



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

## Holiday Gathering

**Date:** Tuesday, December 14  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Where:** Caliper Life Sciences  
605 Fairchild Drive  
Mountain View, CA  
(see below for directions)

**Program:** *Christmas Party*

Hosted by Stephane Mouradian

The December meeting is our annual Christmas Party where we ignore the usual formalities of meetings and indulge in a potluck dinner and other wild, devil may care antics. We'll have a slide show, where everyone is invited to bring about a dozen of their best shots. Please bring something for the potluck either from the list below (using the first letter of your last name or the last letter of your first name). Also, please bring your own utensils, drinking glasses, napkins or paper towels, and paper plates.

A-F: Main Course

G-L: Drinks

M-R: Desserts

S-Z: Snacks, Appetizers, Salads

However, if you have a really special dish you would like to share with us, by all means bring it! Note that the meeting room is equipped with PC and LCD projector, so feel free to bring digital pictures. HOWEVER, please put the files on a CD and bring it with you [Please do not email files to Stephane].

**Directions to Caliper:** From San Jose (Northbound Highway 101): Take the Ellis Street Exit and turn left going back under the freeway. Turn left on Fairchild Drive (first exit after freeway on-ramp). Go approximately .25 miles to the Caliper building on the right. From San Francisco (Southbound Highway 101): Take Ellis Street exit and turn right

onto Ellis Street. Take the first left (100 ft) on Fairchild Drive. Go .25 miles to the Caliper building on the right.



## Welcome New Officers!

The eyes have it and PCS welcomes the new officers for the upcoming year. We wish to thank our outgoing officials for their marvelous job this past year! Pat Callery, Chair; Linda Sun, Vice-Chair; and Jeff Fisher, Treasurer; muchas gracias and good luck with future endeavors!

New officers are:

**Chair:** Arun Mahajan

**Vice-Chair:** Chris Prendergast

**Treasurer:** Bob Bynum

To contact any PCS officer, all information is on the 'Scree' back-page. Thank you!



## Editor Bids Farewell

After serving as your Scree editor for the past seven years, I have decided to move on to the position of Treasurer. It has been my pleasure to serve in this position and make a positive contribution to the PCS, which over the years has provided me with many pleasant peak climbing experiences and great camaraderie.

As of this issue, Debbie Benham will take over as Scree editor. I know she will add fresh energy and ideas to the Scree. We have been working together to insure a smooth transition. I thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Scree editor and I look forward to seeing more of you on peak climbs.

• Bob Bynum, Scree Editor 1997-2004

## 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.

There were no trips submitted via the Trip Scheduler (PCS Vice-Chair) this month. If you're an official PCS leader and would like to lead a trip, come on down! Sign up and lead away. If you need to check on your leader status, or, would like to become an official leader, go to the SierraClub, Loma Prieta/PCS website.



## Wilderness First Aid Classes

These are great classes for learning and practicing wilderness first aid skills in an outdoor setting. In addition to a half day of outdoor scenarios practice of first aid and leadership skills, there is a focus on wilderness first aid topics, such as: patient assessment, shock and bleeding, head and spinal injuries, wounds, musculoskeletal injuries, heat and cold illnesses and much more. A three-year Wilderness First Aid certificate is available upon successful completion of this course and passing a written wilderness exam. There are pre-class reading assignments. For further information on Foster Calm, go to [www.fostercalm.com](http://www.fostercalm.com), or contact Bobbie Foster, 530-265-0997.

Dates and Places: January 22-23, 2005 – Palo Alto  
January 29-30, 2005 – San Francisco



## Climbing and Trekking: Everest Region of Nepal

**Island Peak (6165m/20,550ft)**

**Kala Patthar (5550m/18,490ft)**

*Part 1 of 2*

This was a trip organized by Warren Storkman who has been climbing peaks all over the world and has climbed and organized treks in Nepal for several years. In Nepal, we used the services of Mountain Experience ([www.mountainexperience.info](http://www.mountainexperience.info)) run by Tamding and Chhuldim Sherpa.

Our support staff in the climb were: Sirdar and climbing guide: Shyam Pun, assistant sherpa: Tenzing, cook: Lakhpa Sherpa, cook boys: Lakhpa Sherpa, Norbu, Ganesh and Ashok and Sherpanis: Lakhpa Dolma and Lakhpa, to herd the five sterling Zopkios, the cross between a yak and a cow. There were several Lakhpas but we were never confused.

