



Mountain Ear

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

OCTOBER 1999

The Rocky Mountaineers are dedicated to the exploration of Western Montana's mountains and other high peaks throughout the world.

MEETING

Club Meetings: The Rocky Mountaineers normally meet the second Wednesday of each month at the Missoula Public Library (lower level meeting room). Our next meeting will be held on **October 20, 1999 at 7 p.m.** Please note that this is the third Wednesday in October. Due to a room reservation conflict, the October meeting had to be moved to the following week.

October's program will feature Mark Mencil and Jesse Foster. Last summer, Mark and Jesse, both club members, took a long trip to Alaska. The highlight was the summit of Denali, which they accomplished in good weather and with no problems. They were on the mountain when an injured British climber was flown off, an incident, which made news. On their way home, they stopped at several popular rock climbing areas, near Anchorage, Squamish B.C., the North Cascades, and near Vantage, Washington. Mark is going to present a lot of spectacular slides and souvenirs from the trip. He also notes that he got a bad cut on their last climbing day, and is going to incorporate some climbing safety tips into the program.

Special Note -The Rocky Mountaineers wish to express our sincere condolences to Jennifer, Max, Sam, and Issac Lowe on the recent loss of their father Alex. Alex was a shining star in the climbing world. He grew up here in Missoula and was key to developing rock, ice, and alpine routes throughout our local area. Alex later settled in Bozeman and was married to a climber...Jennifer. While managing to be a father and husband, Alex continued to put up all forms of technical routes throughout the world. We've watched him excel early on in Montana, the Canadian Rockies, the Tetons, and Alaska. He guided and climbed throughout the Himalaya and in the Antarctic. Alex has countless first ascents of all forms throughout the world. He has rescued numerous climbers from perilous and potentially fatal situations. He has broken or set speed climbing ascents. Alex was known as a "mutant" in that the man seemed to have an endless energy and aerobic supply...his aerobic capacity topping out near marathon levels. Yet through it all, Alex seemed to maintain a state of grace. He was never a braggart or flamboyant about his abilities. He would talk to anyone on the street who stopped to say hello. This easy going manner, coupled with his extremely talented abilities, made Alex Lowe probably the best loved climber of our generation. We will all miss you Alex. We hope you're getting in some awesome new ice routes on the other side....

A fund for the children of Alex Lowe has been set up. Please send contributions to **THE FUND FOR THE CHILDREN OF ALEX LOWE, C/O US BANK, 104 EAST MAIN ST, BOZEMAN, MT 59771.**

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS: We are looking for new faces and energetic people to lead trips of all skill levels! Please contact Matt Grandy if you are interested in being a trip leader.

TRIP CALENDER

October 9, Sat, Boulder Peak: Climb Boulder Peak (9804 feet) in the Bitterroot Range. This peak should provide us with spectacular views of Trapper and other Bitterroot Peaks. We will scramble up the east ridge to the summit. Please call Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

October 24, Sun, Trapper Peak: Join the Rocky Mountaineers for the "Seventh Annual First Day of Hunting Season Climb of Trapper Peak". This is the highest point in the Bitterroot Mountains (10,157 feet). We go here every year on this day, and it makes for a good gauge on how weather will be for the rest of the winter. Bring either snowshoes or skis, or else you probably won't make it to the top. Also, WEARING BLAZE ORANGE IS MANDATORY!!! Call Matt Grandy for details at 728-0647.

October 30, Sat, Squaw Peak: Approximately 25 miles west of Missoula, Squaw Peak stands out at an elevation of 7996 feet. The route will involve following a trail for about 2 1/2 miles and then a short scramble to the summit. This peak will provide good views of the Mission and Rattlesnake ranges, and also the Missoula valley. Contact Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

October 31, Sun, SOS FAIR: The 1999 SOS fair will be held at the UM Fieldhouse. This is a great opportunity to stock up on new and used skiing and mountaineering gear. Bargains galore!!!!

November 7, Sun, Lappi Lake: Lappi Lake used to be the site of the original Rocky Mountaineers cabin, until the Wilderness Act was established in 1964. The lake is located at approximately 7400' and will involve approximately 6 miles of trail hiking up the Bass Creek drainage. The Bass Creek Crags should be visible, towering above the lake. Contact Matt Grandy for details at 728-0647.

December 20-31 (approximately), Pico de Orizaba, Mexico: Steve Schombel and Penny Palm are dreaming a bit about heading to Mexico over Christmas and attempting the third highest point in North America (18,426 feet). This is not an official club trip in the sense that my friend from Arizona will pick the route and time. It involves steep snow and perhaps some glacier travel. It will be expensive, and reservations need to be made soon. Call Steve at 721-4686 for more information.

Want to Lead A Trip ? If you are interested in being a Trip Leader for the Rocky Mountaineers, contact Club President Matt Grandy at 728-0647 or e-mail him at matthewg@montana.com.

