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THE MUGELNODS

December 1999

Issue # 754



The guides w/ Cabane des Vignettes in the background

## HAUTE ROUTE OF THE EUROPEAN ALPS APRIL 24 - MAY 9, 1999 by Reiner Stenzel

This trip report describes a guided ski mountaineering adventure in which four SMS members, Ken Deemer, Don Ralphs, Don Pies, and I, participated. Our guide was Ruedi Beglinger, from the Selkirk Mountain Experience-Durrand Glacier Chalet, and his assistant Derek. Our group of about 12 skiers came from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, and California. We skied the Haute Route from East to West, i.e., from Zermatt to Chamonix. Ruedi recommended to arrive earlier in Zermatt to acclimatize, so my story starts with some private skiing around the Matterhorn. The trip report is followed by some of my personal observations and experiences which could be of interest to others planning a similar trip.

Sun 4/25 Zurich to Zermatt We all made our own flight arrangements. I left Los Angeles on Sat 4/24 to arrive in Zurich on a gray, rainy Sun morning. Upon earlier arrangement, I was picked up by my brother Juergen who lives in Augsburg/Germany and wanted to ski with me for a weekend in Zermatt. Along the way we saw much damage from previous avalanches which ran down every canyon from the Aletschgletscher. We took the tram to Zermatt. While walking through the town to find our Pension Burgener we ran into Don Pies who had arrived a few hours earlier. We later explored the town together, searched in vain for the Matterhorn in the clouds.

Mon 4/26 Zermatt: After breakfast, Don, Juergen and I walked up to Klein Matterhorn ski lift and took the tram to mid level for some warm-up runs. After a few runs on hard packed snow, we headed up to the cloudy top of Klein Matterhorn to ski powder in poor visibility, then ate lunch in the cozy Gandeggghuette, skied till 4 pm and returned to town, where we met Don Ralphs and Ken Deemer. Enjoyed hot showers and a fine dinner at the Pension Burgener. Tue 4/27: Zermatt Sunny weather. After a late breakfast Don P., Juergen and I decided to ski Goernergrat/Stockhorn while Don R. and Ken wanted to ski via KleinMatterhorn to Breuil/Cervinia in Italy. The latter turned out to be closed. We took the Goernergrat Bahn to the summit and had a wonderful view of the Matterhorn and the ridge from Breithorn to Monte Rosa. Beautiful weather, excellent slopes, rather empty since this time is considered off-season. Then took the cable car

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## NEXT ISSUE

Issue deadline January 6, 2000. All letters, photos, slides, 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@attglobal.net. If you want your photos or slides returned after publication send a SASE. We can't be responsible for losses.

## Y2K RENEWAL DUE!!!

If you have not renewed for 2000, the December Mugelnoos is the last issue you will receive! To renew, send a check for \$7 made payable to "Ski Mountaineers" to the Mugelmailer: Pat Holleman, 1638 6th St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-6347

## Meetings

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

Jan 18 Ski Mountaineers Show

Feb 15, 2000 Mike Harris "Tall tales from the top and Cyberspace resources for Ski Mountaineering"

March 21, 2000 John Lichterwardt a local ski mountaineer and photographer will give a slide presentation titled: "Local Backcountry Ski Mountaineering"

April 18, 2000. Kurt Wedberg: "Mountaineering in the Sierras"

May 16, 2000 (?) Porter Fox from Powder Magazine will be giving a talk showing slides from his trip to the India Himal: 1st Glisse Descent of Yamunouri Pass 17,600' in the Indian Himalaya. Photos by Wade Mckoy, Skiers Porter Fox and Jason Tattersall.

## SMS WEB PAGE

[HTTP://www.angeleschapter.org/skimt/](http://www.angeleschapter.org/skimt/).

Slide Show, Five years of trip reports, backcountry links and much more. Check it out.

Avalanche info for Eastern Sierra

Phone: 760-924-5500

Web: [www.esac.org/Bulletins/Calif/current](http://www.esac.org/Bulletins/Calif/current)

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## Natural Science Section Winter Ecology Workshop Feb 11-13 Fri-Sun

June Lake: weekend cross-country ski trip to study and enjoy winter plants and animals with naturalist skiers. Intermediate cross-country ski ability required. Stay with local Sierra Club members; some meals provided. Group ltd to 12. LTC credit. Cost approx \$60, payable by Jan 15. To reserve a place, send 2 sase to Leader/Resevationist Ginny Heringer. Co-Leader Sherry Ross.