**Climbers/trekkers from the west: Warren Storkman, David Meinhardt, Arun Mahajan and Ron Karpel (Calif, US), Azfar, Jennie and Stewart McNeill (the UK)**

**3rd Oct 04:** Kathmandu was warm and muggy. Tamding Sherpa was present at the airport to receive us and a short drive got us to the Tibet Guest House in the touristy Thamel district. The TGH provides decent and clean accommodation at a moderate price. The staff is friendly and competent. There we met the great Babu, Warren, our organizer and Stewart McNeill of the UK. Stewart is quite experienced in Nepal trekking and this was his fifth time here. He had already summited Mera Peak and Chulu-east on previous excursions. Azfar and Jennie were to join us later on in the trek. That day and the next were spent in acting tourist. We visited the temples of Pashupatinath and Bodhnath as well as the ancient city of Patan. The Thamel district is a blast and great place to shop for Nepali and Tibetan knickknacks.

**5th and 6th Oct 04:** Lost two days, waiting at KTM airport, hoping to get the flight out to Lukla but the clouds and rain were preventing any landings at Lukla, an emotional roller coaster for us all.

**7 Oct 04:** Finally a clear day and we got on the Lukla flight. Landing at Lukla, 2642m/8800ft, is as exciting as the stories you may have heard from others. The little twin engine Otter somehow finds this little band-aid of an airstrip that is up-sloping on the approach and nestled between two cliffs and at the edge of a ravine. Suffering Swamis, we are going to crash into a wall!! but just before that happens, the expert pilots make the plane do an abrupt ice hockey stop and every body claps in relief. After some great breakfast at Pawan's 'North Face Lodge and Panoramic View Restaurant' (Pawan is another of Warren's friends) we met Shyam Pun, our climbing guide-cum-sirdar and then we were finally off. Warren, me, Shyam, Ron, Dave, Stewart and Warren's porter, Jit Bahadur. The trail passes through scenic villages and some snowcovered peaks started to show up. The trail goes downhill for quite a bit. Laden animals, porters and returning trekkers passed us by. My heart was light with song. I was finally in the Himalaya! We had lunch at Phakding, 2610m/8690ft and had the first major river crossing on a swaying but solid bridge over the turbulent Dudh Kosi. Since we had burned up two days at Kathmandu from our already short schedule, we decided to make up for lost time by hiking more every day, till we had made up the time. So, we decided to continue on upto the village of Monjo, 2840m/9460ft, on day-1 instead of staying at Phakding. Monjo is outside the boundary of Sagarmatha National Park.

**8 Oct 04:** Monjo to Khumjung, 3780m/12,590ft: By 8am, we were walking, then past the park entrance where Shyam did the permit formalities. It was 10am or so, when we arrived in Namche Bazaar, 3440m/11,460ft, the administrative center of the Solu-Kumbhu region. The walk is steep and climbs relentlessly and we were all feeling it. It was cloudy, wet and cold at Namche which

is a very nice town, horseshoe shaped and nestled amongst the hills. All paths climb up steeply to the various tiers on the mountainside where the dwellings are. We had a long break including lunch and snacks at Namche and then we set out for Khumjung. The trail rising out of Namche was steep also. It was cloudy and we had no views and it was a dreary slog up to Syangboche and it's 'airstrip' (somewhat flat piece of gravel on a relatively flat plateau). In about an hour and half, we dropped down into the beautiful town of Khumjung. We saw our first yak on the hill above Namche.

