

February 2008

Issue # 804

PRIVATE TRIPS

ALVIN AND CREW: 3 T'S

The original skiing objective was an open traverse over the 3 T's (Thunder, Telegraph and Timber Peaks) in Southern California's San Gabriel Mountains – probably less than a couple of air miles east of Baldy Bowl. Four other strong and talented skiers: Scott Bornheimer, Don Sutton, Angel Ocana, and Cedric Ma were up for the adventure that had been on my goal list for a long time.



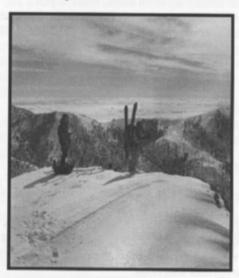
We met a little after 7:00 a.m. at the trailhead for Icehouse Canyon to arrange a car shuttle up to the Mt. Baldy parking lot. The first couple of miles were skinning up an icy road that skirts around the edge of Mt. Baldy's resort to Thunder Mountain. We then dropped about 400 feet down the east side on a steep, icy pitch that some of us decided to crampon down, while two skied to reach the saddle between Telegraph and Thunder, where we stopped for a break. From this position we looked at the slope up Telegraph that had glistening patches of ice spaced randomly about our projected route up to the ridgeline between Telegraph and Timber. Three of us decided to stay with crampons/ boots while two skinned. The ice made for a challenging ascent with dicey moments for all. Near the ridge line, I was in two-way radio contact with Jake Faller to identify our position for possible filming as Jake was planning to film another group in Baldy Bowl from this position. Even when we were right on the ridgeline we were still the tiniest, near-invisible specs that were too far away even for his powerful telephoto lenses.

Time had marched on quickly for us as it was after 1:00 p.m. on the ridge and we had to decide, as a group, if going north to Telegraph for at least a half hour on a rugged, icy ridgeline would compromise our chance of getting some good, mid-day skiing. We chose to head south and savor the views of Baldy Bowl and the east-facing slopes of the ridgeline from our special perspective. After a short while, we reached a prominent high plateau where the terrain dropped precipitously to the south and would have made for great skiing down into Icehouse Canyon if only there was more snow coverage.

APRIL 15th MEETING NEWS...

Be sure to attend the April SMS Meeting. Valerie Mendenhall will be reading and commenting on her book Woman on the Rocks: the mountaineering letters of Ruth Mendenhall. This is a chance to get a unique personal glimpse into the history of the SMS and Southern California skiing.

Scott and I checked out our options to the west and north of the plateau. From the recent weekends



where I had skied excellent powder on northwest-facing aspects, I had great confidence that this same aspect with the well-spaced glades of trees to a deep canyon below would be the best option for the day. We all

MUGELNOOS STAFF

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NEXT ISSUE

The March issue deadline is March 10, 2008. All letters, photos, slides, or articles should be sent to Mugelnoos editor, John Anderson, 21717 Evalyn Avenue, Torrance, CA 90503. Materials can be sent by IBM disc or e-mailed to jay-deeay@yahoo.com. 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!

SMS WEB PAGE

The link is: http://angeles.sierraclub.org/skimt/ Check out the web page for the latest SMS news

SMS Member Gear For Sale

For Sale: Mens lightweight three buckle Dynafit TLT 700 AT boots with thermofoam liners (molded twice). 281mm shell, mondo point 25, fits size 7 to 8.5 +/-. Good condition for \$125 obo, jim_garvey@sbcglobal.net or call 310-809-0792.

Mugelnoos Renewals Due!

To renew, send a check for \$15 made payable to "Ski Mountaineers" to the Mugelmailer: Pat Holleman, 1638 6th St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-6347. Don't forget to update your email address in order to receive the most recent notices for programs and trips.

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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 \$15 per year payable to "SMS." Due in October. Subscription payments are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.

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Calendar of Events

All trips sponsored Ski Mountaineers unless otherwise indicated.

