



MOUNTAIN EAR

Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers

April, 2005 Missoula, Montana

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club organized to promote all types of recreational use of mountainous areas.



**Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, April 13th,
at Pipestone Mountaineering, 129 West
Front Street, Missoula, Montana.**

6:30 PM Business 7:00 PM Presentation

Pat Caffrey

Pat Caffrey, author of the "Climbers Guide to Montana", an essential for every climber spending time in Montana, will be giving a presentation about climbing in Montana and the Northwest. Pat has a long and varied climbing history, with climbs on all seven continents. His presentations are unique and entertaining. Tragically, his book is out of print.

from the President: At our last monthly meeting we spent a lot of time discussing club business. We decided to form a committee to address a couple of issues, mainly the need to increase funds and methods to raise some funds. This committee has met twice and is going to try to increase membership and participation in club activities. They are going to write a report with more details for the May newsletter and monthly meeting. One thing we did decide on is to have a business meeting before the general meeting, for those who are interested. Unless the need arises for a longer board meeting at a separate time, from now on the Rocky Mountaineers will have a board meeting at 6:30 PM the second Wednesday, September through May, at Pipestone Mountaineering. All members of the Rocky Mountaineers are also members of the board, and are encouraged to attend. If you want to take part in shaping the future of this club, this is the time. Since we only have half an hour, we can only discuss a few things at each meeting. In April we would like to talk about:

#1, switching the club to an annual renewal date. This would make it easier to keep track of whose dues are due and who belongs or not.

#2, Julia Kahl has talked to the Forest Service about fireproofing the cabin. We have to decide if this is feasible and set a work day date.

#3, perhaps it is time to drop the custom of having trip leaders get up and describe upcoming trips at the monthly meetings. A lot of people in the audience don't seem interested.

The last item is the election in May. We do have some interest, but we really would like to hear from anyone else who might be willing to become an officer. The offices are: secretary, treasurer, vice president and president. A year from now we will probably need a newsletter editor. We will have a list of candidates in the May newsletter, and also take nominations from the floor. One thing to remember is that your dues must be paid up by April 30th to be eligible to vote. Be prepared for an election and probably some other business at the meeting on Wednesday, May 11th.

Enjoy the spring, Steve Schombel

Upcoming Trips

April 10, Sunday: Woody Mountain- We'll hike along a closed road from Marshall Creek for a couple of miles, then through some trees and up a grassy slope. The last few hundred feet of this mountain have been heavily logged, but the trees on top were spared. It is close to Missoula, about four miles one way, and about 2700' elevation gain. The steepness is similar to Mt Sentinel above the "M", but with only faint game trails to follow part of the way. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more information.

Upcoming Trips

April 17, Sunday: Rattlesnake- Trail 99 Rattlesnake Recreation Area "Trek" to Beeskove Creek and back, 12 miles round trip, very little altitude change. Call Fred Schwanemann @ 542-7372 for more information.

April 23, Saturday: Mount Sentinel- kids trip to the top of Mt. Sentinel. Contact Julie Kahl (Warner) at 543-6508 or jawkal@hotmail.com.

April 24, Sunday: Stuart Peak- This hike is mostly on easy trail, with an elevation gain of 4200', and a one-way distance of 9 miles. There are several options for a different descent route, or you can chose to return the same way. Contact Steve Niday @ 721-3790 or seniday@yahoo.com.

April 29, Friday: East St. Mary Peak, Mission Mountains- This trip will be subject to change if conditions are no good, but I plan to get an early start and ascend the steep ridge heading NE from St. Mary Lake. Current conditions will dictate whether ski's and/or crampons will be needed. This looks to be quite a strenuous ascent with 4000 feet gained in the first 1.75 air miles. Total gain is about 5400 feet over 3.5 air miles. A tribal recreation permit is needed. Contact Forest Dean at 240-7612, 721-6384 or e-mail fdean@midlandimplement.com for more info.

