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A newsheet published by and for the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing sections of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter since 1938. Send subscriptions and address changes to Dove Menkes, 2530 Coventry Circle, Fullerton, CA 92633. Seven dollars yearly.

#### INSURANCE CRISIS UPDATE - by Tom Jeter

A drive is underway to strike back at the insurance crisis which, among other things, resulted in the RCS being tossed out of the Sierra Club on it's ear last year. An initiative will appear on the California June ballot entitled the Fair Responsibility Act Of 1986 (Proposition 51). If this proposition passes, it will constitute a step in the direction of easing the insurance crisis in California (see Mugelnoos article on page 3 by John Orange, RCS Chairman). One of the largest coalitions in California political history has banded together to place Proposition 51 on the ballot and hopefully allow the people of California to force some measure of tort reform in lieu of legislative action.

I would like to see the Sierra Club added to the above coalition, and to this end presented the case to the Chapter Council on February 24. The Council unanimously recommended the issue to the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee for action, and on March 6 I appeared before the Ex. Comm., bringing with me David Fogarty, Field Representative for Taxpayers for Fair Responsibility (and Ex Conservation Coordinator for the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club.) We pointed out the negative impact the insurance crisis has already had on the Sierra Club's outings program, and that it could get worse. We took pains to point out that the crisis is a conservation issue too, affecting parks and recreation and the toxic chemical and toxic clean up industries, among others. Drawing from my own experience with Stoney Point (1977-1981), the "Deep Pockets" liability crisis has grown much worse since then, and I sincerely doubt the park issue would have passed if it had been debated today. The Executive Committee voted to support Prop. 51 by a 6-0 vote (with 2 abstentions), and as a result of this action, the topic was placed on the agenda for discussion by the joint Northern and Southern California Regional Conservation Committee, meeting in Visalia this past weekend. The topic will also be discussed by the Sierra Club Board of Directors meeting in San Francisco on March 22,23.

If Prop. 51 passes, it should effect a downward pressure on some types of insurance premiums on some types of insurance, and increase insurance availability. While it would be only a first step in "normalizing" the insurance situation, it would send an apparantly much needed "message" from the voters of California, and put our legislators "feet to the fire" to enact additional tort reform. My irreverent cartoon in December Mugelnoos did not attempt to single out any one of the 3 players (courts, PI lawyers, insurance companies) in the insurance crisis for the "black hat". I do believe, however, that tort reform is the main target. How long will it be before the only law that rock climbers have to really worry about is the law of gravity? Hopefully not long before the RCS will be back in business, with it's leaders under the protective umberella of Sierra Club insurance. In the meantime, the newly formed (and uninsured) Southern California Mountaineering Association (SCMA) will carry on, hopefully without incident.

MUGELNOOS STAFF

EDITOR FOR MARCH .... Tom Jeter  
 MUGELPRINTER ..... LeRoy Russ  
 MUGELMAILER ..... Dove Menkes  
 Reporters: Tom Jeter, John Orange,  
 George Holland, Steve Wilkie, R.J.  
 Secor, Andy Fried, Mark Goebel,  
 Ruth Mendenhall, Pete Matulavich,  
 Kathy Crandall

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NEXT EDITOR: Virgil Shields  
 3066 Olive Ave.  
 Altadena, Ca 91001  
 818-798-9621

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DEADLINE: Tuesday, April 8

MUGELNOOS MEETINGS: Third Tues. of each month, 7:30 p.m., Griffith Park Ranger Auditorium, 4730 Crystal Springs Drive, LA. Free parking. Program, conversation - skiers climbers, and guests welcome.

CALENDAR

22 Mar - Local Intro Tour  
 Layland/Gygax  
 29-30 Mar - San Gorgonio  
 Jenkins/Ples  
 5-6 April - San Jacinto  
 Matulavich/Holleman  
 11-13 April - Pear Lake Hut  
 Smith/Crandall  
 19-20 April - Sardine Cyn/Onion Val  
 Goebel/Fried

!! SMS OFFICER ELECTIONS !!

