



MOUNTAIN EAR

Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers

HIKING-CLIMBING-MOUNTAINEERING-SKIING-
EXOTIC TRAVEL-EXPLORATION OF PEAKS AND
MOUNTAINS OF MONTANA AND OF THE WORLD

October 2001

HISTORICAL FIRST ASCENT

The Rocky Mountaineers, founded in 1959, have a long and colorful history. Occasionally we like to rerun an interesting article from past newsletters. Here is a documented First Ascent of one of Glacier National Park's five technical mountains credited to our club. Some of the names will be familiar to some of you. This article is from the January 1975 Mountain Ear.

WALTON MTN., by Allen Smith

On July 29th, 1974, four climbers, Paul Jensen, Mavis Lorenz, Tom Shreve, and Allen Smith set out for a first ascent of Walton Mtn., in Glacier National Park. Walton is named on topo maps and is located just south of Mt. Jackson. Tom had written to J. Gordon Edwards, author of "A Climbers Guide to Glacier National Park", inquiring about Walton and received a letter saying as far as Edwards knew it was unclimbed.

We left Going-to-the-Sun Highway about noon to follow the Gunsight Lake Trail. That evening we set up camp at the snout of Jackson Glacier. The next day we climbed Blackfoot Mtn. from which we got an excellent

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CLUB NEWS - NEXT MEETING

The Rocky Mountaineers got our season off to a good start at our meeting on September 19th. We worried too much; no one showed up to cause any trouble, and we had the usual election where a quorum of members almost unanimously elect anyone who is willing to serve. Julie Warner is now officially club President, and I, Steve Schombel, am secretary and newsletter editor. Julie will also continue to fulfill the duties of treasurer. We are very lucky to have such a caring and dedicated person step forward. Let us all give her our support. The only worrisome thing was that no one stepped forward to run as Vice President. However, this is not so surprising given the uncertainties our club has faced in the past few years, and the turmoil in the world today. Hopefully, when things get back on a more even keel someone will step forward and offer to serve in this office.

On the bright side we do have a lot of fun on our weekend outings. We have more and more people willing to participate, and even think about leading an outing once in a while. And we do have some past members who are thinking about getting more active again. We may have solved one problem. Since it is getting hard to reserve the library we have a contact who will arrange for us to meet in the City Council Chambers again on a regular basis, second Wednesdays of each month. No more uncertainty about when and where the meetings will be.

So here is the punch line. In October we are not meeting in our regular hall. Lois Crepeau has invited us to come to her house, 237 North Ave. East, on Wednesday, October 10th for a BYOB pot luck dinner in her back yard. She said bring anything you want, the greasier and more fattening the better, and I think she meant it. We will start the festivities at 7 PM. After some fine food we will discuss some club business. Our dues do not cover our expenses. What do members want from meetings and trips? We really should update our bylaws. The main purpose of the evening will be to get to know each other and to have a lot of fun See you there!

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TRIP REPORTS

HIGH PARK LAKE

Sunday, September 16th Steve Schombel and Brett Doucett hiked to two of the largest and prettiest lakes in the southeast part of the Mission Mountains. We made good time from the Beaver Creek Trailhead along a fine trail to Crystal Lake. We followed a fisherman's trail along the north shore which gradually got fainter and rougher, and then disappeared into a large marsh around the inlet to the lake. We did some serious bushwhacking across a creek and up a slope, when, lo and behold, we stumbled upon some flagging, blazes and cairns. This track led upward through a series of meadows and bedrock slopes, none too steep. We thought we saw a branch that might go to Lost Lake. By mid afternoon we were on a ridge just upstream and above the outlet of High Park Lake. And what a view we had of the most rugged part of the Missions Mountains. We had to reminisce on the multi day backpack that Gerald and Dan once did, coming down from Goat Pass, then travelling the length of High Park Lake, and then down, perhaps, on the track we found. What a mountaineering adventure that must have been! Then Brett and I retraced our tracks, tried to go above the marsh but got into some more horrible bushwhacking, and got back to our car well after dark. But we both agreed that these kind of trips are worth the time and effort.

Oh, and we scouted out a future trip to Sunset Peak, a sharp spire south of the lake. I think one would have to backpack part way, but Brett is thinking about trying it in one day along the ridge. - Steve Schombel

LOLO TRAIL

It isn't very often these days that we get to explore "new" territory, but that was what Lois Crepeau, Steve Schombel, Fred Schwanemann and Julie Warner got to do on the beautiful day of Sept. 23rd. The original plan of hiking the Lolo trail WEST out of Howard Creek was changed to hiking a newly restored section of the trail going EAST. It was pretty much like the west section with steep up and down hills into the drainages, and with long sections of the trail that ran high up on the ridge over looking Lolo Canyon and Highway 12. At the Graves Creek end we either lost the trail or it hadn't been finished yet, so we ended up bushwhacking our way down to Graves Creek and hiked back along the highway. We did about 2½ miles on the road, but probably 3 miles on the trail. It was fascinating to think of those who had gone there before us.

- Julie Warner

First Ascent continued

and impressive view of Walton to the west, across the Harrison Glacier.

After a good night's rest we left camp at 8 AM and quickly reached the pass between Jackson and Harrison Glaciers. From here we picked our way down some broken cliffs, some steep snow, and a few ledges to the Harrison Glacier. Having decided on a low route we struck out across the ice towards the ridge connecting Mt. Jackson and Walton Mtn. The ridge was gained via a prominent snow patch and a short pitch of rock scrambling above the snow. Here we ate lunch under a clear sky with snow, ice and peaks surrounding us.

