


THE  MOUNTAINS

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BUCELNODS

March 1999

Issue # 750

BLOODY COULOIR- THREE FINGERS

March 13-14, 1999 by Reiner Stenzel

The originally scheduled trip to Mt Baldy's Dare, Shit, and Zen chutes had to be canceled (S... happens, no snow). So I chose another chute with snow, Bloody Couloir, e-mailed to a dozen SMS'ers, and got two participants, Don Pies and Coby Teffts. Thanks to Don's assistance it became an official trip. Coby was new to the SMS but after he described his skiing background I thought Bloody was the right intro tour for him. We were so lucky with the weather: A storm had moved through on Thursday (3/11) and the next one was due on Sun (3/14). Our plan was to do Bloody on Sat and something steep on Sun morning and the timing was just right for both.

Bloody Couloir is one of the classic ski descents in the Eastern Sierra Nevada, described in John Moynier's book of Backcountry skiing (p.142,177), Craig Dostie's Couloir (Vol.X, No.5, Feb 98, p.29) and on the web at <http://www.395.com/bloodv.htm>. <http://Www.gomammoth.com/index.shtml>, <http://www.gomammoth.com/bloody.jpg>, etc). The couloir on the N side of Bloody Mtn (12,544') is visible from Hwy 395 near Mammoth Lks. The ascent along Laurel Crk is about 6 mi and 5,000' one way.

We met Sat at 6 am at the intersection of the Sherwin Creek Rd and Laurel Lks Rd, organized our gear, forced down some oatmeal, and were off by 6:45 am. After a 15 min hike we continued on skis and climbed over a ridge into the drainage of Laurel Crk. Except for a few bare spots the 4WD road allowed a steady ascent to the Laurel Lks where we had our first rest. It was windy and slightly overcast. After continuing around a ridge we suddenly faced Bloody Couloir. It's an awe-



Coby Teffts turnin' in the steeps on Bloody Couloir

some sight: At the base the couloir starts broad like Baldy Bowl, but then narrows and rises at a progressively steepening angle some 2700' straight to the summit. By 11 am we started our switchbacks. Fortunately, the snow was soft since the N-facing couloir has too little sun to crust up. In endless long zig-zag turns we worked our way up toward the Y-shaped split in the couloir. By noon the couloir was in the shade. Don turned around, Coby stayed at the rock tower at the split, and I ventured higher. It is recommended to ascend to the left of the split since the right is steeper and narrower. However, the local winds had scoured the snow on the easier side and deposited it as loose powder in the sleeps.

(Continued on page 7)

MUGELNOOS STAFF

EDITOR Don Ralphs
MUGELMAILER Pat Hollman

NEXT ISSUE

Issue deadline April 20 All letters, photos, or articles should be sent to Mugelnoos editor, Don Ralphs, 431 Alma Real Dr, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Materials can be sent by IBM disc or e-mailed to dralphs@ibm.net. If you want your photos returned after publication please send a SASE. We are not responsible for lost photos.

SMS WEB PAGE

HTTP:www.angeleschapter.org/skimt/
Slide Show, Five years of trip reports, backcountry link sand much more. Check it out

TRIPS

May 8-9 Mt Morgan Ldr Mark Goebel Asst: Dan Richter
May 8-13 Eastern Sierra ski tour
Ldr Tom Marsh Asst McGuir
May 15-16 Mammoth area day tours
Ldr Gerry Holleman Asst Paul Harris
May 22-23 Treasure Lakes, Dade Couloir
Ldr Reiner Stenzel Asst Owen Maloy
May 29-31 Tioga and Sonora Pass Ski Camp
Ldr Owen Maloy Asst Kathy Crandall
May 29-30 Palisades Glacier Ldr R Stenzel Asst K Martin

AVALANCHE INFORMATION FOR THE EASTERN SIERRA

Phone: 760-924-5500
Web: www.csac.org/Bulletins/Calif/current

FOR SALE

Scarpa T-2 telemark boots, size 10, \$75.00. Liners are in excellent condition. Fits sizes 10 1/2 to 11. Call Mark Goebel 714-963-9384 for additional information.

