

MUGELNOOS

DECEMBER 16, 1997

Number 739



MT WHITNEY SKITRAVERSE April 30 - May 3, 1997

by Reiner Stenzel

The SMS Trans Sierra trip (Cirque Crest, 4/26-5/4/97) was canceled due to road damage at Cedar Grove. Thus, four SMS members, Steve Hessen, Duncan Livingston, Don Ralphs and myself, decided on an alternate backcountry tour following a section of John Moynier's Crest Tour. Depending on snow conditions we would either do a circumnavigation or a traverse of Mt. Whitney. Here is how it went:

On Tue night, 4/29, we left my car at Whitney Portal and carpoiled up to the end of the Cottonwood road which officially was still closed but cleared from snow for the fishing season. Wed, 4/30, we met up with Duncan who had driven back from Oregon. As we sorted out our gear Don discovered some essentials were missing. He rushed down to Lone Pine for a resupply which included a sumptuous breakfast he later admitted. By 10:30 am we had a takeoff which

Cont. Page 4

THE MUGELNOOS IS 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: PAT HOLLEMAN, 1638 6TH ST., MANHATTAN BEACH, CA. 90266. \$7 PER YEAR DUE IN OCTOBER. SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENTS ARE NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE AS CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS.

MUGELNOOS STAFF

EDITOR ANDY FRIED
MUGELPRINTER ANDY FRIED
MUGELMAILER PAT HOLLEMAN

MEETINGS

3RD TUES EACH MONTH NOV. THRU MAY EXCEPT DEC. 7:30 PM GRIFFITH PARK RANGER STATION AUDITORIUM 4730 CRYSTAL SPRINGS DRIVE, LOS ANGELES, CA.

NEXT ISSUE: JANUARY 20, 1998

ISSUE DEADLINE JAN. 10, 1998. ALL PHOTOS, SLIDES, AND ARTICLES SENT TO: ANDY FRIED, MUGELNOOS EDITOR, c/o TEC GROUP, 10727 WHITE OAK AVE. SUITE # 205, GRANADA HILLS, CA 91344. 3 1/2" OR 5 1/4 " DISKS (IBM) OR AT 71237.1270@COMPUSERVE.COM. IF YOU WISH TO HAVE PHOTOS RETURNED AFTER PUBLICATION INCLUDE A SELF ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE. WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST PHOTOS.

UPCOMING TRIPS:

Date	Location	Leaders / Program
Jan 10 Sat	Ski Mountaineers	
O: Local Tour. Leader: Paul Harris. Asst: Walt Boge.		
Jan 17 Sat	Ski Mountaineers	
T: Mt Pinos - Pine Mtn Club. Leader: Reiner Stenzel. Asst: Pete Matulavich.		
Jan 20 Tue	Ski Mountaineers	Monthly Mtg:
Jan 24-25 Sati-Sun	Ski Mountaineers	
O: Nordic Downhill Clinice. Leader Paul Harris. Asst: Nancy Gordon.		
Jan 30-Feb 1 Sat-Sun	Ski Mountaineers	CHANGE
T: Snowshelter Course Reiner Stenzel. Asst: Ken Deemer.		
Jan 14-16 Fri-Sun		CHANGE
T: TIOGA PASS LODGE. Leader: Reiner Stenzel. Asst: TBD.		
Feb 8 Sun	O: Local Tour.	
Leader: Mark Goebel. Asst: Pete Matulavich.		
Feb 17 Tue	Ski Mountaineers	Monthly Mtg:
Feb 21 -22 Fri-Sun	Ski Mountaineers	
O: Nordic Downhill Practice.o Leader: Paul Harris. Asst: Nancy Gordon.		
Feb 22 Sun	Ski Mountaineers	
T: Mt Baldy Steep and challenging skiing in Baldy Bowl. Leader: Mark Goebel. Asst: Pete Matulavich.		
Mar 7 Sat	Ski Mountaineers	
T: Mt. San Jacinto (10,804):Leader: Lawrence Pallant. Asst: Paul Harris.		

SMS WEB PAGE

<http://www.edgeinternet.com/skimt/>

Mar 14-17 Sat-Tue Ski Mountaineers
T: Buena Vista Crest to Merced Peak Leader: Tom Marsh. Asst: Joe McGuire.

May 2-3 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers
T: Lamarck Col: Leader: Lawrence Pallant. Asst: Tom Marsh.

