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THE MUGELNOOS

October 2000

Issue # 760



La Vallée Blanche, April 21, 2000 Reiner Stenzel (Private Trip)

La Vallée Blanche is *the* premier off-piste skiing tour of the European Alps. It is located East of the Mt. Blanc (4807m), starts at the Aiguille du Midi (3842m), and leads after a 24 km ski descent over glaciated valleys down into Chamonix, France (1030m). Last year, after skiing the Haute Route, we could not do it because of a major storm. This year, I attended a conference in Torino, Italy, was free for a few days afterwards, and was lucky to do it. And luck was necessary, since it had rained for 3 days in a row, and skiing seemed impossible.

On Wed, 4/19/00, my brother Juergen from Germany picked me up and we drove through the beautiful Aosta Valley to Courmayeur South of Monte Bianco. In order to warm up on rented randonnee gear (I had left my teles at home), we skied a day on the slopes of Courmayeur (Col Checrouit). High pressure weather had moved in and it was superb spring snow skiing.

The plan for the next day was clear: Skiing the Vallee Blanche. But easier said than done. It was late in the ski season, no guided tours were available, and private transportation back from France to Italy proved exuberantly expensive. The only chance was to do it as a private trip, i.e., a loop from Courmayeur (Italy) to Chamonix (France) and back in a day which includes a ski ascent between Aiguille de Midi and Punta Helbronner where the Mt Blanc lift does not operate in the winter. Timing was critical since we had to be back at Punta Helbronner by 4:30pm to catch the last tram down to Courmayeur. It was a daring plan, and Juergen was very reluctant since the trip description called for a guide, groups of at least 4 persons, avalanche beacons, and no touring in the afternoons. After talking it over with some locals and guides alpiners, it became a plan of calculated risks which cost me a few hours of sleep. But that's part of ski mountaineering.

MUGELNOOS STAFF

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Pat Holleman

NEXT ISSUE

December Issue deadline Dec 10, 2000. All letters, photos, slides, or articles should be sent to Mugelnoos editor, Lorene Samoska, 701 Craig Avenue, La Canada, CA 91011. Materials can be sent by IBM disc or e-mailed to samsei@pacbell.net. Electronic photos and articles are preferred and appreciated.

MEETINGS

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

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Our newest member of the SMS is Jan St. Amand. Welcome, Jan!

SMS WEB PAGE

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

BALDY SKI HUT LINK

<http://www.angeleschapter.org/skimt/text/huts.htm>

Avalanche Beacons and SMS Historic Video For Sale

- SOS F1-ND Avalanche Beacon, 457 KHZ, \$168
- SMS Video of members skiing in the Sierra in the 1960s, plus rare skiing footage of Section founder, Walter Mosauer in 1932. \$10.00 (only 3 left) Contact Mark Goebel: 714-963-9384

For Sale: Men's randonnee boots. Trezeta (Italian) model TFK201, size 10-11. MINT condition, NEVER used. Retail for \$495, asking \$250/obo. Please phone Mark: (310)398-0366.

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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.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 12 Sun

O: Mt Baldy(10,064') Day Hike: Pre-season conditioner to summit via the hut for skiers and others. 8 mi, 3800ft gain. Meet 7:30am at trailhead above Manker Flats Campground, by Falls Rd gate. Bring water, lunch and windproof clothing. Ldrs: Mark Goebel, Keith Martin.

Nov 21 Tue

Monthly Mtg: Entertaining slide programs featuring equipment, safety, and outings. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station. See SMS Section listing for newsletter info or <http://angeleschapter.org/skimt/>.

Dec 2-3 Sat-Sun

C:Leaders Ski Weekend at Mammoth: Come out and tune up your skiing for the 2000-2001 season. Ldrr: Andy Fried Asst: Owen Maloy

Dec 15-17 Fri-Sun

C: Keller Hut for Demo Days: Join other Ski Mountaineers at Keller Hut and participate in Demo Days at Bear Mountain. Regular hut fee plus optional donation for hut fundraiser. Potluck dinner Sat night. Contact Reservationist: Keith Martin

Jan 6-7 Sat Sun

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

Jan 16 Tue

Monthly Mtg: Entertaining slide programs featuring equipment, safety, and outings. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station. See SMS Section listing for newsletter info or <http://angeleschapter.org/skimt/>.

