

1417 7/98

The Mugelnoos needs a new editor starting this fall! Contact Andy Fried or Ken Deemer if you are interested.

MUGELNOOS

APRIL 21, 1998

Number 743



Mt. Silliman, Great Western Divide, Mar. 21-22, 1998

by Reiner Stenzel

At the beginning of spring, on a warm sunny weekend, eleven skiers came together for a ski tour in the Western Sierra Nevada. Participants were Franz Zechner from Austria, David Kaye from Arizona, Dorothy Reilly and Mike McDermitt from San Francisco, and Dennis Landin, Danny Sommer, Susan Loftus, Jim DeRose, Richard Geist, Aaron Walter from the Los Angeles area. We met at 8 am at the Lodgepole Visitor Center in the Sequoia National Park. Snow conditions looked very promising: At the roadside the snowbanks were 8 feet high, and the buildings were covered with snow to the top of the roof. It took some time to organize equipment to share. We talked Susan into leaving her brandnew 7lb tent behind. Aaron was about to call it quits when he discovered that he had forgotten his skins. He was saved by Franz who smilingly pulled out of his pack a second pair of skins, explaining that one always takes two pairs on touring in the Alps because of balling problems. By 9:30am we started our tour at the Twin Lakes trailhead (6,760'). Luckily there was a bridge across the Kaweah River which was running strong. The trail steadily ascends toward Silliman Creek. There were a few obstacles on the trail and some route finding challenges in the forest. Luckily Danny knew the area well from his activity as an Outward Bound instructor. At noon, after several hours of forest skiing, we made a lunch break at a scenic spot overlooking the Silliman Creek. Near Silliman Meadows (8,200') we slowly got out of the forest and had our first views of the excellent slopes we would later ski on. However, there were also clear signs of avalanche activity. Deep, wet snow covered convex slopes of smooth granite and the obvious cracks warned us to stay away. Thus, we carefully ascended the steep slopes toward Silliman Lake among trees at the side of the cracked slopes. Between 3 and 4pm our spread-out group arrived at basecamp next to

cont. pg.3

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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: MAY 19, 1998

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UPCOMING TRIPS:

Date	Location	Leaders / Program
May 1-7 Fri-Tue	Tl: Mt Williamson-Mt Whitney Crest	Ldr:Reiner Stenzel, Asst: Ken Deemer
May 2-3 Sat-Sun	Tl: Mt. Wood,	Ldr: Mark Goebel, Asst: Dan Richter
May 9-10 Tl:	Onion Valley	Ldr: Keith Martin, Asst: Owen Maloy
May 9-10 Sat-Sun	Tl: Lamarck Col:	Leader: Lawrence Pallant, Asst: Tom Marsh.
May 9-10 Sps/SMS	Tl: Morrison & Baldwin co-ldrs	: Scott Jamison, L Tidball Res. Barbee Tidball
May 16-17	Ski Mountaineers Pk,	Ldr Gerry Holleman, Asst :Paul Harris
May 23-25	Sawtooth Ridge Ski Camp	Leader: Reiner Stenzel,Asst: G Holleman
May 23-25	Tioga & Sonora Pass Ski Camp	Ldr: K Martin Asst: O. Maloy
Jun 13-16 Sat-Tues	Northern Ski Advent.	Ldr:Nancy Gordon,Asst: O. Maloy

Mugelnoos Programs

May 19 Brad Jensen----- Spring 97 Ski Ascent of Denali

SMS WEB PAGE

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

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**US Forest Service Notice
April 1, 1998**

Over 3,000 people were injured by bears last year, many of these attacks were fatal. As a public service to all backpackers, campers and other people enjoying the remote regions of the U.S. this summer, the Forest Service issues the following notice:

Tourists are warned to wear tiny bells on their clothing when hiking in bear country. The bells warn away MOST bears (brown, black, etc.), but be careful because this method doesn't scare Kodiak / grizzly bears.

Tourists are also cautioned to watch the ground on the trail, paying particular attention to bear droppings to be alert for the presence of Kodiak / grizzly bears. One can easily spot a Kodiak or grizzly bear dropping because it has tiny bells in it.

The above was sent in by Marcia Male

Cont. from page 1

Silliman Lake (10,049'). There was a nice bench, away from any avalanche runouts, with a scenic view of Mt. Silliman to the North, the Sierra foothills to the West, and the coastal range far beyond the San Joaquin Valley. Tent city grew with two megamids, a Bibler and 2 other tents. A large snow kitchen was dug out for cooking and socializing. But the day was too good for relaxing. So some of us skinned up to the base of Mt. Silliman and had a few warm-up turns on excellent spring snow. There were a few uneasy moments when after 5pm the clouds rolled in and the visibility and depth perception were gone, but luckily it cleared up for the descent. It was useful to bring my small Motorola radios along to stay in touch with basecamp.

