

RLH 11/01

# THE MUGELNOOS

October 2001

Issue # 768



*Left to right: Bill Lutz, Mike Rector, Evelyn McGuire, Joe McGuire and Tom Marsh at the beginning of the trip at McGee Creek trailhead.*

## **McGee Creek to Mammoth Lakes Ski Tour: May 12-15, 2001**

*By Tom Marsh*

In a season that promised to be short on snow, this tour was much better than expected. Location is everything in a low snow year. Originally this trip was planned for the Yosemite High Route. This tour skirts the Southern section of the park from Silver Lake (June Lake area) to Yosemite Valley. In Owen Maloy's words, this would be more of a Yosemite hike than a Yosemite ski. On his advice, we decided on the Crest tour from McGee Creek to Mammoth, which provided minimal routes with Southern exposures. This is a slightly abbreviated tour from the one described in Moynier's book "Backcountry Skiing California's High Sierra" as Rock Creek to Mammoth. He describes this as one of the best ski mountaineering trips anywhere.

It was with this in mind that the five of us started out on this planned four-day journey. Our group was a repeat of last year with Mike Rector, Bill Lutz, Evelyn McGuire, Joe McGuire and myself. Bill, Mike and I spent the night under starry skies at the McGee Creek trailhead. In the morning, I drove my truck to the winter road closure on Lake Mary road. Joe and Evelyn gave me a ride back to the McGee creek trailhead. The clouds began to roll in at about 7am. By the time we hit the trail at 9am, the sky was completely cloudy. As we quickly hiked the first four miles, it felt like a summer backpack with several stream crossings, abundant greenery and the smell of

*(Continued on Page 4)*

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MUGELMAILER

Lorene Samoska  
Pat Holleman

### NEXT ISSUE

November issue deadline is November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001. 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@earthlink.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. Newcomers welcome!

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### SMS WEB PAGE

The link is: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/skimt/>

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 "SMS." Due in October. Subscription payments are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.

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## FOR SALE

### Historic Sierra Club Outings Video

Before Nate Clark became the President of the Sierra Club, he filmed movies on the Sierra Club's High Trips. In celebration of the centennial year of Sierra Club outings, Nate's movie footage is now available in standard VHS format videotape.

The amazing content of this videotape includes footage from the Sierra Club's 1934 High Trip in Yosemite as well as three other interesting mountaineering adventures of that era. Sierra Club luminaries featured include Lewis Clark (Nate's brother), Glen and Muir Dawson, Jules Eichorn, Francis Farquhar, Marjorie Bridge (Farquhar), Louise Hildebrand, Jack Riegelhuth, Bestor Robinson and Mary Saylor. Norman Clyde makes a brief appearance. Footage includes rock climbing practice, ascents of Cathedral Peak (all three spires), a descent of Muir Gorge on the Tuolumne River, the first mid-winter ascent of Mt. Lyell in 1934, with Bestor Robinson, Lewis Clark, Einar Nilsson and David Brower, and a July 4, 1941 ascent of Mt. Clark, with Dick and Larry Burnley, Lewis Clark and Jonnie Serna.

To order, send a check for \$15 to Angeles Chapter - Sierra Club, Attn: Video Orders, 3435 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 320, Los Angeles, CA 90010. Purchase price includes postage, handling and all applicable taxes.

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## Calendar of Events

**Nov 20, Tue, Ski Mountaineers Section 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/>.

### **Nov 11 Sun Ski Mountaineers Section**

**O: Angeles Crest Conditioning Hike.** Meet at Vincent Gap at 8am on highway 2, 5 1/2 miles west of Big Pines which is west of Wrightwood, car shuttle to Dawson Saddle. Eight miles, 2100' gain, 3400' loss along PCT. Examine steep ski chutes on north sides of Throop, Burnham, and Baden-Powell from their bottoms and tops. Bring map, compass, GPS to locate these elusive treasures for later enjoyment. Ldr: Mark Goebel, Asst: Keith Martin

**Jan 15, Tue, SMS Monthly Mtg:** Entertaining slide programs featuring equipment, safety, and outings. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station.