**9 Oct 04:** Khumjung to Devoche, 3771m/12,560m: The great Babu departs with Jit.

This was the first day when the skies were clear at dawn and we were blessed by our first view of the most beautiful mountain I have ever seen, Ama Dablam and this startling peak always dominated the views throughout the trip. After breakfast, we all hiked to the upscale Everest View Hotel and for the price of a 90 Rupee a cup of tea, got to sit on their deck and see Everest, Nuptse, Lhotse and Ama Dablam, perfectly arranged by God in collusion with the Nepal Board of Tourism and the picture postcard industry to fit into the view finder of most cameras. Then, it was time to say goodbye to Warren and he was saddened to part. I can say this much, the great Babu has a soft heart. After Warren disappeared from view, we turned around and now, with Shyam leading the way, dropped back on the trail. Initially, the trail meandered down to yet another crossing of the Dudh Kosi but then rose sharply and relentlessly till the scenic monastic town of Tengboche, 3860m, with its large Gumpa. We spent a little time inside the monastery. Again, the clouds covered the peaks and the general atmosphere was one of gloom. A pattern that was to be with us for several days, clear skies at sunrise and clouded over by mid morning. From Tengboche, the trail dropped down to Devoche where we spent the night. At the lodge, on whose grounds we got permission to camp, we took the sage advice of David Dugan, an Irish mountaineer and trip organizer who was staying there with his group and decided to slow down our march and that those in the group wanting to do Island Peak (me, Ron and Stewart) would punt on Kala Patthar and do lesser amount of hiking per day and go towards Island Peak directly whereas those wanting to do Kala Patthar only (Dave Meinhardt) would branch off from Dingboche and we would all meet back at Dingboche after our respective trips. By doing this, we would have the time to set up high camp instead of attempting Island Peak directly from Base Camp.

**10 Oct 04:** Devoche to Shomare, 4050m/: We paid a visit to a monastery in Devoche, populated by nuns and then walked further uphill till the small town of Shomare. It was a short day. There was of course, a steep section.

**11th Oct 04:** Shomare to Dingboche, 4360m/13,490ft: Another short day with some uphill. It was in Dingboche that we got our first view of Island Peak. It is a startling view and Island Peak looks quite impressive. It seems to stand right at the lowest point of a valley formed by Lhotse/Lhotse-Shar on the left and Baruntse on the right. This was also a short day for us. We also paid a visit to the lodge owned by Chhuldin's father. They had a poster there for the now defunct Palisades School of Mountaineering, Bishop, Ca!. We did a short hike to a stupa on a ridgetop and got our first views of Cho Oyo on the left and Makalu on the right with Lhotse and Lhotse-Shar dominating the view in the front and Tawoche and Cholatse on the back and left.

**12th October 04:** Dingboche to Chukung, 4750m/15,820ft: Dave split for Kala Patthar. He was to go over the same stupa-hill to Dughla and then Lobuche and Gorak Shep, before attempting Kala Patthar. We took off towards Chukung. The scenery got more barren as we left behind the barley fields of Dingboche and climbed gently towards the last village on the route, Chukung. Ama Dablam, always an amazing sight, presents a different visage from here with a subsidiary summit and a NE ridge. A friend, Dot Riley, had recommended hiking up to Chukung Ri, 5550m/18,490ft as an acclimatization step and for its views. I was not able to spur any enthusiasm from Stewart or Ron, so with some directions from Shyam, took off for it myself. After a river crossing, the trail starts to climb steeply till a plateau. From there, I could make out the two summits of Chukung Ri separated by a saddle. I figured that I had come up close to a 1000 ft above Chukung. But I was concerned about the available daylight and it had started to snow a little so I turned back and returned to camp. It snowed heavily for a few hours not long after that. At this point I had recorded my personal highest altitude, so everything was going to be gray after this....

**13th October 04:** Chukung to Island Peak BC, 5151m/17,150ft: We woke up to a winter wonderland. A few inches of snow everywhere, even on the backs of the yaks and our zopkio's. Ama Dablam looked magnificent in the morning sun with the fresh snow. We started walking towards base camp. There was an initial rise and then we stared down at a large barren plain with a small stream, milky with glacial silt, snaking through. We were all feeling the altitude. Slowly, we made our way to the point where a narrow valley opened up into this plain. There was a large hut there and several tents spread out

further up along this narrow valley. Island Peak BC, at the place called Pereshaya Gyab, is indeed a depressing place. We were made to feel home by the joyful chatter of our porters and cook and as usual, they cooked another great dinner. [To Be Continued....]

- Arun Mahajan



# Cathedral Range Traverse

September 25, 2004

The Cathedral Range in the Tuolumne high country is one of my favorite places in the mountains. The area has an upper alpine feel to it with wide open spaces and terrific views. Over the years I have climbed about everything in this area but a popular climb is to link up all the high points surrounding Budd Lake. These include Cathedral Peak, Echo Peak Number 3, Echo Crest, which oddly enough is the highest point, the Cockscomb, and Unicorn Peak. This traverse is described in both Croft's book and Moynier and Fiddler's book.