After a good long sleep we got up by 7am to a sunny day. Little by little, thin high clouds moved in forming a ring around the sun, a precursor for the next predicted storm. By 8:30 am ten skiers headed up the Southern slopes of Mt. Silliman. At places, the snow was rather crusty requiring careful edging and even more careful kickturns. When the angle became uncomfortably steep, Susan and Dorothy wisely turned back. By 9:15am eight of us summited Mt. Silliman (11,188'). We signed the peak register with the rewarding feeling having been the first party this year on the summit. The view of the white endless range of mountains was superb. Franz said he felt at home. The entire Great Western Divide was near us, the Kaweahs stood out in the South, the Palisades in the North, and Dennis even spotted the crack in Split Mtn. Snow-covered Mt Pinos rose above the fog of the San Joaquin Valley. We took many pictures and fully enjoyed the summit without hurry on this beautiful windstill spring day. By 10 am, we decided that the snow had softened enough and we could start our ski run down. Franz, having skied all his life on stable randonnee gear, was seriously concerned how we would get down without "proper" bindings. He was surprised when the bunch of free heelers lay beautiful tracks and zipped down the mountain. Admittedly, the snow was perfect and on ice we would have been in trouble. It was a great ski run down which some of us spiced up with a steep drop into Silliman Lake. At basecamp, we had an early lunch and packed up. Dennis and David liked it so much that they contemplated of staying for another day. But because of the impending storm we convinced them to come out with us.

The ski run down from Silliman Lake started out under perfect snow conditions, a few inches of soft snow on a firm base. It was telemarking at its best, although a good workout with a full pack. Then came an invisible line in the snow where the firm base changed to bottomless mush. Everybody, even Franz, took a dive into the

wet soup. It was time to change skiing style. My favorite approach was even weighting and steering the rear ski early into the turn. Then it was not too difficult to ski on mush, especially with superfat powder/crud skis (Dynastar BIGs, 115mm shovel). Everyone struggled through the mush zone, and some got precariously close to the cracks in the center of the wet snowfield. After regrouping, we proceeded with our descent along Silliman Creek, followed by plenty of dense forest skiing, and finally down the narrow trail to Lodgepole. It was a delight that we could ski essentially all the way down to our cars, where we arrived at about 2:30pm. We felt the workout of a 4,500' ski descent. But we all agreed that it was a weekend of fine skiing in abundant snow, good weather, a beautiful terrain, an excellent summit view, and a harmonious group of fine skiers. Last but not least, the drive through the Sierra foothills in mid March is a delight in itself, since the hills are green and blooming while the high country is all white.

TRANS-SIERRA SKI TOURSwith **John Fischer**

\$440 per person with group of five

YOSEMITE BORDER CROSSING

April 18 - 25

June lake to Wawona

SIERRA HIGH ROUTE

May 2 - 9

Symme's Creek to Wolverton

**CIRQUE CREST/MONARCH
DIVIDE**

May 16 - 23

Palisades to Cedar Grove

CALL (760) 873-5037**PSIA**

On March 14 th Paul Harris and Andy Fried passed the PSIA level one exam.



SAN BERNARDINO RIDGE

MAR 13-15, 1998

by Reiner Stenzel

This year the El Nino storms brought abundant snow to our local mountains. Thus, within one to two hours driving distance from Los Angeles there is excellent backcountry skiing. The San Bernardino Ridge in the San Geronio Wilderness is one of the best ridge routes. It is vast, rugged, and remote. We planned to ski the 30 mi route from Angelus Oaks to South Fork and here is how it went: On Fri morning, five participants met at the Mill Creek Ranger Station (Tom Marsh, Mike Rector, Doug Wilson, Eric Ginder, R.S.). We drove to South Fork, parked two cars, returned to Angelus Oaks (5,900'), and started our trip by 10am. After half an hour of walking on the trail the snow coverage became continuous and we switched to skinning up on skis. Signs of the trail vanished soon and from now on it became XC skiing with ample of bushwhacking experience. As the hours of climbing proceeded the weather gradually deteriorated. The weather forecast called for the tail end of another El Nino storm to pass through Southern California on Thursday and Friday. But since it was just overcast we thought it was a benign one. However, this was going to change soon. In the afternoon the visibility deteriorated and it gradually started to snow. Our progress of climbing slowed down as Eric got more and more exhausted. We made camp on an avalanche-safe ridge near Limber Pine Bench. That evening, on Fri the 13'th, Doug discovered that his old Asolo boots

began to delaminate. We fixed them with skin glue and wire which, due to his skiing skills, held up throughout the trip. He did the tour on skinny double-cambered Fisher Crowns! Eric had randonnee gear, the rest of us beefy telemark skis and plastic boots. We shared 2 tents, among them a good VE 24. Dinner was cooked outside in a snow kitchen but the steady snowfall soon drove us into the tents. Later, there were some moments of clear sky, giving the impression that the storm was soon going to break up and we might have a sunny morning. This was wishful thinking. It snowed most of the night and next morning the sky was still uniformly grey and gloomy.