Our repast completed, we followed some goat trails south along the ridge. Perched upon this ridge, just before it becomes the summit ridge of Walton, is one of the most ideal campsites in Glacier Park. A small grassy meadow, with water, sits here, high above the surrounding valleys. Too bad it is so hard to reach, or maybe it's better that way.

Upon reaching the actual base of Walton we skirted to the west, entering some large open chimneys and gullies. We alternated climbing on the ridge proper or in the chimneys the rest of the way to the top. The rock here is comparable to that found at Kootenai Cr. (Bitterroot Mtns.) and is much better than expected for GNP. The view from the summit was well worth the climb. Jackson, Blackfoot and Stimpson were before us, while Mt. St. Nicholas stood out far to the southeast. Below us, the east face of Walton fell some 3,000 feet to Harrison Creek.

We searched for a cairn or some other indication of a previous climb but found nothing. A large cairn was erected and a plastic jar with paper and pencil was put inside. The register now reads "Walton Mtn., 8941'. First ascent by humans July 31, 1974." The "humans" was put in because of numerous goat sightings and a goat bed on top! After taking in more of the view and "clicking a few shutters" we began our descent. We roughly retraced our rout and arrived back at camp by 9 PM.

Ropes and ice axes, as well as knowledge of how to use them, are necessary when traveling on glaciers. Altho' you are not "crazy" to cross glaciers, as one ranger told us we were, care should be exercised. There is some good climbing to be done on Walton for those who are willing to put out the effort. It is a very enjoyable climb, fully worth the time and energy it takes.

P.S. We talked with Edwards at Many Glacier later and learned that three rangers had set out 2 days after our climb intending to make a "first" ascent of Walton.

UPCOMING TRIPS

Please note: The distances and elevations are estimates of a one way hike. Call the trip leader early in the week to get an idea of experience and gear required. And be prepared to give a definite yes or no on if you will be going. It is generally assumed that participants have at least average outdoor skills and know what clothing is needed for different Montana seasons.

Most members also do a lot of outdoor activities that they do not put in the newsletter. Feel free to call other members you may know.

Cabin Work Parties

It sounds likely that we will be able to get up to the cabin with a Forest Service Official for an inspection early in October. One of the following trips will likely be changed to a work party on Saturday and Sunday. We will call for help; and also hope to have more details at the October meeting.

Sunday, October 7th, Illinois Peak

Hike and scramble along the Stateline ridge above Missoula Lake at the top of the Cedar Creek Road to Illinois Peak, at 7690 ft. one of the highest in this part of the Bitterroots. About 5 miles one way. The foliage can be very colorful up here in the fall. Plan on stopping in Superior or 9-Mile afterwards for food and refreshments. Call Lois Crepeau at 728-5321 for information.

Sunday, October 14th Boulder Point

Hike up to one of the high points on the east side of the Rattlesnake Wilderness Area to Boulder Point. You can look down upon Boulder Lake, largest in this area, and across Rattlesnake Creek to the main group of mountains and lakes. Although somewhat vandalized, there is an interesting old lookout on top. We will approach this point from the West Fork of Gold Creek, not too far from town. It will be the last day before these roads are closed for hunting season. This trip will require a moderate amount of driving and elevation gain on the trail, so expect to spend most of the day. Call Lois Crepeau at 728-5321 for information.

Sunday, October 21st Graves Peak

This is opening day of Montana's hunting season, and we like to avoid conflicts. This weekend we will explore an area in Idaho just over Lolo Pass. We will drive up the dirt road south from near the Powell Ranger Station to Elk Summit. The trailhead is in Kooskooskia Meadows. We will hike past Swamp Lake and on up to the summit of Graves Peak, at 8282 feet one of the highest points in the area, and higher than

any peaks along the State line northwest of Lolo Pass. This is a long drive and hike, so be prepared to leave early in the morning and bring lunch and dinner. We will probably stop for refreshments on the way home. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for information.

Sunday, October 28th Walman Trail

Explore another part of the Rattlesnake area. The Walman trail is one that doesn't get as much traffic. It branches off the Spring Gulch Trail, climbs up over a ridge, and back down to the main trailhead. There are many things to see along the way, including an area where a large bear and other wildlife were frequently seen earlier last summer. There should be a lot of fall colors, and very little chance of any significant snow this close to town in October. Call Fred Schwanemann at 542-7372.

Saturday, November 3rd. Eagle Pass

If there hasn't been much snow, we can do the whole 16 mile loop up and over Eagle Pass in a very pretty area of the Mission Mountains. A shorter alternative is the pristine Cedar Grove about four miles above MacDonald Lake. And then you can hike up some of the switchbacks to a pretty waterfall below Moon Lake. And up more switchbacks to the lakes themselves. This is a trip for all, go as far as you like and return to the main trailhead at MacDonald Lake. The plus is that there will be very few hunters on the reservation. However, all participants must have a tribal recreation permit. The entire loop is a very long day and will mean leaving early. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for information.

Editor's Apology

I want to make it clear to everyone that it was my idea to have a security guard at the meeting last month. So those of you who don't like it know who to blame. It has been pointed out to me that the gossip I heard last summer was not an attempt to elect one particular person, but a desire for a joint meeting and open discussion of merging two clubs. It is obvious I overreacted; and I sincerely apologize to anyone I have angered or offended. I agree that we should have a joint meeting and calm discussion. Please, just give us officers some time to settle in and look at the bylaws, etc. I welcome feed back from anyone on the above.

Any comments on this, trip reports, future trips or other article should be sent to one of the addresses in the box on page one. - Steve Schombel

Name: _____

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Household Yearly Membership: \$13.00

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