There are many versions of this traverse but the one that Dee and I chose was to just climb all the fourth class or lower routes. This meant we would not ascend the technical 5.7 Southeast Buttress route on Cathedral, on the other hand, we didn't need to haul in a load of gear to climb this particular route.

After blowing the early morning wake up by not hearing the alarm clock we started up the Cathedral Lakes trail at 7 AM Saturday. We decided to climb the peaks counter clockwise, that is, start with Cathedral. We left the Cathedral Lakes trail on the un-maintained but well worn Budd Creek trail after about 15 minutes. The Budd Creek trail essentially heads toward the Southeast Buttress of Cathedral and we left the trail about 100 yards before the buttress and headed up the slope to get to the northwest side of Cathedral. After some thrashing around and one several false start out a notch too far down the ridge towards Eichorn Pinnacle we ended up on the summit. The summit is the furthest north high point and the notch getting to the last 30 feet of fourth class is located close to the northeast ridge line. We patted the summit at 9:45 AM and headed back down.

Dee and I shot down the scree slope next to the Southeast Buttress and encountered the usual conga line of climbers which included my friend Dan and one of his buddies. A couple of "hearty hi ho's" and off we went towards the Echo Peaks. We headed across the wide alpine slabs and tundra that separates the Echo Peaks from Cathedral. Echo Peak Number 1 is the right most high point visible from the base of Cathedral. We worked our way up across the scree and brush to the gap just to the left of Echo Peak Number 1. Once in the gap we dropped our packs and climbed up to the saddle between Echo Peaks Number 1 and 2 and traversed over to the summit of Echo Peak Number 3. The summit of Echo Peak Number 3 has the lone summit register, an Ozzie and Harriet era metal flour can with a little note book in it. This was at 11:50 AM.

From the summit of Echo Peak Number 3 we headed back past Number 2, retrieved our packs, and traversed over across the top of Wilts Col and wandered up to the top of the Echo Crest. Departing the top of Echo Crest at 1:05 PM we dropped down a short third class section to get onto the southeast slope of the Echo Crest. It was a straightforward stroll over to the west ridge of the Cockscomb. We ascended the Cockscomb on the fourth class west ridge and descended at about 2:25 PM. We next wandered around to the east slope of the Cockscomb and headed towards the dogleg shaped ridge with Unicorn Peak at the far end of it. This required going over the top of a rocky bump right at the apex of the dogleg.

Unicorn Peak is somewhere at the end of this ridge. There are a couple of summit bumps at the end of the ridge and it wasn't

clear which one was the biggest. We guessed it was the last one on the ridge and that turned out to be right. From a notch on the ridge the climb goes out on the west face and after a couple of exposed moves going past what is without a doubt the most ancient and manky bolt I have ever laid eyes on the summit is reached. This is about fourth class and we decided to use our rope for this short pitch. Since we didn't bring any gear we used slings threaded through gaps in the rocks for pro and tied in with a bowline-on-a-coil.

It was now about 4:30 PM and we contemplated our descent route. We had anticipated dropping down from the summit of Unicorn to the tarns below and hiking down the slabs and then moving northeast to pick up the Budd Creek trail, however, we had run into another party on the traverse from Unicorn Peak who claimed to have come up the slabs below Unicorn Peak with great route finding difficulty. The other options were to drop down to Elizabeth Lake and hike out through the Tuolumne Campground or drop down to the west and head over to Budd Lake and out the Budd Creek trail. Since we had about two and a half hours of solid sunlight left we opted for the descent down the slabs below Unicorn Peak in spite of the un promising sounding route finding difficulties.

From the low point on the ridge between Unicorn Peak and the un-named "bump" we headed down to the little tarns below Unicorn Peak. From there we crossed over the outlet of these tarns, which was now dry, to the slabs on the west side of the drainage and walked all the way down these slabs to the forested area at the base. We could see what appeared to be either a trail or a dried out creek bed to the left at the bottom of the slabs. It turned out to be a dried out creek bed. We followed this for about 100 yards and then headed to the west cross country, gradually heading to the north. We soon bumped into the dried out Budd Creek creek bed and crossed this at a convenient point. There were vestiges of an old trail on the west side of Budd Creek. We followed this faint trail for another 50 to 100 yards and then headed cross country again through a clear area. This turned out to be just above the open rocky slab area on the Budd Creek Trail and we were soon back on the trail. We followed this out to the Cathedral Lakes trailhead parking and arrived at 7 PM. For once in my life I didn't have to use a headlamp on this trail. It was 12 hours car to car.

