



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

*Len's Report - lots of interest
CONTINUE ID roles*

APRIL, 1999

MEETING

Meeting: Club meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month in the lower-level meeting room at the Missoula Public Library. This month's meeting will be held on April 14, at 7:00 p.m.

Program: Skip Horner is a local mountaineer and nationally known motivational speaker. Over a three-year period, Skip travelled the world and achieved one of mountaineering's top prizes - an ascent of the highest peak on each of the seven continents. From Denali, Aconcagua, Kilimanjaro, Carstensz Pyramid, Mt. Vinson, Mt. Elbrus, and Mt. Everest, Skip captured them all. With Skip's incredible slides and gripping presentation, you'll walk away afterwards convinced you can also achieve such success in mountaineering.

Program next month: Laura Ziemer, who currently is a water rights lawyer for Montana Trout Unlimited, was a member of the successful 1995 North Ridge American Expedition. She will have spectacular slides of Everest and also of the people and other places in Tibet.

Club Business: Elections for club officers will be held at the May meeting. Former vice-president, Len Broberg, will serve as chairman of the nominating committee. Call Len Broberg at 549-6031 if you are interested in serving as a club officer.

Notice -- Benefit for Dan Fox. Dan Fox was a well-known and admired climber and climbing instructor. He was also a benevolent person and worked for the state's Child Protective Services and was active in many community groups. Dan died March 20 after a battle with lung cancer, even though he never smoked. There will be a **benefit gear sale April 17, Saturday, 9:00-3:00, 519 Whitney Lane (in the Rattlesnake area)** to help his wife, Laura pay medical bills and his son, Alan with education expenses. People are asked to bring any used gear to the sale and donate all or part of the proceeds. For more information, call Dave Pengelly at 728-6512 or Dave Ryan at 549-3612.

Notes from the Club President:

1) Last year you may have noticed trip announcements concerning a proposed club-sponsored expedition to Denali. While the official club trip fizzled due to family and career commitments by all the interested members, I am pleased to inform the club that two of our younger members have been selected for two separate expeditions to Denali. Chris Stout and Mark Mencil will be departing Missoula next month to climb the highest peak in North America. Both of these young men were very active in our ice climbing program this winter, and we should all feel proud that two of our fellow club members are taking the mountaineering skills they honed with our club trips and are advancing to a very high level. Congratulations Chris and Mark!

2) Both April and May's programs will be featuring guest speakers who have climbed Everest. One of my personal goals as club president has been to keep the club focused on mountaineering. I would like to thank both of our vice-presidents, Tony and Steve, for lining up such great guest speakers for us.

TRIP CALENDAR

April 17, Saturday, Sonielem Ridge. Climb the prominent snow couloir on Sonielem Ridge that is easily visible from the highway as one drives over the hill near St. Ignatius. Access is fairly quick via the Mission Creek trail. The snow couloir ranges from being gentle at the bottom to about 60° at the top. An ice ax and probably crampons will be required. For those who don't have crampons or are new to snow climbing, it may be possible to practice on the gentle lower slopes. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 25, Sunday, Mt Powell. Climb Mt. Powell (10,168 feet) which is the highest peak in the Flint Creek Range near Deer Lodge. Mt. Powell is an easy scramble over bouldering terrain in the summer. We will use the Northwest Buttress as our final approach route. Call Tony Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

April 25, Sunday, Gash Point. Gash Point (8886 feet), which is west of Victor, is one of the more challenging ski mountaineering spots in the Bitterroot Mountains. Depending on snow conditions, be prepared for a tough hike in. Call Dave Gaeuman at 728-5040 to sign up.

May 1-2, Saturday-Sunday, Gray Wolf Peak. Climb Gray Wolf Peak (9001 feet), which is in the southern portion of the Missions and is perhaps the most impressive peak in that range. This trip was postponed for a couple of months due to snow conditions, but conditions should be excellent now. An ice axe and crampons are required for this two-day climbing trip. Some participants may wish to make it just a winter camping and ski/snowshoe trip. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

May 8-9, Saturday-Sunday, Rocky Mountaineer Cabin. Enjoy a fun-filled weekend at the Club's cabin. A moderate-length ski or snowshoe trip will take one to the cabin where a warm wood stove will provide all the comforts of home (almost). There are ski, snowshoe, and mountaineering opportunities in the area of varying lengths and levels of difficulty. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

May 9, Sunday, Blue Point and Sheep Mountain. Hike and/or snowshoe to Blue Point and Sheep Mountain in the Rattlesnake area. This can be a short and easy spring jaunt to Blue Point or a hike almost as long and high as the much more popular Stuart Peak. Snowshoes will likely be useful for those who want to try for Sheep Mtn. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more information.