The time is due (actually past due!) to nominate and elect SMS officers. Nominations will be taken by phone (call Andy Fried, SMS Chair -818-993-1891) or from the floor at the April 15 Mugelnoos Mtg.  
 KC

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SMS TRIP

MAY 2-4 FRI-SUN SMS  
 T: Virginia Pk (12001'), Twin Peaks (12240'); Join in this spring ascent of two SPS peaks. Ski Mountaineering gear, climbing skins, ice axe, and crampons required. Send sase along with carpool info and credentials to leaders: Randy Danta, Doug Mantle.

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Climbing Partner wanted; I've got the summer off and am looking for a climbing partner interested in extended trips. Willing to travel throughout the western U.S., Canada and Alaska. Open to any ideas. Call Jay at 714-666-1346.

(Ed. above is an RCS Prof. Card holder)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: More articles than I could print were received this month, which is good, keep them coming! Since Mugelnoos is now a cut and paste operation, authors are reminded to submit typewritten articles single spaced rather than double spaced.

SMS CLEANS UP AT THE RACES

Mar. 1 & 2, 1986

What with tropical rains and Santa Ana winds, even the snow guns have not been able to produce enough local snow this year to hold the SMS ski races. Although the Races were cancelled, at least 9 SMS members gathered at Mammoth Mtn. this weekend to ski and as it turned out, to race. Following the Washington Birthday weekend storms, the snow there is now deeper than a mammoth's ear. For example, the approach to Chair one is straight on, no more side stepping up the ramp.

Early Saturday this reporter discovered that there would be a XC Ski Carnival on Sunday with lots of prizes. Jumping at the opportunity, we signed up. We being Kathy Crandall, Paul Harris, Tom Jenkins, Mark Goebel, Pat & Gerry Holleman; along with Steve & Barbara Matthews, and Mike Donovan. In addition to a flat track race, a slalom race that first required climbing up the course; a costume race was also scheduled. All of this was sponsored by Asolo, Karhu and North Face, and they started things off with a drawing for prizes following skiing on Saturday, and almost everyone walked out with something, including Tom with a goretex jacket. The flat track race went out from Chair one to Mineret Summit and back; and the winning woman was Pat. By the way, the fastest time was about 10 min out, and 4 back. For the slalom race, skiers used a variety of uphill techniques including the harringbone, skating, skins, and waxless skis. It really came down to conditioning, but lighter skies did help. Tom Tuttle, of the Mammoth Race Dept. skated up on wide Karhu Extreme skis and returned in less than a minute. My best time on light, waxless touring skis was 1:09, and Jerry was 2nd with 55.9 sec. Pat took first woman with a time of 1:24.

Then came a show stopper event. The first nordic descent of Broadway by 10 skiers disguised as a catapiller., led by a skiing gorilla, wearing a Hawaiian shirt. This creature was formed by colorful little dome tents, with one of us trapped inside, all trying hard not to fall. Needless to say, it was a not-to-be-forgotten-event, and you had to be there to believe it. The final bit of crazyness concluded with judging of the costumes, which included Kathy as Madame Butterfly, Paul as the Spirit of Skiing, Tom as the OSHA Shier (including helmet and red light), and Mark as the metallic man. More prizes were drawn, including skis to Kathy, goretex jacket to Jerry, ski poles to Paul, and too many things to remember to the Matthews. Anyway, it was a fun and crazy weekend.

## WHY THE ROCK CLIMBING SECTION IS NOT CLIMBING ROCKS

By JOHN ORANGE, RCS CHAIRMAN

On November 1 of 1985, the RCS was ordered to stop rock climbing activities. The order came down from the Sierra Club National headquarters in San Francisco because they were not able to obtain liability insurance to cover such activities.

Why can't the Sierra Club obtain insurance? It's not because they haven't tried. There is an unfair law in California. We never voted on it; the Legislature never passed it; in fact, few people even know it exists. Yet it directly affects the availability and affordability of liability insurance. Here is an example of the law at work: A climber participating on a Sierra Club outing fails to protect himself adequately and sustains major injuries from a serious fall. Since his own insurance only covers his medical bills, his lawyer sues the outing leader and the Sierra Club for emotional and mental suffering. The lawyer convinces the jury that although the climber was clearly at fault, the leader should have warned him that it was too wet, or too cold, or too hot. The jury finds the climber 99% at fault, the Sierra Club 1% at fault, and awards the climber \$2 million. Instead of paying \$20,000 (1%) the Sierra Club must pay the full \$2 million because there is no one else to pay. Clearly, the law is unfair. Why is it in existence?