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

## Ski Mountaineers 1999-2000 Schedule— early season

All Ski Mountaineers ski tours are rated "T" (Technical). This rating refers to the ability to ski steeper slopes in the backcountry. It does not imply any level of rock or snow/ice-climbing ability beyond that normally possessed by an experienced skier. Tours are also rated I (Intermediate), M (Up to Class 3 rock/snow), or E (Up to Class 4 rock/snow), according to the Angeles Chapter rating system. Most trips are rated TI. This rating means that there is substantially no climbing except on skis, and that ropes and ice axes are not required for climbing safety, although they may be carried to deal with unanticipated conditions. Trips rated TM or TE require the use of ice axes and climbing equipment. Trips with an R in the code are restricted for insurance reasons to current Sierra Club members, and require a mountaineering resumé or a leader's personal observation, at their discretion. The Sierra Club and the SMS encourage qualified leaders to lead such trips.

Jan 8-9 Sat & Sun

**C: Ski Mammoth/June:** Help stamp out summer by preparing your skills for the backcountry. Stay with Andy or Owen. Contact Ldr: Andy Fried. Asst: Owen Maloy.

Jan 22 Sat

**TI: Mt Abel (Cerro Noroeste):** Intro ski mountaineering tour in local San Rafael Mtns. Mtn bike 3 mi on road depending on snow conditions, then ski to summit. Metal edged skis w skins and bike req'd. Send sase or e-mail w/exper, phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Steve Hessen. Asst: Reiner Stenzel.

Jan 28-30 Fri-Sun

**C: SMS Free-Heel Downhill Clinic:** Develop and improve your skills on free-heel equipment. Clinics appropriate for all levels of skiers taught by professionals at a local area. Stay two nights at Keller Hut, with lift ticket and all day clinics on Sat. High quality rentals available at \$12. Reserve early. Send a check for \$95 and 2 sase to Res: Keith Martin (Active leaders to receive a 50% discount. Talk to Keith to see if you qualify)

Feb 5 Sat

**TI: Local Tour.** Intro ski mountaineering tour in local mountains. Metal-edged skis and climbing skins required. Subject to rescheduling due to snow conditions (see Mugelnoos or angeleschapter.org/skimt). Leader: Mark Goebel. Asst: Kathy Crandall.

Feb 19-21 Sat Sun

**TI: Snowshelter Course.** Join us for a weekend of wilderness survival techniques. Sat build igloos/snowcaves. Sun ski and practice navigation techniques for white-out cond; review avalanche rescue. No tents. Bring snowsaw, shovel, avalanche beacons, metal-edged skis, and skins. Intermed or better skiing ability required. Send experience, h&w phones, email address, ride-share info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel. Asst: Ken Deemer.

Feb 25-27 Fri-Sun

**C:Free-Heel Downhill Practice Weekend:** Clinic and or free-ski with us. Develop and Improve your skills on free-heel equipment. Clinics appropriate for all levels of skiers taught by professionals at a local area. Stay two nights at Keller Hut, with lift ticket and all day clinics on Sat. High quality rentals are available at \$12. Reserve early. Send a check for \$95 to include clinics, or \$65 without, and 2 sase to the Res: Keith Martin.

Mar 11-12 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers

**TI: Little Onion Valley:** Explore Bighorn Sheep Country on skis. Sat am ski into lower valley, set up snowcamp, ski touring Sat pm and Sun am. Metal-edged skis, skins, beacons, and intermediate or better skiing abilities reqd. Send Sase or e-mail w/ experience, h&w phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel. Asst: Tom Marsh

Mar 18-19 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers

**TI: Avalanche Awareness Training:** Two day course in level II avalanche awareness taught by AMGA certified instructor Tim Villaneuva. Participants must have equivalent of level I training. Must have appropriate gear including transceiver. Bishop based day tours in eastern Sierra. Send \$90 (payable to SMS),H&W phones,2sase, experience, rideshare info to ldr Steve Hessen. Asst ldr Keith Martin.

