



Mount Wood April 13th, 2002

Reiner Stenzel

Mt Wood is a prominent peak west of the June Lake road between Silver Lake and Grant Lake. It makes a great day trip for ski mountaineers. Due its popularity we had initially 15 applicants, a body count of 9 at the trailhead and 5 near the summit. It was a joint SPS/SMS trip. The group consisted of John Andersen, Bahram Manahedgi, Wally Drake, Jonathan Meagher, Peter Sporleder, Mark Johnson, Susan Livingston, Craig Conally with family, Mark Goebel, kindly assisting for busy Erik Siering, and myself. We met on Sat, 4/13, at 6:00 am, at the hikers parking lot at Silver Lake. At dawn, it became obvious that there was no snow in sight, no surprise this year. Thanks to a suggestion by Alvin Walter we drove to the north end of Grant Lake where a dirt road leads up toward Parker Creek with a side road heading to the 9,000' plateau east of Mt Wood. With high clearance cars we all made it the safely across the rocks and stream to the road end. By 8:30 am we hiked along a dirt road on intermittent snow toward the eastern slopes of Mt Wood. The snow coverage was adequate, the sun was out in force and the day looked promising. After a 30 min hike we skinned up on mostly solid snow heading into the big gully on the southeast side of the peak. we encountered a rare sight of a climax avalanche. It was a recent wet snow avalanche which had taken out the snow down to the grass level and left a 200' wide path of strewn balls most of which could brake a skiers leg like a straw. Since it was another warm day we decided to be back by midday. Although we shaved off 2,000' of the 5,000' climb, the remainder was still a good workout. We switch backed up the gully and continuing upper slopes toward the 12,000' ridge. Near the ridge we encountered another specialty of

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NEXT ISSUE

Next issue deadline is October 10th, 2002. 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/>

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Election Results

New Central Committee Members for the
2002-2003 Season:

Kathy Crandall
Randy Lamm
Tom Marsh
Keith Martin
Jan St. Amand
Reiner Stenzel

List Initiative:
Passed 15-11 with 3 abstentions

About Lists, Leaders, and Badges by Owen Maloy

When it comes time to decide just what kind of list we will have, if any, there are some things we must consider.

It might be a good idea to give people awards for leadership. We already have such a system, defined in the bylaws -- the Big Badge, last awarded in 1964. To qualify requires service and passing the Ski Mountaineering Test. SMS leaders must pass all elements of the Ski Mountaineering Test, although we do not give this test as formally as in the past. We do insist that a leader be able to ski at the third-class level (not so unusual these days), and be competent at first aid, navigation, avalanche safety, and snow camping, as the test requires. The bylaws define leading a number of trips or serving on the Central Committee as two kinds of acceptable service.

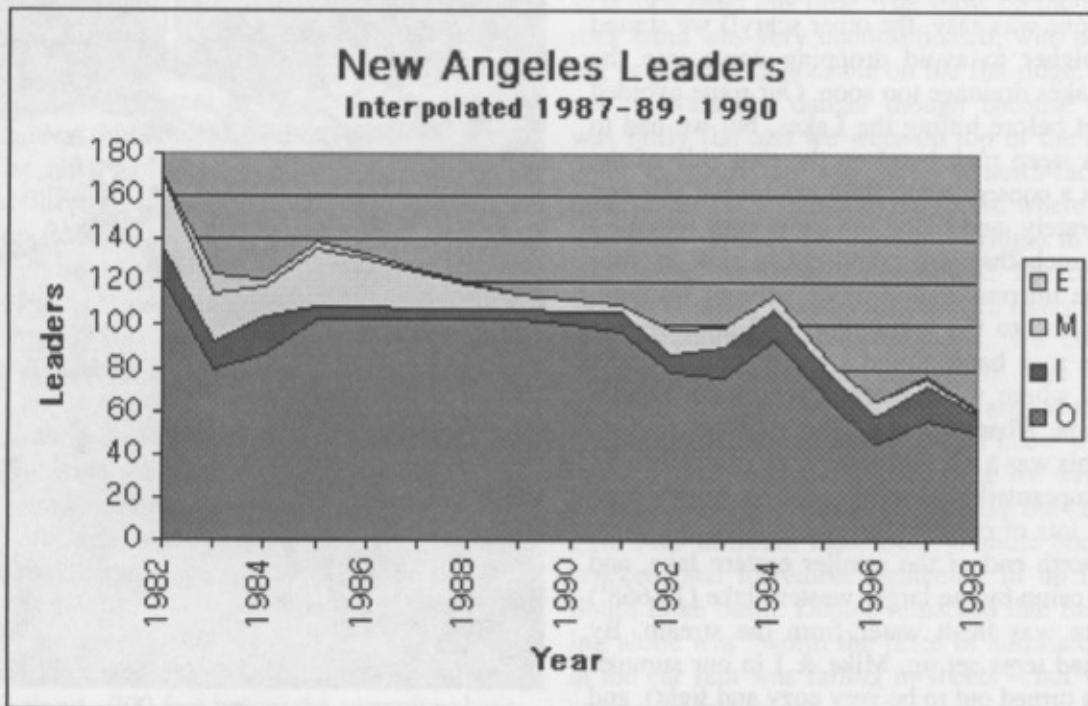
We have a large number of leaders who unquestionably qualify under these criteria. I favor using this system as an incentive for prospective leaders and to recognize our present leaders, some of whom have been leading actively for 30 years.