In 1978, The California Supreme Court ruled that in personal injury suits, when there are two or more defendants and only one of them has sufficient resources, that "deep pocket" defendant must pay 100% of the judgment for economic losses (such as medical expenses, loss of earnings and property damages) PLUS 100% of the judgment for non-economic damages (such as emotional suffering and mental distress).....EVEN if the jury finds that defendant ONLY 1% at fault.

The law tempts the plaintiff's lawyer to go where the money is, not just where the fault lies.

In the past, the Sierra Club has been well insured and therefore HAS deep pockets.

The "deep pocket" law has essentially rendered every potential "deep pocket" an unknown risk. And insurance companies, in the business of assessing risk, are naturally reluctant to insure against the unknown. The problem is not just with climbers and the Sierra Club. Since it has become common practice to include the State Department of Transportation in nearly all litigation involving accidents on state highways, Caltrans now has \$4 billion in lawsuits pending!

As the "deep pocket" grows deeper, liability insurance becomes less and less affordable or unavailable altogether.

There is definitely a problem and it can only get worse. The solution?  
REFORM THE "DEEP POCKET" LAW.

Why have we not done that? It isn't because we have not tried. But one special interest....The California Trial Lawyers Association..... has consistently blocked legislative reform attempts. Four times a reform measure passed the Senate and each time it has died in the Assembly because one special interest (incidentally, the largest financial contributor to legislators' campaign funds in 1985) has a financial stake in keeping this unfair law on the books. Attorney's fees may be paid by taking a percentage of a settlement.....often up to 50%.

What can we do as climbers? Consider the Fair Responsibility Act; an initiative on the JUNE ballot. YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP SEW UP THE DEEP POCKETS.

Dear Mugelnoos Editor,

Last month's Editor printed part of "The Song of the Ski Mountaineers," adding that he didn't know who Bud Halley was. Bud (Wilbur) joined the Ski Mountaineers after WWII, when he was an enthusiastic teenager. His enthusiasm and high spirits were so notable that we dubbed him The Effervescent Adolescent. Bud is a high school teacher. He attended the 1984 50th reunion of the SM & RCS Sections, where he played his guitar and sang the old ski songs. I think he and his wife Margie live in Whittier. Sorry my dates are vague. (And yes, the songs were sung at the Baldy Ski Hut.)

Ruth D. Mendenhall

THE INTREPID JOURNEY

The March 9th, Mt. Pinos tour was shifted to San Jacinto at the last minute as there was no snow at the former. A small group consisting of Andy Fried, George Holland, Bill Lingo (who received his check-off), and this reporter met at 8 a.m. only to discover the tram temporarily out of operation. Where lesser groups would have turned back, the stalwart four remained undaunted, and responding with lightning speed, laid out a bold, new strategy. We would drive to Idylwild and reach the San Jacinto Wilderness via the Devil's Slide Trail. Sure, it would be more difficult, fraught with untold dangers, but such was the mettle of the fearsome foursome.

In Idylwild, we check in with the ranger and hear that a new storm is on its way. The ranger advises us to travel with caution. We tell the ranger we are members of the Ski Mountaineers and that there is no need for concern.

Blind to physical pain, the group charges up the mountain at breakneck speed, ever prodding the leader, refusing short breaks.

Along the way, we meet four attractive young ladies. We find that they are Playboy bunnies out for a day of nature communing. Admitting to be total neophytes, they wonder if we would be kind enough to introduce them to the ways of the wilderness. We are happy to give them a few mountaineering and first-aid tips, but must refuse their request for first-hand instruction in the Heimlich maneuver. We inform them that if they are merely looking for cheap thrills, they will have to find them elsewhere, for we are a manly bunch following wholesome, manly pursuits. We bid them adieu and charge on, ever upward.

By mid-day we have reached an elevation of 9,000 feet and storm clouds loom on the western horizon. We dearly want to push on, to suffer any and all hardship, but realizing discretion to be the better part of valour, we retreat, in utter disappointment.

