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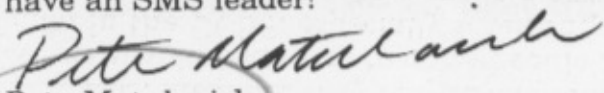
March 16, 1999

To all SMS Members:

I want to thank the many SMS members who wrote to me in support of my position against our group's association with the Orange County Sierra Singles. I have included some of your comments here. Mark Goebel wrote a response supporting our association with the OCSS. I would like to respond to some key points he has made:

- 1. Mark says OCSS ski standards are the same as the SMS.** This is misleading. What good is it to adopt these standards if they are not adhered to and few of your skiers can meet them? SMS leaders who have attended joint OCSS outings report that the skills of the vast majority of OCSS skiers are dramatically beneath our most minimum standards, meaning they are unable to link three turns down a moderate slope. I don't feel we should add tours to our schedule that have to be adjusted to the low skill levels found in the OCSS, especially when they take time away from doing more meaningful tours. By associating with a group whose abilities are so far below ours, and whose leaders obviously do not screen their participants as is claimed, can only lower our standards and tarnish our reputation.
- 2. Mark feels we need to lead joint tours with the OCSS because we only have 100 members and we badly need more.** This, too, is misleading. Our membership has hovered around 100 for as long as I can remember. That said, I agree with Mark that we should always try to strengthen our section, but we don't need to lead joint OCSS tours to do that. The SMS already leads clinics and introductory tours where any aspiring skier, including those from the OCSS, can attend. We should do a better job of promoting these to all relevant sections (including the OCSS). If that isn't enough, then why don't we schedule a "Get to Know the SMS" snowcamp each season. For this one trip we could lower our standards, and be up front about it. I think the danger is when people try to slip these joint OCSS tours into our schedule and then try to claim they meet SMS standards when they clearly do not.
- 3. Mark feels it's o.k. for leaders to get free or partially free trips.** Condo trips to resort areas where leaders go free can commercialize a section. Look what's happened to the OCSS. Fifteen out of 18 OCSS ski trips this season are expensive pay trips! I feel the more we associate with the OCSS, the more likely this could spread to our section. It has already done so in three other sections and is spreading throughout the Sierra Club. It doesn't matter if the Sierra Club approves of it -- it's wrong for our section!

I feel that we should keep our standards high and not jeopardize the unique blend of camaraderie and esprit de corps we share in the SMS by conducting Nordic trips with a commercial group whose member's skiing abilities are dramatically beneath our minimal requirements. If you agree, then I would like to hear from you. The OCSS wants to lead more trips with us. They even tried to schedule an SMS outing that didn't have an SMS leader!


Pete Matulavich

Craig Dostle
SMS Member

Publisher, Couloir Magazine

MAR 99

LETTERS THE MUGELNOOS WON'T PUBLISH

I had a meeting with the the Central Committee and Mugelnoos editor in the hopes of having my recent letter critical of our association with the OCSS published in the *Mugelnoos*. They refused to publish it, feeling it was too critical of Keith Martin and the OCSS, and have now adopted a censorship policy for the *Mugelnoos*. The editor thought I shouldn't criticize the skiing abilities of the OCSS. Keith himself said that the *Mugelnoos* should only deal with "harmonious" issues. I then asked if they would at least publish the letters I had received in support of my position. A few of the committee members thought that some of the letters should be published, but one committee member, who refused to read the letters, felt that none of them should be published. When I asked him why, he said because there was no way to know that the writers wanted to have their letters published. When I informed him that most of the letters included written authorization to have them published, and some, in fact, were addressed to the *Mugelnoos*, the committee member declared that the letters were tainted because they weren't sent to the *Mugelnoos* directly. I informed the committee member that two of the letters were sent directly to the *Mugelnoos*. Certainly those would be published. Those letters weren't published either. Yet, this same committee member had no problem with writing his own 1,000- word letter and having it published in the very next issue of the *Mugelnoos*. Readers are advised to read the following letters with caution as they contain matter of an unharmonious nature. You are also advised to destroy them as soon as you are finished, before the SMS censorship police barge into your home and have you arrested for being in possession of illicit materials.

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Pete's thoughts about joint trips are right on target. The skill level and conditioning required for the SMS is probably three times that for the OCSS. Competent ski mountaineers want to ski with other skilled participants; want to extend themselves. That's the way to draw members, not by lowering standards. Having led hundreds of Nordic Touring trips, I know from experience that non-SMS ski jaunts involve large groups of "paying guests" shuffling along on boards for a few hours. Leading OCSS and NSTS outings make a tour-guide out of a leader. One doesn't really ski, certainly not "mountaineer" - instead one cajoles, pampers, lauds, "way to go" paying guests. It's a completely different game. Don't get caught in it. It all becomes a "for profit" bottom-line exercise.

Norm Kingsley
SMS Member
Co-founder Nordic Ski Section

I agree with Pete 100% about the OCSS. It is a nice place to socialize if you are single. The easy touring trips should be conducted in the Nordic touring section. I don't think the OCSS should be leading technical or difficult trips and that they should encourage their members to participate in the appropriate group.

Bob Wright
SMS Member

Read with interest and general agreement Pete Matulavich's warning about aiming too low to increase participation in the SMS. If only a few qualify, so be it. The SMS will attract more members by showing that aspect of ski mountaineering that comes only by taking the boldest lines, whether on skis, crampons, or the social activities it defines. Don't compromise your standards to pump up your numbers.

Craig Dostie
SMS Member
Publisher, Couloir Magazine

I agree with Pete. Who said these singles could tele? If I'm in trouble in the backcountry, I want SMS people, not Sierra Singles!!

Craig Hoechstetter
SMS Member

March 18, 1999

I agree wholeheartedly. The SMS should not associate with the OCSS. As a former member of Base Camp I knew the original SMS members well enough to know that they would support his stand also.

Bill Voss
SMS Member

Although I am a relatively new member of the SMS, I was attracted to it due to its seriousness of purpose and commitment to a high level of activity. I fear that involvement with a more socially-oriented group will seriously dilute and endanger the level of pursuit and, in fact, the very nature of the SMS.

Dave Baron
SMS Member

There is a long tradition of opinions, criticisms, and general all-around hell-raising in the *Mugelnoos*. Pete Matulavich's concerns regarding the Orange County Sierra Singles infiltration of the Ski Mountaineers should have been published in the *Mugelnoos*. This is the *Mugelnoos*, not the *Snowflake*. Much of what Pete said about the OCSS is true. I spoke to this group during my campaign for the Angeles Chapter ExComm and was surprised to see that their monthly meeting charges an entry fee. In other words, you have to pay them money to attend an OCSS meeting! And those OCSS trips are expensive! Is the OCSS interested in ski mountaineering for its own sake? Or does the OCSS want to use the Ski Mountaineers as a cash cow? The Ski Mountaineers should keep its distance from the OCSS.

R.J. Secor
SMS Member
Former Central Committee Officer

I don't think this is a good idea. The SMS would become a social organization instead of a technical ski mountaineering group. Why doesn't the OCSS associate with the Nordic Ski group?

Steve Wilkie
SMS Member

I thank Pete for trying to save the SMS from OCSS nonsense. How could something like this happen? We did well as singles and couples, but we were mountaineers first! They are some of my most precious memories, those trips. Good luck!

Pete Matulavich
Pete Matulavich

Rosemary Lynch
SMS Member

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