SMS OFFICERS

Ken Deemer	Chair
Diann Fried	V. Chair
Mark Gobel	Sec./Treas.
Owen Maloy	Outings/safety
Eric Klosterman	& Tom Marsh

Ski Mountaineer Leaders

Walt Boge
13260 Cumpston St.
Van Nuys, 91401
(818) 781-4576

Ken Deemer
2401 Pine Ave
Manhattan Bch 90266
(310) 546-4012 H (310) 546-3042W
kdeemer@earthlink.net

Andy Fried
9218 Jellico Ave.
Northridge 91324
(818) 993-1891 H
(818) 363-6196
71237.1270@compuserve.com

Mark Goebel
9522 Innsbruck Drive
Huntington Beach 92646
(714) 963-9384

Nancy Gordon
P.O. Box 10605
Truckee, Ca.92162
(530) 582-6803
nancygordon@mail.telis.org

Paul Harris
P.O. Box 70765
Pasadena 91107
(818) 577-4800

Grerry & Pat Holleman
1638 6th ST
Manhattan Bch. 90266
(310) 374-4654
72763.514@compuserve.com

Scot Jamison
609 Briarwood In
San Dimas, Ca 91773
(909) 394-5900

Owen Maloy
P.O. Box 2083
Mammoth Lakes 93546-2083
(619) 934-4553
(619) 934-9511 - fax
jom@qnet.com

Tom Marsh
5493 Quailridge Dr.
Camarillo 93012
(805) 388-3984
qtrmoon@aol.com

Keith Martin
P.O. Box 864
Palos Verdes Estates 90274
(310) 316-7617

Pete Matrulavich
126 Calle Candida
San Dimas 91773
(909) 599-6148

Joe McGuire
2525 Hamilton Ave.
Concord, Ca. 94519-1617

Lawrence Pallant
2728 Lone Jack Rd.
Encinitas CA 92024-6642
(760)942-0035
L.Pallant.aol.com

R. J. Secor
2366 Las Lunas St.
Pasadena 91107-2510
(818) 795-5520]

Reiner Stenzel
519 Almar Ave.
Pacific Palisades 90272
(310) 454-9787
stenzel@physics.ucla.edu

Eric Watts
3729 Vista St.
Long Beach, 90803
(310) 433-5099

Mugelnoos Programs

- Jan 20 Dennis Yates ----- Latest telemark techniques
- Feb 17 David Braun----First ski ascent of Mt. Fairweather
- April 21 Rich Henke--- -----Ski tours in S.W. US.
- May 19 Brad Jensen----- Spring 97 Ski Ascent of Denali

Has your area code changed? New e-mail address? If so please let Pat Holleman know so SMS records will be up to date.

FROM: INTERNET:Qrtmoon@aol.com, INTERNET:Qrtmoon@aol.com
 TO: (unknown), 71237.1270
 DATE: 4/18/97 1:40 AM

Humphreys Basin Base Camp April 12-15, 1997

By Tom Marsh

This four day adventure into Humprey's Basin had a little bit of everything. There was nine of us : Gene Serabyn, Lawrence Pallant, Denise Huibregtse, Felix Betschart, Scott Meek, Mike Bratleowski, Matt Doody, Keith Martin and myself. We started at 9:00 pm at the road closure to North Lake, which happen to be at the town of Apendale. We walked the approximate three miles to North Lake. We were finally able to put on our skis a 1/2 mile before North Lake. Felix was most relieved to get his Randonne gear off his back. We had a sunny and warm break at North Lake camp ground before beginning the trek up to Piute Pass. We had intermittent snow in trees for a mile before reaching the first steep part of the climb. We were all in need of a lunch break at this spot under sunny skis. As we continued, clouds started to appear. Matt made the comment that it was snowing. This seemed contrary to the weather projection. We reached Piute Pass at 4:00 PM under a driving snow storm. Suffice to say, we did not stay long admiring the view. We quickly set out to our base camp of Muriel Lake. After 10 miles and 3,000 feet of gain, we were all ready to camp.

The next day dawned with cool, sunny crisp air. At about 10:00 am, we set out for of 1st day tour under a pleasantly warm sun. We skied up to the crest of the Mt. Humphreys divide (13,000 feet) and peered over the other side. The day was warm, but the snow at the top was not quite consolidated. As we lunched right below Mt. Humphreys, we enjoyed a spectacular view of the basin. We caught glimpses of Mt. Darwin, Mt. Humphreys, Four Gables, etc.. It was a very pleasant day. After lunch, we enjoyed much better corn snow conditions as we descended 1,000 feet to our base camp.

