

Skiers descending Slate Mountain

Slate Mountain & Jordan Peak Day Trips – March 22-23, 2003

By Mike McDermitt

The weather in the High Sierra was unsettled and had recently received considerable snow, so the original trip plan for a peak that area was scratched in favor of day trips to these lower-elevation peaks, located in the south-west Sierra above Porterville in the watershed of the South Fork of the Middle Fork Tule River. The trips are generally described in Jenkins' "Self Propelled in the Southern Sierra." It is interesting to note that Highway 190 is maintained during the winter, above Camp Nelson, past the Ponderosa lodge and mountain community to a snowpark with facilities at 7200'. Slate Mountain (9302') is the southern-most peak over 9000' on the west-side of the Sierra, while Jordan Peak (9115') to the north is a close second. Both peaks normally get substantial snow during the winter and on this weekend had plenty of snowpack despite a less-than-usual snowfall total this winter. Both peaks are also forested (except on their summits) offering protection from elements and a reduced avalanche risk factor. We enjoyed two successful daytrips and confirmed this area as worthy of future visits by backcountry skiers.

On Saturday morning March 22, four skiers (participants Leslie Hofherr and Heiko Knapp, assistant leader Reiner Stenzel and provisional leader Mike McDermitt) met in the parking lot of the Ponderosa Lodge under clear skies. Just before 9am we began skiing from the snow-covered and snowmobile-

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NEXT ISSUE

Next issue deadline is October 10th, 2003. 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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Passings

Sent by Ellen Wilts

SMS member **Charles Gerckens** passed away January 29, 2003 in Los Angeles. He was born December 12, 1920. He was very active in the Ski Mountaineers and was mimeographer for the Mugelnoos in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. His wife Lillian, 2 daughters and several grandchildren grieve for his loss.

Calendar of Events SUMMER 2003

June 15-22 Sun-Sun

SMS

TI: Oregon Volcanoes: Ski your heart out on Three Sisters, McLoughlin, Batchelor, Broken Top, Jefferson, Hood, St Helens, etc. Day trips, car camps, long days of driving, skiing, and fun. Advanced backcountry ski skills required. E-mail experience, address and h/w phones to Co-Ldrs: REINER STENZEL; TBA.

June 21-22 SPS and SMS I: Colosseum Mt. (12,473 ft.) and Mt. Cedric Wright (12,372ft.) Trip restricted to SC members with strong physical conditioning. Sat backpack up Sawmill trail to Colosseum Mt. Sunday ascend Cedric Wright and then pack out. Send e-mail or SASE with relevant experience to Ldr: Leslie Hofherr. Asst. Erik Siering

Jul 12 Sat Mountain Biking Committee & SMS TS-B: Jalama: Mtn bike on deserted beach north of Jalama for about 8 mi toward Surf. Involves beach biking, some bouldering and occasional dips into the ocean. TS (technical skill) 2 - 3 and EL (effort level) 3. Send sase or e-mail experience, address and h/w phones to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel, Co ldr: Leslie Hofherr.

July 19 Sat Ski Mountaineers Section I: Mt Marsh (13,550') Climb a cl 2 peak near Whitney Pass, recently named after the person who built the Whitney trail and hut. 10mi rt, 5000' gain. Good conditioning required. Send sase or e-mail with climbing experience, current conditioning, phones to Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co ldr: Reiner Stenzel.

Jul 20-27 Sun-Sun Ski Mountaineers/Sierra Peaks M: Columbine, Isoscles, Langille, Citadel, Wheel, Woodworth: Climb some fine peaks in the vicinity of the Middle Fork of the Kings River. Enter via Bishop Pass into Dusy Basin, Kings River, Black Divide. Climb beautiful but less visited Serra Peaks. 40mi rt, 20,000' gain. Good conditioning and experience on rock required. Send sase or e-mail with climbing experience, current conditioning, phones to Ldr: Reiner Stenzel, Co ldr: R.J. Secor.