CORRECTIONS TO MAILING LIST

Please advise our Muggelmailer, Pat Hollman, of any changes or corrections in the mailing list accompanying last months issue. Especially those pesky area codes.

The Mugelnoos is a newsletter published by and for the Ski Mountaineers Section of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter since 1938. Send subscriptions and address changes to: Pat Holleman, 1638 6th Street, Manhattan Beach, CA. 90266 \$7 per year payable to "Ski Mountaineers" Due in October. Subscription payments are not tax deductible as charitable contributions

Meetings

3d Tuesday each month - November - May (except December)
7:30 PM Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium
4730 Crystal Springs Drive, Los Angeles, CA

OFFICERS

Chair Keith Martin	Vice-chair Richard Geist
Secretary Susan Loftus	Treasurer Mark Goebel
Programs Steve Hessen	Webmaster Owen Maloy
Outings and Safety	Owen Maloy

NOMINATIONS OPEN UNTIL APRIL 20

Members have until April 20 to put forth the names of the future officers of the SMS. Submissions can be made to an officer or to the Editor in time for the next issue

Printer Volunteer Wanted

With printing costs going nowhere but up, we could really use the assistance of a member with some fancy computer driven printers in their office. Help us out. Contact the editor

- Snow Report-April 7, 1999

Mt Baldy

We're having an Amazing April! Yesterday's storm dropped over a foot of snow at higher elevations, and today's storm could drop another foot. What's really exciting is that there was already a one to two foot base in Baldy Bowl from two storms last week! By the end of the day, I expect we'll have at least a three foot snow depth in the bowl, maybe even more. Snow is now falling at 2,000 feet. Six inches have accumulated in Baldy Village (4,600'). Amazing! Pete Matulavich

Mammoth

Amazing amounts of snow in Mammoth over the past 10 days, maybe 3 feet. Very cold; 27 F on my balcony, which is next to the warm house. Streets completely frozen and hard ice-covered by 6 PM. More expected.

Skied Mammoth yesterday with Walt Boge -- snow showers, cold and windy. The entire face was closed because of avalanche hazard, as well as Chair 3, Chair 12 and the Chair 19 area. St Anton was closed also. Owen Maloy

About Joint Trips with Other Sections

The SMS Central Committee has reviewed various letters stating that joint trips with other sections compromise SMS standards, and that certain trips had participants who did not ski up to SMS standards.

Attacks on other sections violate Sierra Club standards and should not be published in the Mugelnoos. People who do not approve of the practices of another section should complain to that section.

The SMS schedules trips according to the proposals of leaders. It does not dictate the kind of trips that may be led. This free-market policy was adopted in 1979 by a 2/3 vote of the members. There has been no change in that policy. Those who do not wish to participate on specific trips are free to stay home or volunteer to lead the trips they want.

In particular there is no SMS policy either for or against joint trips with any other Sierra Club section. Censoring trip proposals for political correctness would be a serious mistake, although trips are reviewed for feasibility.

Joint leader training trips have been approved by the Central Committee because of the financial advantages of combining forces in obtaining professional training. This training has been completely consistent with SMS standards and policies. It satisfies parts of the Ski Mountaineering Test used to qualify for SMS leadership and Big Badge membership.

The Central Committee encourages all kinds of skiing. A few trips joint or other) are aimed at intermediate (fourth-class) skiers. While this is a lesser ability level than needed for most SMS trips, according to the bylaws it is the level required for SMS membership. Conducting such easier trips, specifying equipment, and screening participants are leader prerogatives.

Because all activities have been in complete compliance with SMS policy in force for many years, the Central Committee sees no reason for action in response to these complaints. Those who disagree may exercise the options for a special meeting or election provided in the bylaws.

The SMS Central Committee:

Keith Martin, Chair

Richard Geist, Vice Chair

Susan Loftus, Secretary

Mark Goebel, Treasurer

Censorship of the Mugelnoos

I don't think it is the job of the editor to put in print any and all submissions from the readers. Among other considerations, issues of appropriateness and reader interest must be weighed.