### **Jan 25-27, Fri-Sun, Ski Mountaineers Section**

**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 2 Sat Ski Mountaineers Section**

**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. Leader: Mark Goebel, Asst: Kathy Crandall.

### **Feb 9 Sat Ski Mountaineers Section**

**TI: Thunder, Telegraph and Timber:** Ski the 3 T's in the San Gabriel mountains. Intermed or better skiing ability required, not for beginners. Metal-edged skis w skins req'd. Send experience, h&w phones, email address to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel. Asst. Ldr. Randy Lamm

**Feb 19, Tue, Ski Mountaineers Monthly Mtg:** Entertaining slide programs featuring equipment, safety, and outings. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station.

### **Feb 22-24 Fri-Sun, SMS/Orange County Sierra Singles**

**TI: Free-Heel Downhill Practice Weekend/OCSS Ski Leader Training:** 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 Bear Mtn. Stay two nights at Keller Hut, with lift ticket and all day clinics on Sat. & Sat night dinner. Sun either ski at Bear or join Leaders for Navigation exercise and local tour near the hut. High quality rentals are available at Bear for \$12. Reserve early. Send 2 large sase H&W phones, \$95 to include clinics, or \$65 without to Reserv/Ldr: Keith Martin, Asst: Michael Dodson.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### **California Mountaineering Club Trip**

**Nov 17, Avalanche Beacon Practice:** This will be a "dry land" practice finding our avalanche rescue beacons in a canyon in our local mountains. The blight of Aruna will also be discussed. Come prepared to hike a quarter mile with 100' of loss. Skis or snowshoes optional. Send SASE or email with recent conditioning, address, phone, and carpool info to Ldr: R. J. Secor.

### **Leadership Training Navigation Events:**

Nov 11, 12, Indian Cove, Freimanis and Bradshaw, practice and checkoff.

Nov 17, Mt Lowe Area, Dunbar and Creighton, Practice.

Dec 9, Warren Point, Freimanis and Bradshaw, Practice and checkoff.

Jan 6, Warren Point, Freimanis and Bradshaw, Practice and checkoff.

April 21 - 22, Indian Cove, Freimanis and Bradshaw, Practice and checkoff.

May 19, Grinnell Ridge, Freimanis and Bradshaw, Practice and checkoff.

Please see the *Angeles Chapter Schedule of Activities* or the LTC website for more information: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc/>

### **San Diego Ski Section 2001-2002 Ski Schedule:**

Look for more details in the Hisierran. Send your email address to <mnfry@home.com> and receive notice of the local trips. Call Barbara Domurad, 858-271-0696 and get our full schedule in the mail, or see our web page: <http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/ski/> Come and ski with us before the globe warms!

Monthly Meetings: Nov 8, Dec 13, Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 14, Apr 11, May 9, Clairemont Community Room.

Nov 10-11, Kelso dunes sand skiing, car pool, car camp, free, Mike Fry, 858-566-3851, <mnfry@home.com>

Nov 22-25, Thanksgiving at Mammoth, car pool, condos+food, \$185, Barbara Domurad, 858-271-0696, <bdomurad@aol.com>

Dec 8-9, 15-16, Demo Days, instruction and gear at local down-hill resorts, Contact Norpine and Off Piste. \$50-60.