## Final Notes:

This is a great traverse! It can be done at an almost infinite level of difficulty ranging from the easiest fourth class version that we did to including all the Echo Peaks, Eichorn Pinnacle, Matthes Crest and the Southeast Buttress of Cathedral. The fourth class version is a great choice for moderately experienced climbers and is highly recommended. The fourth class summits are Cathedral, Cockscomb, and Unicorn Peak. Echo Peak Number 3 and Echo Crest are easy third class.

The route can be bailed off of at any point along the way and the Budd Creek trail is an easy escape. It is recommended to do this traverse counter clockwise starting with Cathedral. We thought the cross country route heading down from Unicorn was easy and straightforward but this seemed to be difficult for those coming up from this direction. In the advent of a late day the hike out from Unicorn through Budd Lake would be straightforward but longer than the slabs and in an emergency it would be easy to escape to the east from Unicorn to Elizabeth Lake and take the trail out from there. This would require a walk back on the road to the Cathedral Lakes parking area.

We took a 100 foot piece of 9 mm perlon, four carabiners, and four slings and climbed everything in our approach shoes. We only used the rope once on Unicorn Peak and the 100 foot length was fine, even with two bowline-on-a-coil tie-ins.

- Rick Booth

#### References:

The Good, the Great, and the Awesome, Peter Croft, Maximus Press, 2002, ISBN 0-9676116-4-4

Climbing California's High Sierra: The Classic Climbs on Rock and Ice, Second Edition, John Moynier and Claude Fiddler, The Globe Pequot Press (Falcon Guides), 2002, ISBN 0-7627-1085-3.



## Mokelumne Peak

### From Sunset to Sundown

March 13-14, 2004

Trip Participants: Pat Callery (Leader), Stephane (co-leader) and Kirsten Mouradian, Alex Sapozhnikov, Mumtaz Shamsee, Tony Stegman, Charles Schafer, Steve Eckert, Stan Huncilman, Meredith Williams.

This was an ambitious winter trip. Saturday travel 9 miles on snow across a succession of uphill/ downhill for a total gain for 1800'. Sunday climb 1600' and another 4 miles roundtrip to the summit and return via the initial 9 miles and uphill/downhill of 1500' to return to the trailhead, a 13 mile, 3000' day on snow.

We all met Saturday at the Tragedy Spring turn-off on Highway 88 just above Silver Lake. The turn-off is a small plod area 4.1 miles East of Iron Mountain Snow-Park, immediately after the 8000 FEET highway sign. At the time of our trip, there was plod space on both sides of the road and enough room for about 10 cars.

We left the trailhead at 8am and headed SE of Hwy 88 along the 4WD summer trail toward the wilderness boundary. In winter, there are several obvious opportunities to shortcut the switchbacks of the jeep trail. After 4 miles and a couple uphill/downhill, one reaches the site of the Plasse Trading Post. The route up to the Post is used by snowmobiles but we hardly saw any during our trip. At 1 mile from the trailhead, we stopped for a cloth break. Steve, Kirsten and Stephane were on skis and looking at a nice downhill run, so we let the snowshoers take a short head start.

As Steve was putting his pack on and sliding slowly, he fell and injured his ankle. It was extremely painful and it looked like it was going to be a while before Steve could get over the shock and be moving again. As Stephane was helping Steve and icing his wound, Kirsten spontaneously ran down the hill to catch up with Pat and the rest of the group who did not realize the accident. In hindsight, Kirsten the RN should have done the first aid while Stephane the co-leader should have immediately caught up with Pat before he was too far. Kirsten told Pat to continue with the group while her and Stephane (who were ready to function and navigate on their own) would evacuate Steve and maybe attempt the trip on our own if time allowed. We used Steve's plastic Telecuff to brace the ankle and

fortunately, Steve was able to use his poles and our shoulders as clutches and walk slowly on one leg. For a while, we did consider dragging him in the snow, which could have been interesting. Kirsten and Stephane left their own skis + pack behind and carried Steve's skis and pack. The walking was slow but the morning snow was not too soft and it took us maybe 1 hour to cover the 1 mile downhill back to the car. The ordeal was not quite over: Steve could not get into his car because of some alarm failure. We stopped a Highway Patrol officer and he radioed for help. Steve felt like he could drive home and he had plenty of food and water and the cop was working on his case, so Kirsten and Stephane felt like we could go again.