There are also existing awards (pins) for skiing at a given level, as well as passing the Ski Mountaineering Test, should someone want to go through an actual test. This game has not been popular for decades.

I don't favor giving other awards for merely following on trips or passing a few tests without having gained experience or contributed as a leader. Without leaders, there can be no followers. As the graph shows, the number of leaders the Angeles Chapter has trained has steadily declined for two decades. One excuse is the former ice-axe ban -- but then why has the number of lower-level O and I leaders declined, and why did much of the decline occur before the ban in 1989? Besides, the ban was lifted years ago. A former chapter chair commented that the letter "E" stands for "Emeritus." Most of the E-rated leaders on the chapter's list are on Medicare.

While one reason for this disaster is certainly poor management and arrogance on the part of the trainers, another reason might be that people in some sections are given awards for following, not leading. Because of the decline in active leaders, the SPS and DPS are not leading as many trips as they used to. A year ago the Desert Sage published statistics showing the decline in the number of DPS emblems awarded in recent years.

I do favor having a list of Cool Places to Ski, and we can put descriptions and the like on the website and distribute a publication similar to the DPS Peaks Guide.



Graph caption: Two-decade decline in Angeles Chapter leaders trained (Safety Committee data).

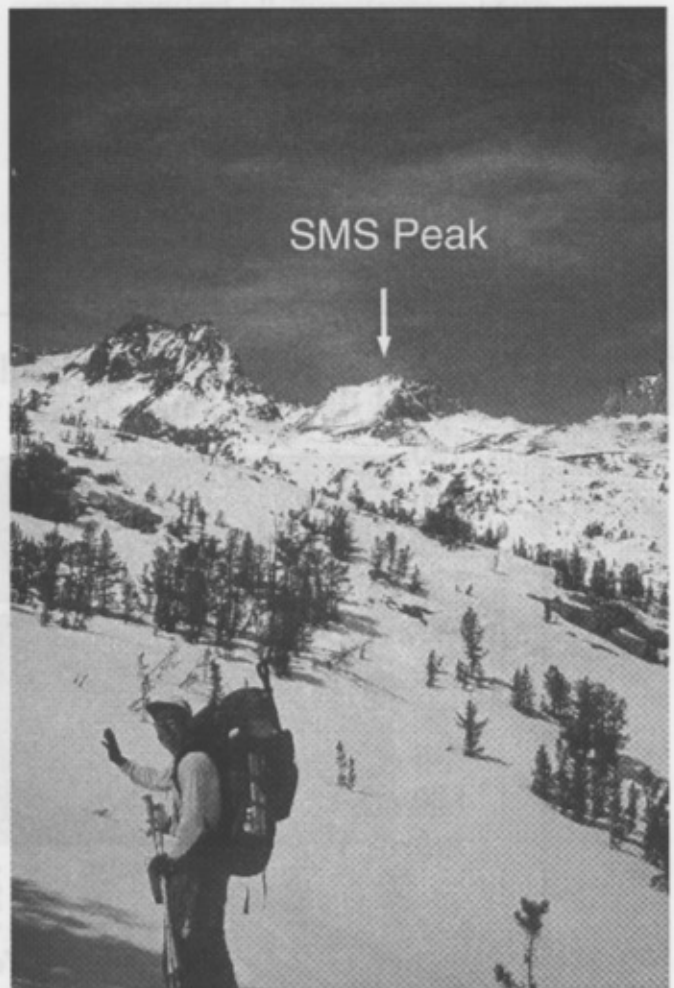
SMS Peak Revisited April 13-14th, 2002

by Lorene Samoska (Private Trip)

