

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

Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, April 9

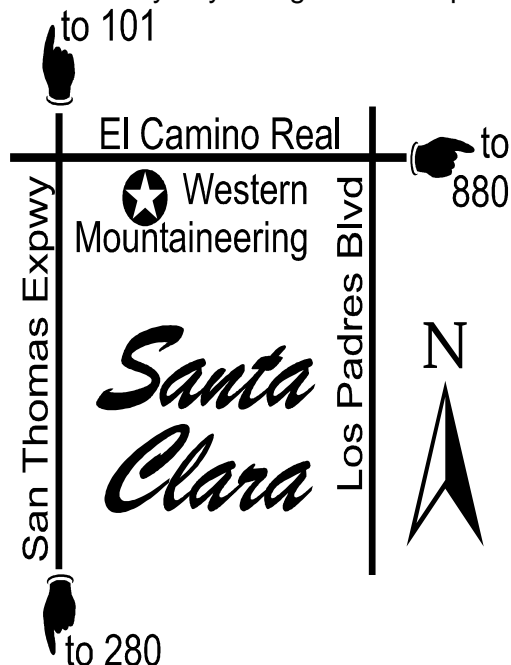
Time: 8:00 PM

Program: Bhutan by Kelly Maas

A slide show on trekking in Bhutan with Landa on his recent honeymoon.

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 4/28/2002 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Sleeping Bag Repair

Gore sells a Gore-Tex fabric repair kit (priced at ~\$7) which I used last spring to repair my waterproof pants. They are pressure-sensitive patches, but Gore recommends applying heat to improve the bond. To date they are holding well, but I have not put a lot of use on the pants this past year.

It isn't a permanent fix however. I purchased the kit at Western Mountaineering. REI and other outdoor retailers should also carry it.

•Chris Franchuk

Dee and I have patched lots of gear over the years. For sleeping bags I have used the ripstop nylon stick on patching which comes in rolls at REI and elsewhere. This stuff used to be iron on and now just sticks on. I have patched an old down filled bag with both the older iron on and stick on patches. Clean the material with alcohol. These patches are 12 and five years old and show no sign of coming off of a bag that gets thrashed and washed regularly. Dee patched one of our tents (twice) with the same material and then used Seam Grip around the edge of the patch. The patches do not seem to be breathable so my guess is they stay pretty much waterproof. They also show no sign of coming off. Depending on where the holes are in the pants I do not know how successful this all will be but using the Seam Grip couldn't hurt.

•Rick Booth

Duct tape. Not the cheap stuff, but Nashua 357 (200 degree rated). I bought mine at Home Depot.

I nicked a friend's VE25 on Denali, and we stuck this tape on the inside and outside of the rip... permanent fix.

I tore my rain pants, did the same thing, 3 years ago.

I tore a pack, and patched the same way. It lasted 2 years and I put on a second set of patches, which lasted until the pack wore out.

A rip in my gaiters seemed too much of a challenge, so I stitched through the duct tape with a big zigzag and that seems to be surviving beautifully.

The trick is getting to both sides of the tear, it seems, and if the inner and outer patch touch a bit it's damn near permanent. Doesn't hold up well to machine washing, but everything has its limitations.

OK, for those who really HATE duct tape, or don't want to go find the good stuff, try "Seam Grip". That's the brand of seam sealer that Therm-O-Rest inflatable pads use in their repair kits. They suggest using dry heat to set the patch, but if you're not in a hurry you can just smear it on and let it sit with a stack of phone books on it.

•Steve Eckert

Or you can Seam Grip a piece of nylon down to the ripped area. That works okay too.

• *Toby Kraft*

You can use plastic tool handle dip ("Plasti-Dip") just like Seam Grip, plus you can thin it down and use it as seam seal COST \$6-9

• *Jim Cormier*

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.

Antarctic Adventure

Peaks: Various, as required
Dates: April 1 - winter, 2002-2003
Map: USGS Antarctica quad; South Georgia island topo, 7.5'
Leader: Ernie@endurance.com

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.

Rock Climbing Practice

Dates: Thu. April 18th (evening session), Sun. April 21st (practice)
Leaders: Ron Karpel, David Ress
Contact: Ron Karpel, email: 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 experienced 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.

Yosemite Rock

Peak: PCS Site for Yosemite Rock Climbing
Dates: May 18th-19th, 2002
Maps: Yosemite Valley if you must
Guide Books: Plenty to choose from
Leader: Ron Karpel, ronny@karpel.org
Co-Leader: Rick Booth, rwbooth@attbi.com

This is an official trip of the Sierra Club. You must be a Sierra Club member to sign-up.