We started walking on the snow at 10am, retrieved our skis + gear and tried to move fast along the agreed upon trip route. As it turns out, we caught up with the group at their lunch break near the Plasse Trading Post. From that point, the route turns straight South, more or less following the Pack trail toward Munson Meadow, our camping spot. On the way in, we did not quite follow the pack trail but dropped West of it and below the ridge and navigated a small maze of bumps to end up at Cole Creek Lakes. We dropped down to the saddle after Cole Creek Lakes and climbed up toward Munson Meadow which we reached around 5pm. Anticipating a long Sunday, we left with Sunrise at 6am toward the Northridge of Mokelumne. We switched to crampons and ice axe and enjoyed the great climb along the sometimes knife-edge ridge. We reached the summit at 8am.

The run out below the summit looked rocky, so we dropped until the slope was gentler before skiers could start having their fun. We got back to camp around 11am and left camp around noon. For the return, we followed the summer pack trail more closely and stayed on the ridge. This route felt faster, more efficient and provided nice views. We were particularly concerned about exiting before dark. Your scribe tried to keep the group moving at a good pace with regular (but timed)



breaks. In spite of minor (mostly fake) moaning, everyone realized how tight we were with daylight and the group did a great job keeping its spirit and energy up. We reached the cars right as the sun was setting through the trees at 6pm, tired but thrilled by the great adventure. Thank you Pat Callery for organizing this fantastic trip. The climbing was excellent, it was a tough trip but the announcement did warn we would be exhausted by the end of the weekend.

- Stephane Mouradian

## Into Africa

### Mt Kilimanjaro (5896m/19,340 ft)

#### Chapter 10: Summit Day – Frozen Tears. Warm Beers.

[The following excerpt is taken from Scott Jorgensen's notes on climbing and summiting the highest peak in Africa, Wednesday, January 28, 2004. To view the entire trip report, see <http://blogs.salon.com/0001893/2004>. This trip was organized by Warren Storkman who has been climbing peaks all over the world. The guiding service we used was from the Marangu Hotel in the small town of Marangu just 40 km NE of Moshi, Tanzania.]

I was mistaken in my last entry: they woke us up at 11:00pm, not midnight, to begin our climb to the summit of Kilimanjaro. I wish I could say Goodluck's pan-banging alarm clock woke me up, but I was awake the whole night.

I could see headlamps turn on, bobbing like nervous will-o-the-wisps from inside everyone's tent. This was it.

James and I began gearing up by our own headlamps. On my feet was a pair of poly liners and thick wool hiking socks. My legs had a midweight pair of Patagonia poly long johns, wind-resistant synthetic hiking pants and a lined pair of warm-up pants over them. My top was a zip-up long sleeve midweight poly shirt, a North Face poly short-sleeve shirt (that never quite recovered from three weeks of solid wear at Everest Base Camp), a 400 weight fleece jacket and a Gore-Tex shell. My gloves were a thin poly liner with Gore-Tex Windstopper fleece mittens over them. My head had a thick balaclava and synthetic hat with the Scottish flag on it that I had picked up hiking the Southern Upland Way.

It was bitter cold outside and the wind was working the dining tent like a bellows. They fed us some shortbread cookies and a mug of black tea. In the shadowy light of headlamps everyone's eyes looked wild, faces distorted into demonic clown smiles or centuries-old stares of hollow-socket black. There was very little conversation.

The weather was far far colder than anything we had experienced on this trip so far. Most of it was the wind, which was a fierce snapping, clawing beast. It snatched the hood from your head, slashed your face when you turned the wrong way up switchbacks and sank its fangs into any flesh it could find. I don't know the exact temp, but after three decades of Minnesota winters, I'd guess it was at least -40 to -60 with the wind chills.

At our frequent rest stops, I'd sit shivering, rattling my bones uncontrollably, wiping away snoticicles that had formed sideways on my face from the wind. After a couple hours, my Snickers bars froze and I had to gnaw them for several minutes to make them swallowable. The watertube on my Camelbak froze up not long after that. To drink, I'd have to dig the bladder out of my pack, break the thin crust of ice on top and gulp from the refill opening.