Jan 26-28 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

Feb 3 Sat

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

Feb 3 Sat

TI: Local Tour: Intro ski mountaineering tour in local mountains. Check out your gear and enjoy some turns. Metal-edged skis and climbing skins required. Call leader in the prior week for location and time. Ldr: Mark Goebel, Asst: Kathy Crandall.

Feb 20 Tue

Monthly Mtg: Entertaining slide programs featuring equipment, safety, and outings. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station. See SMS Section listing for newsletter info or <http://angeleschapter.org/skimt/>.

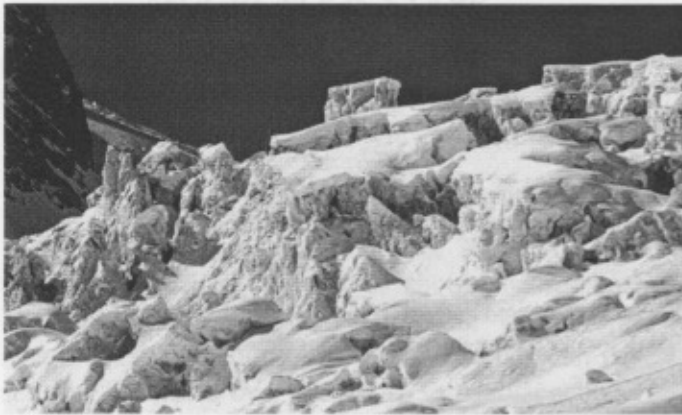
Feb 10-11 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers, Orange County Sierra Singles

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, rideshare info to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel. Asst: Keith Martin.

Feb 23-25 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.

April 7, 2001. Leadership Training Seminar. Mark your calendars! Contact: Don Creighton (310)-519-0364 and see page 7 of this issue.



La Vallée Blanche *Continued*

We followed the numerous ski tracks which lead parallel to the (nonoperating) Mt Blanc lift and tunnel. The snow was hard in the tracks and powder elsewhere but we left the inviting powder alone due to potential crevasses below it. After passing the Col du Gros Rognon we started our descent down the Vallee Blanche, a wonderful wide valley with great surroundings. From the French side (Aiguille du Midi) more skiers were arriving which added a sense of security. The ski tracks coalesced into a narrow passage near the Serac du Geant, the spectacular icefalls of the glacier of the Giant, Northwest of the 4000+m Dente del Gigante. There is a hut (Refuge de Requin, 2516m), perched on a rock outcrop above the glacier, but we bypassed it due to time constraints.

After some exciting skiing down a natural mogul field we arrived on the Glacier du Tacul, located between the Aiguille du Tacul (3444m) and the Dent du Requin (3422m). Now it was easier cruising down a smooth, gentle glacier bed. After a few km other big glaciers (Talefre, Leschaux) joined in from the East which came down from the Groupe des Jorasses and the Aiguille de Triolet at the end of the Argentiere glacier. We spotted a group of roped climbers as they made their way up across the glacier to a peak climb. The scenery of rugged mountains and glaciers was spectacular, but peace was occasionally spoiled by helicopters transporting material to the huts. The glacier du Tacul and the glacier de Leschaux join into the Mer de Glace where the ice flows down into the valley of the Arve between Argentiere and Chamonix. We encountered another exciting traverse through an icefall below the impres-

sive Aiguille du Dru just East of the Aig. Verte (4122m).

In late April, due to the rising snow line, it is not possible to ski down into the Arve valley. The tour ends at Montenvers (1913m) where a short lift and a train brought us down into the town of Chamonix-Le Blanc.

