



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

SEPTEMBER, 1995
MEETING

Meetings: Club meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month in the Missoula County Commission's meeting room, which is located on the second floor of the annex (newer portion) of the Missoula County Courthouse. Please enter through the north door. The September meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13. 7:30

Program. The program for September is traditionally a potluck slide show consisting of pictures taken by Club members on trips during the previous year. We don't want to mess up a perfectly good tradition, so consider yourself invited to bring in your favorite slides from the past year. If you are new to the Club, this program is a good way to find out something about the kinds of outdoor activities which Club members pursue.

CALENDAR

Thursday Evenings and Saturdays, Rock Climbing. After taking a break during August, the rock climbing group will meet again on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. This group usually climbs a wide variety of technical climbs; some easy, some hard, most top-roped, some multi-pitched. Beginners are encouraged to come and gain some experience. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

September 15-17, Friday-Sunday, Mount Jackson, Glacier Park. Backpack and scramble to Mount Jackson (10,052 feet), one of the taller mountains in Glacier Park. The group will leave the Going-to-the-Sun road at Jackson Overlook (4,800 feet) and backpack an easy six miles to Gunsight Lake (5,400 feet), one of the most scenic lakes in Glacier. The next day, a moderate scree scramble of 4-5 miles will lead to the summit, with a little route finding rumored near the top. On Sunday, the group can linger at the lake or charge back to town. Mount Jackson is one of Glacier's major peaks, so try it before snow falls. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or leave a message with Julie Warner at 543-6508.

September 24, Sunday, Sweeney Peak. Hike to the top of Sweeney Peak (9,161 feet), which is in the Bitterroot Mountains near Florence. This is a moderate hike which follows a trail part of the way. The rest of the route is an off-trail hike (no climbing, not even a scramble) to the top of Sweeney Peak. This trip is suitable for many ability levels since it is only about six miles and 3,100 feet in elevation gain to the summit. From the top of the peak, one has great views of the Bitterroot Valley. Call Art Gidel at 543-6352 for more information.

October 1, Sunday, Boulder Peak. Hike to Boulder Peak (9,804 feet), which is south of Darby on the southern border of the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. This is the impressive peak which you see to the south as you hike up Trapper Peak. About half the route follows a trail to the Boulder Point Lookout (7,753 feet). From there, the route may be off-trail travel over rocky ground to Boulder Peak. No climbing is anticipated. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

October 7-9, Saturday-Monday, Warren Peak. Climb Warren Peak (10,453 feet), which is the most scenic peak in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. A short hike on a trail will lead to Carpp Lake where we will camp. The climb of the peak the next day will involve some off-trail travel (minimal bushwacking) and some moderate fourth-class climbing with some exposure. From the top, one should have impressive views of the rugged continental divide as it runs through the Pintlers. Overall, the trip shouldn't be too strenuous since it is spread over three days. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

Wanna lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

TRIP REPORTS

Daughter of the Sun Mountain, July 30. Wanting to climb one of the more challenging and scenic peaks in the Missions, Dan Chisolm and Gerald Olbu headed for Daughter of the Sun Mountain. Unlike most of our mountaineering adventures, most of this route followed a well-maintained trail to Turquoise Lake, which I think is the most beautiful of the larger lakes in the Missions. From Turquoise Lake, we quickly got onto the boulder fields and talus slopes leading up the mountain. The fun began about 200 feet below the summit as we reached the vertical section of the mountain. This section was great fourth-class climbing. Fourth-class climbing is actual climbing using handholds and foot holds where there definitely is exposure, but no rope or other cumbersome climbing equipment is used. If you fall, you could be seriously injured or killed. This kind of climbing

is mostly mental. You can not allow yourself to become nervous or afraid. Often times, once you begin a route you are committed to finishing it, sometimes because you can not climb down what you just climbed up. Generally, you feel very tense and your mind is extremely focused on the task at hand. You never daydream about other aspects of your life. We reached the peak and enjoyed the spectacular views. Daughter of the Sun Mountain is in an unusual position; it is a tall peak, but about a mile east of the Mission Divide. From the peak, one has a great view of the entire Mission Range. We quickly took a couple of photos, ate a snack, and began the climb down. As our feet touched the safety of the talus slope, we let out a sigh of relief. At that point, we felt like we had successfully climbed the mountain and could begin breathing again. As we were hiking out, we met fellow club member Bret Doucett who had just climbed Turquoise Peak, which is an extremely long trip for just one day. We were all in great spirits and quickly reached the trailhead. - Gerald Olbu.