Feb 19 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Feb 23 Sat OCSS, Wilderness Adventures, Ski Mountaineers TI: Mt. Pinos Backcountry Ski Tour: Moderately strenuous 4+ mile, 500' gain to panoramic vista. Ski from end of Mt Pinos Highway to summit at Condor Point. Possible side trips to Inspiration Point, other destinations, or just playing may add a few miles + a few 100 feet elevation loss & gain. May ski lower on mountain if conditions warrant. Part of route may be in pre-existing tracks, but recent snowfall, rutted trail, or aesthetics may require breaking new trail. Intermediate X-C skills required & metal-edged, backcountry skis & backcountry boots highly recommended. Bring winter clothing, water, lunch. No snow or likely blizzard cancel trip. Send e-mail or phone leader w/ experience level/conditioning for trip details in the 2 weeks before trip. Leader: Mark Mitchell, Co-Ldr: Keith Martin

Mar 14-16 Fri-Sun Natural Science

O: Winter Ecology Workshop at June Lake: Join us for two days of xc skiing, tracking, and naturalizing in the spectacular Mammoth-June Lake area. Intermediate ski touring ability required. This trip satisfies the Natural Science requirement for the I-rating. Fee of \$60 includes naturalist instruction, breakfasts and trail lunches, and accommodation at local Sierra Club members' homes on Fri and Sat night. Reserve a place by Mar 1st, by sending sase and \$60 check payable to Sierra Club Natural Science Section to leaders Ginny and Jim Heringer.

Mar 18 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Apr 4-5 Ski Mountaineers

TI: Onion Valley Ski Tour. Meet Saturday Morning for weekend ski at Onion Valley on Sierra Eastside. Camp at Upper Gray and ski Kearsarge and Sardine Canyon. Intermediate and above, climbing skins, metal edge skis, beacon, shovel, etc. Ldr:Tom Marsh, Co-ldr: Randy Lamm

Apr 15 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Apr 25-27 Fri-Sun Ski Mountaineers

TI: Rock Creek Introductory Ski Tour: Car camp, ski slopes of beautiful Little Lakes Valley and surrounding area. Intro SMS day tours aimed at intermediate or better skiers with some backcountry experience. Metal-edged skis & skins required. Send experience, contact, rid share info to Ldr: Mike Seiffert. Co-Ldr: Lorene Samoska

Apr 26-30 Sat-Wed Ski Mountaineers

TI: North Lake Loop Tour: Classic ski touring starting at North Lake, Paiute Pass, Alpine Col., Lamarck Col. Layover in Evolution Basin. Experience skiing with pack, climbing skins, metal edge skis, beacon, shovel, etc. Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co-Ldrs Randy Lamm, Reiner Stenzel

May 3-4 Sat-Sun Ski Mountaineers

TI: San Joaquin Mtn (11,600'): A reliable springtime favorite with great ski terrain and Sierra views. Sat. climb and ski peak, just west of June Lk., via Fern Lk.

TI: San Joaquin Mtn (11,600'): A reliable springtime favorite with great ski terrain and Sierra views. Sat climb and ski peak, just west of June Lk., via Fern Lk., 7 mi rt, 4320' gain. Sat night car camp. Sun we will ski (Esha Cyn, Tioga Pass, or Blue Couloir) wherever the snow is best. Requires strong intermediate or better be skiing ability. Email experience, phone, & ride share info to Ldr: Mark Goebel. Asst: Randy Lamm

May 20 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Audi-

LEADERSHIP TRAINING CLASS COMING UP SMS NEEDS MORE LEADERS...SIGN UP NOW APRIL 12, 2009

Interested in becoming an outings leader for the Club?

Angeles Chapter is home to one of the largest outings programs on the planet – thousands of trips ranging from beach barbecues to mountaineering expeditions.

You can take the first step toward becoming a leader by attending a class offered by the chapter Leadership Training Committee on Saturday, April 12.

The class covers all the basics of leadership. Experienced leaders will tell you how to plan a trip, prevent problems on the trail and make sure that everyone – including you – has a great time. They'll also explain good conservation and safety practices. And they'll give you tips for getting your "O" rating quickly and then, if you choose, pursuing more advanced ratings.

The all-day class at the Griffith Park Ranger Station costs \$25. The application is on page 73 of the Angeles Chapter Schedule #306 and page 77 of Schedule #307. It's also online at angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc.

Mail the application and check, payable to Sierra Club, to Steve Botan, LTC Registrar, 18816 Thornwood Circle, Huntington Beach 92646. You also can reach Botan by phone (714-963-0151) or e-mail (sbotan@pacbell.net).

Applications and checks are due March 31.
Scholarships are available for those in financial need. Apply to LTC Chair Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com).

(Continued from page 1)

moved near the middle of the plateau and peeled our skins. After posing for some photos, we started laying down tracks. The snow was awesome powder on a roll-over pitch that exceeded 40 degrees as we made short traverses west to stay in the steep and deep. Conditions continued this way for at least the first 2,000 vertical feet until we broke out of the trees and headed to a south-facing aspect of the canyon that was baking (for February 2, 2008) in the sun.