We have reserved two campsites in Yosemite Valley in order to organize a weekend of rock climbing. You must have a partner, and one of you needs to be able to lead SAFELY the routes you are going to climb, while the other partner must be able to follow. You also must use your own gear. You must use a helmet. We will encourage, but not require, people to climb in groups for safety and company sake.

I will be happy to keep a list of people who are looking for partners, but you will need to make the contact.

To sign-up, send a climbing resume (rock climbing), the name of your partner, and your Sierra Club member number to the above e-mail address or call Ron Karpel at 650-594-0211 at home.

Thor, Thweetheart?

Date: June 8-9, 2002
Goal: Thor Peak (12300)
Difficulty: class 2
Location: eastern Sierra Nevada
Sponsor: PCS
Leader: Aaron Schuman (aaron@climber.org)

As you hike up the Whitney Trail, and you pass through a meadow called Bighorn Park, you look up in horror at the tremendous sheer southeast wall of Thor Peak. Lucky for you, you decided to join me on the ascent, so we walk around to the back side of the mountain, and scoot up moderate scree and talus to the summit. My permit limits us to 4 people. It's early, so there will be plenty of snow and slush.

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 Mdw 15'
Leader: Ron Karpel, ronny@karpel.org 650-594-0211
Co-Leader: Jim Curl, jcurl@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.

Mt. Langley

Peak: Mt. Langley (14,026 feet) Class 2
Dates: July 12-14, 2002
Map: USGS Mt. Langley topo, 7.5'
Leader: John Wilkinson jwilkinsonca@earthlink.net (408) 947-0858

A leisurely trip to climb California's southernmost fourteener. We'll drive down on Friday and do a short backpack in, camping probably at or near one of the Cottonwood Lakes. Saturday we'll dayhike the peak via Old Army Pass, and hike out and drive home on Sunday. This is suitable as a beginner's trip. Most of the route is on trail or use trail.

Limited to 10 people. There is a \$5 charge for the permit, payable at or before the trailhead. Contact John to sign up or for more information.

More details and carpool contact information will be sent out a week or so before the trip.

Minarets

Peaks: Minarets Mountaineering Classic, Ansel Adams Wilderness, California Trip #: 02154A
Dates: July 26-August 4, 2002
Price: \$675; Dep: \$100
Leaders: Margi Waller & Anne Muzzini; Climbing Leaders: Doug Mantle and Tina Bowman

SUMMARY: Experienced mountaineers will retrace the routes of the first explorers of the Minarets. On layover days we'll have opportunities to enjoy either technical (limit of six participants) or non-technical peak climbs. (Prior rock climbing experience is required for technical ascents.) A packer assist will lighten our loads and allow us to combine strenuous days with great food and a few creature comforts at night.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/brochure/02154a.asp>

Gnarly Adventuring

Trip: Gnarly Adventuring Above Yosemite Valley
California Trip #: 02170A
Dates: August 18-25, 2002
Price: \$615; Dep: \$100
Leaders: Bill Oliver & Will McWhinney

SUMMARY: John Muir came to Yosemite in 1868. He marveled at this wondrous place, exploring its canyons and climbing its peaks. We, too, will marvel, explore, and climb. First we spend four days among the pinnacles and domes of Tuolumne Meadows. Then we backpack from the Valley to Little Yosemite Valley for a three-day finale. Ascents will include Cathedral Peak, Eichorn Pinnacle, Mt. Starr King, and Half Dome (cables). Rock climbing experience required only for optional summit blocks. Non-climbers welcome for non-technical segments.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/brochure/02170A.asp>

Book Review: A Rockclimber's Guide to The Alabama Hills

Michael Strassman

(Range of Light Productions, Lone Pine CA,
2002, 76 pp, \$14.95,
ISBN 0-9714557-0-8)

We have all seen the Alabama Hills while heading up to the eastern Sierra Nevada, but few of us have stopped to explore this magnificent rock garden. Michael Strassman's newly released climber's guide is the invitation we have all been waiting for. He has documented 200 routes in the area, mostly single pitch, ranging in difficulty from 5.6 to 5.13, with the majority at the 5.8 and 5.9 level.

Precise hand drawn maps accompany every route description. The writing is folksy and fun, but still provides the key details the climber needs. The book is well organized and well indexed. Introductory material tells a bit about the history of the area, its rich cinematic lore, BLM rules, environment and safety. One fifth of the book is magazine-style advertising for Owens Valley businesses.

Buy this guidebook online at <http://www.rangeoflight.com/>, and then head out to the Alabama Hills to climb the most famous Hollywood backdrop.