Selway/Bitterroot Trek, August 12-13. On the weekend of August 12 and 13, Matt Grandy and Steve Turnbaugh went on a 30-mile backpack trip through the Selway/Bitterroot Wilderness. A friend dropped us off at the Elk Summit Guard Station in Idaho, which is on the west side of Lolo Pass about 17 miles south of Lochsa Lodge. The cabin at Elk Summit is where Bob Marshall and Norman MacLean both were stationed as young forest rangers. We set off in Bob Marshall's footsteps toward Hamilton. After eight miles, we had lunch at Big Sand Lake and enjoyed watching five moose bathing in the lake. We made camp Saturday night at the 14-mile point. That night, a big storm rolled through and we listened to the lightning reverberate off the granite walls. We woke in the morning to find a fresh coat of snow above 6,000 feet. We reached Blodgett Pass by 10:30 in the morning, but our plans to scramble to the top of Blodgett Peak were dashed by snow and low cloud cover. We arrived at the Blodgett Canyon trailhead at 4:00 and met our driver for the ride back to Missoula. - Matt Grandy.

Bass Creek Crags, August 13. The Bass Creek Crags are the jagged spires easily visible from the highway south of Florence. They are very alluring since we drive or hike by them so often. However, very few people climb them. Tales of tortuous amounts of bushwacking and vertical cliffs with loose rock apparently keep most people away. Dave Siemens and Gerald Olbu, perhaps suffering from mental insanity, decided to go for it. We hiked up the Bass Creek trail about 3-4 miles and looked for the least painful way to begin the bushwacking. We speculated on where the brush might be thin or where there might be pathways between the brush and rock walls. We lucked out and did minimal bushwacking as we followed ridges, pathways, and rocky slopes to reach the main cirque below the crags. From this point, we had a good view of all three main crags, which have vertical walls leading up to their summits. We wanted to climb the tallest crag, but we didn't want to do any heavy duty climbing, so we looked for a less than vertical route. We speculated some more, scouted around, and gradually worked our way up. We found a route that could be characterized as intense rugged scrambling or moderate fourth class climbing. It was fun and challenging, but not severely exposed. We reached the top of the tallest crag and were amazed that we still had most of the day left. Climbing this Bass Creek Crag was a lot easier than we expected. - Gerald Olbu.

Holland Peak, August 20. On a bright blue day, Art Gidel led Peter Dayton, Gerald Olbu, Steve Schombel, Julie Warner and two (2) accountants whose names I am sorry to say I have forgotten, on a climb of Holland Peak in the Swan Range. Contrary to what you might expect, this peak is not located adjacent to Holland Peak, but is about five miles north. If you haven't been there, you ought to correct that oversight, because the scenery is very good, or possibly even better. The hike to the peak involves about 5,000 feet of elevation gain but only about three miles of horizontal distance, so it isn't too grueling. There is a steep but well beaten out usage trail which leads almost all of the way to the summit, so route finding is not a problem. We followed this trail past Lower Rumble Lake to Upper Rumble Lake, which is surrounded by a half-circle of steep cliffs. We climbed up a shoulder to the top of the ridge, and then followed the top of the cliffs up to the summit. My favorite part of this trip is the saddle directly east of Upper Rumble Lake. On the west side of the saddle the cliffs drop a thousand feet or so to the lake, and on the east side of the saddle steep slabs of rock slope off for hundreds of yards. We wandered casually and absent-mindedly along the crest between the cliff and the slabs, daydreaming about other aspects of our lives, relaxing and enjoying the view, and breathing in a normal manner. It's a dramatic piece of scenery. There was less haze than usual, and we had good views from the summit into Glacier Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. Then we headed back to the cars for some refreshment in Seeley Lake. - Peter Dayton.

Blacktail Peak, August 26. I've climbed and hiked in a lot of different areas in the south end of the Mission Mountains, but one area I hadn't visited is the ridge which leads to Blacktail and Weather Peaks, which are located south of Grey Wolf Lake, southeast of Grey Wolf Peak, and east of the Scenic Lake Basin. So, I scheduled a trip into the area. Not realizing that they were guinea pigs, Bret Doucett, Art Gidel, David Olen, Nancy Powell, and another guy showed up for the hike. But not all experimental animals die gruesome deaths; some of them are the first recipients of a new miracle cure. This group lucked out. We parked by Fall Creek and headed up the ridge, which proved to be relatively gradual and contains traces of a trail. The ridge faces south and the vegetation is fairly open, so the bushwacking was quite easy. After we got about two miles back on the ridge we entered an old burned area, and the scenery began to open up in all directions. As we hiked along the top of the ridge towards Blacktail Peak, it looked like our progress would be blocked by a band of cliffs on the west ridge of the peak. However, as is often the case, when we got to the base of the cliff we found easy routes leading up through it to the peak. On the way back to the cars we dropped into the basin to the south of Blacktail Peak, made a loop out to the east, went over two saddles, and rejoined our route up. I recommend this trip pretty highly. - Peter Dayton.