9046
2807
3850 8, 7 1/2 mi

May 15 or 16 Saturday or Sunday, Como Peaks or Gray Wolf Peak. Weather is often marginal to poor at this time of year. In light of this, the peak and the climbing date will depend on the weather. If Mission Mountain weather is nice, we'll climb Gray Wolf. At 9001 feet, this fourth-class climb includes a long snow/ice couloir ... ice ax required. If the Southern Bitterroots have nicer weather, we'll climb one of the Como Peaks - probably the west and highest peak at 9624 feet. The west peak is rated a scramble with some fourth-class moves near the top. Call Tony Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

May 23-28, Sunday-Friday, Mt Rainier. Climb Mt. Rainier (14,411 feet) via an advanced route on either the north or west side of the mountain. The route selected will depend upon access by car to various areas of the park. Possible routes are the Liberty or Ptarmigan Ridges, or the Mowich North Face. These are all serious routes with hazards! Interested persons must have above average speed, endurance, experience, and gear. Please call Tony Sabol at 273-2566 to discuss participating on an exhilarating climb!

Summer Mountaineering. Plans are being made to climb a few mountains this summer such as Mt Rainier, the Grand Teton, and something in the Canadian Rockies. The Rainier trip will probably be in July or August. The Grand Teton trip (several possible routes) will probably be in late August. These trips have a prerequisite to come on a prior trip with the trip leader and to get to know the other people in the group. The number of participants may be limited. If interested, call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 and help choose a date.

Mount McKinley, May-June. Rocky Mountaineer members Mark Mencil and Chris Stout are both leading trips to Mount McKinley in Denali National Park, Alaska. Both are planning to climb the West Buttress route, but are also considering other possibilities. Mark Mencil is teaming up with fellow university student, Jesse Foster. They are going to leave Missoula May 15 and drive to Alaska. They plan to spend 21 days or longer on the mountain and use a modified traditional style and skip some camps below 14,000 feet. Some options they are considering are to climb the Orient Express to the Football Field, also climb Mt. Foraker from the 14,000-foot base camp, and do some climbing in the Bugaboos on the way home. Chris is leading a trip with three other people from across the nation whom he met on previous mountaineering trips. They are considering climbing Thunder Ridge and plan on being gone from May 13 to June 10. We wish them the best of luck and hope to see a couple of slideshows from them next year.

Want to lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Matt Grandy at 728-0647 or e-mail him at matthewg@montana.com.

TRIP REPORTS

Ice Climbing, March 1. Ronnie Attaway and Tony Sabol returned to Mission Falls! They hiked southwest of the main ice

climbing area into a large cirque full of ice. Avalanche debris was piled over 100 feet deep in the creek bottom at the base of numerous climbs. We wondered about the climbers we had seen from the main trail the week prior, as no debris had been present at that time. We selected a two-pitch route which was out of any runoff route. The first pitch was a steep slab and tiered in spots. The second pitch entailed two vertical sections connected by a moderate slab. We down climbed and rappelled parts of the route, returning to the avalanche creek bottom. It appeared to be easier for us to directly cross Mission Creek and climb the opposing hillside. Doing this we hoped to save time by not retracing our route up the valley as we would intercept the main trail by a direct crossover. DO NOT DO THIS! unless you like to break trail uphill through Mission Mountain tangle and under and overgrowth! It took over an hour to cross over and reach the trail...not to mention scratches, torn gear and frustrations. Upon finally arriving at the main ice arena, Tony lead a 3/4 pitch grade 3* or 4* and finished with a top rope of some overhanging ice. We made it out as the last light faded from the sky. A cold beer or two was a godsend after that bushwack. - Tony Sabol.

Mission Falls Ice Climbing, March 6. Mark Mencil, Gerald Olbu, Tami Reschki and Raven Stevens set out for one of the last ice climbs of the season. One notable thing about ice is that it is constantly changing. It was warm the previous week and melted a lot of the ice and detached it from the rock in many places. It was cold this week, but the ice still had not fully re-formed and was still detached from the rock. In addition to the ice being hollow, the cold temperatures made it very brittle and hard to climb. This made for some interesting climbing conditions. Mark began climbing a massive ice column and when he was about eight feet up, the whole column moved about an inch. He climbed back down and began in a different location. We set up a 150-foot, moderate-angle climb and all of us had fun climbing it. We enjoyed beautiful weather and were done by late afternoon. - Gerald Olbu.

Upper Clearwater area near Seeley Lake, March 14. Steve Schombel, Brett Doucett and Lori Hutchinson toured up to the pretty canyon below Fisher Peak. We made our own tracks on the connecting road, and even on the main Seeley - Holland Lake route only five machines went by, so all in all it was a quiet, warm and sunny day. The views of the Missions across the valley and the rugged Swans above was great. The only bad thing was that several days of warm weather made the snow so soft we had to step and kick almost all the way instead of blasting down. - Steve Schombel.

March 20-21, Rocky Mountaineer Cabin. Matt Grandy and Dave Gaeuman made the club's first official trip to our cabin since December. We are pleased to report that, despite lots of snow and very heavy use by non-club members, the cabin is in very good shape. We hiked to the cabin on Saturday and played a very spirited game of chess that evening. On Sunday we headed up to the peak under a cloudless sky. We lounged around on the peak working on our suntans for quite a while before descending back to the cabin, and then the trailhead. I would like to make two observations here about the cabin. 1) Two summers ago, Gerald Olbu and several others worked very hard all summer and put a new roof on our cabin. Without that new roof, this year's huge snowpack would have caused major problems. Our club owes a debt of gratitude to those who worked so hard all summer so that the rest of us could enjoy the cabin in the winter. 2) This year our cabin has been used very heavily by non-club members. They have taken very good care of our cabin and I found it very clean. I would like to thank them for showing respect for a very special place in the mountains. - Matt Grandy.