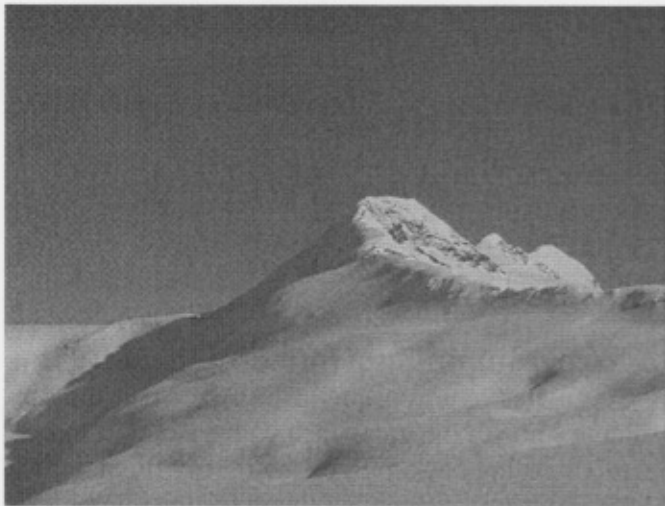
Now it was 1pm. We walked about 1 km from the train station to the Telepherique de l'Aiguille du Midi, purchased one-way tickets and got a 9000+ft lift in about 30 min. That's high-tech skiing in the Alps. Like the other tourists on the Aiguille du Midi we enjoyed the views of the Mt Blanc and the panorama of the Alps. In the distance the Matterhorn was visible, a reminder of last year's Haute Route.

After lunch we realized we had to be back in Italy in 2 hours. Precarious stairs led down from the Aiguille to a small plateau from where one can ski into the upper Vallee Blanche. For another 30 min we enjoyed downhill skiing on spring snow. Then, Northeast of Mt Blanc du Tacul, we put on skins and ascended several km to Punta Helbronner. We arrived just before 4pm and got the next to last tram down.



Everything worked out fine but had we lost half an hour we could not have completed the loop. In the afternoon clouds covered again the summit of Mt Blanc and a ring around the sun indicated a change in weather. We were extremely fortunate. Our successful adventure in the haute montagnes was appropriately celebrated with a fondue dinner in town.





A Week at Reudi's March 4-11, 2000 Randy Lamm (Private Trip)

I needed to use up some excess vacation time and was lucky enough to get on standby for a week at the Selkirk Mtn Experience-Durrand Glacier Chalet operated by Reudi and Nicoline Beglinger. After warming up the day before at Red Mountain I arrived in Revelstoke the night before our helicopter flight up to the Durrand Chalet. While waiting around at the landing zone I unexpectedly ran into Eric Klosterman, as he was unloading from the helicopter after spending the previous week. He advised me of two things that I agreed with: that the food was a major highlight -- as good as the powder skiing, and that the Volk M30's available to rent were worthy powder tools.