While I thought the issues raised in Pete's letter were very important, the use of personal attacks and the inflammatory tone were entirely unnecessary and not productive to the debate. I offered several times to publish a version more focused on the issues, but Pete declined.

I received two letters that were supportive of Pete's positions on the issues but since I did not feel they broke new ground on the debate, they were not printed.

Editor

Ice Axe Use on SMS Trips

Many people think that the Sierra Club still forbids the use of ice axes, but that has not been true for some years now. Trips on which the use of ice axes or other climbing equipment is required for safety are restricted to Sierra Club members. Refresher training may be conducted on any such trip, but formal training trips require special approval. Leaders proposing such trips must have them approved by the Club's national Mountaineering Oversight Committee. The SMS is currently working on a minor modification of our safety policy to cover such restricted trips. This revision will allow SMS I-rated leaders who have passed an LTC snow checkout to lead such trips, which normally require at least an M rating.

Club policy controls the use, not the equipment itself. Any participant may bring any personal safety equipment on any trip. If the use of the equipment is incidental, such as carrying ice axes in case a difficult spot or two might be encountered, the trip is not restricted. Here is the March 1996 language from the Club's Insurance Manual, which may soon change slightly:

"The policy language applies only to trips which require Mountaineering Equipment. This should be interpreted to mean any outing or activity where the leadership anticipates, contemplates, or expects to use Mountaineering Hardware. In no event, should this be treated as restricting leadership from taking along such mountaineering or other safety equipment as may be prudent to deal with unanticipated hazards. Similarly, there is no prohibition against trip participants bringing along whatever mountaineering or safety equipment they may choose to bring on a trip for their own personal safety. The important thing is that leaders not attempt to avoid the extra requirements for a Mountaineering Outing if the leaders know or reasonably believe that Mountaineering Hardware will be required in order to negotiate the required itinerary on an outing. Remember, violation of these policies could expose the club and its leaders to uninsured claims."

"Mountaineering Hardware" includes climbing ropes, belay devices, ice axes, and so on. A leader may not prevent people from bringing such equipment if they wish, but just because people bring

ice axes doesn't mean they know how to use them. A leader who encounters a difficult exposed spot on any trip should be prepared to offer a belay to someone who appears to be unskilled or uncertain, or set a fixed rope.

Owen Maloy, Outings and Safety

Nature Knowledge Workshop, March 27-28, 1999

At the behest of the SMS, the Natural Science Section conducted a Winter Ecology Workshop on skis in the Mammoth area, to study animal tracks, geology, local flora, and other items. Attendance at one of these workshops is required to complete Angeles Chapter leadership training at the level required for SMS leadership. The Central Committee felt we should certainly be able to ski while meeting this requirement.

The leaders were Ginny Heringer and Sherry Ross, with naturalists Jean Dillingham and Jim Lowery. Range of Light Group Conservation Chair John Walter wore his USFS naturalist hat as geology interpreter on Saturday. On Saturday we toured around the Obsidian Dome between Mammoth and June near US 395, followed by a potluck supper at the Dillingham home in June Lake. On Sunday the group skied from the Mammoth Mtn Main Lodge into the woods to the north

Some SMS members brought their heavy telemark skis and made some turns on steeper slopes at lunchtime. Others used light touring skis, and were happy to get them to turn at all. All were experienced backcountry skiers.

Owen Maloy



Picture taken after skiing off the backside of the Park City Ski Resort. Solitude is the peak on the right, Brighton on the left. The route goes between the two and drops down to the base of Alta and from there down the canyon to Snowbird.

UTAH INTERCONNECT

By Don Ralphs

This tour has been run commercially for about fifteen years. The idea is to link up several of the major Utah ski resorts that are very close as the crow flies. Park City/Deer Valley share one drainage, Solitude/Brighten the next, and Alta/Snowbird the next, going in a southerly direction. The tour is run four days a week in the north/south direction and three in the reverse. The south to north direction begins and ends in Snowbird, doesn't hit Park City, and reaches only half of the terrain. Cost is \$150. There are two guides for up to 12 clients. The price includes lift passes on the five resorts, lunch, and a van ride back to Park City from Snowbird. The tour runs throughout the season and books up well in advance, though cancellation availability is ready.