TRIP REPORTS

Eighteen Mile Peak, August 21st: Matt Grandy and Tami Sabol drove past Dillon and to the base of the highest peak in the Beaverhead Mountains. The trip began with a very creative and adventurous version of 4-WD trails. We did a little muddin' just to get within 1 1/2 miles of the base of the peak. We finally came to a wetland that looked as though it would engulf the entire truck if we dared to attempt a crossing. We strapped on our packs and started cross-country through a beautiful sloping prairie. Upon reaching the base of the peak, we started our ascent up the steep ridge on scree slopes. Close to the top, it was apparent that bad weather was moving in quickly. We scurried to the top across large talus blocks and reached the summit just in time to see a fascinating lightening bolt hit Borah Peak. We suddenly noticed that the hair atop both of our heads was standing straight up. Suddenly, the sense of urgency to descend quickly set in. We scrambled down the peak as fast as we could. Near the bottom, rain and high winds pummeled us. Upon reaching the truck, we both let out a sigh of relief and a trip to McDonald's was in order - Tami Sabol

Scapegoat Wilderness, August 21st: There were no calls about Rocky Mountain, so Steve Schombel opted to backpack into the Scapegoat Wilderness - ten miles up Straight Creek from Benchmark. Then, up the Green Fork, where an unmaintained trail led through a break in the cliffs. And back across the plateau to the top of the Scapegoat. At 9204 feet, it is the high point of the Scapegoat Wilderness Area. The route took a little longer, but was the gentle way to the summit. The Rocky Mountain Front has unique topography, and is only 3-4 hours away. You should visit it sometime - Steve Schombel

Mount Athabasca, September 4th – 6th: The Labor Day trip to Mount Athabasca in the Canadian Rockies has become an annual event, labeled by some club members as the "Athabasca Extravaganza". This year we got more than we bargained for. A total of four Rocky Mountaineers made the trip this year: Penny Palm, Karen Apland, James Banister, and Matt Grandy. James and Matt headed north on Friday morning, hoping to enjoy the evening nightlife of Banff. Penny and Karen joined up the following day. Base camp was established in the Icefields Campground in Jasper National Park (car camping). The morning of the climb started out uneventful. Up at 4 a.m., breakfast, and the short 10 minute drive to the base of the climb. We toiled up the moraine with our packs and climbing gear, mindful of the weather. It was snowing high on the mountain. As we roped up, we could hear the wind roaring above, but we could not see the summit due to the whiteout conditions above. We were not alone on the mountain - this is one of Canada's most popular climbs. But Canadian climbers tend to be a friendly bunch, so we did not mind the company. Conditions deteriorated rapidly as we ascended up the glacier. As we approached the headwall at the base of the Silverhorn (where you turn right to go to the col, or turn left to ascend Silverhorn itself), a party higher than us turned around and reported extreme avalanche conditions on the traverse to the col. As their observations matched ours, we made the painful decision to turn around. Some members of another party above us were having trouble, so we decided to ascend the 100 yards between us and tell them of our decision to descend, and offer to take their struggling members down with us. When we got to them, they reported that they too were going to get off the mountain. As they descended past us, we became the highest party on the mountain. Suddenly, we were slammed by an avalanche!!! We only were carried a short way, but a few seconds later we were hit by a second, larger avalanche. How far we were carried down the mountain is not known, each of us had our own recollection of events. What is known is that all four of us were able to dig ourselves out on our own, and there were no injuries. We hurried off the mountain, chased down the glacier by yet a third avalanche. The bad news was that a large amount of our gear was lost or destroyed. Penny's brand new rope suffered a severe cut, ending its brief, but heroic career. All in all, close to \$500 in gear was lost or destroyed. But that is just money, the important thing was that we survived. This trip is an important lesson to our club. This is a serious business that we engage in. The four of us came very close to losing our lives that day, and a bond was forged between us. We need to be constantly vigilant that safety remains the hallmark of the Rocky Mountaineers - Matt Grandy

Alaska, Yukon & Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta (Aug.-Sept.): Tami and Tony Sabol set off in post-marriage bliss to explore the upper half of North America, scout some peaks to climb in the future and to do some climbing en-route. Our drive took us by the Stikine Icefield (seen from the Cassiar Highway) and home to the Devil's Thumb – a coveted climb. The mountains there are very spectacular and offer countless mountaineering challenges. We moved on and passed numerous peaks in the Alaska Range – Mt. Deborah, Mt. Hayes, and Mount Kimball, which though they range from 10,000-13,832 feet, offer difficult snow and ice-covered routes. We motored through the rest of interior and south-central Alaska, seeing Mt. McKinley – North America's highest at 20,320 feet, as well as countless challenging peaks in the Alaska, Kenai, Chugach, and Wrangell Mountains. Back in the Yukon, we set out to climb a peak with historical significance to Montanans. In 1905, Colonel Joseph Conrad – associated with Conrad, Montana – being a wealthy easterner, bought up an entire area of mining claims. The mountain at center was named **Montana Mountain (7,280 ft.)**. The mountain is about 60 miles from Skagway, Alaska and lies along the Klondike-Goldrush route. An access road from Carcross, Yukon winds up to the mountain before becoming totally photos before the clouds washed out. We hiked up the remaining road in intermittent blowing rain and snow and gained the north ridge to the mountain. Much of the route is trail, developed by gold and mineral seekers, until just about 500 feet below the summit. From there, an easy snow scramble brought us to the top of