That evening, Lawrence, Gene, Felix and I were admiring a crooked South facing peak on the extreme North of the basin. It was called simply "12,225" on the Map. It was not on the Sierra Peaks list, but looked to provide some good corn snow conditions. Therefore, the next day, the group set out for the top of this peak. The firm snow provided a good base for this long distance day tour. Again, we enjoyed a warm sunny morning with spectacular view all around. We made good time to the outlet of Desolation Lake. At that point, the real climbing began. We started up the ridge to the left of peak 12,225. We quickly make it to the top within an hour. Gene lead

the last section to the top. The views were much better than the day before. We enjoyed a sunny warm lunch with view of Alpine Col, Bear Creek Spire, Four Gables, etc... After lunch, we enjoy a great ski down the peak and than down to Mesa lake. We arrived back at camp at around 5:00 pm.

The last day, we broke camp at about 10:00 am. We arrived at Piute Pass to find good corn snow conditions. We skied effortlessly to the next steep section. We encountered one exposed section in a narrow gully, but everyone did well skiing this section. Gene decided to take a more adventures route on the left side. After that, we skied through a maze of trees. Denise likened it to working on a puzzle. After one interesting creek crossing, we made it back to the campground at North Lake for lunch. The day, contrary to the previous two days, was cool and cloudy. Therefore, it did not take much convincing to end our trip soaking at Keough Hot Spring.

Much thanks to Keith Martin for co-leading and John Moynier's for advice on conditions. John has a wonderful web site at "<http://www.csac.org.bulletins>".

An Avalanche Awareness Series is being sponsored by Kittredge Sports and presented by John Moynier. The first of the eight part series is entitled Backcountry Adventure and begins at 7 p.m. on Dec. 16 at the Mammoth Mountain R.V. Park. There will be four classroom sessions and four coinciding field courses. The following is a listing of the events:

- Jan. 6, 7:30 p.m., **Avy Terrain and Snow Conditions** (free), Mammoth Mountain R.V. Park;
- Jan 7, 1-3 p.m., **June Mountain/Telefest '98**, Snow Pit Clinic, (\$10 lift ticket);
- Jan 10, 9 a.m. 3 p.m. **Intro to Avalanche Awareness**, Field Course, (\$25),
- Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m., **Travel and Basic Forecasting**, Mammoth Mountain R.V. Park (free);
- Feb. 7, 9 a.m.- 3p.m., **Travel and Forecasting** (\$25);
- March 10, 7:30 p.m., **Gearing Up For Spring**, Mammoth Mtn. R.V.Park (free);
- Mar. 14, 9 a.m.- 3p.m. **Ski Tours and Hazardous Terrain**, FieldCourse, (\$25). For more information, call Kittredge Sports (760) 934-7566.

Kittredge Sports and June Mountain are hosting the Annual June Mountain Telefest on Wednesday, Jan. 7 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is a chance to demo the new 1997/98 gear for free, while enjoying complimentary instructional clinics and racing for prizes. John Moynier will also offer a free snowpit clinic as a part of the Kittredge Sports Backcountry Awareness Series. For details, call Kittredge Sports at 934-7566.

the best rock of the group." Mike's description of these early days begins in this issue, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

cont. from page 1

involved an hour walk through sandy forest and slushy Horseshoe Meadow (10,000'). Then we skinned up to climb Cottonwood Pass (11,150') hoping to find more snow in the backcountry. Indeed there was plenty in the distance but on the nearby Pacific Crest Trail which we had to follow North, there was intermittent snow. With a full pack it was about equally tiring to constantly put the skis on and off as to walk and periodically sink into knee-deep holes on breakable crust. Above tree line there was finally continuous snow coverage. The route to Rock Creek leads over many ridges. Above Chicken Spring Lake a ridge was corniced and required a detour. The weather was excellent and the scenery superb. Below us was the Big Whitney Meadows, far to the West were the white peaks of Mineral King and the Great Western Divide with puffy clouds, and in the North the Whitney Range with large lenticular clouds. The western slopes of Cirque Peak were covered with weathered foxtail pines. On the open slopes a cold wind was blowing. By 6 pm we spotted a flat meadow at the Southern entrance of Rock Creek which was ideal for our first campsite. We dined on a wind-sheltered dry place among trees while watching a beautiful sunset.