Dec-May, Where the Snow is (WSI), free, One or two day local trips. Send your email address to <mnfry@home.com>

Dec 28-Jan 1, New Years at Elk Meadows Utah, bus, condos, \$325, Alice Fichandler, 619-226-6083, <aliceandorbill@aol.com>

Jan 19, Leader Training, how to lead ski trips and how to teach skiing. Mike Fry 858-566-3851, <mnfry@home.com>

Jan 20, Ski lessons for beginners, \$15 plus car pool and ski rental, Craig Denson, 858-270-3828, <cdenson@cts.com>

Feb 1-3, 3-5, or Mar 8-10, Ostrander Hut, car pool, ski in with packs, \$65, Jim Crouch, 619-223-9084 <jim@saraitlim.com>

Feb 14-18, Yosemite, bus, Yos. Lodge, \$425 (2/rm), \$345 (3/rm), \$330 (4/rm), Afra Roet, 619-296-3459, <afaraoet@home.com>

Mar 2-5, Montecito-Sequoia, car pool, lodge, fine meals, groomed trails, \$444, Jackie Gray, 858-270-3828, <jackpots@cts.com>

Mar 28-31, Tioga Pass Resort, car pool, ski in, cabins, fine meals, \$450, Rhea Leptich, 858-277-8123, <rleptich@hotmail.com>

Apr 11-15, Claire Tappaan Sierra Club Lodge, fly, rental cars, lodge, meals, groomed trails, about \$250, coordinator needed.

May (TBD), Oregon Telecamp, fly, rental cars, motel, about \$400, Craig Denson, 858-270-3828, <cdenson@cts.com>



*(Continued from Page 1)*

trail dust in the air. Luckily the rain was light. In fact, the cloud cover kept it comfortably cool. At about the 2nd stream crossing, we were into intermittent snow. This was quite exhausting! You could not put skis on and the snow was quite soft. A number of would-be mountaineers complained of knee deep snow as they hiked back to civilization. Apparently temperatures had not allowed the snow pack to freeze. My feet were getting pretty wet. Hate wet feet.

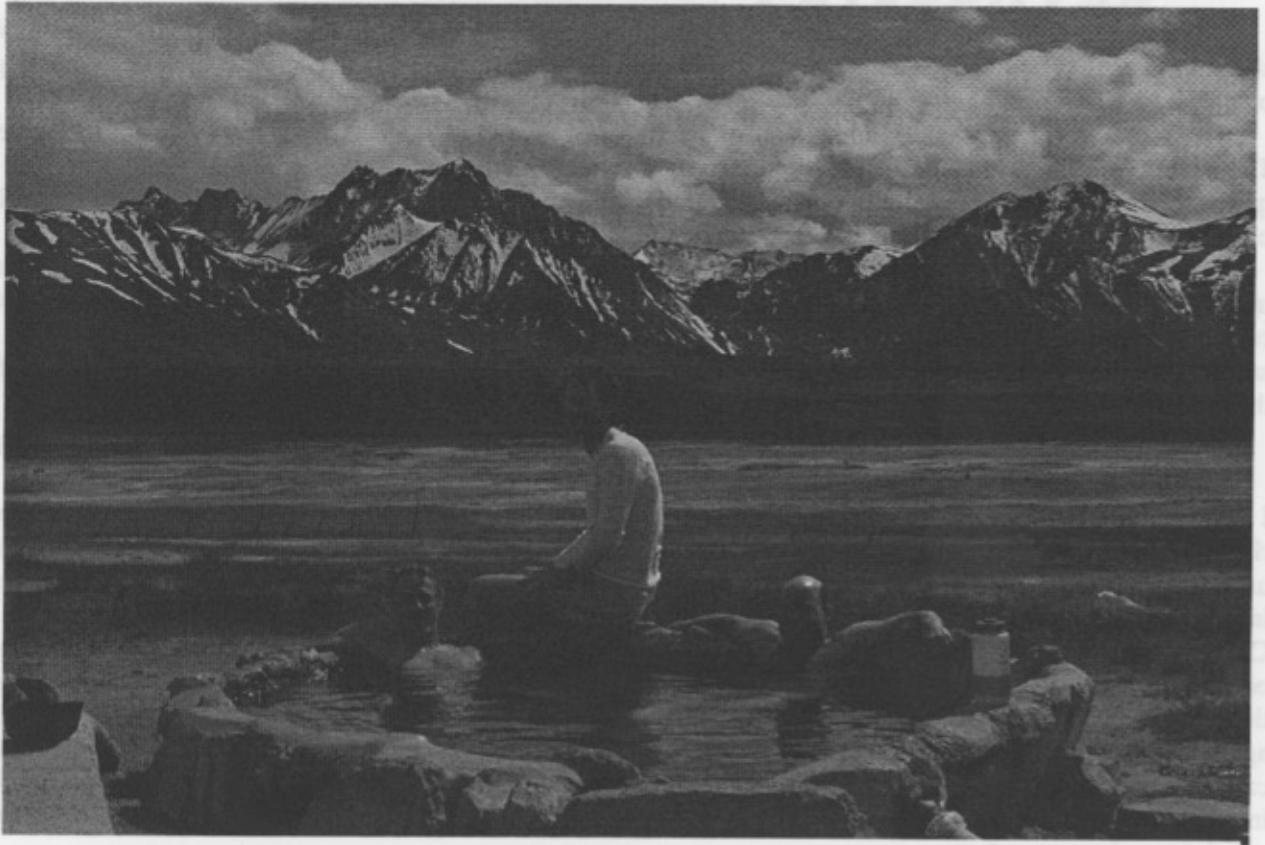
We finally reached continuous snow at about 10,200 ft. after climbing the last south facing slope before reaching the bench to Big McGee Lake. We were all glad to be at our camp at Big McGee Lake. Even though it was snowing quite hard, relief could be found in the confines of a tent.

