



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

MAY, 1994

MEETING

Time and Place: Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the County Commissioner's conference room, which is located on the second floor of the Annex (new portion) of the Missoula County Courthouse. This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11.

Program. Missoula kayaker and urologist David Guth will present a slide show on a recent trip he and his son took to southern Chile and Argentina, where they ran various rivers, including the Bio Bio and the Futa la Flew, and did some trekking. Chile had intended to begin a series of damming projects on the Bio Bio last year, but international pressure on world banking organizations appears to have delayed or stopped the construction, at least for now. Expect to see some great scenery and exciting whitewater pictures. The last time the editor of this newsletter saw Dave's son, he was surfing on the monster front wave in Fang Rapid in the Alberton Gorge, and he threw away his paddle and surfed with his hands, something you don't see very often.

Elections. Officers will be elected at the May meeting. You better show up, or you might get elected to something.

TRIP CALENDAR

Thursday evenings and Saturdays. Rock Climbing. The rock climbing group will meet again this year on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. Last year this group climbed a wide variety of technical climbs, some easy, some hard, most top roped, some multi-pitched. The group plans more of the same this year. Beginners are encouraged to come and gain some experience on the rocks; rock climbing experience may be a prerequisite for some of the Club's trips this summer. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

May 8. Sunday. West Como Peak. Climb the north face of West Como Peak. This is one of the three symmetrical Como Peaks which can be seen from the highway south of Hamilton. The west peak has a large snowfield which is composed of three ramps leading to the summit. An ice ax will be required and crampons may be needed. This will be a long and strenuous trip. The first portion of the trip follows a trail, and then bushwacking is required until we reach snow. The snow climb portion should be a great mountaineering experience. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

May 15. Sunday. ^{Lolo} Boulder Peak. Ski to Boulder Peak, which is the impressive peak south of Trapper Peak, south of Darby. The ridge leading to this peak is similar to the Trapper Peak ridge, and may have some good springtime intermediate-level telemark skiing. If the snow is blown off the top, some scrambling over the rocks will be necessary to reach the peak. This will be a moderate to strenuous long day trip. Call Ralph Flockerzi at 549-7150 for details.

May 22. Sunday. Gray Wolf Peak. Climb Gray Wolf Peak, which is the impressive massive peak at the south end of the Missions. Unlike most Mission climbs, the approach to Gray Wolf follows a trail most of the way. Upper Riddle Lake, at the base of Gray Wolf, is a scenic place to spend the afternoon for those wishing to come for the hike but not the climb. The climb begins at the south couloir and an ice ax is required. Fourth class climbing with some exposure is required to reach the summit. This is a moderately strenuous trip. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

May 28-30. Sat-Mon. McDonald Peak. Three-day backpack trip to Cliff Lake and scramble to reach McDonald Peak, the highest peak in the Missions. A nine mile hike, mostly along a trail, will lead to Cliff Lake. On the second day, we will scramble up the rocky slopes of McDonald, cross McDonald Glacier, and continue scrambling to reach the summit. Since this trip is spread over three days, it should be quite manageable for the average backpacker. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for information.

June 5. Sunday. Mill Creek Hike. Day hike up Mill Creek, which is located near Hamilton in the Bitterroots. Mill Creek is known for its steep canyon and majestic cliff faces. The approximately ten-mile (one way) route will be entirely on a trail. This will be an easy to moderate hike. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

June 11. Saturday. Mountain Bike Ride. Circuit trip starting in Missoula and heading up the Blackfoot to the Gold Creek/Twin Creek

Roads (gated), over the top to Shoofly Meadows, and out the East fork of the Rattlesnake. Depending on energy levels, we could also ride to the Mineral Peak lookout. An option, if participants prefer, is to drive cars to the Twin Creek Road. Call Ed Monnig at 721-2707 for information.