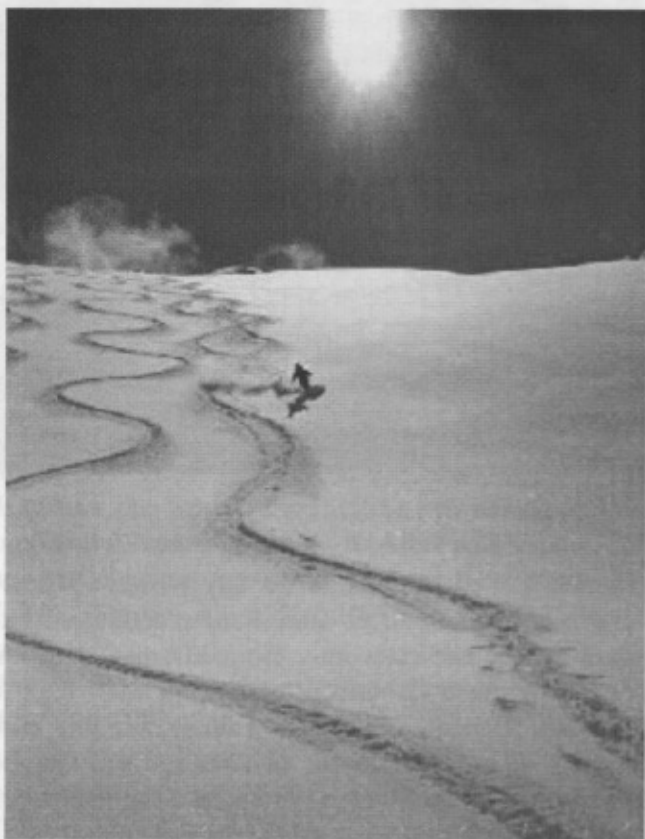
After Eric got off the helicopter, the pilot shut down due to the fog and ceiling closing in. After 10 minutes or so talking to Reudi he decided to go up and have a look. He landed again and this time recommended that we load in. When asked if it was his decision, he replied "you will not hear the words Oh Sxxx-- from these lips." We flew up the canyon and into the fog, and after circling we were wondering if the clouds were solid, when on the radio Reudi could be heard telling the pilot "Ja, its sunny up here." In a few seconds we broke thru the layer and could see our way up the next canyon to the chalet.

After unloading and making a quick lunch to take with us were briefed and divided into two groups. I was to join a group of 10 in the B team

(which turned out not to be any slower). The A group was made up of more hard core alumni like Paul Parker and co-worker from Marmot, and others including a father/son team from Makenzie in northern British Columbia, a husband and wife from Vancouver, a couple of doctors from Oregon and Washington, a salmon biologist from Winthrop, Washington, and a doctor from the Bay area.

My group of 10 included 4 from Colorado -- King the Yodeling Architect, Mark (also an architect) in business with King from Denver, Mark from Colorado Springs, Connie from Durango, and the two Johns who we named Tele John and Johny Alpine to tell them apart, both from Seattle. There was a couple from Vancouver who dropped out early. Our guides were Derek and Rokus. After briefing from Reudi, we headed out about noon for our first tour. The hut was at 6300'.

The next day, our tour went up to Moonhill at 7580', up to Woosley Pk, down to Boogie Basin and back to the Chalet. We did 3,070' of vertical, skiing 12 noon till 4:30. I was beat and wanted to take the next day off, but was convinced to keep going. It was snowing the whole day. On Sunday, our first full day, we went up to Moonhill again, then took a long run down some tree gullies on a route called Excaliber, then back up Moonhill and down another tree run called Camelot, and finished up back at the chalet. All in all we skied about 5400' of verticle, with the sun coming out for a couple of hours.



Monday 3/6 We skied Symphony Pk, Snowcap & Alian down thru the Keyhole, with about 5500' vertical. It was snowing all day.

Tuesday 3/7 brought us Forbidden Pk, and we skied down Forbidden Glacier twice on different aspects. We also went over Forbidden Pass, skied down the Gendarme and then back to the Chalet. The sunny day involved 6000' of vertical. Best day of skiing I ever had!

Wednesday 3/8 We climbed Mt Ruth, thru Diamond Col, skied down the Ruth Glacier to Moloch Hut, and traveled approx. 4,700' up, 3,450' down.

Thurs 3/9 We climbed Mt. Fang & skied down the Juliana Glacier, back up Fang, down to Diamond Plateau, up Diamond Pk, then down Diamond, then up Tumbledown, then back to the Chalet. This was the worst weather of the trip -- snowy, windy and cold. 5300' up, 6300' down.

Friday 3/10 We skied up Woolsey, down Boogie Basin, back up Camelot Pk, down the first descent of Morgan Lefey gully, up Camelot ridge, up Elm Pk to 8130', then down the front face of of Elm Pk, up Moonhill, and finally back to the Chalet. About 6,000' vert.

sive Aiguille du Dre just East of the Aig. Verte (172m)

The total vertical for the week was about 36,000 feet and I felt it! All in all an enjoyable but tiring week at the Durrand Chalet. Everyone in my group was compatible and skied and toured well together. Thanks to Reudi, Nicoline, Derek, Rokus, our Chef and assistant Salome.