Sunday dawned clear. This was a welcoming contrast to the prior day. We took our time getting ready. More time allowed the sun to dry out our clothes and gear. Luckily our campsite on Big McGee Lake afforded us an early sun (up by 7AM). We were off to a cheery start with dry clothes, warm sun and continuous snow at 9 AM. We had no problems climbing the ridge and gully to Corridor Pass. Mike did a good job finding the best route in that last mile to the top. We arrived at this very gradual pass by 11am. Clouds started to intensify, so we made a quick exit down to Constance Lake. The North facing snow was hard yet somewhat still in transition. Care had to be exercised in some of the turns. It would have been nice to ski across Constance Lake, but with Mike's test of the shore ice it was decided to circumnavigate around the lake. To our delight, hail started to fall as we put skis back on the skis for our traverse of the lake. The gray, black and red rock visible to the East are impressive. Upper Convict Canyon is extremely scenic. A great ski destination, if not for the long climb in from either McGee or Convict Canyons. After a short lunch at Lake Wit-So-Nah-Pah, we started out to our next destination, Pretty Pass. It should be named Pretty Darn Hard Pass. The ascent from the lake was on slightly soft snow. We keep to the left of the main Canyon below, as dropping down the main canyon towards Lake

Dorothy would have cost 1,000 feet. This provided some exciting traversing. We went through several avalanche debris fields on a fairly steep traverse. This quickly got us to the base of Pretty Pass. Much trepidation was expressed at this very steep ascent, especially after 7 hours of skiing. Nonetheless we started our ascent. It was not too long before the slope became too steep for skis and we packed skis on the pack. The best approach seemed to be to boot right up the center. We sank to our thighs in some spots. Finally after much suffering, we made it to the top of the pass by 5:30. We were then faced with an even steeper descent down the other side. This proved to be much easier as most of us booted down. The gully to the far right proved to be the best. Mike and Bill went down the center. They broke through to their thighs under hidden rock. At one point Bill accidentally rolled his pack down the slope while securing his skis. Mike was almost hit as the pack went right for him. Luckily the spectators below gave Mike some warning. We then made our descent to Franklin Lake, our much cherished campsite for the night. We were in a snowstorm at the top of Pretty, but were treated to 1.5 hours of warm sun at camp before the sunset. So fickle is Sierra mountain weather!