Mar 25-26 Sat-Sun SPS & SMS

**TR: Birch Mtn (13,602'): Ski the SE slopes of a cl2 SPS peak.** Sat hike in via Tinemaha Crk, set up snowcamp, ski pm. Sun climb pk, ski out. For this restricted trip you must be a member of the Sierra Club and have suitable mountaineering experience. Metal-edged skis, skins, beacons, ice axe, crampons, and advanced skiing abilities reqd. Send Sase or e-mail w/experience, h&w phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel, co-ldr: R J Secor.

APR 1-2 SAT-SUN Ski Mountaineers

**TI: Eldeberry Canyon/Onion Valley Ski:** Join us for these classic Eastern Sierra ski tours. Saturday ski Elderberry Canyon, Sunday ski Onion Valley. Option to postpone to next weekend if conditions warrant. Car camp near destinations. Intermediate or better skiing ability, metal-edge skis, skins and avalanche beacons required. Send experience, H&W phone, SASE or email address and ride share info to Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co-Ldr: Mark Goebel.

Apr 29-May 7 Sat-Sun SPS & SMS

**TR: Trans-Sierra Ski Tour:** Join a 7day backcountry ski tour across the Sierra Nevada. Depending on snow/road conditions the trip may go from Onion Valley to Mineral King, or the High Route, or the Monarch Divide, or a tour along Eastern Sierra Crest such as Onion Valley to South Lke. Peak climbs included. For this restricted trip you must be a member of the Sierra Club and have suitable, mountaineering experience. Metal-edged skis, skins, beacons, ice axe, crampons, and strong skiing abilities and stamina reqd. Must have skied with leaders before. Send Sase or e-mail, climbing/skiing resume, h&w phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel, co-Ldr: R J Secor.

May 6-7 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers

**TI:San Joaquin Mtn(11,600'): One day ascent and ski of north slopes via Fern Cr, 4320' gain, 8mi rt. This route features a variety of intermediate to steeper slopes, both above and in the trees. Last year we skied to within a short walk of the cars. Car camp Sat nite. Tour on Sun will be decided based upon conditions and group's interests. Must be an advanced skier and confident on steep slopes to participate. Send SASE and skiing experience to Ldr: Mark Goebel. Co-Ldr: Gerry Holleman**

May 13-19 SAT-FRI Ski Mountaineers  
**TI: Bishop Pass to Taboose Pass Ski Tour:** Join us for this premier ski tour of the Sierra High Route via Dusy, Palisade and Upper Basins. Possible ski into Lake Basin and to the top of Split Mtn. Intermediate or better skiing ability, metal-edged skis, skins and avalanche beacons required. Send experience, H&W phones, SASE or email address and ride share info to Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co-ldr: Joe McGuire

May 16 Tue Ski Mountaineers  
**Monthly Meeting:** Program of interest to Ski Mountaineers, watch Mugelnoos and Web Page for additional information. Newcomers welcome. 7:30pm Griffith Park Ranger Station. See SMS Section listing for newsletter info or www.edgeinternet.com/skimt.

May 20-21 Sat-Sun SMS  
**TI: Mammoth Area Day Tours:** Sat ski Blue Couloir off the Mammoth Crest. Sun 13000' Mt Dana above Tioga Pass. Intermed or better skiers; metal edges, skins reqd. Send SASE and exp to Ldr: Gerry Holleman. Asst: Paul Harris

May 27-29 Sat-Mon SPS & SMS  
**TR: Powell (13,360') and Thompson (13,494'):** Enjoy a long weekend of cornsnow skiing and peak climbing. For this restricted trip you must be a member of the Sierra Club and have suitable mountaineering experience. Metal-edged skis, skins, beacons, ice axe and crampons, and advanced skiing abilities reqd. Send Sase or e-mail, climbing/skiing resume, h&w phones, ride-share info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel; Co-Ldr: Mark Goebel Nov 13-14 Sat Sun Ski Mountaineers

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## New Forest Service Permit System: Sleep Low, Climb Late

The Forest Service's permit system as designed for 2000 was to have addressed the needs of the climbing and hiking communities. They seem, however, to have forgotten that many wilderness users start hiking early in the morning after sleeping at elevation near the trailhead. Under the new system "All wilderness permits must be picked up in person..." Unless the Forest Service plans to have 24 hour service at the ranger station, or they are planning to continue to place permits in a night pick-up box, we will have problems obtaining our permits for weekend trips.

