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3 SMS'ers ascend the SE Ridge of False White to the bump at 11,600+ feet elevation, May 16, 1999, Yosemite National Park. Photo by Pete Yamagata

Mammoth Area Day Trips, May 15 – 16, 1999

Story by Gerry Holleman

A 5.6 earthquake at 6:22 a.m. had everyone wide awake and ready to go at 7:30 Saturday morning when 12 Ski Mountaineers met in the Mammoth Ranger Station parking lot before driving up to the Blue Col roadhead. Although the road around Lake Mary had been plowed, a locked gate forced us to walk an extra 2 miles from Tamarack Lodge. A chilly wind was blowing under sunny skies as we started up the road.

An energetic group of newcomers and veteran SMS'ers reached Blue Col before noon to find the snow was still surprisingly firm, so an early lunch was arranged to give the snow an extra hour to soften. The wind had died down to an intermittent cool breeze with an air temperature of 58 degrees under bright sun. While spring corn appeared at the bottom, 8 skiers found very firm conditions on the upper half of the col even after 45 minutes of sight-seeing into Deer Lakes Basin. We started down bumpy boilerplate with varying degrees of success. Only Angel Ocana and I went back for seconds. About half way down the col, the snow softened, and from there to the plowed road a generous base of Sierra corn was the order of the day.

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SAN ANTONIO SKI HUT WORK PARTY June 5th and 6th

Skiers are urged to attend the upcoming Baldy Hut work party. Come for one day or both. Those staying overnite will be wined and dined with an outdoor BBQ. Reserve with Jerry Held, Hut Chairman, 714-7518805 if staying overnight. Meet Sat at 8:00am by the gate to help carry supplies.

Local Skiing Continues

There is still local skiing to be had on Baldy and San Gorgonio. A few of us skied San Gorgonio Saturday, May 8th, and found pretty darn good corn conditions. Most of the chutes were filled except for the top 500 feet. We got a good 1,000 foot run. We ran into a couple of other skiers who raved about a 2,000 foot run down the back of Baldy the week before. If you decide to go to either, go quickly, and plan on paying for it with a lot of gain. Still, its worth it. After all, it was just about a month ago that no one thought there'd be any local skiing at all. What a surprise.

Pete Matulavich May 11,1999

Big Big Badge Errata

The Mugelnoos prematurely reported last month the elevation of several esteemed SMS members to Big Badge status. In fact the list was of those recommended for that honor. A vote by the Board has not yet been taken and will be deferred until next year. Excuuuuuuuuuse me!!!!

New Board Elected

Congratulations to the newly elected SMS Board For 1999- 2000:

Mark Goebel
Steve Hessen
Randy Lamm
Susan Loftus
Owen Maloy
Keith Martin

WOLFGANG LERT'S MUGELHUPF MOVIE NOW AVAILABLE ON VIDEO

The Mugelhupf movie features early (approx. 1936) SMS members in a wild and woolly ski chase on Mt. Baldy just following construction of the Baldy Ski Hut. Skiing familiar slopes, you will be impressed by their skills on seven foot hickory skis. Also included in the video, *Ski Memories*, is other historical footage from Switzerland, Mt. Rainier, and Yosemite, narrated by SMS founding member, Wolfgang Lert. The video is \$20.00 plus postage, and it may be order from the New England Ski Museum, 800-639-4181, or from their web site, www.skimuseum.org. The museum's catalog includes many historical skiing books, videos, and even a pure silk necktie with tele skiers on it. Wolfgang, now 82, reports that he is still making turns on ski area cruiser runs, and dreams of his days in the back-country. He recently spent many days at the Film museum in Munich, studying old skiing and mountaineering films, including the lost and just rediscovered first-ever ski film, a 1913 ski ascent of the Monte Rosa.

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue deadline October 1, 1999. 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.

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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

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 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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Saturday's participants were Lorene Samoska and Mike Seiffert (both of whom qualified for sign-off and SMS membership), Angel Ocana, Pete Yamagata, Susan Loftus, Dennis Landin, Ray Smith, Walt Boge, Owen Maloy, Pat Holleman, and the leaders, Gerry Holleman and Paul Harris.

Over a pizza dinner at Giovanni's, discussion turned to the plan for Sunday. Because snow is scarce south of Mammoth this year, northerly destinations were the first choice in spite of the longer Sunday drive required of those who had to go to work Monday (Not me.). The road to Tioga Pass had opened that weekend, so all 12 of us augmented by Bill Lingle who had skied at Cloudripper on Saturday, set out for Tioga at 7 a.m. Given the firm conditions on Saturday, both at Blue Col and Cloudripper, it seemed likely that Mt. Dana, 2000' higher than Blue Col, would also be frozen hard. False White, on the other hand, is often too soft so this seemed like the perfect solution. A crowd of a dozen or more locals preparing for False White at the Saddle Bag Lake intersection helped confirm our selection.