On Thur, 5/1, we got up when the sun reached our tents. The goal of the day was to ski to the Crabtree Lakes. After a leisurely start at 10 am we skied up the Rock Creek drainage. A steep 400' climb at Lake 10,800' got us to a ridge which connected above tree line to the broad valley of Rock Creek. After passing an impressive rock face near Primrose Lake we reached Skyblue Lake which had a scenic lunch spot next to the Miter (3900 m). The lakes were still covered but due to the warm weather and some ominous cracks we did not risk to ski across them. Heading toward Lake 3697 m we encountered a steep (40 deg) wall which some of us muscled up on skis, some on foot and the smarter ones avoided with a long detour. Now Crabtree Pass (3850 m) was in sight and we reached it by 5 pm. The impressive ridge line of Mt. McAide was to the East, below us was Lake 3700 m, and far to the West lay our goal, the upper Crabtree Lake (3456 m). After a short downhill scramble on rocks we reached a steep snowfield which was skiable. We continued well above the Southern shore of Lake 3700m. A long gentle valley lead us to the upper Crabtree Lake. Unfortunately, due to the late hour, we encountered breakable crust so that the downhill skiing took longer than expected. By 7 pm we found a scenic campsite overlooking the lake with a nearby waterfall and some trees. Steve arrived by sunset. After dinner we watched the comet Hale-Bopp and were amazed how long its tail was in the clear dark sky. At cometset we called it quits for day two.

Having made a resolution to get up earlier we had breakfast on Friday, 5/2, at 6:30 am. Our goal was to ski close to Guitar Lake where we would decide either on a ski ascent or a detour around Mt. Whitney. By 8:30 am we were skiing along the Crabtree Ekes and then ascended at tree line the Northern ridge of Mt Hitchcock. Unfortunately, we climbed too high and encountered steep cliffs above Timberline Lake. After retracing part of the route we proceeded at the 3400 m contour toward the lower Hitchcock Lake (3450 m). We found a good lunch spot with view of the Western slopes of the Whitney Range. The circumnavigation via Wallace Lake, Tulainyo Lake and the Russell-Carillon saddle was ruled out as too long and possibly dry. Since we had to ski over the ridge we decided to spend the night on the summit. The shortest ascent, East of Guitar Lake, required a steep ascent through narrow gullies filled with soft afternoon snow. It was considered too risky and strenuous with full packs. Thus, we took the conservative long route up the partially visible switchbacks to Trail Crest. This started with skinning up the lower portion, then hiking up steeper sections on breakable snow where even tall Duncan vanished to his hips. Frustrated, we chose some rock bands and scrambled straight up which was equivalent to a peak climb with full packs. After four hours of 'Teaming our turns' we were at the crest. Although the terrain levels out the pace slowed down at 14,000' altitude. A cold wind was blowing and it got cloudy. Some tricky traverses near Mt. Muir required ice axes for safety. But little by little, we got closer to the summit with its inviting hut where we planned to spend the night. Finally, by sunset (8 pm), we stood on the summit of Mt. Whitney (14,494', 4416 m). Nobody was there, a rare sight for this tourist spot. The last climbers signed in a week earlier. We got quite worried about Steve who was far behind us and had to hike by starlight. But by 10 pm he safely arrived after a 14 hour day. We cooked, ate and slept in the hut which was a great shelter from the cold strong winds outside. Luckily, no thunderstorms were in sight.

On Sat, 5/3, we were in no rush since we had to wait for the snow to soften in order to enjoy the skiing down. From earlier experience, I had great hopes for a beautiful sunrise at high altitude, but it was unfortunately cloudy. Nevertheless, we enjoyed great views from the summit. Below the steep East face was frozen Iceberg Lake and the Mountaineers Route. To the West was a panorama of many familiar ranges and peaks. We even could make out the San Rafael Mtns beyond the cloudy San Joaquin Valley, and it reminded me of the distant views of Mt. Whitney from the Mt. Pinos-Abel traverse. The snow coverage was highly