Monday dawned clear and warm. After yesterday's very long day, we all slept in late that morning. We basked in the warm morning sun as our cloths and gear dried. It was 10:30 before we got moving again. Not exactly an alpine start, but we all felt refreshed. The skate down to Upper Ram Lake was enjoyable on slightly soft snow. The coverage was excellent as we made for our next pass, Pika Pass. We got our first glimpse of it from lower Ram Lake. It looked every bit as steep as our experience the day before. John Moynier describes this as being more secure with crampons. The upper part was quite narrow with a rock band in the middle. It didn't take too long for us all to agree to try another alternative. The Bloody Mountain topo map showed a more gradual pass to the West.

Some trepidation was felt because it was not described in any books. There is always that possibility that



*The Gang at Polky's Pool.*

you will arrive at a cliff — especially with the conversion to metric maps, where the distance between contour lines is greater and the distinction less visible than on the tried-and-true "feet" scale. The reality of thru-trips like this is that you have to take some risks, whereas on a day ski, you can choose to go back the way you came. This is positive in the sense that you get perspective — perspective to realize the difference between true and imagined risk.

It was great skiing the narrow creek gully that terminates at Purple Lake. We then had to walk the first 600 feet of south facing slope just above Purple Lake. It was a good thing since the slope would have been too steep to skin up anyway. We finally reached continuous snow and made the gradual ascent to the pass. The pass was just as imagined from the map, gradual ascent and steep, but manageable, descent. It took no time at all to ski down the slope just above Duck Lake. The views of Duck Lake to the north were exceptional. Duck was frozen over and the snow coverage was excellent as far as the eye could see.

As we descended to our campsite near Pika Lake, much relief and satisfaction was felt in getting this far in our intended journey. We had only easy Duck Pass to cross to our intended destination. There is always the possibility that weather or snow conditions will make it difficult to proceed. This was the case last year due to bad weather in an attempt to go from South Lake to Taboose Creek. The concern this year was snow coverage. Although, with the exception of the low south facing slopes in the McGee Creek drainage, the snow was continuous. The day turned out to be sunny,

calm and pleasant. We, again, had the late day sun to enjoy in camp.

The last leg of our journey from McGee Creek to Mammoth was surprisingly good skiing. As we awoke on Tuesday morning, full cloudiness greeted us at our campsite near Pika Lake overlooking Duck Lake. Mike and Bill were ready to dart into one of the two tents during the night in the event that it rained. Luckily the sky was more bark than bite. In fact, as we readied for our final ski, the sun broke through and it was noticeably warm and humid. We were surprised to find the short climb up to Duck Pass on soft snow despite the lack of sun. We lingered at Duck Pass savoring the completion of our last ascent of the trip as we took skins off for the last time. The top of the pass was still somewhat unconsolidated as we sank into deep wet snow. It would quickly set up after each turn making it imperative not to edge too hard. After that, the snow became more firm and skiable. It was a delight as we traversed the creek down to Skelton Lake. We enjoyed threading our way through trees on very skiable snow to the parking lot at Coldwater Creek campground. We were even able to dodge the bare spots to Lake Mary Road. It was a great surprise that we were able to ski so far, especially with all the warm weather and thin snowpack. We walked the plowed road to the winter road closure spot on the Lake Mary road. After a nice soak in "Polky's Pool", we made our way back to civilization. Special thanks to Joe for co-leading these long tours with me for the last three years. Next year, we may ski another section of the Sierra Crest.

## NEW SIGN-IN/ WAIVER FORMS FOR ALL OUTINGS

Beginning this fall, you will be seeing something new on Sierra Club trips – a combined Sign-in/Waiver sheet. Waivers have become standard in the outdoor adventure industry, and the Sierra Club is implementing them on all Sierra Club trips.

Some Angeles Chapter entities and mountaineering outings have been requiring waivers for some time. The new waiver language has been incorporated on a standardized sign-in sheet, which all participants will be required to sign. The waiver is an important legal document, and everyone should read it before signing it. The text of the waiver is reproduced below for easy reference.

A copy of the new combined Sign-in/Waiver sheet and new Accident and Incident reporting forms were mailed to all Angeles Chapter Outings Leaders this past summer. SMS leaders who did not receive this packet can contact the SMS Outings Chair, Keith Martin for copies, or they are available from the LTC website: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc/> (then make a personal supply for future use). Discard any of the old forms, and bring the new forms on the next outing you lead.