Lindberg Lake, March 20. While Matt and Dave spent the weekend at the Rocky Mountaineer cabin, I did my civic duty and checked out the route from Lindberg Lake toward Buck Lake, since I was scheduled to lead that trip the next weekend. The trail began in gently rolling terrain. When I came to the steep section, it was not as steep as I thought it would be and I didn't even have to use skins. The skiing was very easy once I was on the large flat ridge top. There were several clearings on top and I had good views of the Swans to the east and the Missions to the west, especially McDonald Peak with massive amounts of snow. This is one of the few places where you have views of both the Swans and Missions; usually you're on one or the other. I lost the trail on the flat ridge top; this was ok since it was easy to ski anywhere through the widely spaced trees. I skied as far as I wanted, then headed back and enjoyed a nice glide. For the steep portion, I just put ropes on my skies and walked down. I got back to the trailhead in a total time for the round trip of about six hours. It was quiet, I saw no one all day long. Unfortunately, next week for the scheduled trip, nobody called. - Gerald Olbu.

Rocky Mountaineer Cabin, April 3. Trips advertised in the newsletter are not written in stone. Even though the cabin trip was advertised as a two-day trip, Doyle Gerrard and Gerald Olbu decided to make it a one-day trip. Since we heard that Matt and Dave had an easy time getting to the cabin two weeks ago, we began in late morning and began hiking up the ridge. We were about half way to the cabin before we got into any snow. Then, as is usual for spring conditions, the snow depth increased very rapidly as we gained more elevation on the ridge and eventually reached 4-5 feet at the cabin. The snow was firm enough that we could walk on top of it; we didn't have to use our snowshoes. It was only a three-hour hike to the cabin. The weather toyed with us. There were scattered clouds, but no precipitation and we actually got some sun. We spent about an hour at the cabin and then enjoyed a relaxing walk on the snow down the ridge to our vehicles.

Some history of the cabin may be useful for new members. The cabin was built in 1974 by a group of Rocky Mountaineers led by Bob Benson. Initially, the cabin was very primitive: four log walls, log roof, log floor and a wood stove.

A few years later, roofing material was added to keep the snow out. Then, came a plywood floor which made for easier walking and kept out a lot of the drafts. A couple of windows were installed which livened up the inside. An outhouse was dug to keep the area clean. A more modern wood stove was hauled up on a wheel barrel and now it's warm enough inside the cabin that some people say that it's too hot. There's a lot of ongoing work at the cabin. The roof needs to be worked on every two or three years because the bumpy logs poke holes through the roofing material, and then the wind comes along and makes the holes bigger. Many users of the cabin have contributed miscellaneous work, such as chinking and plastic sheeting inside to cut down on the drafts. The cabin is relatively draft-free now. (I'm not sure if I would have used plastic in a rustic cabin, but I don't have a better idea.) Every summer we do miscellaneous work such as chopping firewood, cleaning out the cabin and whatever else comes up that year. The cabin log book indicates that the cabin gets used about every two weeks in the winter; about one fourth of that is by the Rocky Mountaineers, the rest by the public. The cabin can comfortably accommodate 3-6 people, although I've heard of 12 people in the cabin. It takes about six hours to reach the cabin in early winter due to deep powder; in spring when the snow firms up, it takes about three hours. Activities at the cabin range all the way from hanging around the cabin relaxing in a fine atmosphere to short or long ski/snowshoe trips.

It's worth mentioning that the current cabin was built as a replacement for a previous cabin. The previous cabin at Lappi Lake was built a long time ago as a hunter/trapper cabin. When the Rocky Mountaineers were formed in 1960, the Club inherited the Lappi Lake cabin. However, when the Bitterroots became wilderness, the Lappi Lake cabin had to be removed and the current cabin was built. The Rocky Mountaineers have almost always had a cabin. The Club offers a wide variety of activities such as hiking, backpacking, ski touring, snow shoeing, tele skiing (need more, Dave?), backcountry skiing, winter camping, cabin trips, summer mountaineering, snow climbing, ice climbing, and a few big mountains in the summer. However, of all these activities, in only one does the Club have a vested interest. It is in the best interest of the Club, as owners of the cabin, if we use and maintain our cabin. - Gerald Olbu.

OFFICERS

Matt Grandy, President - 728-0647
Tony Sabol, Vice President - 273-2566
Steve Schombel, Vice President - 721-4686

Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508
Gerald Olbu, Newsletter Editor - 549-4769

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Check one: Individual (\$9.00/year) _____ Family (\$12.00/year) _____

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

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Schombel, Stephen
2200 Applewood Ln
04/99
Missoula MT 59801