

THE MUGELNOOS

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Steve Hessen and Susan Loftus approach the summit of Skier's Alta

### SKIER'S ALTA & PEAR LAKE

February 20-22, 1999

by Steve Hessen

Having obtained five spaces in the Pear Lake Hut lottery, our group had a warm and cozy destination for this west side Sierra ski tour. The Friday weather forecast called for drizzly conditions to 7,500 feet, so we were pleasantly surprised to encounter a clear, starry night as we arrived at the road head Friday night.

Saturday morning brought overcast and cold conditions but without rain or slush. Our group of nine included: Richard Geist, Mark Goebel, Randy Lamm, Susan Loftus, Bahram Manahedgi, Don Pies, Eric Watts, Reiner Stenzel, and Steve Hessen. Four were using AT gear and five were free heelers. As we were preparing to leave, we noticed a group of five skiers departing for the hut. Our group moved quickly with the settled snow conditions allowing for fast travel. As we went up the Hump, we caught up

with and passed the other group. While taking a lunch stop at Heather Gap, the wind picked up and it began snowing. Speeding up our lunch, we quickly dropped over the pass and descended to the lakes below. By the time we reached Heather Lake the snow fall had abated significantly. We continued past Aster Lake and skied down to the hut. It was nice and warm as the hut keepers were in residence. We made good time in reaching the hut in under four and a half hours.

Five of us settled into the hut and the four who were snow camping set up their tents nearby. Our early arrival allowed for enjoyable afternoon runs near the hut. Late in the afternoon the other group arrived. They were locals from Visalia who had been to the Hut previously. They proved to be nice people, being both good company and having a good touch (butane blowtorch!) with the pellet stove. We marveled at some of their backpack cuisine which included vast quantities of spaghetti, potatoes, and chorizo. It should be noted that

*(Continued on page 7)*

## MUGELNOOS STAFF

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## NEXT ISSUE

Issue deadline May 25. 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 can't be responsible for lost photos.

## SMS WEB PAGE

HTTP:www.angeleschapter.org/skimt/  
Slide Show, Five years of trip reports, backcountry links and 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 info for Eastern Sierra

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

## For Sale

Green Scarpa T2's, Scarpa size 9 (U.S.10), like new, no kidding!  
- worn only a few times lift skiing - \$150  
Montet MX skis, 197 cm with Voile release cable binding, \$120  
. Gerry Holleman 310-374-4654

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## Meetings

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

May 18- Haute Route Lecture & Slide Show  
Four SMS members travel to the Alps next week to ski this classic route from Zermatt to Chamoinx. Come hear their story at the May monthly meeting.

## 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

## Will Sell Mother for Printer Volunteer

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

## Beck Weathers Lecture

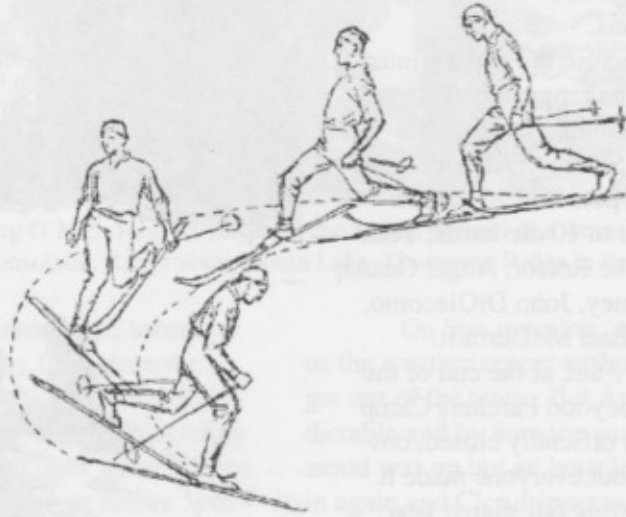
Beck Weathers, a member of one of the ill fated 1997 Everest expeditions, will be giving a lecture 5/27 at Redondo Performing Arts Center  
Information: 310-546-6222 or www.speakersla.com.