Morale, nonetheless, remains high, and the camaraderie we sense, the esprit de corps that accompanies so many of our SMS outings, bursts forth in the form of a spirited and spontaneous rendition of the Village People's "Macho Man," Andy Fried dancing down the trail as I've never seen him.

Back at the cars, we run across the Playboy bunnies again. This time they're conversing with several rock climbers fresh off of Tahquitz. We chuckle to ourselves, knowing the bunnies will probably try the same trick again.

(This piece has been slightly embellished  
for increased reader satisfaction)

PM

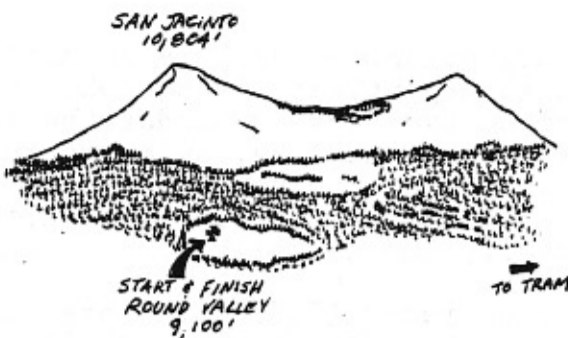
## PRIVATE TRIP

AFTER AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT ON MT. MORGAN (DEEP T.G. SNOW) ON JAN 13, I RETURNED TO LA TO FIND THAT POOR SNOW COVER WOULD FORCE THE CANCELLATION OF THE NEEDLES TRIP. STILL WANTING TO SKI I CALLED MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ AND SUGGESTED THAT WE TAKE A SHORT DRIVE UP TO CEDAR BREAKS FOR THE WEEKEND. MIGUEL, STILL UNFAMILIAR WITH THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE WEST, RESPONDED WITH " I DON'T KNOW; IT SEEMS A LITTLE BIT FAR FOR A WEEKEND". I ASSURED HIM IT WASN'T MUCH FURTHER THAN MAMMOTH AND HE FINALLY AGREED.

LEAVING LA AT 6PM FRI NIGHT WE ARRIVED IN LAS VEGAS ABOUT 10:30 FOR DINNER. WE THEN CONTINUED ON UNTILL ABOUT 2:30 AM SAT WHEN WE PULLED OVER TO GET SOME SLEEP. WE ARRIVED AT THE BRIAN HEAD SKI TOURING CENTER ABOUT 8:AM SAT. WE PURCHASED MAPS AND RENTED EQUIPT. AS NEEDED AND TOOK OFF FOR THE MONUMENT. AFTER TOURING THRU DEEP POWDER WE ARRIVED AT A SCENIC OVERLOOK AROUND 11. UNLIKE THE SIERRAS THIS AREA IS LARGELY FLAT, AND WHEN COVERED WITH DEEP POWDER MAKES FOR SLOW GOING. WE FOUND THAT FOLLOWING SNOWMOBILE TRACKS WAS THE FASTEST WAY TO TRAVEL.

AFTER OUR TOUR WE SPENT THE PM 3 PINNING AT BRYAN HEAD SKI AREA. DUE TO A FLAT TIRE, WE HAD TO DRIVE DOWN TO THE CITY THAT EVENING. AFTER REPAIRS WE DROVE ON TO ZION FOR THE NIGHT. WE SPENT SUN AM LOOKING FOR CLIMBS, AND SKI TOURS IN THE ZION AREA. THE AFTERNOON WAS SPENT DRIVING BACK TO L.A. WE ARRIVED TIRED ABOUT 7PM IN NORTHRIDGE. AF

EIGHT SURVIVE WILDERNESS RACE



Eight skiers enjoyed spectacular weather and phenomenally good snow for the 1st annual SMS Wilderness Ski Race conducted Feb 23rd on San Jacinto.

The race began and ended at Round Valley at an elevation of 9,100 feet with the mid-point being San Jacinto Peak at 10,804 -- two miles up and two miles back with 1,700 feet of gain in between. The overall winner not only received a trophy, to be described later in some detail, but was also accorded the distinct privilege (that's what they told

me) of preparing this write-up for the Mugelnoos.

The race turned out to be not only a test of stamina and downhill ability, but also required skill in route selection and an intuitive sense of direction. Or, you could win it like I did, with a lot of luck.