• *Climber Aaron*

Mont Blanc, 4807m

July 2001.

Attempt-1, 17th/18th July 01. The Gouter Route.

This is the highest summit in the Alps and rises from the Chamonix Valley in dramatic relief. It is massive and complex and has more than one hundred routes to get up top. The 'normal' route, the Gouter Route, is a fair bit of hard work but not technical. The subjective dangers on this route far outweigh its objective technical difficulty.

It was raining in Zurich where Ron and I met, having arrived there on different flights on the 15th of July 01 and things looked unsettled even on the 16th at Chamonix at the lower elevations but nonetheless, Ron and I hiked up to and beyond the Aiguillette Du

Argentierre on the hills across from Mt Blanc in the chilly rain in an effort to acclimate.

The cable car from Les Houches drops you into Bellveue from where you take the tramway to Nid D'Aigle at 2372m. It is possible to avoid this cable car leg by directly taking the tram from Le Fayet which simplifies the whole process and might result in time and cost savings as well.

Barely acclimated and still jetlagged, at 9.40am, under reasonable weather conditions, Ron and I started hiking on the graded trail from Nid d'Aigle along with several day hikers, peak baggers and just picnic-ers. The trail was snow free initially but we got into snow within half an hour. The highlight of the climb upto this time was the spotting of several ibex sunning themselves on the rock, impervious to the hiking hordes.

The trail passes by a small refuge (hut) and then climbs a steep ridge via a series of switchbacks to deposit you onto a small glacier that is on some sort of a plain and on the right end of which is the refuge, the Tete Rousse, at 3167m. We stayed left of this hut and made straight for the Grand Cuoloir via a beaten path on the snow over a steep hill. This cuoloir is narrow and maybe two hundred feet across only but can get quite dangerous in bad conditions due to either falling rock or avalanches. It also has a cable across it. It is unlikely that this cable is used as a hand rail as it will pull you off. If there is a need to, then one clips one's rope on to it (or a really long sling). The idea being that if you get bowled over in the cuolouir, you can at least dangle from this clip. This time, the weather was good and there was nothing coming down and there was a beaten track so walking across was trivial. Then begins a very steep climb, more or less staying on a rib of broken up rock to the next hut, the Refuge Du Gouter at 3817m over class-2 and class-3 terrain. Climbing this with a heavy pack and plastic boots and crampons, for there is snow also, can be very testing and full concentration is needed. There are parts where cables have been put for added security and several people choose to clip in with slings. Ron and I negotiated all this in good time and in a total of six and half hours of having left the tramway, were at the Gouter Hut where we had reservations. This is more like a rustic dorm style hotel. Lots of people and from all over the world. Breakfast is included with the room and dinner is extra. Water is not free either. By this time the weather outside had gone bad and at the 2am wakeup time, it was blowing hard. The wind was blowing snow all around and not even the guides were venturing out.

Along with everybody else, Ron and I also punted on the summit attempt and waited till 10am for the storm to die down, but this not being the case, decided to descend anyway. This has to be the worst descent that I have done. As it is, the route down from Gouter to Tete Rousse is steep and it was further complicated by bad weather, snow and near whiteout conditions. We roped up and were clipping into the cables. It was very hard to find the route down and maintain balance. Several times, we belayed each other. To make matters worse, there were many parties descending at the same time and not everybody was considerate, jostling and pushing other people out of the way, in their own anxiety to get down. The cuoloir crossing was also quite hairy. The beaten path of the previous day was gone. The fresh snow had made the steep slope slick (try saying that three times, fast). Ron led the way, clipping in the rope between us to the cable. In his footsteps, I and then several others, followed. Only after getting to the Tete Rousse did we relax a little. Conditions and visibility improved as we descended down further and we staggered into the tram station only to discover that they had cancelled the next scheduled tram due to the bad weather! So, we hiked down from there till the cable car at Bellveue, an additional hour and half. That ended our

first unsuccessful attempt of Mont Blanc. We were just relieved to be back down safely, in all this bad weather.

Attempt-2, 22/23rd July 01, Gouter Route.