After Reiner sent me a delightful story for the Mugelnoos about his ascent of Ski Mountaineer's Peak (13,323') off the Thompson Ridge with Susan Livingston the weekend before, I got peak-itis and decided I wanted to try it. The weekend plans were to join up with the scheduled Blue Col/ Mammoth tours. However, the trip was cancelled, and I was not looking forward to another dry, snowless weekend in LA. Mike & I kicked around the idea of hitting the Mammoth Mountaineering Demo Days, but I was really looking for a wilderness experience. On Wednesday, Dennis Landin had emailed us, also itching to do a trip somewhere. By Thursday evening, the decision was made for the three of us to carcamp out of Bishop Friday night and ski up to Treasure Lakes to make a base camp for a possible SMS peak trip. Luckily our stock of freeze dried food in the pantry was enough to get us through a weekend without a trip to REI.

On Friday night, we ran into Jan St. Amand and Leslie Hoffher at the Coso junction gas station (you know it's a small community of backcountry skiers when . . .) They were headed to day-ski out of Lake Sabrina and then off to the Demo days. After picking up a permit at the Bishop Ranger Station, we made our way up to Aspendell to find an attractive carcamp without an attractive name: "Intake 2." It turned out to be a cozy, free camp and we slept well on a warm night. When we awoke and packed up our stuff, Jan & Leslie were also there, having camped in the same place! We waved our goodbyes and headed for the South Lake trailhead, which just opened for the season the day before, saving us a walk from Parcher's resort.

After a wild gear sort to pare down weight, we set off at 10 AM and made our way on the summertime trail to Bishop Pass. The snow was intermittent and *soft!* We got through the rocks and started postholing, so ended up putting skis and skins on and off a few times until we reached a good turn-off to Treasure Lakes. A snowboarder on snowshoes and a skier were headed there also. We continued on the summertime trail to the west, and after 2 snowbridge crossings (one was easy, the other scary!) we started climbing higher to avoid dropping down into the Treasure Lakes drainage too soon. Our route avoided any descent before hitting the Lakes, but we had to negotiate a steep rock band on the east side of the drainage as a consequence. Here we carried skis and packs separately, and found the snow very rotten by the rocks, such that you could easily sink to your chest in the unconsolidated muck without warning. We were close to the lakes now, and after getting through the rock band, found a flat dirt patch under some trees where we regrouped for lunch. Dennis brought some albacore tuna salad in a pouch with crackers (this was a hit, and apparently can be bought at regular supermarkets), which he generously shared along with lots of colorful trail mix. Soon we came upon the north end of the smaller eastern lake, and decided to camp by the larger western lake (10,668') where there was fresh water from the stream. By 2:30 we had tents set up, Mike & I in our summer tent (which turned out to be very cozy and light), and Dennis braving it in the megamid, where he promptly



Above: Dennis en route to Treasure Lakes, with Ski Mountaineer's Peak in the distance.



From left: Dennis Landin, Mike Seiffert, and Lorene Samoska looking south from the South Lake Dam at the start of the trip.

dug out a nice kitchen block. Since Reiner's trip account involved ski crampons, I decided to do a little self-arrest practice and tried to find some slidable snow, however, by late afternoon I could do little more than sink into the soft stuff. The slopes around and below the lake had reasonably nice snow for skiing though.

We cooked a bunch of soup and my favorite sweet & sour pork dinners (feels like ordering out for Chinese in your tent), and as night fell we prepared for the next day by filtering water and getting packs ready. The temperature when the sun went down was still > 40F! We picked a weekend with a new moon, and the starlight alone was enough to light up the snow – it was truly spectacular. This weekend, the temperature inside the tent never got below 40, although outside a thin crust formed on the snow.