After parking at the Forest Service rest area above Tioga Lodge, we walked nearly to the Yosemite entrance station before finding a spot where the snowplow berm was low enough to climb onto the snow. Then we climbed up through the woods on the southeast slope of Gaylor Peak and crossed over the open ridge, eagerly anticipating a return run on the creamed corn that was already warming nicely on the east side. Our route dropped down the still firm west

side to Gaylor Lake and then through some rocks on the gentle slope past the Great Sierra Mine although none of us saw the old cabin. At 11 a.m. False White (Peak 12002) was in sight but the group elected to ski the inviting snow we were on rather than continue. We climbed an 11,600' bump on the ridge, and settled in on the rocks for a pleasant lunch while the sun did its magic on the still frozen slopes. Numerous skiers were visible below us while we were treated to outstanding views of Cathedral Peak and Mt. Hoffman to the west. La Niña snow depths on Mt. Dana were clearly much less than the El Niño bonanza that remained last July.

At 12:45 we started bouncing over bumpy crust that turned into the silky corn of our dreams a couple hundred feet down. As we whooped with glee making turns along the ridge towards Gaylor Peak, our route angled slightly left to pass north of Gaylor on a line that avoided any climbing. A cornice overlooking Tioga road forced a short back track where a 30 ft. climb put us on the north side of the northeast ridge extending from Gaylor. From there we ecstatically turned, turned, turned all the way to the road to a point about 1/4 mile below our cars. Many thanks to Owen and Ray for recommending this route, which was undoubtedly the right place at the right time. —





SIERRA CORN TOURS - MAY 8.9,1999
Mark Goebel

This outing was postponed one week, and with a week of warm days and cool nights after the storm cycle ended, we found fields of smooth, easy skiing, go fast, have a fun time corn snow. Saturday's objective was Mt. Morgan (north) via hidden Esha Canyon. Meeting at the McGee Creek pack station, participants included myself and Dan Richter as leaders, Bahram Manahedgi, Eric Wafts, Tony Bird, Gerry and Pat Holleman, Randy Lamm, and special guest, John Fisher taking a guide's dayoff to go skiing. Heading south across the stream, we were on snow at the mouth of Esha Cyn in about 25 minutes. Kicking steps up steep slopes, we climbed the curving canyon until we reached about 10,500'. From this point, we were able to view much of the remaining route to the peak, and could see that snow was not continuous. Quickly the decision was made to change direction and head up into a nearby bowl with inviting slopes. Part way up, John recommended and proceeded to dig a hasty pit which revealed a weak underlying layer. With this information, we choose to make our runs on the lower and safer portion of the bowl. Interestingly, from Esha Cyn we had a nice view over the Long Valley Caldera, with Crowley Lake and Glass Mtn off to the east. John informed us that some 760,000 years ago this was the site of one of the world's largest volcanic eruptions. One week after this outing, a 5.6 earthquake occurred in the Caldera and ruffled Mammoth and the surrounding area just to prove that it is not finished yet. Finally, it was time to slide down the canyon, and except for a few bare moraines, we left tracks right to the bottom.

Saturday night we stayed at the Convict Lk campground, some enjoyed the nearby hotspots, and we all enjoyed a warm campfire thanks to Bahram's big box of wood. Sunday, as we drove north to June Lk, it was clearly apparent that the snow pack is deeper from the Mammoth area north. Starting a short distance west of the June Mt Ski area, we hiked up a mostly snow covered trail through the woods to frozen Fim Lk. As we traversed the steep slope (similar to the face of June) we noted many old ski tracks, and eyed several gullies with fingers of snow as possible descent routes. Once at the lake, we took to our skis and skinned our way up the canyon, zigzagging the steeper areas. Finally, we crested on to a plateau and headed towards and up the ridge of the apparent peak. However, were we fooled, the real summit was still another half mile away! With time growing late, we only had time for a bite to eat, and the great view of the snowy Minarets, Mts Ritter, Banner, Lyell, and everything far and near. Then off with the skins, we started down and at first the snow had a thin crust, but soon gave way to sweet corn! The very firm and steep slopes were now softer and our comy smiles just grew and grew. Once past Firm Lk and into the woods, we were able to find a continuous ski route down the face, and on down one of those fingers of snow, It was then only a short walk through low bushes to our cars, Our total descent was about 2800', over two and a half miles, not counting turns. Definitely worth a return visit.



Avalanche Beacons

New Digital Technology Compared

Over a period of 17 days in September and October of 1998 the Swiss Federal Institute of Snow and Avalanche Research organized a study comparing beacons with the newly developed digital technology with optical search aides to three conventional types. Compared were the digital Arva 9000 (France), Ortovox M1, (Germany), and Tracker DTS (US) as against the conventional Barryvox VS 2000(Swiss), Filtre Snow Bip II (Italy), and Pieps 457 Opti 4 (Austria). The published summary of the results was forwarded to the Mugelnoos by Paul Wilson. This article will summarize that rather lengthy document.

Effective Range:

The average range of the new type units (20-30m) are in some cases much shorter than those of the proven reference equipment that have ranges between 30 and 45 m. This gives relatively small search strip widths from 18 to 21 m. The search strip width is defined so that a person buried in an avalanche would be missed by the search no more than twice in a hundred times.