In 1996 when the Forest Service proposed the 100% reservable system many backcountry users sent a letter to the Forest Service. The Forest Service listened to the wilderness users and soon revised the system to allow for a percentage of no-show permits to be issued on the day of entry. Once again we need to suggest a revision to the manner in which they are planning to handle issuing permits. (lifted from SPS)

### Write a Letter

Please take a minute and drop a letter or post card to the Inyo National Forest, Jeff Bailey, Forest Supervisor, 873 N. Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514. Thank them for deciding to operate the permit system and tell Jeff that you are an experienced, frequent wilderness user. Explain that on weekend trips it is important to "sleep high" so that you can be ready for a safe climbing trip in the Sierra. Let the Forest Service know that you usually start hiking by 6 or 7 am. after arriving as late as midnight the night before. Express your concern about the permit pickup requirements and ask them to either keep the night pick-up boxes or to develop an alternate late night or mail pick-up system. Acknowledge that you understand that contact with wilderness users is one way the Forest Service can educate wilderness users, but that being prepared to climb safely is also



Alvin Walters, Gene Serbyn and Bill Teats (L-R) at North Sheppard's

### Ellery Lake to Twin Lakes Ski Tour May 15-20, 1999 By Tom Marsh

Participants : Gene Serabyn, Bill Lux, Mike Rector, Alvin Walter and Tom Marsh.

At approximately 6:30 AM on Saturday morning a violent jolt rocked the vehicle Mike and I were sleeping in. The thunderous sound of crashing granite slabs could be heard in the distance. A huge cloud of dusk drifted over the campground at Convict Lake from Mt. Morrison. Several aftershocks reverberated through the pavement as Mike and I readied to drive to our meeting point in Lee Vining. Upon turning on the radio, we discovered that a 6.0 earthquake had occurred just 7 miles southeast of Rock Creek. This seemed an ominous start to our multiday ski tour in the Sierras.

The local Mammoth radio station had called for clear and cool temperatures. Sunday would experience clear skies with a 10 degree pop in temperature and a warming trend through the middle of the next week. Gene reported that the cool weather kept the north facing slopes hard all day on Friday. He had hoped to ski the Ellery Bowl prior to our trip, but the Tioga Pass road had not opened to the pass until noon on Friday. For the second year in a row, the opening up of the road coincided with the start of my ex-

tended ski tour (last year Tioga Pass to Mammoth).

Encouraged by the road opening and the predication for warmer temperatures, Bill and I proceeded to Mono Village at the West end of Twin Lakes to drop off my truck. Gene and Mike took the gear to our starting point near Ellery Lake and Alvin met us at Ellery Lake. It was noon as we set out on the ample snow covering the road to Saddleback Lake. The snowpack was firm enough to provide a pleasant ride up the road to the dam and over the northwest facing slope around Saddleback Lake. We settled on a campspot on the western edge of Steelhead Lake. Just below our exit point over the range separating Mono and Tuolumne Counties. Alvin provided the evening entertainment with a ski to the ridge and a ski down the hardpack to camp. (C1) (C2)

Day two dawned sunny and warmer. By 10:00 AM, all of us had set out for various day tours. Alvin planned to bag both North Peak and Mount Conness and the rest of us explored our exit route. Soft corn snow was under foot as we scaled the short but steep wall directly south of Shepherd Crest. A class two route of granite seemed possible down to Upper McCabe Lake. We than shifted out attention to the higher bowl to the North of Shepherd Crest. Gene lead the way up the steep slope to "Shepherd Col" (named by us). The views from the Col were magnificent. Virginia Canyon and Virginia Peak to

the Northwest. North Peak, Mount Dana and Saddleback Lake to the Southwest. Most encouraging was the progressive decent down the other side to Shepherd Lake. After a brief snack, we had a heavenly decent down the Col to our camp. Falling into turns were the norm on the high steep with effortless telemarks the remainder of the decent to camp. Alvin arrived back at camp much later having successfully been the first person to sign the registers for both North Peak and Mount Conness in 1999.