The next morning, we woke with the sun around 6, filtered some water, and started making our way up to SMS peak. We were on the trail by 7:45, and chose to drop a little into the Treasure Lake drainage and make our way across the bowl before climbing the west slopes above the drainage. By 9 AM we'd reached the top of the slopes with the great traverse on the way to SMS peak ahead of us. The clouds came in to harden the already softening snow and the wind was picking up, but after about an hour of ominous weather the sun came back out. We continued through some gorgeous traverses and bowls to a rock band where we stopped to unload ice axes and crampons, which we knew we wouldn't need in the warm sun. Shortly after 11, we were at the foot of the main peak. We zigzagged up in our skins until about ~200 feet below the summit, where the snow turned really rotten. With skis on, one sank

to the hips. With skis off, one sank to the chest. Now we had to make our way to the summit rocks in these conditions, and it took much longer than one would predict based on the short distance! Finally we were able to scramble to a rock where we unloaded skis and happily tromped upon the hard surface in our ski boots. We were on the summit at 1 PM, found the register, and hung out for a bit enjoying the sunny view down the steep cliffs to the bowls and cirques to the west by Mt Darwin.

We made our way back to the skis, and did a few kick turns in the soft muck before tele-ing down the slopes. The snow was a trickster, because it would look great but if a rock was buried, the snow was not very consolidated near the rock and would suck the skier in! It was a trick to find the right line away from hidden rocks. Also, the steep slopes were easier to ski than the shallower benches, as they had not soaked up the previous week's sunny weather as much. After many buried ski tips and the consequential digging out that follows, we made our way back past the traverse and down the slopes to Treasure Lakes drainage. We got back to base camp near 5 (much longer than we had expected) and there were new clouds moving in and lots of wind. We decided that despite having extra food and warm sleeping bags waiting for us, we would pack up and make our way back home, with headlamps if necessary.

We headed out with skins on for the descent, and Dennis found a nicer route to negotiate the east-side rock band this time. The snow on the top of the rock band was very unconsolidated, with deep sinking or postholing possible on the flat ridge. We were not in avalanche danger though because the route was fairly flat and we were on top of the ridge. Finally we made our way across a north-facing bowl (and firmer snow) and into the forest, where the snow was better. We reached the snow bridges in darkness, and crossed them with headlamps! The route from there was pretty easy to follow with many ski tracks and occasional compass bearings. We could have hugged the John Muir Wilderness sign when we came upon it! At this point, snow started to fall and the wind grew more fierce, but we knew we did not have to set up any more tents since we were almost home. As we took off our skis to hike the last quarter mile back to South Lake Dam, thunder boomed and cracked, and incredible lightening lit up the entire South Lake basin. Dennis remarked that the lightening alone was "worth the price of admission." Back at the car rain was falling in sheets – but we didn't care. A late night snack was waiting for us at Denny's down the hill.



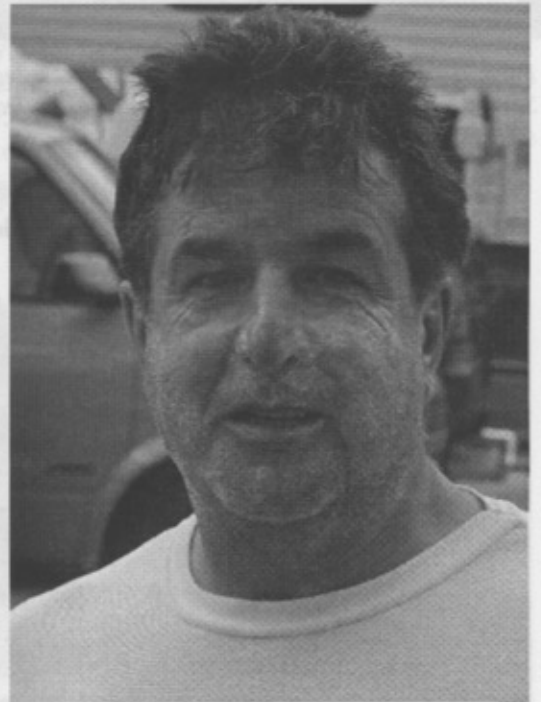
View from the slopes of Mt Wood.