Secondary Search Times:

This test measures the time elapsed from the first signal up to the time of the precise location. The newer devices were quicker:

Tracker	2:04 min
Ortovox	2:22 min
Pieps	2:54 min
Barryvox	3:09 min
Arva	3:14 min

Locating Tests with Two Transmitters

Searching for multiple burials produced some critical results. The two transmitters were buried 5 m from each other, one 1 m deep, the other .5m. The Arva failed to identify the presence of the second transmitter in as many as 15 cases out of 17. Five searchers were unable to locate the second transmitter even when its presence was indicated. When using the Tracker, 11 out of 23 testers did in fact identify two victims buried near to each other but the location of the second transmitter could not be identified again

in five cases despite its presence being indicated. The Ortovox came out best of the newly developed units: 13 of 15 testers identified the presence of two transmitters; and the second transmitter could not be located despite an indication of its presence in only one instance. All the testers taking part were very experienced. Even if it is assumed that when members of the own party are searched for, the # of victims is known, this result is still very disappointing. Only some results were available for the proven equipment. Using the Peips, the second transmitter could not be located in 3 out of 8 cases, but was found when it's presence was indicated.

Wrongful Use

The equipment was repeatedly wrongfully manipulated throughout the 400 locating tests. In 3% of the tests, testers tried to start searching with a unit in a state of operation with which it would have been impossible to find a buried victim. This percentage is quite high if we consider these testers were in fact trained people and that these were staged search exercises. Incidence of error would be considerably higher in the case of a real avalanche accident when searchers work under considerable stress. The display showing the searcher the operation mode is insufficiently clear on some of the beacons tested. The automatic switchover to "transmit" on the Tracker and Barryvox models is still controversial and not liked by most of the testers.

Primary vs Secondary Search Times

The study found a close interrelation between search strip width, locating time and overall rescue time. They examined two examples of an avalanche deposit: one, 30 m wide and 40 m long, and a medium sized 50 m wide and 80 m long. In fact, greater range of the unit means a short primary search but a longer secondary search, and visa versa. In the case of a short range unit, the search is very quick with such a unit on a small avalanche deposit but it takes quite a bit more time on a large avalanche. A beacon with a relatively long range, compared with a short range unit, takes only slightly more time on a small avalanche but such a unit works much faster on a real large avalanche.

(Continued on page 7)

457 khz Frequency Tolerance

The 457 khz frequency is maintained within standard tolerance in the case of all units. The accuracy of the transmitter frequency of the two reference models, Barryvox and Pieps is excellent. Greater deviations, no doubt having a negative effect on compatibility, but still remaining in the standard tolerance of + or - 100hz, were found in the Tracker and Ortovox. In the case of Ortovox, the transmitting frequency of three out of five of the tested units even dropped slightly below the tolerance limit at low temperatures.

The effect of low battery condition on the signal is slightly greater than the effect of low temperature (-20C) Low battery meant a 10% reduction in range. Battery life in the "transmit" mode was around 300 hours in most units, varying 180 hours (Tracker) up to 700 hours (Barryvox)

Receiver Sensitivity

Testing receiver sensitivity, the greatest differences were found not only between the units of various manufacturers but also within the same make. Arva and Barryvox were clearly satisfactory. Pieps and Ortovox were inadequate by a narrow margin. Receiver sensitivity values for Tracker were found to be far too low.

Subjective Scores of the Testers

Testers filled out questionnaires, though fewer were returned for the reference units. Ortovox comes out the best of the three new type units. It's grades for the three essential features (operating safety, operation, and locating system) are practically as good as those for the reference Pieps unit. It's optical search aid, on the other hand is described in many comments as being unsatisfactory. Tracker is second place for the new units, receiving low marks for it's "handling". The Arva was in last.

From a total of 50 questions, Barryvox is described as unsatisfactory on only two points, Pieps and Ortovox, three each. Fitre was unsatisfactory on six, Tracker eight, and Arva twenty two. Even the well proven Barryvox was not free of imperfections, receiving negative marks for size, weight, price, and the automatic switchover.

Conclusions of the Study

There is no doubt that the newly developed equipment is headed in the right direction. The new optical displays offer advantages but are frequently too extensive and in the case of Ortovox M1 even rather confusing. Features promising solutions have been found in the locating system (Tracker DTS: receiving antennas, best direction indicator) or in the combination of analog and digital technology (Ortovox M1). In simple situations (small avalanche, only one buried victim, shallow depth etc.), untrained persons should achieve rather better results with Tracker DTS or Ortovox M1 than with the proven equipment. The disappearance of sensitivity regulators in some cases should also be regarded as welcome. Therefore, it is to be hoped at the manufacturers will not be discouraged by the test results and that they will eliminate the imperfections soon. The true dynamism displayed by the development of the beacon equipment will no doubt lead to substantial improvements for the benefit of the user. It appears to be quite possible that further development will bring us in the near future a big step closer to the target which is easy-to-control, efficient and reliable avalanche rescue search equipment.

December 1998



Bahram Manahedgi skiing the corn snow on San Jauquin Ridge

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