All contestants chose Nordic gear and were off like a pack of confused hounds as only a few knew in which direction the peak actually lay.

Breaking out of the dense forest and heading up the slopes of San Jacinto, the pack began to break up. Gerry Holleman took the lead, Dick Smith was second, and I was in third. I closed in behind Gerry and attempted to take a steeper line to the top. Unfortunately, I miscalculated my angles and wound up amongst some illogically-placed boulders which I intend to talk to the park service about later. Following a virtually flawless and efficient line, Gerry was first to the summit in 55 minutes. I was second about 30 seconds behind, and Dick Smith was third a few minutes later.

Gerry and I went off the top together and stayed close most of the way down, cranking humungus teles in perfect corn most of the way. Gerry was just ahead of me as we re-entered the forest and the race was shaping up to be a photo-finish. My game plan was simple. I'd cheat. I'd follow Gerry all the way in, letting him do all the hard work of navigating, and then I'd make a final mad dash at the end. The plan couldn't fail. Then, I looked up and Gerry wasn't there. The sneak lost me. Not entirely sure which way to turn, I figured the race was as good as lost. I came to three sets of ski tracks heading in different directions. I chose one set and was stunned when they brought me directly back to the finish. Gerry was less than a minute behind, having made a wrong turn in the forest. Finishing third was Paul Harris. In the women's category, Pat Holleman took top honors although there is some suspicion she may have followed a trail of chocolate turtles left by her husband.

Don Pies, using only natural materials, made authentic snowman and snow-woman trophies (Larry Bigler points out the men's trophies can be distinguished by their bigger balls), and presented them in an impromptu award ceremony. We took a vote on what we should call the new trophy, and "Edsel" won out in spite of strong opposition from some quarters. Other candidates were, the "Murray," the "Herb," and the "Yeti" (as in abominable snow race). At the end of the ceremonies, the winners threw their trophies at Don Pies, establishing, I'm sure, something of a wilderness ski race tradition.

THE RESULTS

(In hours and rounded-off minutes. Many contestants having gotten lost to varying degrees.)

Men

Women

- 1. Pete Matulavich 1:22
- 2. Gerry Holleman 1:23
- 3. Paul Harris 1:28
- 4. Don Pies 1:29
- 5. Dick Smith 1:31
- 6. Larry Bigler Withdrew

- 1. Pat Holleman 1:55
- 2. Kathy Crandall 2:18  
(more lost than others)



THE TROPHY

Fastest time down: about 16 minutes, both Don Pies and Paul Harris.

## ACONCAGUA

Jack Miller and I arrived in Mendoza, Argentina, on January 20 after taking the "Peak Bagger's Special" (Aerolíneas Argentinas Flight #385) from LAX to Buenos Aires the night before. We spent two days in Mendoza buying food, white gas, attending a Club Andinista Mendoza meeting, swimming in the hotel pool, eating steak, drinking wine, and getting government permission. Getting permission was easy. All that was needed was a note from our doctors stating that we were physically and mentally fit to climb the 22,834' peak.

On January 22 we left Mendoza for Punta de Vacas (7,858'). Here we showed the Gendarmeria (in essence, a border patrol) our permit to climb the mountain. They asked us for our date of return, and they wrote this down in their log along with our passport numbers. That was that; we had permission to climb Aconcagua. We hired two arrieros (muleteers) and one mule to carry our gear to Plaza Argentina, the base camp for the Polish route. This cost us US\$250 for the pack-in only. My share of the food and equipment weighed a staggering 110 lbs. The next day we started the 21 mile (5,600' of gain) hike-in to base camp. This took two days, with two major stream crossings on horse back. One night was spent at the Casa de Piedra refuge, with a Gendarmeria patrol.

