. We can help you find one. Potluck dinner Monday and wine tasting Monday night. Bring your best! There is no running water in Joshua Tree. Limited to 25. 10\$ reserves your spot. Mail to:

Joan Marshall  
650 Elmbrook Way  
San Jose, CA 95111

### Mt. Muir

Peak: Mt. Muir  
Date: March 30-April 1  
Contact: George Van Gorden [gvangord@mhu.k12.ca.us](mailto:gvangord@mhu.k12.ca.us)

Climb a fourteener, barely, in winter conditions in the springtime when you can get by with only nine hours in the sack. Participants need to have experience using an ice axe for self-arrest. Crampons will be necessary and we will travel by snowshoe. Some winter camping experience would help.

### Nepal and Tibet

Goal: Kala Pattar, Island Peak, Tibet  
Dates: Apr 26 - May 15, 2002 (Fri-Wed)  
Difficulty: mostly trekking, Island Peak may require ropes  
Location: Nepal and Tibet  
Contact: Warren Storkman, [dstorkman@aol.com](mailto:dstorkman@aol.com)  
650-493-8959

DATES ARE TENTATIVE - let me know what works for you. To all of you who have expressed interest in the past about my trips: This coming May '02 there is the option of two trips - doing one or both. Nepal is a 17 day trek including climbing Kalapattar or Island Peak - the other is a 7 night, 8 day trip into Tibet. Fly to Lasha - return to KTM by auto. If you want to be kept posted please let me know.

## Elected Officials

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

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## Subscriptions and Email List Info

Hard copy subscriptions are \$13. Subscription applications and checks payable to "PCS" should be mailed to the Treasurer so they arrive before the last Tuesday of the expiration month. If you are on the official email list ([lomap-pcs-announce@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:lomap-pcs-announce@lists.sierraclub.org)) or one of the email lists the PCS feeds (either the [sierra-nevada@climber.org](mailto:sierra-nevada@climber.org) discussion list or the [california-news@climber.org](mailto:california-news@climber.org) read-only list), you have a free **EScree** subscription. For email list details, send "info lomap-pcs-announce" to "[listserv@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:listserv@lists.sierraclub.org)", or send anything to "[info@climber.org](mailto:info@climber.org)". **EScree** subscribers should send a subscription form to the Treasurer to become voting PCS members at no charge. The **Scree** is on the web as both plain text and fully formatted Adobe Acrobat/PDF.

## 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 2/24/2002. 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**