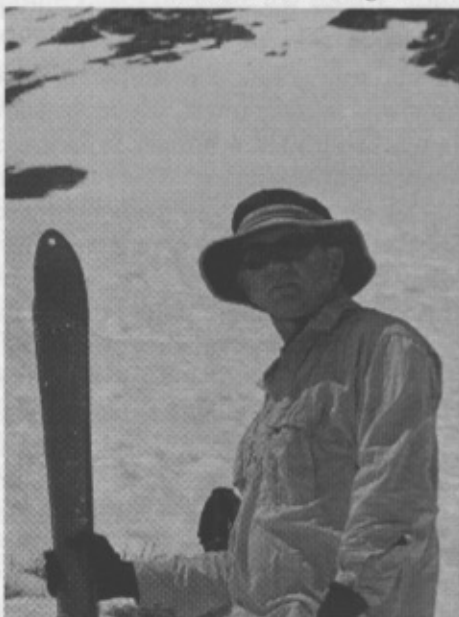
John Anderson



Mark Goebel skiing Mt Wood.



Bahram Manahdgi



Craig Connally



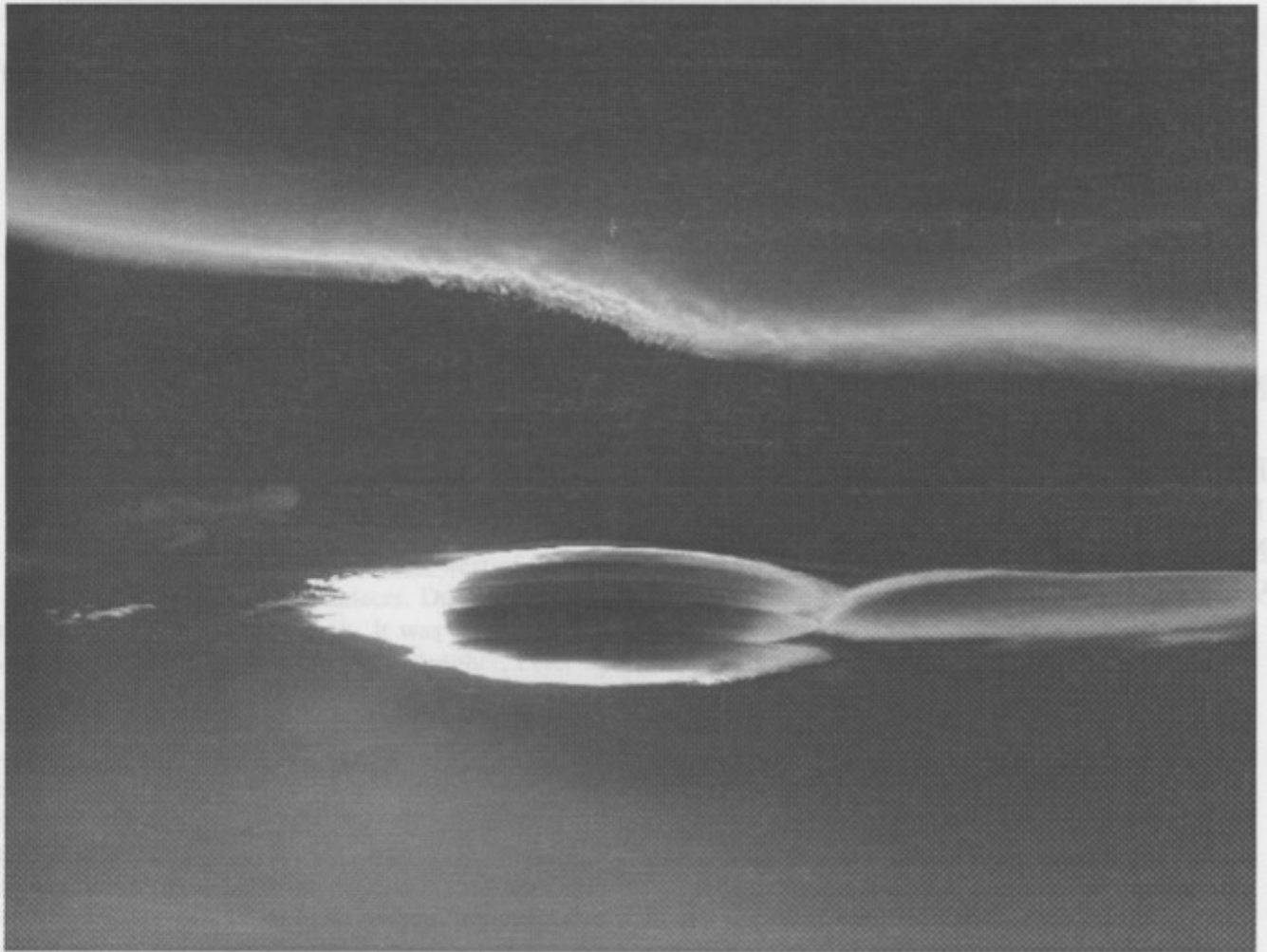
Mark Goebel is all smiles after a good ski weekend.