After arriving at Plaza Argentina (13,400') we spent six days establishing three camps: Camp 1 at 15,500'; Camp 2 at 18,700'; and Camp 3 at 20,100'. We started for the summit on January 31, but turned back early as we were both tired. We spent the rest of the day napping. On February 1 we went for the summit again, only we turned back after an hour and a half because my feet were cold. On February 2 we actually did go to the summit. Our route took us up the steep, right side of the glacier. We chose this route because it had perfect styrofoam snow, and it had a fixed rope left by a National Outdoor Leadership School expedition. The fixed rope ended in a relatively flat section of seracs. We traversed to the left, above the level of the Piedra Bandera, and then climbed the left side of the glacier to the east ridge of Aconcagua. The fixed rope section of the glacier had a 40° slope, and the rest of the glacier never exceeded 30°. On the way to the summit we encountered a dead Japanese climber. You don't have to major in English to understand symbolism. We arrived at the summit around 6.00pm, about 11 hours after leaving our high camp. A pleasant chap by the name of Fernando gave us coffee, and told us about his two month stay at the summit, in an attempt to set a new altitude record. We descended the normal route to the Independencia shelter at 22,000'. We reached it at 10.00pm, where we bivouacked for the night. The shelter needs a better roof, and we spent a cold, windy night there.

At dawn we started the traverse across the north side of Aconcagua to our high camp. The traverse took us about two hours. Believe me, if we had known we were so close to our camp we would have pushed on the previous night. We packed up our gear and descended to Plaza Argentina in two days, encountering another dead man at 19,300'. More symbolism.

On February 5 we left Plaza Argentina and arrived at Punta de Vacas the next day. Cesar Pizarro of Uspallata packed our gear out for 200 Australes. One of his mules stumbled during a stream crossing during the trip out. Fortunately, it wasn't carrying any of our gear. It also survived. We spent the rest of our time in Argentina visiting Christ of the Andes, and the cemetery for andinistas at Puente del Inca. Still more symbolism. This was followed by steak eating, wine drinking, and souvenir hunting in Mendoza.

Argentina is a beautiful, friendly country, and Aconcagua via the Polish Glacier is a great climb. The only thing I would do different is approach the Polish Glacier via the normal route, rather than the Rio de las Vacas. The mules don't go as far on the normal route, so it is less expensive. The normal route is a trail, with shelters located along the way. And it is easy to traverse to Polish Glacier from the normal route anywhere above 20,000'.

RJS

(Editor's note: Polish Glacier Route eh? Well done old boy, I shall nominate you for the RCS/SMS Hard Man Of The Year award, but what's this about a hot cup of coffee waiting for you at the summit? The once fearsome Aconcagua is going wimp on us! Altitude record indeed, this Fernando chap sounds like a commercial real estate agent checking on pedestrian traffic at that location. Mark my words, hot coffee today - Big Macs tomorrow!)

## SKI MOUNTAINEERING FROM GLACIER TO YELLOWSTONE - George Holland

Late in February I spent eight days touring Montana Nordic centers with a group of writers. Expecting the dry telepowder I had previously skied in the state, I was followed instead by the same warm storms we'd been cursing in California. Still, our group had several passably good ski days and discovered some potentially superior track and ski mountaineering sites. The state has so many ranges that the possibilities seem endless, but three areas stand out for accessibility and versatility.

First, we flew into Glacier Airport at Kalispell before the ten minute drive to Grouse Mountain Lodge at Whitefish. The lodge fronts on a golf course, from which around 20km of finely groomed trails (1 track, but wide enough to skate) lead to steep switchbacks up Grouse Mountain. On top, views sweep from Big Mountain to Glacier Park to Flathead Lake. Formerly called Chicken Ridge, the descent is thrilling but has well-banked untracked turns. These trails are provided free by the Glacier Nordic Club; members informed me that nearby Big Mountain offers varied ski mountaineering. Either take off at the lift parking lot or ride the chair to the top, where vast touring terrain leads to many unmarked descents down the mountain.

Our schedule called for boarding Amtrak the next day for an hour ride to Isaak Walton Inn on Glacier Park boundary. A total mind and time warp, the inn feels and looks like a 19th century railroad hotel. Rumor has it that the third floor once provided soft solace for the hard men who worked the tracks. No evidence of that now, but breakfast was shared with burly gandy dancers as well as skiers. Soon we were breaking trail through thigh deep powder toward Glacier's big walls, looming off the road at Maria's Pass. Even though the day was clear and cold, recent wet storms made it a heavy, long slog. We did cut a few slow telemarks on the lower slopes. Views were exhilarating. The upper hills looked like they would pump adrenalin under better conditions. Later we skied some of the hotel's untracked trails up into deserted canyons.