July 29 - Aug 4 Tues. - Monday SPS/SMS/WTC

I/M: Mt. Goodard (13,568') other possible peaks are Mt. Huxley (13,086'), Charybdis (13,096'), Mt. McDuffie (13,282'), Black Giant (13,330), Seylla (12,956'), Mt. Fiske

(13,503'), Mt. McGee (12,969'), Goethe (13,264'), and Mt. Lamarck (13,417'). We will backpack in over Lamarck Col and camp at Darwin Canyon (approx. 6 miles and 2600' gain). Then from Wed. through Sat. we will climb peaks (class 1, 2 & 3) and move camp to Wanda Lake and possibly the Ionian Basin near Black Giant. On Sunday start heading out and climb a peak or two that we missed and be back at the trailhead Monday. The total is approximately 28 miles round trip with backpack and 26 miles with day-pack and overall elevation gain of 18,000 feet (if do all the peaks). Some of the peaks are optional so there will be time to relax and enjoy the beautiful lakes and scenery. There will be some navigation practice for those interested. Strong, experienced WTC students will be accepted at the leader's discretion. Send 2 sase or e-mail detailing experience/recent conditioning, \$5 permit fee to Ldr: Keith Martin. Co-Ldr: Patty Rambert

Aug 1-3 Fri-Sun Ski Mountaineers/Sierra Peaks

M: Mt Ansel Adams, Electra: Climb two remote, beautiful, and not frequently visited peaks in Yosemite N.P. Approach from south with basecamp at Sadler Lke. 30mi, 6000' rt. Good conditioning and cl 3 rock experience required. Send e-mail with climbing experience, current conditioning, phones to Co-Ldrs: REINER STENZEL, MARK GOEBEL.

Aug 8-10 Fri-Sun SMS/SPS

I: Amelia Earhardt, Donohue: Climb two fine peaks out of Lyell Cyn. Good conditioning required. Send sase or e-mail with climbing experience, current conditioning, phones to Ldr: LESLIE HOFHERR, Co-ldr: REINER STENZEL

Sept 20-21 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers

I: Painted Lady (12,126): Climb a cl 2 peak west of Gould Pass. On Saturday backpack 2 1/4 miles and 2200' from Onion Valley to camp at Golden Trout Lake. Sunday, climb peak (approx. 4 miles rt. 3100' gain/loss) and back to cars. This is a strenuous trip and good conditioning is required. Send SASE or e-mail with climbing experience and current conditioning to Prov Ldr: Jan St. Amand. Asst: Reiner Stenzel.

Judge finds proposed Mammoth Airport expansion illegal

Submitted by Owen Maloy

The Federal Aviation Administration's approval of a proposal to expand a Mammoth Lakes airport was illegal, a San Francisco U.S. District Court judge ruled Monday, April 28th. The FAA had not fully considered the environmental consequences of expanding the Mammoth-Yosemite airport from a small facility for private airplanes to one that could carry thousands of tourists each year, Judge Bernard Zimmerman stated in his ruling.

"Common sense dictates that improving an airport to introduce regular commercial air service in an area known for and reliant on tourism will have a substantial impact on a number of environmental factors," Zimmerman said in his ruling. He added that the federal agency's finding "that the project would have no significant impact on endangered or threatened species strains credulity."

The FAA did not immediately return calls seeking comment. The judge's ruling came in response to a pair of 2001 lawsuits filed separately by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer and environmental groups. The Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association and other groups wanted to force the FAA to complete an environmental impact

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2002-3 Season Summary

By Reiner Stenzel, SMS Chair

As the 2002-3 ski season comes to an end it is worth looking back and summarizing the main events. First, it was an unusual year in terms of the weather. Promising precipitation in Nov-Dec fizzled out in Jan-Mar but a late "miracle" in Apr-May gave us enough snow to enjoy many ski trips summarized below.