Summer mountaineering. Plans are being made to climb a few regional mountains this summer, such as the Grand Teton, Granite Peak, Mount Rainier, and the Canadian Rockies. These will be moderately difficult technical climbs. We will probably climb most of them in July and August. The exact date will not be published in the newsletter due to tight scheduling. Make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

Kayaking. Yowch, what happened to all the water? Peter Dayton (728-8101) and Art Gidel (543-6352) will be boating like there is no tomorrow during May, because it doesn't look like there is going to be much boating thereafter, except of course on the Alberton Gorge. Give them a call if you want to float some whitewater.

Wanna lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, help is only a telephone call away; Gerald Olbu, 549-4769, will be delighted to sign you up.

TRIP REPORTS

Rock Climbing, April. The rock climbing group is beginning to come to life after a long winter hibernation. Climbers this month include: Tim Page, John Page, Gerald Olbu, Jeff Holiday, Justin Ivory, Dave Siemens and Paul Wilson. Since we all were trying to get back into climbing shape, we only climbed a few easy top-rope climbs. Next month, we'll do more. --Gerald Olbu.

Yellowstone Ski Touring, April 3-13. On April 3, Jamie Greene, Homer Lambert, and David Bixby set out from the Indian Creek Trail Head, which is just south of Swan Lake in Northern Yellowstone National Park, intending to climb to and traverse the Gallatin Crest north toward Electric Peak. Under leaden skies and intermittent wet snow showers we skied along the banks of Indian Creek across open flats to the mouth of Indian Creek Canyon. Two camps were made in the Indian Creek Drainage area. While snow fell almost continuously, we climbed Dome Mountain and made a nice low angle downhill run. By the third day of virtually uninterrupted snowfall, it became obvious that avalanche conditions were going to limit our route to ridge tops and low angle or heavily wooded slopes. By the sixth day we had some great skiing and some exciting ridge crossings in roaring winds, but still not more than about 3 or 4 total hours of sunshine. So much new snow had fallen that at one point it became necessary to make tracks up to a ridge with light packs before traveling the next day with full packs. Even with skis on we were sinking to our knees with each stride. Reaching camp on the sixth night was glorious. The skies had cleared and we were sitting at 9,400 feet overlooking Northern Yellowstone Park. The sun was with us for the rest of the time as we worked our way north. Our route took us over Quadrant Mountain, where elk and coyotes shared the 2 mile wide open plateau with us for a cold clear night and morning, and up to the base of Electric Peak. We all agreed that the spectacular views from near the summit of Electric Peak (the summit appeared to be accessible only via an avalanche-prone chute), a great telemarking descent to camp, and really fast skiing (skating) down the wide open Glen Creek valley bottom on very hard snow made a fantastic ending for our journey. In all, 10 days were spent in the back country, and we never saw so much as a ski track from anyone outside our party. This is rare for Yellowstone, and we felt privileged to have one of the nation's most visited national parks virtually to ourselves for a short period. Although we received some negative phone reports before our trip (mostly from office workers in Mammoth who looked out their windows when asked about snow conditions), I am convinced that early April may be one of the best times to visit the park. One ranger told me on the phone, "there's no snow for snowmobiles on the roads and the park is basically closed. Not many people ski this time of year either because of the lack of snow at lower elevations." He couldn't have given me a more encouraging report.

Avalanche Viewing, April 17. Jeff Holiday, Justin Ivory, Eric Moles and Gerald Olbu set out early in the morning to climb McDonald Peak from the McDonald Lake side. We did the ugly bushwhacking, then started the traverse along the rocky slopes. As we were traversing, we saw three avalanches. As we came to the chute where our route led up, we headed for a large rock near the base of the chute to take time to think about the risk. Suddenly, we heard a rumbling sound. Avalanche!!! Within five seconds, tons of snow began pouring down the chute. A couple of us had to run and jump out of its path. We got sprayed by a cloud of snow as a raging current of heavy snow flowed down the chute less than ten feet from us. Afterwards, a cold wind blew down the chute. We all unanimously agreed we didn't want to climb the chute. Before our heart rates returned to normal, another avalanche came down the same chute. We had our cameras ready. We decided to go down and spend the afternoon watching the avalanches. Most of avalanches resulted from chunks of snow breaking off the headwall of the Sheep's Head and crashing down the chutes. In four hours, we saw 16 avalanches, and we have photos. --Gerald Olbu.