Day three dawned sunny and warm. By 10:00 AM, we hoisted our packs for the first significant climb of the trip. Mike and Alvin led the way up the steep col with just two kick turns on the last 500 foot ascent. The decent to Shepherd Lake was a sheer delight over just ripened corn. Gene led the way through lumpy snow on the long four mile traverse around Excelsior Mountain to the bottom of Virginia Canyon West of Camiaca Peak. We climbed the last 1.5 miles to a wonderful rock platform near Return Lake. Virginia, Stanton, Camiaca and Excelsior Peaks surrounded our most humble campspot. We truly were in the midst of Giants. Alvin, again, provided the evening entertainment with an accent of Stanton Pack. He gave us the word, via portable radio, that he had achieved the summit, as we munched on dinner. We watched as he descended the steep hardpack in the fading ambient light.

Day four dawned with a cloud ridge to the East. This blocked the morning sun from an early arrival. At 10:00 AM, Alvin set out to bag Virginia and Twin Peaks. Mike, Gene and I headed up to the upper basin between Stanton and Grey Butte in search for a crossing into the Spiller Creek drainage. While Alvin reached the top of Virginia Peak, the rest of us reached two peaklets of our own. We had the best views imaginable of Yosemite. We could see Cathedral Peak, Cox Dome, Dana, North Peak, Conness with one sweep of the horizon. We surveyed the ridge into Spiller Creek, but could not see any safe passage. Our leisure break on the top of Yosemite was broken by a jubilant Alvin on the radio on the top of Virginia Peak. Alvin deemed the register in fine quality and with a very short list of entries. Bill, back in camp, was treated to Alvin's ski decent of one of the southwest chutes of Virginia Peak. The rest of us took the pleasurable decent down the North slope of Grey Butte on 2 inch deep corn.

Day five dawned sunny and warm, again. We got on early start in route down Virginia Creek Canyon and around and up Spiller Creek Canyon. Acrobatics were required to navigate through the icy, tree

welled, lumpy hard pack of Virginia Canyon. Luckily, the snow held out to 8,300 feet elevation. We had only to walk a short distance into Spiller Creek drainage before donning skis onto continuous snow pack. The accent of Spiller Creek Canyon was a ski touring dream. It had steep vertical walls of granite with expansive meadow views both up and down canyon. No summer trail is listed on the maps through Spiller Creek Canyon. Probably because the decent down Horse Creek is never truly free of snow. This added to the remote feel of this magnificent canyon. Snow holes exposing the snow buried creek provided steep drop offs from the meadow snow pack. A water-Ouzel bird jetted in and out of the gushing water in one hole like a Salmon jumping upstream. We camped on the opposite side of Virginia and Stanton Peaks. Ambient light fell on camp shortly after the early exit of the sun. A setting quarter moon lit up the vast upper canyon like stadium lights as wolves howled in the background.

Day six was another fine day. We lounged around camp in the morning sun waiting for the North slope corn to ripen in Horse Creek. The accent was a delightful two hour climb with rainbows clouds appearing in the sky to the East. The pass was perfectly v-notched at the narrowest point. We bid farewell to Alvin on his impromptu decision to bag the Matterhorn and then descend the North Matterhorn bowls. The rest of us prepared for the challenging ski down Horse Creek. The first traverse was the most unsettling. The slope got extremely steep, requiring one ski to be at least one foot above the other to maintain an edge. After that, we hit a perfectly corned slope. This was followed by a section of peanut butter type snow. The last steep section above 8,400 feet was perfectly set for good corn skiing. After descending through intermittent snow, we finally attained the continuous dirt trail at about 8,000 feet. The remaining walk down to Mono Village was a delightful saunter in a cool pine forest.

The trip appeared to be a real delight for all. We had excellent snow coverage, despite all the evidence of dry conditions to the South. The weather window could not have been better. Special thanks to Gene for assisting in the organization and execution of the trip. To Mike for his encouragement during various times. To Alvin for his contribution of a wealth of knowledge on traveling in the Sierras and to Bill for his emphasis on the lighter side of things.

to the Stockhorn, skied black-diamond runs down to a tow lift and repeated. We lunched at the Rote Nase with a great view of glaciated mountains (Monte Rosa). Then traversed by tram to Grant, Blauherd and Rothorn. We continued to ski in now wet soft snow till 4pm. Enjoyed a rest at Sunegga in an outdoors cafe with great views of mountains in the afternoon sun. Returned via underground cable train (Sunegga metro) to Zermatt where we regrouped for dinner.