Our next stop was Butte, where Steve Shimek, manager of Tobacco Root Ranch, drove us an hour to the range of that name. The ranch's trails extend into backcountry, but his real forte is

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

## RAIN AT CLAIR TAPPAAN - by Steve Wilkie

Ski Mountaineers Walt Boge, Ed Unge, and Steve Wilkie met for a reunion at the Sierra Club's Clair Tappaan Lodge on President's Weekend. Friday it was too rainy to ski so they visited the museum at Donner Memorial State Park. Saturday brought wet snowfall; one hour of skiing at a time was enough, then back to the drying room. Sunday, the same. Monday we had four hours of shoveling snow in the rain to free the car. Ed and Walt made it home to Southern California before the closure of I-5 near Stockton, but the flooded freeway I-80 caused Steve to bivouac (in the car) at Fairfield while trying to make Berkeley. It took him two more days to get home to Healdsburg, negotiating 101 north from the Bay Area. In the three days at C.T.L., they had about 3½ hours skiing. The snow conditions at C.T.L. as of March 1st are that it freezes at night in open areas but not under the trees, which makes cross-country skiing early in the morning a little tricky. Ski mountaineering by the Sonoma Napa group of the Sierra Club consists entirely of overnight trips to any of the four backcountry huts maintained by the Club, with both skiers and snowshoers participating. The percentage of skiers is gradually increasing. The Bay Area Chapter has a much more active ski mountaineering program. This reporter misses the Ski Mountaineers.

(Glacier to Yellowstone - continued from page 7)  
 ski mountaineering trips; the Tobacco Roots has 28 peaks over 10,000 ft., and Steve has built two yurts above 8,000 ft. A 15km, 3,000 ft. ski through thick fir and spruce took us to Rossiter Basin, ringed with chutes, open slopes, and plenty of trees. Bob Woodward has it on film and threatens to expose me to Sierra Central, so I might as well 'fess up. I ski-jored (ski joured?); that is, I (and the rest) were pulled part way by mechanical means--and loved it. Casey Sheahan, a sub rosa Sierra Clubber, went public with his own mea culpa regarding mechanical conveyance (helicopters) in POWDER over a year ago. (Confession has not led to repentance.) Once the snowmobile left us at the first yurt, the only sounds we heard were the plopping of snowflakes and chortles from Woodward about not having to endure the "torture sticks" for the full 15km. The last 3km required skins, and the powder got deeper and heavier, just reward for our previous waywardness.

Once in the basin, we immediately ascended what we could see of one open slope, and despite the fat flakes, Woodward and Sheahan opined it would hold. Sheahan launched himself, tele-marking down the fall line with ease. Woodward followed, looking beautiful until he did a head plant in the knee-deep viscous stuff. A little unnerved, I made such wide turns an avalanche should have let loose. Somehow, I felt the trees would be safer, but my skiing didn't improve. After that, Bob and Casey tore up everything in sight; Mark, the assistant leader, paralleled gracefully on skinny skis. Casey said it was the best skiing he had had this season despite the conditions. Still, the warm, spacious yurt brought hosannas from a wet bunch at the end of the day. Shimek expects drier powder to fall on the consolidated base, making good ski mountaineering possible through May; something on the order of yurt to yurt tours (ski-joring optional) should become regular.

I also skied one day at Sundance Ranch on the Big Hole River. From my window, I could see several great looking slopes about 14 miles up La Marche Creek in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, but the ranch is primarily a laid-back place for people who want to ski tour rolling trails through lodgepole pine forests and open meadows.

The third major spot, Lone Mountain Ranch near Bozeman, I had previously skied when Shimek was assistant manager. With 75km of Piston Bullied tracks, this is the premier Nordic ski center in Montana. The nearby Montana portion of Yellowstone Park and the Spanish Peaks offer fine ski mountaineering. On my first trip there, I experienced the feather light powder which makes average telemarkers feel Nordic blood in their veins.

Western can get you to all three cities. Call me if you want more details or a copy of my previously published L.A. TIMES article.

THE MUGELNOOS  
 Dove Menkes  
 2530 Coventry Circle  
 Fullerton, Ca 92633