We packed and got off to another late start (9:30am). Packing time is inversely proportional to experience. Instead of following the switchbacks of the trail we ascended straight up a creek drainage to Limber Pine Springs. It was an arduous task for Eric since his pack was too heavy, his skins slipped, the ascent was steep, and it was now snowing heavily. By midday we reached the 10,000' ridge. I was glad to get out of the gully since there was now a foot of new snow which developed uphill cracks from our tracks. Up on the exposed ridge we were greeted by gusts and poor visibility. But as long as one followed the ridge, there was no route finding problem. Skiing became tricky since there were large windslabs and abundant cornices some of which showed cracks three feet from the edge. Depth perception became a problem and one could easily run into a snowbank or fall down from it. The alternative of skiing below the ridge on the steep slopes was worse; on the wind side the snow was hard and

a fall would sooner or later happen, on the lee side the cornices would loom above us. So we stayed in the wind on the ridge and continued from peak to peak, first San Bernardino Pk (10,649'), then East San Bernardino Pk (10,691'), Anderson Pk (10,840'), and Shields Pk (10,680'). It was a seemingly endless roller coaster ridge line. Without visibility it was hard to know on which peak we were. The altimeter, calibrated at the trail head, read far too high since a low pressure front had moved in. The brunt of the storm must have moved through on Sat afternoon just when we were on the high part of the ridge, proving Murphy's law. It was a classic picture of winter ski mountaineering as five people, mummified in goggles and face masks, skied in a blizzard along an exposed ridge. Wind gusts of 30-50mph called for careful balancing. The snow-seeded wind blew over the corniced ridge formed streamlines like those over an airplane wing. The cornices were growing and we found signs of a fresh avalanche triggered by a cornice breakoff. It must have been Eric's first experience of this kind since he began to inquire about the chances of his survival. We assured him of that with the reminder that "every step counts" and there was "no return". By 5pm we all had enough and picked a campsite somewhere off the ridge in a forest with moderate slope. But even in the forest the cold wind was blowing and kicking up spindrifts. So we cooked in the tent vestibules and spent the next 12 hours indoors, nature calls excepted.

Sunday morning the sky cleared up. It was wonderful to see the sun again. We dried our gear, eat outside, and had an 8:30 am start. Almost a foot of fresh snow had accumulated and it was a real workout to break trail, a job for the one with the fattest skis. After getting back on the ridge we had a most spectacular view. In the distance we saw Big Bear Lake, San Jacinto, and the San Gabriels. Ahead of us, along the ridge were Charleton, Jepson, and San Gorgonio. Now we realized that our progress had been slower than planned. We proceeded over a few more peaklets and traverses around gullies and made it to Dollar Lke Saddle (9,960') by lunchtime. There we had a soulsearching discussion. Eric was at the end of his strength since this tour was not a good match for his conditioning and skiing skills. Most of us wanted to ski San Gorgonio (11,490') which was right in front of us, although another 1,500' higher. I was very concerned about possible

accidents of a weak skier coming down the Draws, and also declined splitting up a small group in a remote terrain. So we had no choice but to shorten the tour and to ski out via Dollar Lke. As a consolation, this started with a wonderful 2,000' ski run down into Dry Lke and the South Fork Meadows. The snow was fresh and deep and ideal for my fat powder skis (Dynastar BIGs). Doug did a superb job on his skinny skis. Eric got another workout with many ups and downs, but kept his good spirit up. Tom and Mike enjoyed making figure eights out of my

tracks. When we looked back, our tracks on this long slope were visible for miles. A strange effect occurred in some locations near Dollar Lake: We heard pop music in the wilderness, probably carried by the wind from the Bear Mtn ski area some 10 miles away. Down in the forest, we followed the South Fork Trail and reached Poopout Hill by mid afternoon. There we left the obvious trail and traversed XC toward South Fork Campground. Till about Camp Osceola the snow was continuous. Then it was postholing through sometimes deep-knee mush. Off and on there were stretches of confusing trails, but mostly we worked our way down through forest and brush. The last surprise of the day was a 45 degree dropoff to the road which we slid down by near darkness. After 1/4 mi on the road we were back at our cars by 6:30pm. It was another long day of skiing, but in spring weather rather than in a blizzard. Although the trip was short of our goal, we had three days of adventurous backcountry skiing. Eric did survive the trip, and we will come back to ski the old Greyback another time. Thanks to everyone for staying together, for Tom's patience in assisting, Mike's help with Eric, and Doug's good spirits. I won't forget the scenery of this group skiing in a blizzard along the corniced SB ridge

Is GPS For You??