Wed 4/28 Zermatt Official start. At 1:30pm met our guide Ruedi and assistant Derek from Revelstoke, BC. We gathered at the porch of the hotel for introduction, planning, and general advice and questions. 14 people showed up for the trip, 10 with randonnee gear, 4 with telemark skis. These were from the SMS Ken Deemer, Don Pies, Don Ralphs, Reiner Stenzel, from Canada (Yukon Territory) Gordon and his wife Catherine, from Oregon Carl and Rich, from Colorado the two Randies, John and his wife JC, and from Washington another Don. Ruedi inspected our skis and packs and eliminated unnecessary items in order to go light. The rest of the gear was packed up, brought to the train station and sent to our final destination, Chamonix. With nothing but the ski gear left a feeling of no return came up. On the way back from the rain station we stopped by at a grocery store to buy lunches for the first few days. After a great dinner with plenty of the local Fendant wine we went to bed for an early start next morning.

Thur 4/29: Zermatt to Schoenbielhuetten

7am breakfast and left at 7:30 to catch the first tram to Klein Matterhorn (3883m). Whiteout and windy on summit. Skied down to a plateau, skinned up and ascended the Breithorn (4164 m). Zero visibility on the narrow ridge. Skied down in soft snow, continued down the piste, then contoured around the Matterhorn on the Odul glacier and dropped down to the Zmutt glacier. Weather deteriorated and it started to rain! The snow became wet mush, difficult to turn in. We climbed up to the Schoenbielhuetten (2694m) which included a final steep ascent up the moraine. Arrived by 2:30pm completely wet. One small stove in the hut was insufficient to dry all of our wet clothes. The living room became a steaming sauna. Talked to group of Japanese skiers with their Swiss guide whom we later met again. Tea and a fine dinner at 7pm, then practiced the use of seat harnesses for next day's skiing on the glaciers. To bed by 8:30pm. The joke was that getting to the outdoor we across the ice was a 5.6

Fri 4/30: Schoenbielhuetten to Cabane de Bertol. Wake-up call at 4:30am, breakfast at 5am, leaving the hut at 5:30am by flashlight. This will be a long day and said to be the first of the two most challenging days. One team member was dismissed from the entire trip as his fitness was clearly inadequate for the task ahead. Two telemarkers, John and JC, were dismissed and asked to rejoin in Arolla. In foggy weather we descended on slushy snow, then skinned up the Stockjii glacier toward the Tete Blanche. Ski crampons were required at the Col d'Herens. Traversed under big ice-falls, visibility improved and the impressive Matter-

horn came out of the clouds. Five skiers ascended the Tete de Valpelline (3799m) while the rest waited at the col. Great view of Matterhorn, Dent d'Herens, Dent Blanche, and Mont Blanc in the distance. We skied down in formation while Ruedi took pictures from below. The entire group continued to ski and climb the Tete Blanche. Then proceeded on the glacier Mt Mine toward the Cabane de Bertol (3311m). It is built on top of a ridge and accessible after a steep climb assisted by a chain and ladders. Arrived at 2pm, relaxed, had hot tea, lunch, watched avalanches coming down on sunny slopes, clouds moving in and out. Fresh air toilet with straight view down to the glacier. Bedroom assigned for our group was two levels downstairs. Beds are equipped with 2 woolen blankets and a pillow. After use they need to be folded with Swiss accuracy (strictly scrutinized). Met again the group of Japanese skiers. Two were on telemark gear, they were ski instructors. Fine dinner at 6pm and a beautiful sunset among clouds and mountains.