We met at a sports store at the base of the Park City ski resort. It was the end of February. We had a glorious blue sky day. There was a good base but there had only been six inches of new snow two days earlier. We had a mom and dad/2 teenager team from Jersey and two young couples from that incredible ski Mecca, Panama.

We were given ave beacons, but no instruction as to how to use them. Though we had extremely stable conditions, I was surprised to learn that this is the same procedure they would use after a big dump.

We rode the lifts to the top of Park City and then checked out with the ski patrol before skiing over the back side at about 10 AM. We descended some 1600 ft. down a south facing slope to the base of the Solitude lift. The snow was still a little hard and broken up by the snowmobileers who had been out causing a

ruckus the previous day. We skied under some power lines and past a few summer homes. Not exactly wilderness here.

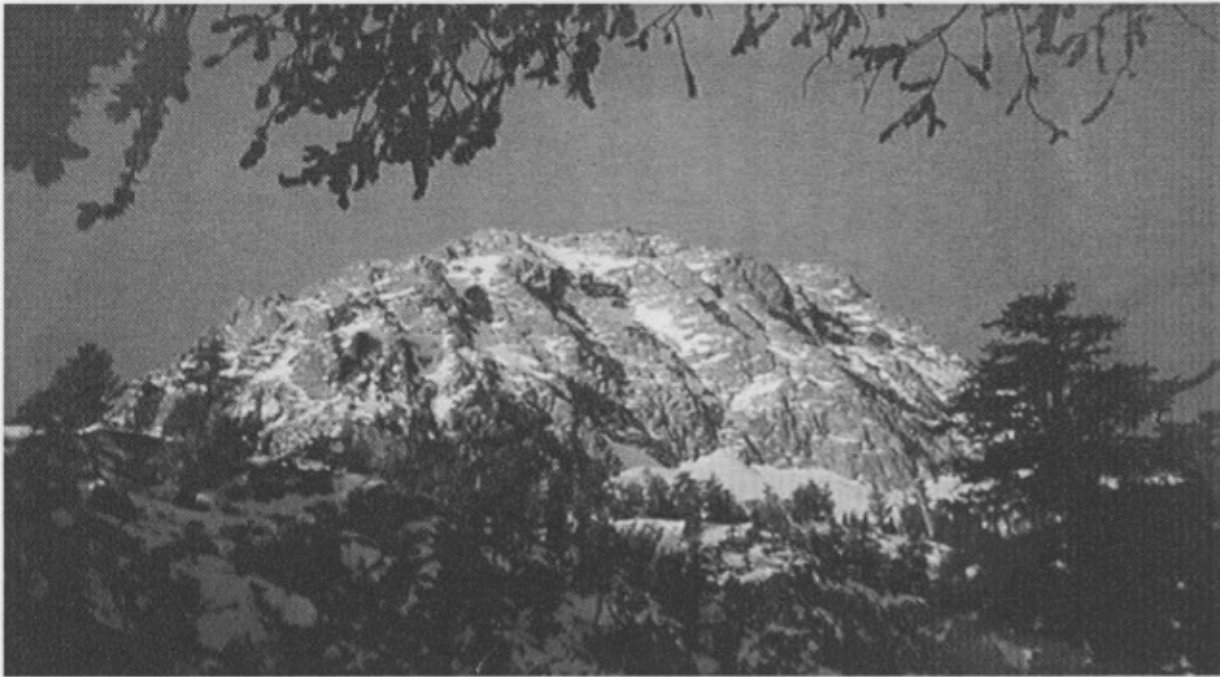
We rode the Solitude lift up the opposite north facing slope and then traversed to the adjacent Brighten area, took a run and descended back to the Solitude base lodge for lunch.. At the top of the Solitude lift, we hiked for only 20 minutes to the Solitude/ Brighton saddle, where we commenced our descent down the south facing slope to Alta. By now, the snow had softened and we hiked out into some steeper terrain and a few untracked pitches. Fine snow becoming pretty sloppy as we lost altitude

It was remarkable how many people there were in this backcountry. One is never out of sight of ten to twenty skiers or snowboarders at a time and the vast terrain is tracked in the most improbable areas even after a recent dusting. Helicopters were buzzing in regularly, people are out having picnics. This is truly their backyard.