Immediately we were treated to two to three inches of corn on a uniform base in a broad, open canyon with side slopes of 30 +/- degrees. Many turns were fast and furious as this "Ego Snow" let one have the feeling that nothing could go wrong. After about 1,200 vertical feet of this corn, we stopped for a break and unanimously decided we had to have more. We skinned back up to the top of the corn level and ripped it again. This was definitely a day to remember – only at this point it wasn't over.

As we descended deeper into this now narrow slot of a canyon, we got into more trees, shade, some bushes and powder again. With this day of climbing and skiing meant to be an adventure, none of us knew exactly how or where our skiing would end. There were moments of uncertainty as it looked like our canyon was closing in on us. At one point, we were elated to find something that looked like a trail and began following it uphill even though we knew we needed to head downhill. Suddenly something jelled in all of us and we turned around to proceed across the canyon to pick up the trail that headed down as our instincts directed. The very nice thing about this trail is that it was gentle and well-covered with untouched powder in this very restricted space that enabled us to keep our speed in total control. We proceeded down many switchbacks through now what was primarily an oak tree covered forest with some of those beautiful red bark cedars projecting up through the canopy until Icehouse Canyon with plenty of snow on the trail opened up for us. On we continued skiing until we reached the Icehouse Canyon parking lot with our cars only a couple of hundred feet away. The day couldn't have turned out better if we wanted it to it was excellent and deserved a celebration.

Scott recommended the Buckhorn, just about a mile down the road. For a Saturday night with live music and an outgoing, energetic singer, there was hardly a crowd and we enjoyed several rounds of toasts with dinner and good entertainment that was befitting our fine day in the mountains. Thanks to Scott, Don, Angel, Cedric and Jake (who joined us at the Buckhorn) for the fine day.

MAMMOTH LAKES SKI TOUR

Much of the joy of Mammoth Lakes in January is the reliability of effortless dry powder (otherwise known as POW). Even last year during one of the driest years on record and during a major cold snap, you could find fairly good ski conditions. Lucky for us this year, a major storm tracked through the area in early January giving us an excellent base.

Most folks arrived fairly early on Friday evening in time



to enjoy an evening in the spacious condo with a roaring fire and good conversation. There were 14 of us on the trip - Randy Lamm, Bronwyn Barkan, Kat Seiple, Jim Garvey, Brian Ham-

mer, Linda Bouchie, Ulrike Luderer, Kevin Olson, Aaron Applebaum, Mike Rector, Bill Lutz, Mike Bratkowski and Aron Socher and myself

Bill popped in a slide show of many of his past trips as we discussed all the familiar places folks in the group had been. Most of us arrived before 10PM that night. Randy, Bronwyn and Mike Bratkowski opted for a late start from Los Angeles. Around midnight, I woke up to the ring of my cell phone. Someone prudently lock the front door to the condo before retiring for the night and Randy and his wife, Bronwyn could not get in. After letting them in and carrying the remaining food stuff



upstairs to the kitchen, it was almost time to greet Mike arriving near the 1am hour.

The next day dawned sunny, cold and beautiful. The air was fairly still and spirits were high

for an exciting tour. With the exception of Aron Socher and Bronwyn, the whole group decided to do the tour. We started out at the end of the road near Twin Lakes by about 9:30AM with fantastic weather. After about an hour of trudging the Lake Mary road and the Coldwater Creek road, we arrived at the Duck Pass trail head. This was not before seeing Pat and Gerry Hollerman gleefully making the many rounds around the block on skate skis. They had been up for the prior 6 days and enjoyed

(Continued from page 4)

great condition on Mammoth Mountain and the XC area. As promised the snow in Coldwater creek was nice

powder. Surprisingly, we had to break trail for much of the way past the first hump a couple weeks after the last snowfall. It was virgin terrain as was crossed over Skeleton Lake and up the drainage toward Barney lake and



the base of Duck Pass. A real testament to the wonderful pristine conditions of this sport. For many of us, this was the first tour up this canyon. In fact, for Kat, it was her first back country tour. The whole group did exceptionally well climbing the 1,800 feet in elevation gain from the cars.

The weather was perfect for a nice lunch under the warm sun. Although, not too warm to change the powder like conditions of the snow. After a brief time at Barney Lake, we made the quick decent down the canyon. As we expected, the snow was soft and forgiving. The decent after Skeleton Lake was especially joyful as we each found untracked sections tree weaving down to the Duck Pass trail head.