Sat 5/1 Cabane de Bertol to Arolla. Got up at 5am, tea and bread at 5:30am, climbed down ladders at 5:45am, and skied out at 6am. After ascent of a col using skins and ski crampons, we left the packs at a col and climbed an unnamed peak with great views of Matterhorn, Mt Blanc de Cheillon, Pigne d'Arolla, Grand Combin, GranParadiso, and Mt Blanc. At 7:30am skied down powder slopes to the col, picked up our packs and descended into a valley leading to the Swiss town of Arolla. The upper slopes were crusty and steep, which required careful sideslipping and balanced snowplow turns. Below an icefall a quick descent was required. Then the slopes mellowed and it was a fast run on hard packed snow. Ate a snack on the glacier below the Cabane des Vignettes which was frequented by helicopters. Continued our run down into Arolla where we arrived by 9:30am. Took a lift up the local piste and had a wonderful rundown on corn snow. Then we walked into town to the Hotel de Glacier where we would stay for the night. Washed clothes, showered, ate lunch, relaxed, went food shopping, picture taking with great weather and beautiful scenery. At 6pm all of us had great raclette dinner with plenty of Fendant.

Sun 5/2 Arolla to Cabane des Vignettes: Up at 6:30am, breakfast at 7am to catch first tram at 8:15am. From the end of the tram we contoured without skins on steep frozen slopes. Don from Washington lost one of his skis, it tumbled into valley, he could not catch up with group and was sent out. The rest of the group skinned up on open slopes toward the Cabane des Vignettes (3160m). At a lunch stop, Ruedi's ski came off which prompted the call "down to Arolla"! We reached the hut by 11:30am, settled down, and after a short break Ruedi and 6 of us (2 Randies, Gordon, Catherine, Reiner, Derek) went off to ascend the Pigne d'Arolla (3796m). Sunny and warm, soft snow, Ruedi's fast pace got only 4 to the summit. Great views from Matterhorn to Mont Blanc. But a ring around the sun and rising clouds indicated a change in weather. The 2,000' descent on soft snow was a delight. Ruedi took us on a steep route down through an ice fall. Randy's ski came off and tumbled over the edge. He was sure that was the end of his trip but luckily the ski got stuck further down in soft snow between crevasses. Ruedi retrieved it, then we skied down and were back at the hut by 2pm. Hung out, rested, dinner at 6pm, to bed by 8:30pm.

Mon 5/3 Cabane des Vignettes to Cabane des Dix Typical 5am rise, folding blankets, rye bread with jam and tea for breakfast, filling the bottles with tea, harness and flashlights on for a start by moonlight on crusty snow. With skins and ski crampons we muscled 2000' up to the Pigne d'Arolla, second time for some. Windy and descending clouds covering most peaks. Passed over the col de Brenay and skied toward La Serpentine (3795m) which was climbed in a whiteout and high winds. Continued over the col de la Serpentine, crossed the Glacier de Cheillon and reached the Cabane des Dix (2928m) by 9:45am. Arranged our things, ate, and rested for a while. By 11:30am we started a peak ascent of La Lurette (3368m). Skied down its steep slopes in soft snow, even some corn snow. Back at the hut by 2pm for lunch, resting, writing. Met again the group of Japanese skiers from Schoenbiel hut.

Tue 5/4 Cabane des Dix to Cabane de Chanrion- Another 4:30am rise and 5:30am start in near white-out conditions. Rich had breathing difficulties and was advised by Ruedi to return to Arolla ("Zehnkleine Negerlein..."). Skied up the Glacier de Cheilon, over the Col de Cheilon toward La Ruinette. Made first break at the west side of Mt Blanc de Cheilon between two large crevasses. Ruedi, Derek and 4 participants ascended Mt Blanc de Cheillon (3869m) in total whiteout and high winds while the rest of the group built a snowshelter and waited for their return. Continued to Col Mont Rouge where we were greeted by gale force winds and an overhanging cornice. The guides fixed a pair of skis as dead-

men and set up a Munter hitch belay. One after another, we were lowered by rope over the cornice and sideslipped on skis down the pass. Ruedi kickstepped down with skis on snow as anchors. High winds with blowing ice crystals required goggles. Contoured around the Glacier de Lire Rose, traversed over Col de Lire Rose, descended onto Glacier du Brenay where the snow turned into breakable crust, then wet cement, and finally bottomless slush as it started to rain again. Without breaks we continued to ski in wet clothes to the Cabane de Chanrion (2462m) arriving at 12:30pm. The hut was rather cold, there were insufficient lines to dry our wet clothes. Ate lunch, rested, wrote, entertained the young boy living at the hut, and finally ate dinner at 6:30 pm. To bed by 8:30pm, hoping for better weather next day. (To be continued )



Break time. Dent Blanche (left peak) and Valiser Alpen in background.

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