## Mt Baldy Report

Several of us skied Mt. Baldy this past weekend and found decent corn conditions, but unfortunately the snow was going fast. Four foot snow depth of a week ago now averaged two feet due to record high temperatures this past week. We found the best corn in the 9,000 to 10,000 range off of W. Baldy into the west bowl. We heard the bowl itself was good in the morning but was too soft by the time we got there in the afternoon. We figure Baldy will be good for only another weekend or so, and then you'll have to pick your lines carefully. The backside looked no better than the front. The backside of Bighorn/Ontario ought to be good for another week. In the distance, San Geronio appeared to have an ample snow depth and looked like it might be good for another couple of weeks.  
Pete Matulavich April 19, 1999

## The Telemark Turn, Then and Now by Owen Maloy

Here are a couple of pictures that emphasize the enormous difference between the modern telemark turn and the old one. The first picture below is from the PSIA's "The Official American Ski Technique" (1970), which has an excellent history section. The sketch shown was reprinted from "Skiing Turns," by Vivian Caulfield, 1922.



The Telemark Turn in 1922.

Of course these skis had no sidecut and were double-cambered, but a person would have a lot of trouble skiing this way on anything. People still are taught to do this by some instructors. Note the extremely long lead with the hands low, which puts the weight back. The skier sticks the front foot out with little weight on it, and then follows the skis at the end of the turn (but not the middle). There is very strong steering of the stemmed inside ski, but that's hard when standing on it. In the second frame the skier is leaning backward; in the fourth, leaning forward, almost looking at the tips. Faceplant time. No wonder the turn fell out of favor. It looks like it hurts.



Now here's a recent photo of Urmias Franosch of the US National Nordic DemoTeam making a modern high-speed dynamic carved telemark. He's using a very short lead (you can barely tell it's a tele). Note the high flex in the skis, hip angulation to edge the skis, and anticipation, facing into the next turn.

## CLOUDRIPPER, April 10-11, 1999

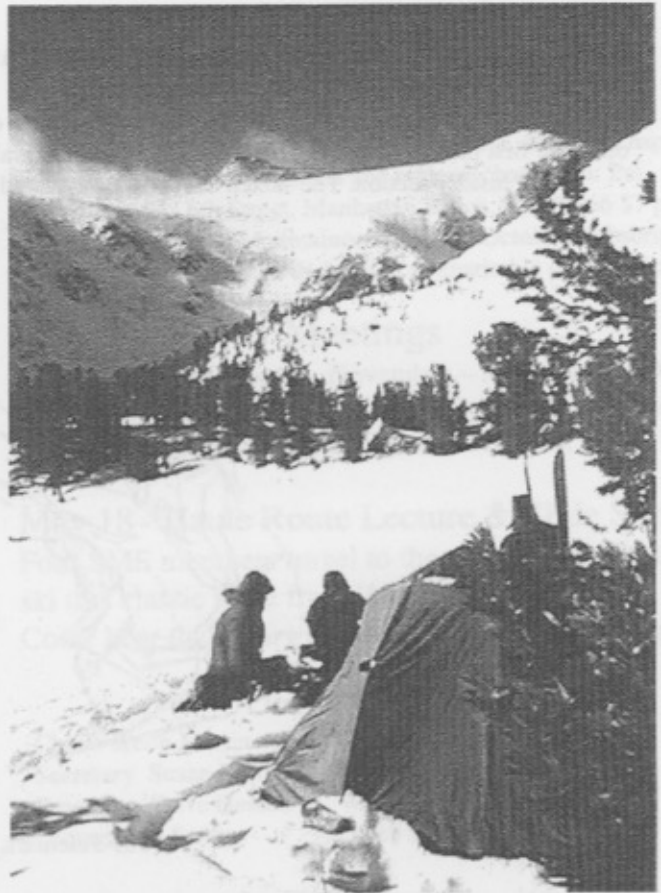
by Reiner Stenzel

This trip was a fine ski mountaineering adventure with great powder skiing, a challenging peak ascent, a gamble with the weather and avalanche conditions.

On Thursday before the trip a winter storm moved through the range, the avalanche conditions were rated as high, and another storm was forecast for Sunday. After describing the situation to our potential 15 participants, the group shrunk to 10 die-hards: Tom Marsh, Mark Vogt, Mike Rector, Angel Ocana, Jim DeRose, Brad Kinney, John DiGiacomo, Doug O'Neil, and Michael McDermift.