Our Ski Mountaineering program was active and successful. We had a variety of trips such as Training trips (Ski and nav clinic, igloo course), Intro trips (Abel, Yosemite), Peak trips to the Western Sierras (Kaiser Wilderness, Slate & Jordan), Northern Sierras (Pyramid, Round Top, Waterhouse), Eastern Sierras (Stanford & Morgan), Desert Ranges (Telescope, Boundary), a Trans-Sierra trip (8-day Yosemite High Route), a Sierra Crest Tour (Rock Creek-North Lake), Basecamp trips (Taboose, Tioga), and an upcoming out-of-state trip (Oregon Volcanoes). The trips were well attended and attracted skiers from all over California. A good web page helped to advertise our program. Likewise, having new SMS leaders from San Diego and the Bay Area helped to bring in new participants. We will continue to be open to other sections and chapters. We have no dogma to the gear and accept telemarkers, randonneers snowboarders and an occasional snowshoer on our trips. During the last few years our leadership declined. I am happy to report that much progress has been made last year. In 2002 Alvin Walter (San Diego Chapter) was accepted as an M-rated leader for the LA Chapter. He is now leading advanced ski mountaineering trips with us. We have several new provisional leaders: Mike McDermitt from the Bay Area finished two I-rated lead trips, Leslie Hofherr has finished one provisional I-trip and scheduled the next one for June, Jan St Amand has scheduled one I-trip for the summer. Lorene Samoska has become an O-rated leader and Mike Seiffert is close to finishing it. We also hope to get leaders Jim Crouch (San Diego Chapter) and Ted Lenzie (Sacramento Chapter) accepted as LA Chapter leaders. Thus, in the coming year we should have several new leaders who will maintain our active outings program.

During the last year we decided to create an expanded program of summer trips. There are several reasons for it, the main one being that the SMS is a mountaineering section and that many of us

like to hike and climb in the summer, too. Trips of the peak climbing section (SPS) are frequently filled and rarely go to peaks not on their List. On summer trips our provisional leaders can finish their lead requirements. Scheduling our trips jointly with other climbing sections is beneficial to all climbers. Below is a summary of our trips:

June 20-21 SMS & SPS, Coluseum & Cedric Wright (Hofherr, Siering)

Jul 12: SMS & MBC, Mountain biking trip (Hofherr, Stenzel)

July 17: SMS & SPS, Mt Marsh (13,550') (Marsh, Stenzel)

Jul 20-27: SMS & SPS, Columbine, Isoceles, Langille, Citadel, Wheel, Woodworth (Stenzel, Secor)

July 29-Aug 4, SPS/SMS/WTC, Mt. Goddard (Martin, Rambert)

Aug 1-3: SMS & SPS, Mt Ansel Adams, Electra (Stenzel, Goebel)

Aug 8-10: SMS & SPS, Amelia Earhart, Donohue (Hofherr, Stenzel)

Sept 20-21: SMS, Painted Lady (12,126') (St. Amand, Stenzel)

Last but not least we now have our own "SMS List". It is a mix of ski tours involving peak ascents, steep chutes, passes and traverses. Basically, it is a selection of trips that some of us have done in the past, but it will be a challenge to do them all. By setting goals and offering recognitions we hope to stimulate our activities. The SMS List is published on the SMS home page (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/skimt/text/list.htm>). The List, established by a committee, is not rigid but can be changed periodically. In conjunction with the "SMS List" your Chair has started to compile an "SMS Archive" of over 100 trips. These consist of trip reports, maps, and 1200 pictures, all contained on two compact discs. The purpose is to describe trips for the List and to provide a record of SMS activities from about the last decade. In early 2003 about 50 free copies were sent out with the Mugelnoos. The Archives are constantly updated and recent versions are available from the SMS Chair for \$5.

In summary, we had an active year with many good trips and positive developments. Thanks to all leaders, Central Committee members and Officers for all your contributions.

