



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

DECEMBER, 1995

MEETING

Meetings: Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. 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. This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 13.

Program. Howard Mozen, owner of Copper Oar, an Alaskan wilderness raft outing company, will present a slide show entitled: Glaciers Melting: Traveling the Wilds and Waterways of the Wrangell St. Elias National Park. Howard, an 11-year resident of McCarthy Alaska, will discuss the wilderness scenery and the natural and human history of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. The show will be enjoyed by all hikers and boaters who appreciate the wilderness qualities of Alaska.

CALENDAR

Avalanche Seminar. Dudley Improta, of the UM Campus Recreation Department, will hold an avalanche seminar on December 13 and 14 at 7:00 in SC131. An optional field trip will be on Saturday, December 16. Contact Campus Rec at 243-2802 for more information.

December 17. Sunday local ski trip. Moderate-level backcountry ski trip to a local area such as Hoodoo Pass, St. Mary's Peak, or Sweeney Peak, depending on the snow conditions. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for details.

December 17. Sunday Lolo Pass. Beginning/intermediate-level ski touring in the Lolo Pass area. There are many trails in this area providing an array of opportunities. Lolo Pass usually collects a lot of snow, creating great ski conditions. Transportation will be provided. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for details.

December 30 - January 1. Warren Peak Ski Trip. Ring in the new year in the beautiful snow-covered Anaconda Pintler Wilderness. On the first day, we will ski eight miles with 1900 feet of elevation gain along a road and trail to Edith Lake (about 7850 feet), which is a mile southwest of Warren Peak (10,453 feet). The peak will be approached from the southwest face or the west ridge, depending on conditions. Endurance and winter camping skills are required. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

January 7. Sunday Wisherd Ridge. Moderate-level ski trip to Wisherd Ridge, or another location, depending on conditions. Wisherd Ridge is suitable for tele-skiing in the bowls or ski touring along the mostly flat ridge top. Hopefully, this will be a short day trip. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

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

TRIP REPORTS

Driving around in the rain. November 11-12. On Saturday, November 11, Art Gidel, Ralph Flockerzi, and Peter Dayton set off to ski up St. Mary's Peak. It was raining steadily as we drove through the Bitterroot Valley, but we hoped to find more winter-like conditions at higher elevations. The road was slippery and treacherous as we drove up the logging road towards the trailhead, so we stopped and put chains on Art's Trooper. When we reached the first switchback at about 4,800 feet, we passed Gerald Olbu and a group of skiers, standing by their cars in the rain. We smiled and waved and kept grinding on up the road. We never saw those guys again. As we drove up the road we began to see a gratifying amount of snow on the ground, and the rain began to turn to wet snow. Hunters had been keeping the road open at lower elevations, but by the time we reached the road junction at 6,200 feet, there was only one set of tracks ahead of us. Although we had to stop twice to replace chains which came off, we kept grinding on up the road. At the last switchback before the trailhead, at about 6,700 feet, we found a pickup parked in the middle of the road, with unbroken snow in front of it. We dug a large parking area for Art's Trooper, turned the vehicle around, and parked it. The snow at that elevation was about a foot and a half deep and very heavy and solid. Soaking wet snow continued to fall as we skied up the ridge. When we got up into the krumholtz (dense low stunted pine thickets) below the summit, we encountered wicked winds, blowing snow, and a mixture of rocks and drifted-in krumholtz. After ditching our skis and hiking up a short distance, we decided that we had had enough fun and headed back

down. The snow was heavy but skiable. When we returned to the vehicle, we discovered that the driving conditions had deteriorated markedly during the day. The snow was saturated with water, and the wheels of Art's Itsuzu Trooper squished down through our old tracks to a layer of ice. Driving was extremely difficult and hazardous. We got high centered while exiting our parking space and had to dig ourselves out, and we just barely made it the mile and a half back to the road junction, where we encountered additional vehicle tracks. Art had to creep along at about one mile an hour the whole way. We threw another chain in the process. Art was wondering if his Trooper was going to get stranded up on the mountain for the rest of the winter. We had hoped that the road conditions would improve after the road junction, but they continued to be very difficult, and progress continued to be extremely slow. However, we continued to lose altitude, and began to think we were going to make it out. Then we came around a corner and found a pickup blocking the road, with one rear tire hanging off the edge of the road. The hunters in the pickup had improvised a come-along out of a jack and some mangey old braided polypro rope, and were trying to keep the truck from sliding any further. Not having much choice, we climbed out into the rain and gave them a hand. Art had a real come-along in his car, and we rigged it to a tree. Then the hunters kept jacking up the rear end of the truck while we pulled and pushed the truck sideways. This strategy worked quite well. After moving the rear of the truck four or five feet sideways, the hunters were able to drive back onto the road. We continued on down the road, but a short time later we encountered another group of hunters in an identical predicament. After further fooling around we finally made it out to Highway 93. My ski clothing works just fine in cold snowy weather, but this trip reminded me that my gear doesn't handle rain particularly well. I could easily end up with hypothermia in wet or rainy conditions. The weather on Sunday was still cold, overcast, and rainy, so Art and I didn't even think about skiing. We went kayaking, and were perfectly comfortable. - Peter Dayton.

Trapper Peak, October 22. Dan Chisholm, Gerald Olbu and Matt Grandy hiked and scrambled to Trapper Peak. The weather was ugly when we left Missoula but improved as we drove down the highway. We parked at the trailhead and found one group of hunters. We donned our orange clothing and headed up the trail. We first encountered snow at 7500 feet. We made the summit at 2 p.m. and found a group of three climbers descending the summit. They had climbed a couloir on the north face of Trapper Peak. This sounded like a very interesting route and we have plans to do it in the future. We spent one hour at the summit eating our lunch and reading through the register. The descent from the peak was uneventful. - Matt Grandy.

Lolo Pass, November 26. As of late Friday the 24th, no one had called, so Julie Warner and myself, Steve Schombel, decided to ski the Lolo Pass area on Sunday. We took advantage of two things: One, since Elk Meadows Road had been plowed up till Thanksgiving, we drove all the way up to Low Gap. Two, Saturday night brought 4-5 inches of new fresh powder. We spent a real nice afternoon on new snow unmarked by either ski or snowmobile tracks. Plus, on our way out we could thumb our nose at snowmobilers who were snowmobiling where we could drive. Normally, they buzz by us on skis. Don't always believe our newsletter editor's warning about the early season. Feel free to call if Julie or myself have a trip in future Mountain Ears. - Steve Schombel.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769

Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

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

Mail a check payable to
"Rocky Mountaineers" to
Dave Pengelly
P.O. Box 4262
Missoula, Montana 59806

THE MOUNTAIN EAR
P.O. BOX 4262
MISSOULA, MT 59806

(STAMP)

FIRST CLASS MAIL