We met on Sat 7 am, at the end of the South Lake Road just beyond Parchers Camp (9,400'). The road was officially closed, covered with an icy crust, but everyone made it somehow up. After sorting out shared gear, packing, testing avalanche beacons, we were off to an 8:30am start on a sunny crisp morning. The tour starts with a good warm-up, a 1000' climb through forest up to Bluff Lake (10,523'). Since the snow from the last storm had not yet settled, safe route finding was the highest priority. We ascended half way up in the forest, but then the snow became so unsettled that at places one could push the entire ski pole into the snow without reaching a solid layer. We traversed into an open area which, unfortunately, was an old avalanche path. Less than one foot of soft snow on top of a solid base felt much better. We switch-backed up among large boulders, everyone spaced properly apart and on high alert. Finally, the slope mellowed and near Bluff Lake we were back on safe terrain. As a reminder, we saw a big, fresh, cornice-triggered avalanche on a nearby ridge of the Inconsolable Range.

We were so lucky with the weather, the spring sun was out, no wind, and we could ski with one layer of clothing. Near Brown Lake (10,800'), we passed some inviting gullies which were loaded with fresh, untouched powder up to the 12,000' ridge of the Inconsolable Range. The next day, we had planned to carve them. We made basecamp at the shores of Green Lake (11,054'). A row of pine trees provided shelter from winds, otherwise we had a grand view over the frozen lake towards the



Campsite at Green Lake 11054', Clouddripper 13525' in the background. Mike Rector and John DiGiacomo

Inconsolable Range with Clouddripper in the distance.

Unfortunately, the weather began to change. A broad high layer of clouds moved. In the North the clouds began to cover the summit of Mt. Tom. During lunch we considered our options: Originally, we wanted to climb Clouddripper on Sun morning. But with the impending storm, there was only a narrow window of opportunity. We therefore decided to make an attempt for the summit in the afternoon. By 1:30 pm 8 skiers headed South along the creek drainage toward a steep slope leading up to the 13,000' plateau North of Clouddripper. We carved endless switchbacks into this 1500' slope whose angle steepened to about 35 deg. The deep snow and the thin air took their toll, the pace slowed down, and somewhere on the slope the group decided it would be more fun to ski down than up. In the meantime three of us, Jim, Mark and I, were on the plateau with Clouddripper in full view. The summit was still clear of clouds and seemed just an hour away. With my portable radio I contacted co-leader Tom that we would make an attempt for the peak and keep him and the group informed about our progress. We proceeded to ski up on windswept slabs to a band of



Mark Vogt, Doug O'Neil, John DiGiacomo, and Reiner Stenzel in a storm on the 12,000 ridge of the Inconsolable Range above South Lake. Thompson Ridge in the background

rocks, stashed our skis and started the ascent on foot. I set landmarks with my GPS since the chance of finding skis in a whiteout are usually slim. Now it became a race with the descending clouds. An ice cold wind and light snow flurries accompanied us on our climb. Just before 5pm we summited Clouddripper (13,525').

In the South the Palisades Range was still visible while in the North, Mt Humphreys and Tom Basin, etc, were all covered by dark clouds. Finding the peak register was a real challenge since it was in a white plastic cylinder buried in the snow. But it was a pleasure to sign in an SMS trip for the first ascent in 1999. The arctic winds allowed us only a few minutes to rest and take a summit picture, a bite of hard chocolate, and a sip of water. Then we had to move again, climbing down over rock and snow in a storm guided by GPS to find our skis hidden behind a rock. We skied carefully over the wind-slabbed plateau, then dropped down the steep powder slopes toward Green Lke. It felt like skiing on a mine field since fresh powder loosely covered underlying rocks resulting in nasty falls when skiing or turning over them. Further down we followed the tracks of our skiers who descended earlier. But nobody could compete with Angel's tracks which were a straight line of tight precision turns made by short randonnee powder skies.

By 6:30pm we were back at camp. Clouddripper had vanished in the clouds and we were glad to be down. We all had dinner in a snow kitchen while light snow flurries were coming down. As it got darker and gloomier we vanished in the tents. The wind picked up and all night there was a light snowfall.