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groomed forest road just across the street (marked point 7157-T on the 7.5 minute Sentinel Peak topo). We skied westward along this road for about ½ mile before making a left onto another snowmobile-groomed road (marked point 7208-T on the topo) and proceeding south about 0.1 mile, across a small stream and around a small bend. At this point we left the road and proceeded cross-country in a roughly southwesterly direction, along a modest ridge then upslope to a bench at 7840+ above the north fork of Peppermint Creek. There was some brush at first but well before reaching the bench the forest thinned out. After a break, we skied down in a southwest direction, dropping to about 7700', and crossed first a small tributary stream and then Peppermint Creek north fork. From here we skinned up the more northerly of the two arms of Slate Mountain which radiate eastward from below the summit, generally staying on the north side of the ridge. We made good progress and soon reached a bench at 8280+'. Here we took a break in warm sun and enjoyed vistas which were beginning to open up to the Mineral King area and to peaks in the eastern Sierra. With Heiko's prodding we got going again and made rapid progress to the bench at 8920+. From here we proceeded southwest reaching a steep slope at approx. 9000' which marked the southeastern scarp of Slate Mountain's summit area. We carefully proceeded, one skier at a time, across this short steep slope, to the peak's south shoulder. From here we then made the short ascent of several hundred feet up the easy grade to the summit, which we reached at approximately 11.30am. Under sunny skies and a slight breeze we enjoyed lunch accompanied by near-360-degree views, from snow-streaked Mount Pinos area far to the southwest to the peaks of the Mineral King area in the north, northeast to the Whitney region and Langley, as well as east across the Little Kern and Kern rivers to such peaks as Coyote, Angora and Siretta. Not to mention, the San Joaquin Valley spread out 9000' directly below us to the west!

After about an hour on the summit, we moved on. Reiner and Heiko tried skiing down slopes from a few feet north of the summit but found the snow a bit too unconsolidated and heavy to be much fun. So we skied NNE along the ridge, then dropped down the open slopes on the east side of the summit from about the 9000' level. While not perfect, the snow was nevertheless more than sufficiently consolidated to make good turns and we enjoyed several hundred feet of descent. We then con-

tinued down through open trees with very enjoyable skiing, going several hundred at a time then regrouping, with the snow quality improving somewhat at lower elevations, along the same ridge we had ascended. Somewhere at about the 7700' level Heiko spotted a snow-covered forest road (not on the topo), and we decided to follow it. It wound south, eventually reaching a stream (which is on the topo). We crossed the stream then skied down along it back to Peppermint Creek north fork at approx. 7360'. At this point the downhill was over and at this low elevation the brush and occasional melted areas without snow became somewhat of a factor. We proceed northeasterly over a low rise then onward and before too long reached the snowmobile groomed road from which we had originally started going cross-country, at a point maybe ½ mile south of the point 7208-T intersection. From here we rapidly made our way back to the Ponderosa parking lot, getting our boots off around 3.30pm. The day's totals were about 6 miles and 2400' gross/ 2100' net gain.

Saturday afternoon was occupied by Heiko's car troubles - car wouldn't start. Even with the assistance of several knowledgeable local people it would not start. Ultimately a short tow to the hill crest north of Ponderosa and then a glide down the hill to Camp Nelson got it going, at which point Heiko made the appropriate decision to continue back to LA. Saturday evening the three remaining skiers enjoyed the warmth of a charcoal grill with dinner.

Sunday morning at 7am we drove north to North Road, a paved road which leaves Highway 190 at the ~7000' level and runs north. It was plowed for about 100 feet; we parked at road end and after gearing up, our group of three was skiing by about 7.45am. The trip plan this day was fairly simple, skiing along snowcovered North Road (21S50), then cross-country to Jordan Peak. North Road turned out to have a lot of very moderate up and down, making for somewhat inefficient progress. After an initial gain of several hundred feet in the first mile, the next five or six miles netted only another few hundred feet. Unlike the prior day, Sunday was windy and cloudy as a front moved through, and we were glad to be in well-protected terrain. Views were quite limited by the weather. One interesting surprise was finding a very nice yurt-type shelter in the vicinity of Log Cabin Meadow. By about 1pm we reached the 8000' level about a mile north of Log Cabin Meadow and started cross-country on a line towards the saddle just NNE of