We next took a lift up Alta and descended to the Snowbird area. A tram to the top of Snowbird led us to our final run of the day and our waiting van.

The guides were very easy going, good timin' guys. Our skiers looked really strong on the initial groomed run at Park City but had real difficulty in the early hard crust and later slush. With no screening for ability, competence of clients could be a real problem in more difficult conditions.

This is more of a ski resort tour than a backcountry experience. We had two approx 1600' off resort descents and neither were memorable, though on a blue sky day like ours it was good fun. It would be very easy to do this tour w/o a guide, but there is a hefty fine for leaving the backside of Park City and the various lift tickets would be tres \$\$\$.



Sunrise on the ridge south of Golden Trout Lake

SARDINE CANYON Feb. 13-14, 1999

(Private Trip Reiner Stenzel)

A mid-winter backcountry trip in the Sierra Nevada is always an adventure. A break in the storm system was predicted for the Presidents Day weekend. I had no luck in finding other SMS'ers on a short notice, therefore took off *with* my best friend Tatanka who never says no. Since on Fri eve, before the long weekend, the Fwy 405 was solidly covered with metal, I opted for an Alpine start on Sat, drove to Independence, inspected Sardine Cyn from the 395 and gave it a go ahead. In this *low* snow year I was sure to be able to drive up to the Onion Valley parking lot. But trouble started already at the 7,000' snow level where, in spite of chains, the tires vanished in unconsolidated snow. The driving was over and a long ski ascent started (4mi, 2000' to the parking lot). No chance to do Sardine Cyn in a day trip. After skiing up the road and along Independence Crk I arrived in the afternoon at the parking lot. Not a soul around, not even ski tracks at this usually busy place. The route up toward Golden Trout Lake starts with a steep climb. By 5 pm I set up camp in a stand of old pine trees. It was getting windy, cold and snow flurries came down. After dinner, the wind really picked up and periodically ferocious gusts came down the gully from Dragon Pk. We were all engulfed in spin drifts. Contrary to general principles, Tatanka was allowed into the tent. I did not mind the extra warmth of a 90 lb K-9. Occasional growls kept prowling coyotes at a

distance. All night long trees and tent were shaken by the winds, spindrift found its way into the smallest tent openings, and a nature call became a true punishment. Next morning, I awoke to a bloody red sunrise. Miraculously, the winds had calmed down. At 8am we headed up Lilley Pass (11,920', 0.5mi W of Kearsarge Pk). The slope was steep and frozen hard, requiring careful edging and a minimum of kickturns with a full pack. The dog had no problems uphill but downhill his claws don't break. Then I have to leave good tracks in which he usually follows. The upper part of Sardine Cyn was covered with windslabs but on the lee side of Pk 3877m there was dry powder snow. I contoured around this peak to look into Little Onion Valley. It's a superb ski terrain but there was no safe way down from the ridge between Pks 3877m and 3701 m. After some nice tele turns down onto Sardine Lake there was a stretch of barren rocks, followed by a ski descent down the bench at 3300m. It was paralleling on hard snow. Below the mine, breakable crust required careful balancing or exhausting jumps with full pack. Then, a zone of spring-like snow started for great telemarking. Below the upper mining road the canyon narrows and required short-radius turns around many bushes and rocks. Finally, at 2200m, one crosses again the mining road which one traverses South to the Onion Valley Rd. From Lilley Pass to the mining road it is a 4,800' ski descent, a great but exhausting run with a full pack. By 3pm I was cruising home in no traffic. The mountains were shrouded in clouds in anticipation of the next storm.