There was no sense of time or how far or high we had come. Most sound was gobbled up by the wind. I'd turn off my headlamp at rest stops to conserve battery power. Through ice-crystal prisms of tears, I could see the headlamps of a party that had taken off before us and I wished we were that high up the mountain. Then I'd look down and see a party far below us and be glad I wasn't them. Further down still were the lights of villages. Villages lying in warm jungles with sweet thick air and cold bottles of beer.

My own light gave out after about four hours. The new batteries on my headlamp dimming to a faint yellow, to gray and then leaving me in dark blue on the side of Kilimanjaro.

Not long afterwards I began hallucinating. It felt like I'd be asleep for a second and then I'd force myself awake for a couple seconds and then slip below into some kind of subconscious ink that was writing a different story than what my body was experiencing. I saw boulders that were thrones with ancient kings seated upon them in a vast court. Then the light cast on them would shift, I'd wake up and see that it was merely snow on boulders. Snow. How high were we? How far had we come? How much farther was there to go? I cast a look back, but there wasn't even a memory of dawn in the sky. Shadows cast to my left became a caravan of camels hauling spices across the desert. Next thing I know I felt my nose brush up against the pack of the person in front of me. At least, I told myself, I knew I was still moving forward.

As I wrestled with this mental quicksand I became convinced I needed to take a short nap. I was on the verge of telling Charles I was going to just go off the trail a few feet and lay down for a couple minutes. Just five minutes and I'd be cool. Don't worry, it's alright.

Charles called a rest and I crumpled down against a boulder, flopped my head back against the rock and immediately shut myself down. I don't know how long I was out for, but when I awoke to a black as dark as my sleep, I briefly thought that everyone had left me. A quick glance over my shoulder revealed Andy's pinched face under his headlamp. More importantly, I felt a lot more reality-based.

Charles in Charge got us on our feet. "Twenty minutes." He said. "Twenty minutes to the rim."

Having heard "Almost there." Shouted by spectators at marathons I've run, I was going to call bullshit. But then I noticed a huge wall of white to my left. It was a glacier. The snows of Kilimanjaro!

But I could see it. Without my headlamp. The snow was reflecting off...I turned around to see a lighter shade of purple coming over the eastern skyline, making the rough outline of Mt. Mwenzi visible. Dawn. Day was breaking. We were close. So it was. And so we were.

The features of the glacier became more evident and it grew thicker as we climbed. Headlamps were unnecessary now. The glacial till under our feet was turning peach and crimson in the new light. And above us...above us was a line. A high horizon that nothing could be seen behind. It had to be the crater rim. Everyone saw it. We were moving at a slow shuffle behind Charles, but it soon turned into a slightly faster shuffle as we realized we were close. We fanned out behind him in the slowest hurry you could imagine.

This is going to sound like I was imaging it, but Charles got us to the top right at sunrise. We put our feet on the crater rim and gazed down into the snow-dusted ash cone for the first time and suddenly everything around us turned into gold. The sunrise raised the temperature almost immediately, but it felt more like the warmth was coming from inside us and radiating

The light had turned all the soil a rich Martian red. It was tough to know where to look. There were walls of glaciers shot through with neon blues that had been enjoying this view for millennia. There was the gray of the ash cone, the center of Kilimanjaro hiding her explosive heart. There was Mt. Meru to the west; an incongruous lush green cape spreading down its slopes. And there was the curve of the earth bending before us and disappearing into a sheet of solid clouds far below. We were standing here looking *down* on the top of clouds. And there was a wooden sign coming into view in front of us. As James and I slogged the final steps to Uhuru Peak, I felt the emotions start to come out, the expectations of our goal finally within sight, I started to tear up with what I was about to accomplish. I was glad James was in front of me, I thought.

Then we were there.

*And, for a few brief moments, I was the tallest person on the entire continent of Africa.*

We waited for the rest of our group to stumble up to the peak. Everyone made it. Including Lois who was 65. Including Paul who had never been above 9,000 feet in his life. Including 61-year old Linda who couldn't see.

That's right, she lost her vision when we had arrived at the crater rim. It was either a reaction to the Diamox she was taking or a result of the altitude (which is fairly common I was told). Charles was going to take her down immediately after it happened. But she grabbed his arm and said "Not until you take me to the summit." That's badass.