Flush from our success on the Aiguille Du Midi the day before and news of continued good weather, Ron and I made one more attempt on Mt Blanc. This time however we did not have a reservation at the Gouter Hut, so we decided to camp. This meant heavier packs due to the added weight of the sleeping bags, tent, stove, fuel, food etc. But, feeling more acclimated and stronger, we set out by the same route as a few days ago. On the route to Gouter, after the Tete Rousse, I heard a loud sound, like thunder and sure enough, a large avalanche was rumbling down on the glacier to the right of us. Luckily, it was away from the route. As we climbed up further, I noticed another avalanche, smaller than the first, take off on the Grand Cuoloir. This was the same cuoloir that we had earlier traversed. I yelled 'AVALANCHE' along with several other parties who undoubtedly yelled 'Avalanche' too, in their own languages, hoping that there was no body on the cuoloir traverse below. We made it to the top of the Gouter Hut in 6 hrs and on the flat ridge above the hut, set up camp. It was like a zoo up there. There were at least 40 people setting up their camps. The happy banter reminded me more of a fairground than an alpine peak. We cooked dinner and melted water for the summit bid and it was 10pm by the time we went to sleep. We woke up at 1pm, hastily cooked breakfast and were walking by 2.15am.

It was chilly but not unbearable and almost no wind and a clear sky. Perfect! We were roped and silently crunched our way on the snow. Several headlamp lights could already be seen bobbing in the distance. We slogged up the Dome Du Gouter. The climbing seemed endless and we did one bump after the other, hardly pausing longer than five minutes to eat and drink. By 5am, the sun came up lighting the sky with a soft glow and we were blessed with a fantastic vista of the Alps.

The route became a narrow ridge walk requiring concentration but it was never too bad as we went up and up and then suddenly Ron turned around and shook my hand. We were at the top! Top of all that we could survey from the rooftop of Western Europe. It was somewhat disappointing. It was 7.30 am then. The guide book says 5 hrs. We had taken 5.15. These Alpine guide books are unsparing. But then it got really cold and so after a few photographs, we took off at 7.50am and dragging somewhat due to lack of sleep, got back to camp at 11am. We broke camp and headed back down at noon and after the usual hairy descent from the Gouter (this time the beaten path to traverse the Grand Cuoloir had been washed away by the avalanche of the previous day), were at the Tete Rousse area for a break. Again, bad weather overtook us and it started to get cloudy and rain and hail fell.

Amazing, just 2.5 good weather days in 9. But this time, we were going down and on an easier section and we still made it to the tram by 4.30pm, a really long day but one that ended in a very happy note as going upto 15769 ft was the highest that either of us had ever been. In such perfect conditions, it would have been better, on hindsight, to make this a three day climb than a two day climb. We could have pushed out the start from 2am to maybe a 5am. An additional, artificial sense of urgency gets introduced into some of these climbs simply because of the need to make it back to the last cable car or train which do not run beyond 6pm.

Thanks to our friends, Bob Suzuki, Bruce Bousfield and Rick and Dee Booth for the information and advice that they provided to us before we set out on this trip based on their experiences in these mountains. Also, thanks are due to Peter Maxwell for all the advice, information and encouragement and who insisted that we check in with him after we got down from Mont Blanc to ensure

that we were safe since he knew that we were attempting this peak in less than ideal conditions.

This climb would not have happened without the organisation and planning and the skill in leading on rock and snow of my climbing partner, Ron Karpel, who cast his long shadow on this trip.

I was glad to be along for the ride.

• *Arun Mahajan and Ron Karpel*

The Aiguille Du Midi, 3842m by the Cosmiques Ridge

July 21, 2001.

The Aiguille Du Midi, the highest of all the Chamonix Aiguilles (needles), is a beautiful and seeming unclimbable spire of rock very near the Mont Blanc massif. Some of the nicest posters and stock shots of Mont Blanc include this beautiful spire in it. When you see its summit packed with hundreds of tourists you wonder how they got there till you look closer and see the cable car that goes almost right to the top and started to climb the several pitches. Ron led the first two and let me lead the third. We could have done without a rope on these three on hindsight. We climbed many pitches of mixed stuff, snow and rock, all in cramponed boots. This mixed climbing is something you rarely get in the Sierra. Later on came a few more challenging pitches particularly the two rappels and the short awkward climbing in between and after the second rappel. A couple more easy pitches lead to a flat section just below the crux. The crux would have gone free, particularly if one is to take off the crampons but with time pressure, the slings on the large pin make good foot holds.

There is a good bolt for belay just above the crux. This pitch provided the most excitement. It is a 20 ft wall with a right sloping crack. It has a huge pin in the middle and Ron led this and I followed him but the whole thing was complicated by several guided parties trying to get by while we were still on it causing rope management nightmares. One particular guide and client pair proved the most inconvenient. The guide got in the way several times, once even clipping into my anchor and his poor terrified client then using my anchor sling to haul himself up, all the time apologising profusely in French. I imagine that he was wishing that he should have rather taken up that deal on a weekend at the Pokenose than come on a guided climb on the Cosmiques Ridge! Following this were about three pitches of easy class-5 and some class 4 climbing.