On Sun morning, at 5:30am, Mark gave us the weather report with the result that nobody got out of the tents. But April weather is unpredictable and by 8am the sun broke through. The mood was up but an hour later the clouds moved in again and Clouddripper was in a whiteout. No chance for a second ascent. So we packed and headed for the powder slopes near Brown Lake. There we simply dropped our packs and switch-backed up for an hour to the 12,000' ridge overlooking South Lake and the Thompson Ridge. The backcountry was in a deep winter weather, covered with fresh snow, clouds drifting around peaks, and more of it on the way. Then the fun started to ski 1,000' down in fresh powder snow. It was one sweet turn after another only interrupted when the legs got too tired. We carved the whole slope with tracks ranging from narrow parallel ones to giant slalom turns, even a straight line of footsteps since Mark's binding broke somewhere on the slope.

By noon, after a brief snack, we continued to ski out. The steep slopes down to Parcher's Camp were another skiing adventure. Now the challenge was tight turns around trees, bushes and rocks with a full pack in deep snow. Even my fat powder skis sank into the bottomless unsettled snow in some places. But everyone made it somehow down and reached the cars by about 1:30pm.

We were in high spirits to have finished an exciting ski mountaineering trip. It was a pleasure to be in the company of fine strong skiers. My special thanks go to Tom for co-leading the trip. In the late afternoon the predicted storm materialized. The mountains vanished in dark clouds which even sank to the ground over Owen's Valley. It rained from Lone Pine to LA.

## Big Badge Memberships Awarded

When the SMS was founded outside the Sierra Club in 1934, advanced (third-class) skiing ability was required for membership, because the Ski Mountaineers was to be a club for better skiers only. This position was soon compromised by such factors as the need for cheap labor to build ski huts, not to mention the tendency to select friends of the opposite sex for qualities other than skiing ability.

In February of 1939, the section voted to establish a new grade of associate membership for fourth-class skiers, with a smaller badge. On the original ("Big") badge, the ski tracks emerge from the valley. On the small badge, they do not. Whether this was typical SMS humor or not is unknown.

In 1939, the requirements for regular membership (now called "Big Badge") were raised to include the first-aid and rescue, avalanche safety, and snow-camping requirements of the new Sierra Club Ski Mountaineering Test, announced in the Bulletin in late 1937 as a qualification for future leaders. Only Big Badge members could be leaders at that time, but the rule was dropped in 1956.

In 1980, the technical leadership qualifications were reinstated. As in 1939, SMS ski leaders must be qualified by passing every element of the Sierra Club Ski Mountaineering Test, appropriately modernized. Only advanced skiers may be leaders. First-aid cards and navigation ability are required (Angeles Chapter I-rating). Avalanche knowledge is obtained by attending an approved seminar. Nowadays, most SMS members have extensive snow-camping experience, required as a prerequisite. A candidate must lead at least one snow-camping trip on skis to qualify as a leader. Last June the SMS Central Committee voted to elect ski leaders with extensive service to the SMS to Big Badge membership. The bylaws require more than mere leadership status. A Big Badge member must have led many trips, served on the Central Committee, or otherwise participated in a significant way. The following leaders have been awarded Big Badge membership by vote of the Central Committee:

Walt Boge, Kathy Crandall, Ken Deemer, Andy Fried, Mark Goebel, Nancy Gordon, Paul Harris, Pat Holleman, Gerry Holleman, Scot Jamison, Marcia Male, Owen Malloy, Tom Marsh, Keith Martin, Pete Matulavich, Mary Motheral, Eddie Nunez, Don Pies, Howard Schultz, RJ Secor, Richard Smith, Reiner Stenzel, Larry Tidball. In addition, the Central Committee awards a Big Badge to long-time member Chuck Gerckens, a qualified SMS leader. As Chair of the Keller Hut Committee, Chuck's efforts sustained the Hut for many years.

Other qualified persons, who may have been omitted in error, may apply to the Central Committee for appointment.