A Week Bumming Around Central B.C.

After returning to Revelstoke I had time to sample some of the local back country opportunities before heading back to Spokane for my flight home. After the week at Reudi's I thought something more lazy -- like chair lift and snowmobile assisted back-country skiing would be appropriate. I met up with a Revelstoke local and fellow guest at the hostel, and the three of us took two snowmobiles to Turtle Pk near Frisby ridge on the west side of Revelstoke. After riding for about 20k on the machines we climbed from about 1700' from the Transcan hwy to 4000'. There we parked, got out our skins and started climbing up to about 7500'. The skiing was light and dry as the photos show. The snowmobiles are more work than climbing! Next stop was the town of Silverton, about 3mi south of New Denver in the Slocan Valley. In Silverton I hooked up with a local named Moonbow and we rode his snowmobile about 15k up Maurier Creek to about 7000' and parked. From there it was skiing up. It was snowing lightly the whole time - just like it had been every day for the last few weeks. Since the visibility was low and the avalanche danger a possibility, we stuck to some of the slopes Moonbow was more familiar with -- he skis there a few times a week. After pronouncing the snow safe, we dove in, light and dry. We did 4 or 5 runs, maybe 4000' of vertical. Really good skiing is within reach for a day trip there with a snowmobile.

Finally we arrived into the town of Nelson. We skied at Whitewater, using the lifts to access the back country on the west and east sides of the canyon above the lifts. Bill Bryce, a local, and former Patroller showed me a great stash on the east side above the lift. After letting the "guest go first" I snapped this face shot of Bill Bryce in the open spot in the trees (see next page).

P.S. After sending the pictures I got this message



back: You probably don't want to hear this but the day you left, the skiing in the bowl was quite deluxe - not exactly champagne powder (a little heavy) but very nice. We also had a really good week of snow at the end of March and there's a big cold low pressure weather system heading our way tonight. They're calling for snow at the "higher elevations" so I guess it's up to Whitewater on Friday for a bit of touring. A great trip and back just in time for spring skiing in Elderberry Canyon and Onion Valley!

NOTICE OF UPCOMING EVENTS: DOES THE SKI MOUNTAINEER'S SCHEDULE NEED MORE TRIPS?

Would you like our schedule to have more ski mountaineering trips? Become a leader for the Ski Mountaineer's Section!!

To be an SMS leader, you must complete the Angeles Chapter's Leadership Training Program (<http://angeleschapter.org/ltc>) for the "I" Rating and also be checked off by the Ski Mountaineer's Section for the "T" Rating (Technical ability).

THE NEXT LTP LECTURE IS APRIL 7th, 2001. Your completed application and fee must be received by the Registrar 2 weeks in advance. The LTP application is online: (http://angeleschapter.org/ltc/forms/ltc_application.html)

LTP Candidates for "I" Rating often need practice in navigation before passing the check-off. The next Navigation check-off/practice is Nov. 11-12.

Any questions? Contact SMS Central Committee members!

Leadership Training Seminar

April 7, 2001 Sat: Everyone desiring to lead for Ski Mountaineers should sign up for the spring seminar. Written applications with the \$20 fee are required 2 weeks before the seminar starts. Applications are available at http://angeleschapter.org/ltc/forms/ltc_application.html or send large SASE to: Don Creighton, LTC Registrar, 2235 W 25th St., #128, San Pedro, CA 90732-4130 Phone: 310-519-0364 Also see <http://www.angeleschapter.org/ltc/> for more info on leadership courses.

MUGELNOOS SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS DUE!

If you have not renewed your Mugelnoos subscription for the 2000-2001 season, send a check for \$7 made payable to "Ski Mountaineers" to the Mugelmailer: Pat Holleman, 1638 6th St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-6347