A Great Tool for Backcountry Travelers

by Robert Somoano

Global Positioning System(GPS) receivers are becoming very popular and prices are dropping. You can now buy a good, useful, small, lightweight, waterproof, weatherproof GPS receiver for \$100-200. The purpose of this note is to briefly discuss GPS receivers and their usefulness to backcountry skiers and hikers.

The GPS is a Department of Defense constellation of 24 satellites that provide continuous positional location. A GPS receiver gives you your location within approximately 100 meters over most of the world's surface. It provides this capability in all weather (e.g., a blinding snowstorm, heavy fog, etc.) and at all times- day or night. It will give you your speed provided you are traveling at least 10-15 mph, magnetic and/or true north bearings to your favorite landmarks from your present position, and many other neat things!

It is a wonderful toy/tool, especially when you use it with a map and compass - as you should! The usefulness and user-friendliness are greatly enhanced if one learns and uses the simple Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates instead of latitude-longitude -particularly on land, since one can easily -eye-ball UTM coordinates on a map. I've had some recent backcountry experiences that demonstrate the value of GPS. Andy Fried and I, with our better halves and friends, recently skied to Ostrander. I have done Ostrander 12 -15 times by all routes, but especially by Horizon Ridge, and I know the way well. Several of us were skiing down some great snow on the

way back (and not paying attention) when I realized that Horizon Ridge was nowhere in sight. Intuitively, I knew where we were (don't we always?). Nevertheless, even though we were in fairly deep forest with no sight of mountains to enable compass sightings, I made a quick check w/the GPS, and referenced my map w/the hand-drawn UTM grid. I was shocked to realize that I was completely turned around and disoriented (euphemism for -being temporarily lost). The GPS and map clearly showed where we were, and how far off the trail we had skied. It enabled us to find the safe way back to the trail.

Similarly, on a climb to the Obelisk, we found ourselves in unfamiliar territory on the hike out. The GPS clearly showed that we had missed a subtle fork in the trail and were on a faint trail that we had not even noticed on the map!! I have used the GPS successfully in fairly deep forest, and in deep gullies, e.g., Bear Canyon in the San Gabriels, with no problems.

I've loaded UTM coordinates (or lat-long when necessary) of favorite peaks and landmarks to sight on during hikes, drives, and ski trips. GPS is especially useful in flat desert country.

The latest 7.5 minute topo maps now have UTM grids (not just ticks) to facilitate GPS use. The latest Gazetteers, e.g., for Southern California, also claim to be -user-friendly with degree-minute ticks instead of the more difficult to use degree-minute-second. Useful functions/capabilities of a GPS receiver include an extensive list of datums (very important), the ability to use UTM or lat-long, magnetic and/or true north bearings, ability to store several hundred

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waypoints, implement several routes, and route reversal. Some come with maps—I don't have any experience with these, but they are probably useful. An interface to a computer, although not necessary, will be very useful with the new digital topo map software coming out. Also, -parallel (vs multiplexing) receivers with 5 to 12 channels provides improved sensitivity and quick satellite lock in difficult environments.

The batteries for the receiver are plenty adequate for most multi-day trips, but you should carry spares. Consider buying a 120 v. adapter to enable leisure use of your GPS at home while inputting waypoints. Also, a cigarette lighter adapter to enable use of your GPS in your car (on the dash) is a great way to fully test and exercise your GPS while someone else drives. I have inputted waypoints for the trip from Los Angeles to Mammoth and it is a great way to really learn the power and usefulness of this fine tool.

A precaution: GPS gives you your current elevation, but the uncertainty of 150 meters is too much to be of use. Use an altimeter, or your GPS-location on a topo map with its contour lines to find your elevation.

So if you like maps, compasses, etc., look into a GPS. There are great fun!! Some useful references are shown below.

GPS Made Easy, Using Global Positioning Systems in the Outdoors, Lawrence Letham, The Mountaineers, 1996.
GPS Land Navigation, 2nd Edition, Michael Ferguson, Glassford Publishing, Boise, Idaho, 1997
<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/gcraft/notes/gps/gps.html>