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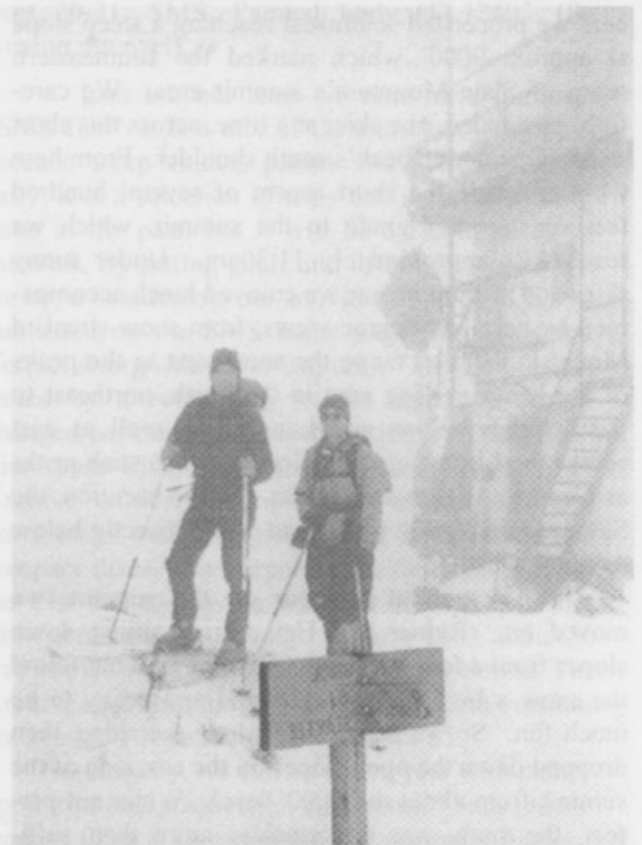
Jordan Peak. Open rolling terrain soon gave way to steeper, brushier terrain with unconsolidated snow. Happily our course intersected with a snowcovered road (31E35) and we continued more easily up the road to a marked bend at 8600'. We then made a short climb to the saddle then continued up the northeast shoulder of Jordan Peak. The weather was poor and as we climbed although protected by the open forest visibility was limited. On reaching the summit at about 2pm visibility was down to less than 50 feet and winds were gusting to perhaps 25-30 mph or more. After a short food break just below the summit, we headed down. This route offered only a short distance for making turns. Soon reaching road 31E35, we enjoyed a steady downhill glide back to the intersection with North Road at 8240+. From here, in occasional sleet and snow showers, we retraced the lengthy up-and-down approach, back to the cars, which we reached at around 6pm. The day's totals were about 16 miles and 2600' gross/2100' net gain.

TRIP PLANNING NOTES: These peaks are located in Sequoia National Forest. Aside from the 7.5' to-



Fresh bear tracks near Slate Mtn

pos, this area is well covered by the USFS Golden Trout Wilderness Map. Highway 190 beyond Springville is nicely paved but very windy, and the 27-mile drive from Springville to Ponderosa takes a good hour. Hwy. 190 officially ends at North Road, becoming Western Divide Highway. Ponderosa Lodge is open year-round and offers food and lodging plus a general store. More info on the entire area is available at www.ponderosaca.com. Parking at the snow park (or possibly area surface streets) rather than the lodge is recommended unless you are a lodge guest. I found the lodge to offer an excellent dinner, with friendly efficient service, at a very good price. Jordan Peak is said to get more snow than Slate Mountain (and our experience supports that) however, for downhill skiers it is unclear if Jordan's slopes can be accessed without a long approach (but the yurt, stove and all, might tempt an overnight). An alternative may be from the Hossack Meadow/Alder Creek Grove area via Rte. 216. In any event, Slate has the convenience of a nearby snowpark and seems to offer both more vertical and more variety of slopes.