Don Pies and Reiner at the base of Sherwin Bowl

Since skiing up or down on hard-packed steep slopes was asking for trouble I chose the right hand side. As the gully narrowed the switchbacks became shorter and shorter, the turning dicier, the effort to ascend in 2 feet deep powder at 40+deg angles utterly exhausting, and the snow stability somewhat questionable. Finally, rockfall from the steep sidewalls was the call to get down. I could not afford an injury six weeks before the Haute Route. Although the summit appeared within reach I decided to turn back by 1:30pm.

Facing the couloir downhill was quite a sight. Don had skied to the base and was a barely visible spot on a rock. The first few turns produced plenty of adrenaline. Snow

gushed down with each turn. At the lower tower, Coby joined the fun with a great display of high-speed parallel turns on his randonnee skis. I enjoyed my powder tele skis at a slower pace. After at most 10 turns it was necessary to stop and recover. Somewhere in the deep snow my Voile release bindings came off and I took a healthy plunge. Don was watching from below as we left our tracks in the Bloody Couloir. Eventually, we regrouped with him on a sunny rock recovering with great satisfaction from an exciting ski descent. After some picture taking we skied back the mining road to the Laurel Lks, plunged down another powder slope through mixed forest and bushes to Laurel Creek, crossed it on a collapsing snowbridge, and paralleled along the creek on soft spring snow. Some hiking and skiing along the dirt road got us back to the cars by 4 pm. It was 9 hrs of exciting skiing, nobody got hurt or was too exhausted. We drove into town, called Owen Maloy, went out together for dinner at Matsu's, accepted his kind offer to stay at his condo, and heard many a story till late into the night. Our plan for Sunday was to ski the Three Fingers in the Sherwin Ridge, a favorite backcountry tour for the locals at Mammoth Lks.

Sunday morning it was windy and an ominous front was building up. Before 8 am we headed to the golf course below the Sherwin Bowls, left one car at Ranch Rd, and carpooled up to the Lake Mary road end near Tamarack Lodge. From there we skied up to an old mine but missed the local's trail and ended up with a cl.3 mountaineering ascent to the Sherwin Ridge. On the plateau (10,100') we were greeted by ferocious winds indicating that the next storm was impending. Like tilted drunkards we staggered in 50mph gusts along the ridge toward the Rock in front of which the Three Fingers lead down into Sherwin Bowl. Luckily, the gullies to the East were on the lee side and had surprisingly good powder snow left. The ski run down on 35deg powder slopes was a pure delight. At the base we traversed through the forest into the open avalanche slope of the Sherwin Bowl whose runout got us straight back to the car by noon. An hour later, we had carpooled back to the upper car and were ready to drive home. High winds and dust filled the entire Owens Valley. The whole weekend was a great success in backcountry skiing. Just a pity that so few joined the fun. Thanks to Don for his co-lead and to Coby for joining our group.

SMS 1998 FINANCIAL REPORT

Receipts	
Mugelnoos subscriptions	\$1440
Sales revenues (a)	2562
Outings fees (b)	2867
Interest from check & savings accts	269
Annual deposit refund, Griffith Pk aud	100
	\$7238
Expenditures	
Outings expenses (c)	\$2759
Mugelnoos printing/mailing (d)	513
SMS brochure	363
Sales expenses (a)	2191
Griffith Pk aud. rental/deposit	370
Avalanche books for leaders	81
Misc. expenses	153
CA sales tax (g)	84
Keller Hut donation	1000
	\$7514
Deficit	\$(276)

Cash Balance @ December 31, 1998

Checking	\$ 5776
Savings	6157
Petty cash	51
Total	\$11,984

Notes:

- a)Avalanche beacons, SMS video, patches & pins.
 - b)Training camp & Feb ski wknd at Keller, Tioga Pass Resort. c) Outing fees, food, hut fees, lift tickets/lessons at Bear Mtn. d)Mostly postage. Most printing costs were donated by Andy Fried. e) Cost of items in (a) above.
 - f) John Moynier's avalanche safety book distributed to leaders.
 - g)Sales tax on beacons/equip ordered at wholesale.
- The substantial bank account is the result of many years of little or no cost for printing Mugelnoos, and income from the annual tele training camp particularity when members provided the training. Each issue is now costing approximately \$100 to print, and income from the ski wknd is now minimal to breakeven.



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