East and West St. Mary's Peaks, August 27. For a casual hike to a respectable peak in beautiful country, Roland Giller, Matt Grandy, Gerald Olbu, Martin Oleksiewicz, Dave Siemens, and Steve Turnbaugh decided to hike up to East St. Mary's Peak in the Missions. The first portion of the route was along a very faint trail up a steep ridge. When we reached tree line, we stopped for a break, and soon we had a visitor. Ian had hiked up on

his own and joined us. The seven of us continued hiking to East St. Mary's Peak. We still had some energy left, so we scrambled and climbed over to West St. Mary's Peak. The weather was great on this day; it was sunny, but cool. In fact, we didn't really get hot until the afternoon when we were hiking down through the trees. We all had a great time and Ian said he would be joining the Club. - Gerald Olbu.

Canyon Peak, September 3-4. Canyon Peak, immediately west of Hamilton in the Bitterroot Mountains, is a very nice technical climb. The north ridge is appealing because it is a moderate technical climb, loose rock is minimal, and route finding is straight forward. Dan Chisolm, Brigitte Hendrix, and Gerald Olbu set out early in the morning and hiked up Canyon Creek. We reached the saddle at the base of the north ridge, ate lunch, and made preparations for the ensuing climb. Most of the climb was easy, but there were some difficult moves. Probably the most difficult move was to climb a steep friction slab covered with loose lichen with no footholds or handholds. you just hope you don't slip. Perhaps the funnest move was where you had to grab onto the top of the knife-edge ridge and friction your feet along about 1000 feet of exposure on both sides of the ridge. After about eight pitches and lots of fun and thrills, we reached the summit. We didn't have much time to enjoy the views because it was now sunset. We rappelled down the south face mostly using the light from our headlamps. It was very frustrating when we tried to pull the rope down and found it was stuck. We had to climb back up and get it. Once we got off the peak we were very relieved, ate a snack, and changed from climbing gear to hiking gear. In order to get out, we had to climb over a ridge to get back into the Canyon Creek drainage. We headed out using our headlamps. About 2:00 in the morning, we realized that in the dark we apparently made a wrong turn and were in the wrong valley and not getting any closer to the trailhead. We decided to find a flat cozy spot to spend the night. We found a comfortable spot with lots of soft grass. We got a little bit chilly near morning, but it wasn't too bad. The next morning, our first objective was to climb up onto a ridge so we could find out where we were. Then, we had to do a long traverse to get back on course. We still had to climb over the ridge to get back into the Canyon Creek drainage. There was only one place where we could cross the ridge. The other side of the ridge was a sheer cliff face, except for a notch which was only visible from the other side. We had to find the notch. Normally, this wouldn't be very difficult, but we were all very dehydrated and weak. We had about a half quart of water to ration between the three of us. It was very slow and excruciating. Things that we normally could climb, we couldn't now because we were too weak and it was not safe. After much agony, we finally found the notch in the ridge that led down to Canyon Lake and soon we had water. Our energy came back quickly and soon we were at the trailhead. - Gerald Olbu.

More damn kayaking. Alberton Gorge, September 9. One of the benefits of living in Missoula is that you can go kayaking in the evening after work all Summer. However, as Fall approaches and the days rapidly get shorter, you either have to start leaving earlier, or you have to start wearing a headlamp. Since we were all pretty busy at work, on September 9 we finally felt it was time to get out the headlamps again. Art Gidel, Jeremy Keene, C.J. and Mike Peterson, Mike and Sarah Worrall, and I headed out to the Alberton Gorge after work at 5:00 p.m. for a little R&R. We played hard for a couple of hours as the sun sunk towards the horizon. By the time we got to Fang it was definitely dark. Surfing by headlamp is almost as much fun to watch as it is to do. Mike Worrall was surfing the big wave in Fang, his paddle and the spray from his kayak flashing in the light from his headlamp, when he caught a huge endo, made a pirouette like an airplane beacon, and crashed headfirst into the next wave downstream. The water broke over his light, and then the foam glowed white as he rolled up. Yes, yes, yes, the fun never quits around Missoula. - Peter Dayton.

OFFICERS

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Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mail a check payable to
"Rocky Mountaineers" to

Address: _____

Dave Pengelly
P.O. Box 4262

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

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