The last section is flat snow with exposure on both sides which leads to the ladder and to the viewing platform of the A-M, where the tourists are. Further excitement was provided by the fact that we had to finish the climb in time for the last cable car (5.50pm).

It was touch and go, but we made it by 6pm and they had held up the cable car for us and the people behind. This climb is one of the best that we both had ever done, not because of it's technical rating but because of the length and the mixed nature and mainly the altitude and the ambience and the alpine feel. It took us about six hours to do this climb. We could have done it a little faster had we not belayed every pitch, or in my case, simply taking the time to soak in the grand scale of the surroundings. It is hard not to be overwhelmed by the view of the Alps all around you. We still feel that the guide book recommended time of three hours is a sandbag. Plan for a longer time than that. Also be prepared to run into several parties on this route on a good day, not all of them, considerate.

• *Arun Mahajan with a lot of input from Ron Karpel.*

Climbing in Zermatt

July 2001

The Breithorn, 4159m, 25th July 01.

It is a short walk, maybe twenty minutes, from the Zermatt train station to the start of the cable car that will take you to Klien Matterhorn. A three stage cable car ride, costing nearly 50\$ RT drops you and about a million others there. The Briethorn looms to your left. It is a huge rock peak topped by a large mound of snow which looks as if it is a precariously placed dollop of vanilla glaze on top of a mound of dark chocolate. In perfect conditions, which is what we had, this is a walk up. We were carrying all sorts of glacier travel gear and we did notice that many parties had roped up but we decided that everything looked stable and so we just did it as a snow climb. You start off straight out of the Klien Matterhorn station and then trace the path along the circumference of a semi circle to double back towards the Briethorn on fairly level snow ground and then you climb up the steep slopes to the airy summit. We did the climb in just under one and half hours, hardly stopping for breaks. Great views of peaks like Monte Rosa, Rimfischorn, Pollux and Castor (we got good at spotting these distinctive peaks) and ofcourse the Matterhorn. Photos and summit dawdling at the summit for 30 mins and then the walk down to the station took the best part of the next couple of hours. This peak is good for a quick work out and to get above 4000 M for acclimatization.

The Klien Matterhorn, 3883m, 25th July 01.

As soon as we had done the Briethorn, we decided to do the few hundred feet on snow and rock to the top of this peak as well. The more aerobically inclined may choose the elevator to the top.

The Unterrothorn, 3103m, 26th July 01

This time, a ride on the Sunnegga Express, an electric train that goes upwards but still inside a tunnel that has been bored into a hill got us to the top of the Sunnegga station (2288m). From there, hiking on an evenly graded trail, we reached the Blauherd cable station (2517m). Another hour of hiking up on a steep trail got us to the top of the Unterrothorn and we made a loop return. Through out this hike, we had great views of the lush green country side contrasted with the glaciated peaks and huge glaciers that came down very low.

The Matterhorn, attempted, 27/28th July 01.

A two stage cable car ride dropped us off at the Schwarzee (2583m), stop from where we began our hike to the Hornli Hut enroute to climbing the Matterhorn by the Hornli Grat. Within two hours of slow walking we were at the Hornli Hut (3263m), a deluxe mountain dorm with a restaurant that caters to all sorts of day hikers as well. The Matterhorn looms in front and needless to say, is very intimidating.

It is about a 4000 ft gain to the summit from this point. There was a lot of snow on the peak, especially on the shoulder above the Solvay Hut, a high hut that is primarily meant to be used for emergencies and bivys, planned or otherwise, are not allowed. Ron and I passed the rest of the day lounging at the restaurant, sorting gear and chatting with climbers who had summited and were coming down. The news was not very encouraging. The snow was icy in spots and these climbers had taken more time to descend than to ascend. The first people returning from the summit, a batch of strong Scottish climbers, had made the round trip in these non-dry rock conditions in about eleven hours. None of the Zermatt guides were taking clients on the Matterhorn. There were several parties still high up on the peak and some returned to Hornli as late as 8.30pm in the night. Ron and I woke up at 3.30am and by 4.15am, were rolling, the second party out the gate,

just behind a two person party of an Austrian and his German friend. The first class-4 section had a fixed rope that we quickly ascended but then after that there was a class-3/2 traverse on loose rock and there were some route finding with a lot of exposure and in the dark and with the low clouds looming overhead, it was slow going as Ron and I climbed with running belays. The protection offered was very poor but Ron made the best of what was available. The other parties passed us by, hardly setting up protection, which we thought was rather risky. After an hour or so, just as the faint sunlight appeared on the horizon, Ron and I mutually decided to call of the climb as we did not think that we would make the whole trip in about 12 hours to Hornli Hut giving us enough time to hike down as well to Schwarzee to take the last cable car out to Zermatt and then the train back down to Tasch and then start driving back to Zurich to catch the flight the next day. All the bad weather that we had encountered in the early part of our trip had pushed our Matterhorn climb to the second last day of our stay giving us only one shot at the peak without any buffer time for delays and we would have needed the best of conditions as well as a lot more speed. The clouds started to disappear as we hiked back down and the first rays of the sun bathed the peak in a red glow. We felt regret at having backed out but thought that it was prudent.