East and West Goat Peaks, April 24. West Goat Peak is the highest mountain in the Pintlar Range at 10,793 feet. East and West Goat Peak are the prominent saddle-shaped mountain at the north end of the Big Hole Valley. Jenny and I wanted to bag it, but it was raining. When Friday's rain ended and the sky cleared on Saturday, we knew it was time to head for the Big Hole. Art Gidel provided some information about road access from the south, but we couldn't enlist any other willing participants on the spur of the moment. We car camped at the trailhead on the West Fork of Fishtrap Creek at about 6,300 feet. On Sunday morning the going was slow between 7,000 and 9,000 feet on the South Ridge because of poor snow conditions. We brought skis but could leave them on for only brief stretches due to bare spots and downfall. This make up for an absence of actual bushwhacking on the trip. We experienced some electrical activity on the exposed summit ridge; Jenny's headache went away after she removed her earrings, and her mood seemed improved by the shock therapy. The views of the West Fork of Fishtrap Peak and Warren Peak were dramatic in the unsettled weather. Views to the east and across the Big Hole Valley to the Pioneers were mostly obscured by

clouds and lightening displays. We barely made the vehicle by dark at 10 p.m. after a long, nonstop day. - Rick Murney

Selway River, April 29-May 1. At the end of April, Art Gidel, Peter Dayton, Mike Worrall, and John O'Bannon took a three-day kayak trip on the Selway River in Idaho. This nationally-known wilderness float trip begins at Paradise Ranger Station, which is located west of Darby across Nez Perce Pass, and runs northwesterly for 47 miles towards Lowell, Idaho, where the Selway joins the Lochsa. During the days before our departure the weather was cold and ugly, with new snow in the mountains, and we resigned ourself to a wet and chilly trip. However, not all surprises are unpleasant; we had warm sunny weather for the entire float, except for some light rain the second evening. The river was at 2 feet 10 inches at Paradise when we put in, an intermediate level which provided an enjoyable level of gusto. Last year we saw at least 1,000 elk during the first day, but this year we only saw a few. Possibly they had taken advantage of the lack of snow and moved to higher altitudes already. Peter forgot his tent poles and had to rig his bivy tent from trees. This was Mike's first self-contained kayak trip, and once he adapted to cooking at low altitude (he is used to cooking at 14,000 feet in Colorado) he did fine. Art provided a high point of the trip with an extended more-or-less-intentional side-surf in the hole at Double Drop where two kayakers lost their boats last year at much higher water levels and had to walk out nineteen miles. We spotted a rattlesnake during a side hike; the canyon is supposed to be teeming with them, but this is the first time I have encountered one. - Peter Dayton

St. Mary's Peak, April 30-May 1. There was a trail and then there wasn't a trail. You had to be there to understand the humor of this statement. Jim and Janet Surrena, Tim Page, Eric Moles, Cheryl Beyer and Gerald Olbu set out for a ski trip to Vacation Pass. It was a lot of work carrying our skis up the steep ridge. We leveled the snow for a pleasant camp at the treeline. The next day we proceeded to ski to East St. Mary's Peak. The snow was intermittent and the ridge was narrow in places, which meant that we carried our skis a lot. The final approach to the peak would have been more comfortable if we had ice axes. It's notable how cheerfully we all overcame the obstacles that we met along the route. It was a beautiful trip. --Gerald Olbu.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769
Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101
Rick Murney, Vice President - 543-7586

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) _____ Family (\$8.00/year) _____ (9398)

Mail a check payable to
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(STAMP)

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