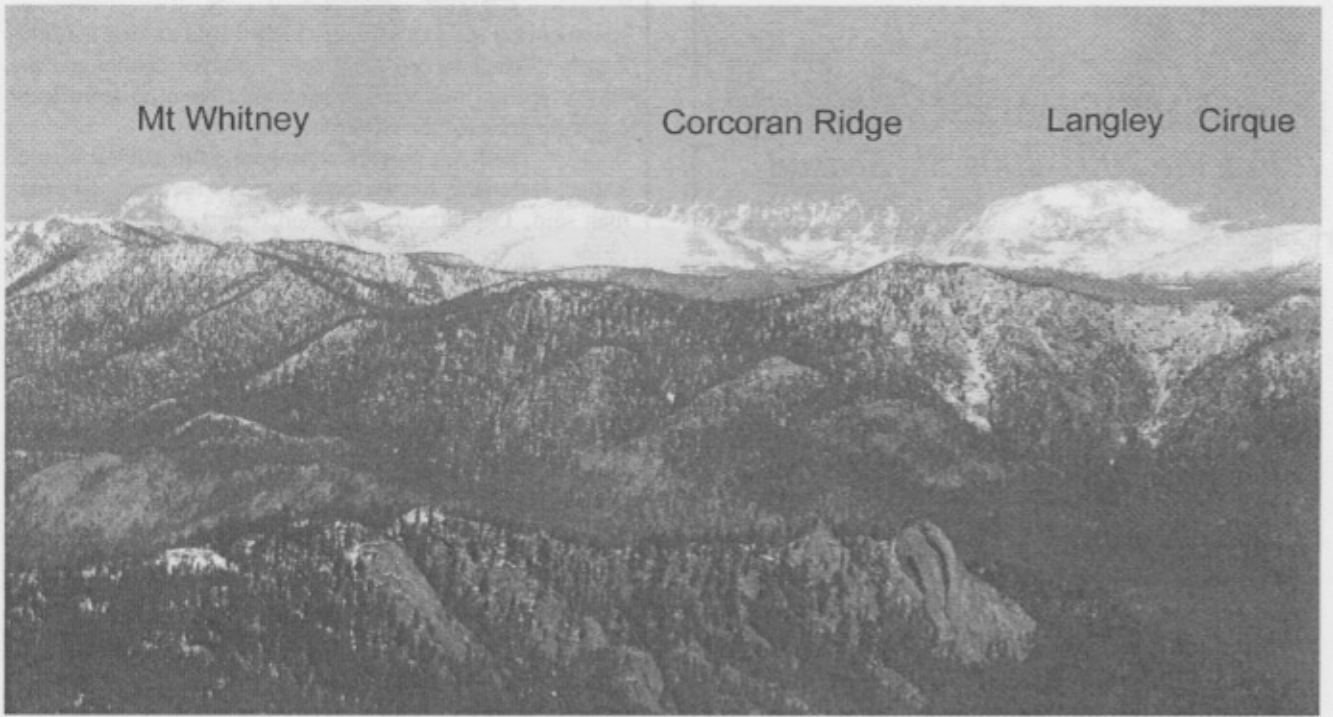


Mike & Leslie on Jordan Pk with lookout tower in whiteout.

Mt Whitney

Corcoran Ridge

Langley Cirque



Panorama of the southern Sierra from Slate Mtn



Heiko, Reiner and Leslie on Slate Mountain

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New SMS Central Committee For the 2003-2004 Ski Season

The new elected central committee members are:

Tom Marsh
Reiner Stenzel
Randy Lamm
Mike Seiffert
Keith Martin
Leslie Hofherr

(Mammoth Airport, continued from Page 3)

statement on the expansion, which would extend a 7,000-foot-long runway by 1,200 feet. Lockyer challenged the FAA's finding that the project would have no significant consequences for the environment.

The FAA must now prepare a full environmental impact statement for the plan to move forward, Zimmerman said. The airport expansion is part of the city's plan to lure more out-of-state visitors and transform Mammoth into a resort town like Aspen, Colo.

Environmentalists argue that the increased tourist traffic would also mean more hotels, restaurants and shopping centers that would strain the region's natural resources. "This project proposes to double the number of visitor-days with tourists arriving by plane," said Sierra Club member Owen Maloy, who lives in the region. "People still don't have enough information about how this will change our area. There is risk of destroying the very scenic values that attract visitors."

For more information, see <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mammoth-29apr29,1,5440622.story> or <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2003/04/28/state2038EDT0168.DTL>

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