Back down to Schwarzee and then to Zermatt and then Matterhorn was lost from our view as the train turned a bend and headed to Tasch. We drove to Zurich via Grindelwald and got a short glimpse of the Eiger and it's fearsome north wall which has inspired so many climbers to test their prowess against. Even in the few moments that the clouds lifted over the famed Norwand, we saw an avalanche take off down it! Then it started to rain again as we drove from Grindelwald. Maybe it was a good thing that we were here than on the Matterhorn, afterall.

Thus ended our two week stay in the Alps, with some disappointments and some bad weather days but we choose to remember it by the experiences we gained while climbing the Alps and their grandeur and being in places with so much mountaineering history and the friendly people that we encountered all over in France and Switzerland.

• *Arun Mahajan*

Mt. Brewer

August 26-28, 2001

This was a successful 3-day solo trip to climb Mt. Brewer (13,570') via its East Ridge. A detailed trip report and route descriptions follow, then a bear story.

Arrived at Onion Valley (9,200') Saturday evening via shuttle from Independence after unusual car problems (Wilder House B&B in Independence has friendly 24-hour shuttle w/ capacious 4WD truck though not cheap). Headed out towards Kearsarge Pass at a leisurely 8.30am on Sunday morning. The walk up to the pass was uneventful and I made it in 3 hours, just in time for lunch. Spent an hour at the pass (11,750') to help acclimatize; met many friendly and happy people stopping on their way out. My objective was in plain view; having brought along a pair of binoculars I scouted Mt. Brewer's east ridge and found what looked like a good place to gain the ridge, a ramp on the ridges north side near it's east end. The east end itself looked steep. Headed down the trail again at 12:30 under blazing sun and cloudless skies. Reached the trail intersection with the PCT, dropped down to Bubbs Creek, then continued along it down to Junction Meadow. Crossed a low Bubbs Creek in bare feet a somewhat shaky endeavor even at this low level reminding myself to bring sneakers next time. Took a half hour break. Made it up the East Creek trail and reached East Lake at 5.45pm.

The main campsite at the foot of East Lake (9334') by the bear box was taken by a large group, so I headed across the stream. I was stopped by the view south across East Lake and up the drainage to Mt. Geneva. Of the fancy lake-and-mountain views in the Sierra that I have seen and appreciate, such as South Lake and Lake Sabrina, this one is uniquely picturesque: surely the scene that Albert Bierstadt most regrets he didn't paint. After a few photos I tiptoed over logs across the stream then up and into the woods in a southeasterly direction, coming upon a small meadow by a stream where I stopped for the evening. The stream is the small unnamed stream north of Ouzel Creek. There was a clear view of the mountain and the east ridge in the evening light.

I had brought both Secor's east ridge route description and Scott Sullivan's write-up and discovered that night that although these write-ups are both called the east ridge route, they differ. Per the terse Secor, one follows Ouzel Creek to a point where the east ridge can be gained (which would by apparent implication be from the south side). Sullivan followed between Ouzel and the unnamed stream then gained the ridge from the north side. I mainly followed Sullivan's route since it coincided with what I viewed from the binoculars. However there is a huge rock island between the two streams lower down, so it is unclear how one could follow between them, as he states. Somewhat complicating both route descriptions is the fact that Ouzel Creek has a substantial tributary (north fork) which does not appear on any topo but which drains two small lakes shown on the topo which otherwise would seem to have no drainage; the possibility exists that prior travelers may have confused this tributary with Ouzel Creek or with the small unnamed stream.