May 7, Saturday: Blodgett Canyon- Spend the day before Mothers Day on a pleasant hike through a scenic canyon with your family or spouse. Blodgett Canyon climbs slowly, so we can hike a long ways before encountering snow. There should be waterfalls and wildflowers along the way. Participants can make this as short or long of a hike as they desire. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for the details.

May 22, Sunday: Grant-Kohrs Ranch- This will be a kids trip to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch in Deer Lodge. It happens that they are having their Draft Horse Play days this weekend and in addition to being able to see the working ranch they will be having wagon rides on Sunday. This is an educational trip, as understanding the history of the lands we recreate on is important to being a well rounded outdoors person. Contact Julie Kahl (Warner) at 543-6508 or jawkal@hotmail.com.

July, 2005: Mount Stimson- We are planning to send in an application for an advanced reservation in Glacier Park in mid April. We are still trying to decide whether to reserve one campsite for four, or two for eight. Please let us know soon if you would like to participate. Here is a proposed itinerary:

Friday, July 15th- Leave Missoula about 11:00 am- drive to Apgar- get permits- drive to Coal Creek Trailhead- hike the approximate 6 miles in to Coal Creek Campground (hopefully arrive 7:00-7:30).

Saturday, July 16th- Hike the remaining 10 miles up to Beaver Woman Lake campground. Option for an afternoon climb of Mt. Pinchot.

Sunday, July 17th- Early start to climb Mt. Stimson. Camp at Beaver Woman again.

Monday, July 18th- 3 options: A) If rain yesterday, then climb Stimpson today. B) Climb another mountain (I've got my eyes set on Eaglehead). C) Hike part or all the way out (16 miles).

Tuesday, July 19th- Hike out and drive home.

This is the most ambitious scenario if everything goes right. Not everyone has to climb all three of the mountains. The second choice would be one week later. There is a \$20.00 fee for an advanced reservation, or \$5.00 per person, plus a per day charge when we pick up the permit. Participants must be able to carry a heavy pack long distances for several days, and know what food and clothing to bring to Glacier. Scrambling and climbing experience on loose sedimentary rocks will be a real plus. Call Steve Schombel for more information at 721-4686

MORE

TRIP

LEADERS

PLEASE!

Trip Reports

“AVALANCHE DOG”

March 13, Sunday: Lolo Pass to Packer Ridge-

Nine people from the Rocky Mountaineers showed up for a spring ski day, and we had enough much needed snow to just barely turn it into a very fine day. We stopped at the Lee Creek Campground to see if it would be possible to do the original point to point plan. But there was hardly any snow at the gate and melting fast, so we went up to Lolo Pass where there were a few new inches, but melting fast. Three people wanted to stay on the groomed trails, while the rest of us went up the “D” trail, the advertised alternative to the top of Packer Ridge. There were no tracks at all on this road, but, surprisingly, we were able to stay on snow all the way to the little knob above the visitor center. We had lunch on the lee side of the ridge, then four of us returned the same way, while two adventurous types descended the steep and direct way. We had to cross a couple of small muddy areas which had melted in just a couple of hours, but no one had any problems except one of the adventurous ones broke a ski tip. Best of all, because of all the stumps, rocks and bare areas, there were no snowmobiles on the ridge at all, just on the groomed roads below. The participants were: Bret Doucett, Jack Kuehn, Dave and Julie Kahl, Alden and Sally Wright, Fred and Eileen Schwanemann, and Steve Schombel.

April 2, Saturday: Gash Point- Due to the recent snowfall in the mountains, the trip scheduled to St. Joseph Peak was changed to a ski of Gash Point. Forest Dean, Jack Kuehn, Alden Wright, and I found plenty of old and new snow. We parked at 4800’, where the road crosses Gash Creek. We hiked up the rather sketchy trail shown on the topo map in the bottom of the drainage about a mile, where we saw a 4wd vehicle parked on the road. MT License “M Goat”. Mario? The trail at this point gets better and we hiked a ways farther before putting on the skis. We soon climbed up onto the ridge between Gash Creek and Sweathouse Creek and proceeded northwesterly to the summit. It is not yet spring snow conditions in this area, and the downhill skiing was an effort. A good workout was had by all. Steve Niday