### Sign-in Sheet & Acknowledgment of Outing Member Responsibility, Express Assumption of Risk, and Release of Liability

I understand that during my participation in this Sierra Club Outing, I may be exposed to a variety of hazards and risks, foreseen or unforeseen, which are inherent in each Outing and cannot be eliminated without destroying the unique character of the Outing. These inherent risks include, but are not limited to, the dangers of serious personal injury, property damage, and death (“Injuries and Damages”) from exposure to the hazards of travel and the Sierra Club has not tried to contradict or minimize my understanding of these risks. I know that Injuries and Damages can occur by natural causes or activities of other persons, animals, trip members, trip leaders and assistants or third parties, either as a result of negligence or because of other reasons. I understand that risk of such Injuries and Damages are involved in adventure travel such as Sierra Club Outings and I appreciate that I may have to exercise extra care for my own person and for others around me in the face of such hazards, I further understand that on this Outing there may not be rescue or medical facilities or expertise necessary to deal with the Injuries and Damages to which I may be exposed.

In consideration for my acceptance as a participant on this Outing, and the services and amenities to be provided by the Sierra Club in connection with the Outing, I confirm my understanding that:

- I have read any rules and conditions applicable to the Outing made available to me; I will pay any costs and fees for the Outing, and I acknowledge my participation is at the discretion of the leader.
- The Outing begins and ends at the location where the Outing officially commences with leader and participants in attendance, as designated by the Sierra Club (“Trailhead”). The Outing does not include carpooling, transportation, or transit to and from the Trailhead, and I am personally responsible for all risks associated with this travel. This does not apply to transportation provided by the Sierra Club after the commencement and before the end of the Outing.
- If I decide to leave early and not to complete the Outing as planned, I assume all risks inherent in my decision to leave and waive all liability against the Sierra Club arising from that decision. Likewise, if the leader has concluded the Outing, and I decide to go forward without the leader, I assume all risks inherent in my decision to go forward and waive all liability against the Sierra Club arising from that decision.
- This Agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as is permitted by law. If any provision or any part of any provision of this Agreement is held to be invalid or legally unenforceable for any reason, the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby and shall remain valid and fully enforceable.
- To the fullest extent allowed by law, I agree to **WAIVE, DISCHARGE CLAIMS, AND RELEASE FROM LIABILITY**, and to **INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS** the Sierra Club, its officers, directors, employees, agents, and leaders from **any and all liability** on account of, or in any way resulting from Injuries and Damages, even if caused by **negligence** of the Sierra Club its officers, directors, employees, agents, and leaders, in any way connected with this Outing. I understand and intend that this assumption of risk and release is binding upon my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, and includes any minors accompanying me on the Outing.
- I have read this document in its entirety and I freely and voluntarily assume all risk of such Injuries and Damages and notwithstanding such risks, I agree to participate in the Outing.