I was off for the mountain at 7.30am the next morning, initially following the small unnamed stream, and picking up traces of a use path or animal path. At a certain point the stream, rather than continuing up a gully, cascades over rocks from the top of the right (north) side of the gully. I continued up the gully a short further ways until it became feasible to climb right and out of the gully. From there I headed east towards the peak, climbing upwards over slabby rocks, turf and pines. As did Sullivan, I encountered an occasional duck. After a ways I come to a small forested area with a vigorous stream not on the map, running south towards Ouzel Creek; I have discovered the north fork of

Ouzel Creek. I cross it and continue eastward and steadily upward. Eventually the ridge comes into view again, including its east end and the ramp I had previously espied. The east end does not look as steep as it had previously and I consider that Sullivan may have taken the east end (he says only that they hopped on the east ridge, without further specification) but I decide to stick with my plan. The ramp itself, all talus and perhaps 400' high, is a lot steeper than I had thought, not really a ramp just an opening in the cliffs, but I stick with my plan and proceed. At the base of the ramp is a small hidden tarn fed with a still-moving trickle that I decide is good enough to allow me to refill (this at the end of a dry year). The final 100 to 200 turns out to be very steep but not difficult class 3 but then I am on the ridge and shortly thereafter come upon a duck. No, I'm not lost! Continuing up the broad ridge on easy class 1 footing, by now the elevation is approaching 12,000' and views to the south and north are opening up when I pause for breath. Approaching the shoulder where the east ridge meets Mt Brewer's south ridge, the class 2 picks up again and the terrain steepens. A few hundred feet higher and a short class 3 section is reached. As per Secor and Sullivan, when further upward progress is blocked, there is a ledge that takes one to the left (south) to a notch; passing through it I am on the south face. From there it is a class 2 scramble to the summit. The notch had a fabulous duck, two rocks which were obviously placed by human hand but which looked like they would fall over at any moment. I gained the summit at about 1.15pm and stayed about 45 minutes. Warm and not a cloud in the sky. My momentary dread at noticing the higher, class 3/4 spires immediately to the west was calmed by checking the peak register, placed by RJ Secor, who titled it Mt. Brewer, 4136m' leaving no question that I was on the named summit since from the 7.5 topo it was clear I was on Pt. 4136m. Views to the north were dimmed by smoke from the fires. Even so, there was a terrific view. In particular it appeared that every single 14'er in the Sierra was visible, including Muir, Russell, Tyndall, each of the Palisade peaks, etc. Many happy register entries, including a nice one from Steve Eckert leading a PCS group in 1994; he wrote, obviously on the precipice of his famous multi-year dash for the List, I can see nothing green, but everything seems alive.

Still feeling that Secor's east ridge route was different than Sullivan's, for the return I decided to try what I thought Secor's route was/is. Thus, after returning through the notch and coming back onto the east ridge, I immediately headed down to the bowl at the head of Ouzel Creek. This bowl ends at the low point of Brewer's south ridge, but continues north a few hundred feet to the foot of what in effect is the southeast chute. One cannot go straight down the southeast chute, which seems to cliff out, so I walked out the east ridge a short ways, then turned south then west as I climbed down 200-300 over class 2 talus into the head of the bowl. From there a short walk south brought me to Ouzel Creek and I began walking back east downstream towards East Lake. Sullivan mentions the tedious talus after a short stretch of sand, coming down from Lilley Pass to Reflection Lake, well I am sure he was being modest. The Ouzel Creek route has no short stretch of sand and an incredible amount of talus, over a longer descent. At one point I coined the phrase "death talus" after encountering a section with very large, flat-topped talus that would be great to walk and hop about on, except that it was covered with scree and sand, so that like those marbles in the cartoons one risked a terrible fall by walking on it (so I didn't). It turns out that Ouzel Creek runs underground for a stretch of perhaps a quarter mile or more. At times of heavy flow, the underground channel must be too small to accommodate all of the water, so then water also flows on top, leaving debris on the talus. In any event, following Ouzel Creek back to East Lake is tiresome and slow, with talus occasionally broken up by manzanita. Near the bottom I left the

creek and returned to my original route. For the record, from Ouzel Creek there is absolutely no visible route onto the east ridge at any point, all the way up, until the very head of the creek, i.e., where I descended off the east shoulder. As such, approaching the east ridge from slightly to the north and gaining it from its north side at or near the east end of the ridge, is IMHO by far the better route both up and down, excepting in winter/spring if snow covers the talus, or if one is in a situation where exposure is to be avoided such as severe wind or electric storms. Furthermore, excepting those same situations, a party passing through Brewer Pass/Col headed west (or east), would have an easier time by taking the ridge not the creek and either passing through the notch or going down/up (or up/down) via the east shoulder. Although, the creek route when snow-covered probably makes a nice ski run.

I returned to camp at around 6pm. The next day I was walking by 6.15am, with a 3pm ride to catch at Onion Valley. Found a large log just downstream of the East Creek/ Bubbs Creek trail intersection and crossed Bubbs Creek dry. Made it back by 2.30 pm uneventfully, with the last 5 miles from the pass covered in a blistering (literally) 90 minutes. The 3-day total was 12,000' gross gain and approx. 38 miles.