uneven. While the Russell-Carillon saddle was entirely dry, Mt. Hale and Young were covered to the summit. We had an early lunch on the wind shaded side of the hut. A rosy finch joined and was so friendly that he ate out of the hand. At noon we started our descend. On his stable randonne gear Don made some turns on the crusty snow near the summit but most of the crest trail was not skiable. Due to the weekend we met some hikers climbing up, some wearing shorts and pretty rings in ears and nose. Finally, at Trail Crest (13,777'), there was a large steep (40 deg) slope with continuous snow all the way down to Consultation Lake (11,700'). Luckily, the wind-crusted snow had softened on the top but there were icy patches below and the skiing was tricky. Don had no problems with his heels down, I telemarked it on my stable fat boards (115 mm), and Duncan and Steve made a safe survival descend. Skiing this 1500+ foot, ungroomed black diamond run with full packs was an exhilarating but exhausting fun. Near Trail Camp (12,000') perfect spring snow started and we all had a great time. We stayed on North facing slopes on connected snow fields and we carved countless numbers of turns. Further down the suncups made the ride a bit bumpy. We could ski all the way down to Outpost Camp (10,300') where the snow turned intermittent. After another hour hike on the Whitney trail we arrived at Whitney Portal (8,360') by about 7 pm. A car shuttle up the nearby Cottonwood Road got us back to the remaining cars. Then it was time to drive into town for a celebration dinner. Don decided for a late drive home, the rest of us carcamped in the Alabama Hills and drove home well rested on Sun morning. We were all pleased by our adventurous backcountry ski tour with a group of fine friends.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE SMS & RCS

Submitted by Mark Goebel

From the bottom of the box which serves as our SMS records keeping system, I recently discovered an essay titled, **WOMEN ON THE ROCKS, WAY BACK THEN**, written by Ruth Dyar Mendenhall (1912-1989), dated October, 1987, in which she tells of her experiences as a skier, climber, and the close knit activities of the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections of the Sierra Club, in Los Angeles beginning in 1937. Ruth had sent her write up to Pete Matulavich in March, 1988, after Pete had inquired about obtaining a copy of the first issue of *Mugelnoos*. Ruth was the editor for its first 4 years, and after WW II, she continued her editorial leadership until 1978. Ruth and her husband John, were well known for a number of first ascents in the Sierra, Tetons, and Canada; years of leadership in the Sierra Club and The American Alpine Club; and they also wrote and published books on climbing and backpacking. In her letter to Pete, she states, "I also have noted that you really have extracted



the spirit of those days from the Mug. (and presumably other sources). Instead of commenting in detail on this, I think I'll send you a copy of the treatise I wrote last fall on the same subject — except it was slanted for the female climbers of the thirties, and I wrote it mostly with them in mind. This caused me to give a great deal of thought and some research to the prewar atmosphere in which we skied and climbed" In addition, she states, "I found I could not write about those times only for women, because we had such good times for both men and women. We really were so close in our activities and friendship in 1938 and 1939 that I have never seen another group quite like it. Ski huts and Mugelnoos were social centers. At that time the skiers were much more numerous than the climbers. All but one or two of our climbing group were fundamentally ski mountaineers. Only a relatively few of the ski group found their forte in climbing (John and I were among them). It was partly due to the depression and threat of WW II. In my write-up I had to emphasize climbing, but ski mountaineering was really the bed-rock of the group." Ruth's description of those early days begins in this issue, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

WOMEN ON THE ROCKS, WAY BACK THEN

By Ruth Dyar Mendenhall

Due to the passage of time I have advanced from the status of climber to that of Pioneer Woman Climber. I started climbing rocks in Southern California in 1938. Alpine techniques had been introduced to both the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas in 1931 during Robert L. M. Underhill's visit from New England. A Rock Climbing Section (usually referred to as the RCS) was established in the mid-thirties in the Southern California (now Angeles) Chapter of the Sierra Club. At the time I took up the sport, the popularity of climbing was rapidly rising. Most of the pioneer rock climbers were men, but several outstanding women climbers had already retired from climbing or overlapped with me. Now that I have become a Pioneer nearly fifty years later, modern women climbers have expressed an interest in the status of women climbers of that day. A question occasionally asked is whether we climbed with men or mostly with each other. The short simple answer to that — is that we did not have enough climbers to sort them out by gender.