## MT. WOOD, WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR?

Mark Goebel

Mt. Wood rises 5000' above Grant and Silver Lakes, just north of June Lake in the Sierra. Its east facing slope curves upward at an ever steeper angle to the 12,000' summit. A challenge to climb and to ski for sure. I scheduled it last May and continuous El Nino storms forced a change to San Gorgonio instead. It was scheduled again for this May, but the co-leader couldn't make it in May, so we switched it to March 27th. While Mammoth Mountain has lots of snow, in the week prior to the 27th I learned that La Nina wind storms have blown snow away from Mt. Wood except for the highest slopes. With the prospect of a long walk for questionable snow I decided to cancel the trip. Also, only one other person besides the leaders had shown any interest. As I recall, interest last year was also light. I am told that by May the snow will be gone from Mt Wood. Clearly, timing is everything. I am surprised that there was so little interest in this trip. I have the potential for a really big ski descent. Sure you first have to climb up 5000', but that's how this game works. You know, 'earn your turns'.

**I would be interested to know what type of trips our membership is eager to see led, and I am sure our other leaders would also. Just might give us some good ideas for next season. So I encourage the membership to write, fax, or e-mail your trip suggestions to Mugeinoos editor Don Ralphs for publication in a future issue. Even if you don't have a specific trip in mind, just let us know what you like or don't like to ski in the backcountry. Anonymous submission are OK.**

Still looking for something to ski, Bahram Manahedgi and I rocketed to Mammoth Friday night in his turbo charged Audi. Saturday we skied the mountain top-to-bottom, hardly waited in any lines, interviewed two 10 year old racers on the lift (they live in the Bay area, ski really fast, maybe 40mph, and race 2x month), decided not to challenge them to a race, but did nearly ski our legs off, and had a grand time. Early Sunday we drove south to Onion Valley where we were able to reach the mostly snow covered parking lot at 9200'. From there we skinned up about 2000' to a gully on a south facing slope above Gilbert Lake. While the snow pack around Mammoth is approximately normal, and the northern Sierra towards Tahoe is well above normal, the southern Sierra is about two thirds of normal. Above Onion Valley, the south facing slopes have about 3 feet of coverage. The cool breezy weather kept the snow in good shape, and we enjoyed many fun turns on our way down the hill.



Steve Hessen at Pear Lake Hut

*(Continued from page 1)*

Richard Geist upheld the culinary honor of the SMS by bringing a steak dinner with all the trimmings.

The hut proved a cozy base as the weather picked up with snow failing throughout the evening. Our snow campers enjoyed the opportunity to cook, eat, and hang out in sheltered conditions. Saturday morning dawned clear and cool. Only light breezes remained from the storm system. The winds moved the snow around but we had six inches of new powder at a minimum. Skiing with the hut keepers, we ascended the untracked slopes back of the Hut. The outstanding conditions induced six of our group to forego Skier's Alta for the superb slopes and bowls below it. Susan, Reiner, and I continued on to the peak. We were rewarded with great views to the north and east. It all looked inviting...perhaps a High Route from west to east someday. While using his Motorola radio, Reiner was surprised to be able to talk with people in Visalia, some 40 miles away. After taking photos, the three of us dropped down to join

our colleagues having fun on the slopes below.

Given the great snow and the presence of clouds coming up from the Valley below, lunch was reduced to a quick snack, allowing for more turns. We moved to lower runs in the early afternoon. The snow was superb. Mark Goebel, who has skied this area regularly since the early '70s, pronounced conditions to be the best he had seen. We eventually worked our way back to the Hut, for a needed afternoon soup break. Most people rallied for more runs in the late afternoon. Sunday evening was spent enjoyably in the hut. Tired and happy skiers and good food and drink contributed to the atmosphere. We all plan to return and plans were made for next year. We were out of the Hut and skiing by 9.00 on Monday morning. We enjoyed good weather and scenic conditions on the way out. Several people took turns breaking trail enabling us to make good time up to Heather Gap. A tree run down to the trail route and a quick run to the parking lot at Wolverton followed. Attracted by burgers and milkshakes, we immediately headed to Visalia. All in all a great trip. Thanks to all who participated, especially assistant leader Reiner Stenzel, who has lead this trip so many times in the past and was successful in the Hut lottery.



Mark Goebel and Eric Watts takin' 5 on the route up to Skier's Alta

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