Bear Story

Although I thought I had taken the proper precautions, I did experience a bear incident the first night at East Lake. My canister was 50 feet away from where I slept and it had all my food and toiletries. My pack was open and about 20 feet away, next to it my zipped daypack. Just before 11pm I was awakened to the sound of a bear going through the pack. There is no food there, what's it doing???? The bear is easily scared away. Eventually I recall that I have a zippered gear pouch which detaches from my pack and in which among many essential items compass, gloves, hat, toilet paper, camera, etc. is emergency food, e.g. extra food bars which have been left there for years. This being the first time I have used a bear canister their presence escaped me but not the bear. The next morning I found out that the bear was incredibly talented. Aforesaid gear bag had been zippered shut inside one of two main zipped compartments of my daypack. The bear had unzipped the proper compartment of the daypack, removed the gear bag and walked away (the zipper was untracked for a couple of inches at the end, but not at all damaged). After walking a couple of hundred feet, the bear perfectly unzipped the gear bag, dropped all of the contents in a small neat radius of about 3 feet then picked out the edibles and ate them.

No damage to or marks on the gear bag nor any of the inedible contents, many highly crushable by an errant paw, save one bottle of sunscreen which was slightly punctured. I doubt that I could have done as well were I stuck in a bear suit.

• *Mike McDermitt*

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.

Tableland Traverse - Alta and Silliman

Date: Apr 6-8 (Sat-Mon)
Goal: Alta Peak (11204') and Mt Silliman (11188')
Difficulty: class 2, ice axe, crampons, skis, snowshoes
Location: western Sierra Nevada
Contacts: Steve Eckert and Stephane Mouradian
http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Steve_Eckert.html
http://www.climber.org/WhosWho/Stephane_Mouradian.html

We'll actually DO the high traverse of the Tablelands (above Table Meadow) instead of cutting down across the valley. Expect high angle snow near Silliman and great views into the seldom-visited Ferguson and Deadman canyons from the Kings-Kern Divide. Snowshoers will have more fun near the cars, skiers will have more fun up high.

Tom and Basin

Peak: Mt Tom (13,652'), Basin Mtn (13,181')
Date: May 11-12 (Sat-Sun)
Difficulty: class 2, ice axe, crampons
Map: Mount Tom topo
Contact: Bob Suzuki, SuzukiR@sd-star.com
Co-contact: Jim Ramaker, ramaker@vnet.ibm.com

This will be a strenuous weekend climb of two 13,000' mountains (Mt. Tom is the large mountain seen when driving NW out of Bishop). We'll have 6k' of gain the first day. Ice axe and crampons needed for Sunday.

Mt Shasta

Peak: Mt. Shasta (14,162)
Date: May 25-27
Contact: George Van Gorden
gvangord@paradise.mhu.k12.ca.us

We will climb the mountain by one of the east side routes, either Clear Creek or the Wintun ridge depending upon access. Both of these routes are relatively easy and shouldn't be nearly as crowded as the Avalanche Gulch route. Crampon and ice ax experience are necessary. Sat. night in a camp at about 10000 feet, climb the mountain on Sunday and return to our cars either Sunday evening or Monday morning, This is not a beginners trip and Sunday will be a long day.

Colosseum & Baxter

Peak: Colosseum Mtn (12,451'), Mt Baxter (13,136')
Date: May 25-27 (Sat-Mon)
Difficulty: class 3, ice axe, crampons
Maps: Aberdeen, Kearsarge Peak topos
Contact: Bob Suzuki, SuzukiR@sd-star.com

Another strenuous outing, a rough first day will get us to base camp at Sawmill Lake. Ice axe, crampons and snowshoes needed for climbing.

The Kaweahs Area

Peaks: Eisen, Lippincott, Lion Rock, the Kaweahs, Picket Guard, and others
Dates: 6/29 - 7/7 (Sat-Sun)
Difficulty: class 1-4
Maps: Mineral King, Triple Divide Peak, and Mt Kaweah topos
Co-contacts: Jim Ramaker, ramaker@vnet.ibm.com, Bob Suzuki, SuzukiR@sd-star.com

Starting from Mineral King (marmots!) we'll try to pack to Big Arroyo the first day. There'll be a lot of accessible peaks to keep us busy for the week! We'll collect names of interested climbers and decide on participants by the end of April. Class 3-4, ice axe, crampons and rope experience required, harness and helmet for Black Kaweah.

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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 4/28/2002. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.



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

First Class Mail - Dated Material