There were seldom more than three or four serious women climbers in Southern California at any one time, often only one or two compared with, perhaps, six to a couple of dozen men. Besides that, the boys and girls enjoyed climbing together. Most respected their own and each other's abilities and limitations. A few fellows, usually young gymnasts, seemed to feel diminished if a girl made a pitch they couldn't. But I remember very little machismo, or for that matter machisma, among us. Of course a mixture of these attitudes did surface occasionally. For example, at a Taquitz Rock climb, the man who was trip leader was arranging the ropes for the day's climbs. He asked me to lead a visitor from Switzerland up the Fingertip Traverse. Although I had made the climb, I was in my first season and somewhat lacking in confidence. I was on the verge of declining when another man nearby, who really had nothing to do with the matter, spoke to me: "Ruth! You shouldn't! You had only three or four hours of sleep last night." That decided me. I agreed to lead the rope, off-handedly collected my equipment and my second, and went. Years later I discovered by chance that I had acquired a modest fame in Europe as a rock climber.

Other women in our club had been making their mark in the climbing world Mary Jane Edwards, Adrienne Applewhite (Jones), the first woman to climb the East Face of Mt. Whitney, LaVere Daniels (Aulie), who appeared in a professional movie short, "Three on a

Rope." and was the first woman to climb Temple Crag, 12,999 feet. May Pridham, who had made assorted climbs with her sister and other girls before she ever heard of rope techniques, and who provided our newssheet with skiing and climbing cartoons so pertinent that they are famous in Sierra Club publications to this day. Also Else Strand, Agnes Fair. We didn't think of ourselves as women climbers, but as women who liked to climb. The field of mountaineering and rock climbing was wide open to all comers.

I had grown up having outdoor adventures with various of my three sisters and occasional cousins. We had hiked, backpacked, camped, and made wilderness fishing trips. Though we had never heard of rock climbing, we had indulged in ascents of some of the basalt formations in Spokane, Washington (our brother was too conservative). I later classified some of these climbs as Fourth Class; we should have been roped. Though all these girls climbed to some extent in later years, I was the only one to develop such a passion for climbing that I pursued it for thirty-five seasons.

From Spokane I had come to southern California as a college graduate in need of a job, my school having assigned all its scarce job openings that year to men. A relative offered me secretarial work with one of the State Relief organizations of the time. I was lonely, homesick and displaced in both occupation and geography. When I discovered the Ski Mountaineers Section of the Sierra Club, my life improved immeasurably. When I found out that many of the skiers became rock climbers when the snow melted, I thought I had been catapulted into Eden. Don't laugh! After all, there allegedly was an apple tree in Eden. And due to a childhood of tree climbing, I soon realized that apple trees are the horticultural equivalent of sound granite.

My situation was not unlike that of many young people of that time, the latter years of the Great Depression. Some were unemployed; many held poorly paying jobs and worked hard not to lose them. We hungered for fun, adventure and companionship. These were all available in the skiing and climbing set — and at that time had the added advantage of not costing much.

In the late 1930's there were no ski lifts except for a few short rope tows. The Ski Mountaineers gave instruction. They also raised money and provided the manpower to build and maintain ski huts in nearby mountains. Hut fees were twenty-five cents a night. Entertainment, often complete with a member's accordion at the end of a steep trail, was free.

Rock climbing was even cheaper. Our club furnished most of the equipment. Ropes were 90-foot and 130-foot seven-sixteenth inch manila, the best yachting line available. Its lack of stretch was compensated for by dynamic belays. Steel carabiners were imported from Germany. The same was true of soft iron pitons until duty became so high that local manufacture

was arranged. Quarter-inch manila was used for slings, Prusiks, etc. We wore leather patches sewn on pants and shirts to protect us from the friction of body rappels. We wore old jeans and very jaunty, individual felt hats. Ice axes and piton hammers were personal equipment, and often there was only, one to a rope. For footgear in the high mountains we had men's work shoes or old leather ski boots nailed with tricounis. For rock climbing we wore tennis shoes or crepe-soled basketball shoes. With this gear, the better climbers of the time put up routes judged very difficult to this day, and others followed them. In recent years a male climber remarked in my hearing, "Imagine climbing the Mechanic's Route (at Tahquitz) in tennis shoes!" I said, "I don't have to imagine it. I did it."