From then on, it was all downhill. Literally. James and I ran down the scree back into camp. Well, it was more like a controlled falling, but you could actually ski the loose soil until your thighs begged for mercy.

What did we care about tired or dirty or sore? We had just climbed to the top of Kilimanjaro. And now it was our turn, wandering through the camps, to have people ask us what it was like and what we had seen and to see the look of uncertainty in their eyes from a rare vantage point.

- submitted by trip participant 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.

#### Aconcagua 22,800 ft

Date: December 28, 2004  
Peak: Aconcagua, Argentina  
Contact: Warren Storkman  
[dstorkman@aol.com](mailto:dstorkman@aol.com)

A difficult walk-up to the highest peak in South America. Following sumptuous views, we'll hike out. Must be comfortable hiking cross-country.



### Items For Sale

[Please note: sale articles will be listed for two issues unless otherwise specified.]

North Face VE25 expedition tent: Sleeps 3 with large vestibule \$125 (retail new \$500). Good shape. Rain fly has a few small tears that have been repaired. Contact Tim Hult, 408-970-0760, or [timothy.hult@gd-ais.com](mailto:timothy.hult@gd-ais.com)

Lowe Expedition Pack: A huge hauler for your next expedition to McKinley. Quite a few miles on this monster classic sack, with a few more trail miles on it. One side pocket. Blue. \$50. Contact Tim Hult, 408-970-0760 or [timothy.hult@gd-ais.com](mailto:timothy.hult@gd-ais.com)

Sierra Designs Glacier Tent: Sleeps two. 4-season. Older tent with some wear. Used for winter mountaineering. Good for base camp on peak climb. Contact Gregg Hamm, 209-295-4810.



### Talk of the Town....



(...a new column from ze new editor)

I have it on good authority that **Gaston Rabbitface** will be coming out of hiding (or climbing as the case may be) to, once again, answer those perplexing mountaineering questions that require his wisdom and expertise. Stay tuned. Another venerable institution may be headed for the chopping block. **Clair Tappaan Lodge**, a Sierra Club mainstay, may be put up for sale if monies aren't raised by June 30, '05. Is nothing sacred? To answer questions, contact Kathy Wells, [kathy.wells@sierraclub.org](mailto:kathy.wells@sierraclub.org) or visit the CTL website: [www.ctl.sierraclub.org](http://www.ctl.sierraclub.org). Those office holiday parties a bit too much? Take a break from the office frenzy and read some stunning, on-line climbing history: the 'need-no-introduction' **Lynn Hill** and her one-day ascent of the Nose [[www.planetmountain.com/English/Special/people/Hill](http://www.planetmountain.com/English/Special/people/Hill)]; who's **Pete Schoening**? Read a bit about his famous belay at 25,200 ft [[climbing.com/news/peteschoening](http://climbing.com/news/peteschoening)]; Heard of **Tom Hornbein**? Read all about him and his pioneering route up Everest's West Ridge [[magazine.wustl.edu/winter00](http://magazine.wustl.edu/winter00)

[/hornbein.html](#)] . Need to get out more? Besides us (and we're wonderful, I know), check out a couple other local climbing groups: The **Stanford Alpine Club** has a monthly meeting that bodes well. Last month was Cordillera Blanca del Peru – what's next? [[alpineclub.Stanford.edu](http://alpineclub.Stanford.edu)]. And remember old faithful, the **American Alpine Club**, Sierra Nevada Section, has ongoing meetings in the Berkeley/Emeryville area. Contact Chair Ellen Lapham for more info, [elapham@aimhigh1.com](mailto:elapham@aimhigh1.com). Ever wonder what to do with all those climbing adverts/postcards? I actually read one, and this one, **SummitClimb.com**, offers a new, Himalayan, leader-in-training program. Anyone ever check this out? Verrrry interesting....

I'm in search of a Talk of the Town cartoon or drawing that shows a frazzled belayer sitting precariously with one hand on the rope and another hand holding the cell phone while listening to critical belay calls and mumbling on the wire! Let me know if you find somethin'©

**If you hear of anything worth repeating, keep me informed!** Wonderful websites; interesting climbers; slideshow events; Planet Granite serial stories; all fodder for the mill (that's a heartland term, by the way).

- D. Benham

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To Be Announced shortly

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

Our official website is [http:// lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/pcs/](http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/pcs/)

## Subscriptions and Email List Info

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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 12/26/2004. 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

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