*(submitted by Mark Goebel)*

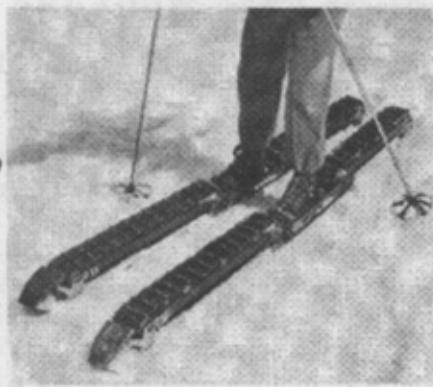
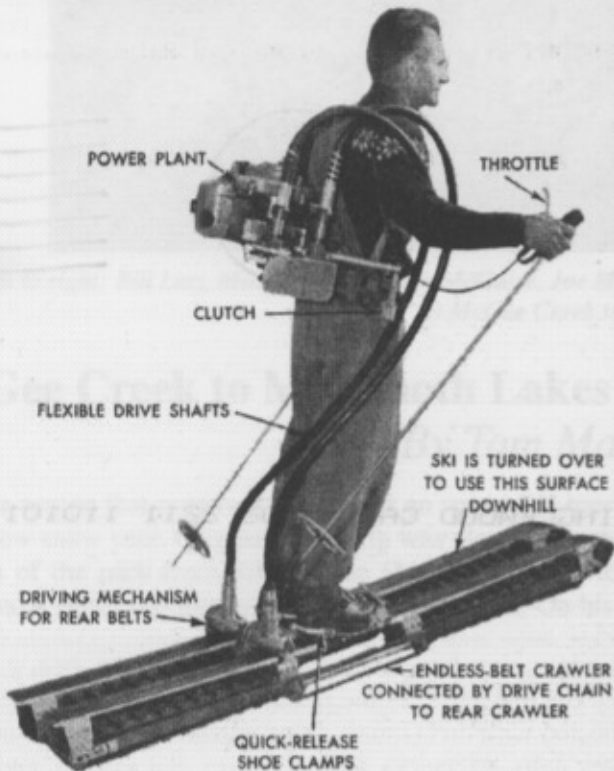
# CATERPILLAR SKIS



STAN VOORHEES of West Los Angeles doesn't hitch a ride on a ski lift when he goes out for winter sports. His motorized skis propel him uphill faster than a man can walk. Fitted with crawler-type cleats and powered by a 3½-horsepower outboard-type gas engine that straps to his back, his skis carry him up a 20-degree slope at 4 miles per hour. At the top of the slope, Voorhees detaches the drive mechanisms and turns the skis over, then coasts downhill. Traversing and other maneuvers are easy. The endless belts are attached to standard seven-foot Army skis. At present, each ski weighs 30 pounds but, with re-designing, Voorhees expects to reduce the weight. Ultimately, a small motor in each ski may replace the present power plant now carried on his back.

Moving uphill at four miles per hour, users of powered skis find snow humps and other obstacles no problem. Below, power-plant pack weighs 47 pounds

Attaching power-plant shafts, below, to tractor drives on skis. Bottom, with the shafts removed and the skis turned over, the skier is ready for downhill travel



106

POPULAR MECHANICS

Reprinted from Popular Mechanics, October 1953  
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(submitted by Randy Lamm)

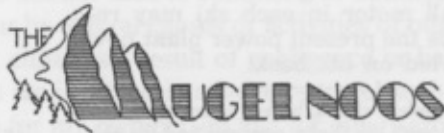
## SMS Election Results

The new SMS officers for the 2001-2002 season are:

Randy Lamm (Chair)  
Keith Martin (Vice Chair, Outings)  
Tom Marsh (Treasurer)  
Cathy Crandall (Secretary)  
Wally Drake (Programs)  
Jan St. Amand (Leader Records)

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who participated and for volunteering to serve!

See page 2 for contact information.



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## Angeles Chapter Awards Banquet

Sunday, February 24, 2002 No host reception: 5:00pm Dinner:6:30pm  
Brookside Country Club, Pasadena

Once again we Angeles Chapter members will gather to honor and thank our dedicated volunteers, socialize, and celebrate the many accomplishments of our chapter this past year. We have allotted extra time preceding dinner to interact with others who share our love of exploring and preserving nature and the environment. Each year many of our members enjoy viewing and bidding for the diverse artistic or useful items that have been donated for our Silent Auction. Your contributions would be welcomed by our Silent Auction Chair, Anne Gladman (323) 255-2317.

Individual tickets at \$30 each, or a table of ten (\$300) can be reserved. Please specify the number of Chicken and Vegetarian entrees. Send a check (Angeles Chapter), and a SASE to our reservationist:

Cathy Kissinger,  
10541 Oro Vista Ave.,  
Sunland, CA 91040 (818) 352-3361

Thanks for your support!  
Rosemary Campbell, Banquet Chair (818) 344-6869 NoWimp@aol.com



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