In my first season, I attended RCS climbs almost every weekend. There were one-day or half-day instructional climbs locally, at Stony Point, Eagle Rock, and Devil's Gate Dam (until the authorities plastered it with concrete). Here anyone could learn elementary rope handling, belaying, and safety. Weekend climbs were held at Tahquitz Rock. This thousand-foot wedge of glorious granitic rock, on the south side of Mt. San Jacinto above Idylwild, seemed to offer endless possibilities for new routes. Only ten had been established by early 1938. And for three-day weekends, we went to the High Sierra, its stupendous East side readily accessible from the south. Climbers' vacations were usually spent in the Sierra. Foreign climbing, except for a rare venture to Canada, was at that time beyond the scope of our group.

Over the weekend of July 4, 1938, I had my first taste of scaling one of the fourteen thousand foot peaks in the Palisades west of Big Pine in Owens Valley. The backpack was three or four miles of easy trail to Third Lake at about 10,000 feet. Parties attacked North Palisade, 14,242 feet and Mt. Sill, 14,162 feet, by assorted routes. I was on one of two ropes that made a new route up the North Buttress (now called the Swiss Arete in climber's guides). We had two experienced rope leaders. The rest of us were all in our first season of climbing. The two men, whose bent was really not rock climbing, didn't seem to appreciate the exposure. I was so exhilarated by my first ascent of a "real mountain," by the elevation and difficult moves, and by the lovely surroundings that, though I kept my cool, I was -running over with sheer joy. We made the summit and descended by an easier way. For years afterwards, my rope leader twitted me about our return to camp. He claimed that when our friends came into view beside their little campfires, I exclaimed, "Let's run, so they won't think we're tired."

Over Labor Day that year, eleven RCS members, nine men and two women, made the strenuous backpack, largely cross-country, over Pinnacle Pass to camp at East Face Lake at over 13,000 feet.

Next day we all climbed 14,495-foot Mt. Whitney's East Face by the Sunshine-Peewee Route (now more decorously referred to as the East Buttress). The difficulty of the pack-in made a much more lasting impression on my mind than the climb itself.

Backpacking equipment of the day included Trapper Nelson packboards of wood and canvas, tortuous for neck and shoulders. Many of us had made our own sleeping bags. A pillow factory blew goose down into the tubes. Down cost \$3 a pound, but as we often remarked, down was going up. A shelter was rarely needed, since it "never" rained in the Sierra until after nylon and plastic were invented. Our foods came from the grocery store in the form of cheese, sausage, spaghetti, cereals, dried fruits, crackers and candy. We didn't miss freeze-dried or "instant" foods since there weren't any. But we did have Primus stoves from Sweden for use above timberline.

On our trips the mountains rang all day, and sometimes far into the night with puns, jokes, yodels, shouts, and laughter, and with the singing and pinging of pitons going deeper into the cracks with each whack of the hammer. It was a gay and happy period in our lives, certainly not carefree, but light-hearted and filled with good comradeship. Both men and women became close friends through their mountain activities and related pursuits. We were often together evenings as well as weekends. We held meetings, gave parties, promoted "ski rallies" to raise funds for the ski huts, and published our Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections' newsheet, The Mugelnoos. For many a year I was chief honcho for The Mugelnoos, named after what is now called a mogul, and our Ski Mountaineers chairman George Bauwens' Austrian accent. I kept the newsheet crammed with puns (one issue claimed forty-nine puns), cartoons, and facts that made climbing history. The first ascent of the Eigerwand was noted in August 1938. We also had a correspondent from Byrd's third expedition of 1939-40. The Expedition's official artist, Leland Curtis was a member of the Ski Mountaineers Section.

Transportation to Section affairs posed the usual problems. Most of the men and a few women drove old cars, and the rest of us were courtesy or paying passengers. Some of the crowd still lived at home, a very few were married, others occupied rooms or apartments, alone or with friends. Gradually a few of us, whose situations and yearnings were similar, conceived the idea of starting a cooperative coeducational boarding house for climbers and skiers. We weren't quite ready for serious romance, though that came along soon. We weren't into what are now called relationships. Our mutual and overwhelming desire was a place to live that would be spacious, enjoyable and of necessity economical — A HOME. The concept was rather far-out for the times. That it actually became a reality and a success seems a little surprising even now.

To be continued



Mt. Locke 12,241' in the center with the "Wahoo Gullies" down the N.E. face. Pete Yamagata photo.

THE MUGELNOOS

PAT HOLLEMAN

1638 6th St.

Manhattan Beach, CA 90266



Your subscription has EXPIRED !!

Richard L. Henke

652 Marine Ave.

Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

SMS RCS-R 1997