this year: Bottomless rotten snow, in which a skier sinks 1-2 feet in without warning. Since it was on a 30 deg slope, the snow had baked for 5 hours, it was time to get out. We had a brief lunch on the ridge, enjoyed a great view over the snow-covered back country, and decided to forgo the last 500' to the summit on the partially barren, brown ridge. The view to the west of the Ritter Range, Lyell, Dana, Koip, etc was as gorgeous as the blue Mono Lke to the east.

Skiing the upper few hundred feet in rotten snow was an exercise in equal weighting, balance and plain luck since even a straightforward traverse could lead to a face plant. Peter from the Lake Tahoe Search and Rescue Team had another approach: If you ski fast enough straight down the fall line there is no time to break through rotten snow. After this initial trial zone we had wonderful spring snow and fully enjoyed every turn. Too bad, the run down

lasted only about 30 min whereas the climb up was more like 3 hours. Near the bottom spring snow gave way to spring mush. It was just the right time to come down. By 2 pm we were back at the cars which expecting Susan C. had guarded with her dog. We washed up in the creek, rested and then headed down to the Tiger Bar in June Lake to celebrate a great day of skiing. Later we dispersed to hot springs, Mammoth town, and camping at Glass Creek.

On Sun, 4/14, we skied Mammoth Mtn, maximizing the downhill vs uphill skiing. We were joined by Chris Lohman, Jan St Amand, Leslie Hofherr, and mingled with lots of telemarkers on the occasion of the Mammoth Tele Fest. Snow and skiing were excellent. By 3-4 pm the clouds rolled in and we rolled home on the 395. Another fine ski mountaineering weekend. Thanks to Mark for assisting on Mt Wood.



And thus ends another season of the Mugelnoos. Thanks to all the leaders and participants this year for the fine trips and good camaraderie! Look in your mailboxes this fall for the next issue. . .

ASTC Ski Weekend

April 20-22, 2002

by Walt Davie

Walt Davie and Bahram Manahedgi went to Mammoth Fri night, staying in the San Diego Ski Club Chalet. Met Bruce Rorty at the Convict Lake parking lot 9am on Saturday for a trip up Morrison Canyon. It had snowed about 6-8 inches the week before, so previous tracks were obliterated at both venues. Had to bushwhack up the first incline to reach the snow. From then on Morrison was very good, slightly crusty in the lower gully, but wide open otherwise. A nice, but somewhat chilly sunshine tour 9:30 am- 6:30pm. This was topped off by a relaxing hot springs in one of the local Long valley natural tubs.

Sunday the threesome skied the lifts at Mammoth, conditions were very good on the groomed slopes. Then another hot springs dip. Talked to a German couple who were touring north America in a Mercedes truck-camper conversion. They had just driven up from Guatemala.

Monday drove to Independence and up to Onion Valley. Surprisingly, the snow on the Robinson Basin side was excellent. We put on skis right at the picnic tables and went up until the final couloir could be seen. The final stretch appeared rocky, so we didn't do it. But the ski run down was THE BEST IN YEARS! Skied all the way back to the picnic ground.

A very nice ski tour weekend. (ASTC = Alpine Ski Touring Committee)

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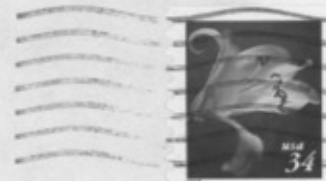
More Signs of an El Nino Winter

Weather experts say another El Nino is on the way. But people in San Diego knew that already.

Small red crabs are washing up on the San Diego beaches. They normally live in the warm waters off Baja. The last time the crabs showed up was just before the last El Nino five years ago. Experts expect a weak to moderate El Nino, but that could still mean a wet winter for California. —From kpix.com

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