Two skiers and 2 dogs left the Marias Pass parking lot about 1015 and skinned up the south side of Flattop, gained the ridge and were heading south towards Elk Calf. Flattop runs north/south and the east side of it was heavily loaded with large overhanging cornices. It was warm (upper 30's - low 40's) and the snow was very sticky. High moisture content and, on the way up, we observed evidence of past sloughing & some small surface slides. As we headed south on Flattop towards Elk Calf, we stopped for a break at about 1310, about 12-15 feet west of the corniced edge and my dog, Vidar (80 lbs. chocolate lab) went over to the edge. With a loud crack, the cornice cracked, about 40-50 feet in length and 6-8 feet wide and Vidar was on the wrong side of the fracture line. After the fracture, I was now standing about 5 feet from the new edge. I peered over the edge and watched the events below unfold. When the cornice hit the ground (about 30-40 feet below the surface we were standing on) it triggered an avalanche. There was no powder cloud since the snow was pretty warm & damp, so I had an unobstructed view from above. The churning mass of snow picked up small trees and tumbled them around with Vidar. I saw him bob to the surface and go back under a couple of times. About 8-10 seconds after the cornice broke, the slide stopped and I could see Vidar on the surface, wagging his tail and looking up at us. We backed off, skied over to an un-corniced spot and skied down to get the dog and make brief observations of the events. After checking the dog for injuries we made brief observations of the site and promptly left the area due to continued objective hazard. Looking up from the middle of the debris field we could see and estimated the following:

- * more huge overhanging cornices above us
- * the crown fracture, which we estimated to vary from 3-5 feet deep
- * the crown fracture was about 300 feet across the top
- * the debris field and slide extended about .1 to .2 mile long

* there were chunks of the cornice below us in the debris field that were 2x the size of a large refrigerator.

We were quite shaken by the whole incident and discussed it extensively on the way out. We concluded:

- 1) with the recent snow events we should remember there is still a lot of instability in the backcountry;
- 2) gotta pay attention to keeping the dog under control at all times. This event was triggered by a mere 80 lbs. of lab.

Finally, the name Vidar is from Germanic mythology and personifies the imperishable forces of nature. May the force be with you, Vidar !

Submitted by Jim Cossitt and approved by Vidar.

Mountaineering Class Update

Jim Wilson's mountaineering class which started the first week in February, held its last classroom session on April 5. A day of rock climbing in Kootenai Canyon and a trip to Mount Shuksan for glacier skills practice and summit attempt will be the final outings. We had field trips to the Rock Garden climbing walls and ice climbing in Blodgett Canyon, along with about 20 hours of class work. If this sounds like something you might be interested in, contact Jim Wilson at Pipestone and see when he might be giving another class.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Family Yearly Membership: \$20.00 - paper newsletter
Family Yearly Membership: \$10.00 - electronic newsletter
Make checks payable to: "Rocky Mountaineers" and send to:

Rocky Mountaineers, P.O. Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I have read this release and indemnity agreement and have fully informed myself of its contents before I have signed it.

Print Name

Signature Date

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian if Participant is Under 18 Years of Age

I, (print name) _____ hereby state that I wish to participate in courses and/or activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, a non-profit organization. I recognize any outdoors activity may involve certain dangers, including but not limited to the hazards of traveling in mountainous terrain, accidents or illness in remote places, forces of nature, and the actions of participants and other persons. I further understand and agree that without some program providing protection of its assets and its leaders, the Rocky Mountaineers would not be able to offer its courses and activities. In consideration of and as part payment for the right to participate in the activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, I agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any and all liability, claims and causes of action arising out of or in any way connected with my participation, or the participation of any minor that I am signing on behalf of, in any activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers. I personally assume all risks in connection with these activities. If I am signing on behalf of a minor, I further agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any liability, claims and cause of action, which the minor may have arising from the minor's participation in activities. The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and indemnity agreement for my heirs, personal representative, and for all members of my family, including any minors. (Parents or Legal Guardians must sign for all persons under eighteen (18) years of age).



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