Back to the condo by 5:30PM, we all enjoyed happy hour with beer, wine, chips, salsa, quiche, pizza and an assortment of dips and sauces. So much so, that we may have to deem this trip a little on the "Nancy" side. After that, most of us retreated to the warmth of the Jacuzzi and dry sauna.

Bill keep the sauna streaming with cups of water over



the rocks and heads. Bill devised a way to keep the warm air from the top of the sauna with the occasional wave of a towel. Later that evening, after enjoying a Lasagna dinner, Mike and

Lorene dropped by for a visit. They had recently purchased a condo in the Mammoth area.

The next day (Sunday), Mike and Lorene decided to join us for a tour up Mammoth Crest. Sunday was a bit cold and blistery. A storm had been forecast to arrive in the late afternoon and the winds and clouds started to pick up. We started on the Lake Mary road again with a short cut by the stables to get over to the trail head at Lake George. Before that Kevin, Ulrike and Kat split off in search of the Mammoth Pass trail. A nice track had been set climbing the ridge near the summer crest trail. We had wonderful views making quick work up to our lunch spot just below the crest. It was not as comfortable as

the day before with a moderate breeze and disappearing sun. After the brief lunch, many in the group decided to take the short jaunt up to the crest to marvel at the outstanding view in all directions. Given the approaching storm and the high winds, it was fairly short lived. The bowl to the North of the crest looked to be the best conditions down. Later, we found out this canyon was called Red Cone (Jim Garvey archives). We were

greeted with the whole spectrum of variable conditions from wind pack to breakable crust to sections of powder. The conditions improved considerably as we made it down through the trees



on the way towards Horse Shoe Lake. It was all hooting and hollering as we made turn after turn in the near perfect powder. Randy and Dave went a little too far to the right and were greeted with sizable cliffs. Most of us stayed to the left and easily made it down to Horse Shoe Lake. Lorene showed us the way back to the short cut to the stables and ultimately to the cars. As we got back to the condo, the first snowfall started to arrive. The conditions got considerable more blistery and snow had started to accumulate. Perfect conditions for Happy hour viewing and another trip to the sauna. That evening after dinner, we got a nice surprise visit from our SMS chair, Scott Kopke and his lovely wife, Estelle and two kids.

The next day, the sun had appeared with a bit of wind. Most everyone decided to go on there own. So after

packing in morning, Mike, Kat drove over trail head White and Wing. blistery started up climb to Wing in ful condi-



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took about two hours for Bill, Mike and I to reach the top following an existing track. The wind had moderated and the sun came out, so it was quite pleasant as we ripped off skins and made the wonderful decent through the powder back down to the XC trail.

Thanks much to Randy and Bronwyn for helping with the food and Randy for agreeing to co-lead.

Tom Marsh

SNOW SCIENCE AND AVALANCHE DREDAREDNESS

One of the main bodies of knowledge necessary to staying alive in the winter back country is snow science. We have reports now of early season deaths at Mountain High in our local mountains and on the Pear Lake Hut trail, which many of you are familiar with. The Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center (www.esavalanche.org) is the premier avy research and forecasting center in the Sierra Nevada. Sue Burak is the avalanche forecaster, Nate Greenberg, V.P, and Bishop guides S.P. Parker and Howie Schwartz holding officer positions. Please help them out by joining for \$35. Then take courses, and check the site out frequently so you have an idea of what the Sierra snow pack is doing. By frequently reviewing the site you can build up a base of knowledge of the snow pack over a season. Here is a recent report:

Good afternoon. This is Sue Burak with the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center with a backcountry avalanche warning posted on Saturday February 23, 2008.

A SPECIAL AVALANCHE ADVISORY IS IN EFFECT FOR THE EASTERN SIERRA FROM SONORA PASS SOUTH TO MT WHITNEY. STRONG WINDS AND HEAVY SNOWFALL WILL CREATE DANGEROUS AVALANCHES IN THE HIGHER ELEVATIONS AND THE DANGER IS EXPECTED TO REACH HIGH BY EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. AS SNOWFALL AND STRONG WINDS CONTINUE ON SUNDAY, THE AVALANCHE DANGER MAY RISE TO EXTREME.

MOUNTAIN WEATHER

After phone discussion with NWS in Reno, it is reasonable to expect to see over 4 feet of snow accumulate above the 9,000 ft elevation in Mono County. Models indicate 3 feet of snow could fall at the 7,000 ft elevation. This is one of the most impressive storms I have seen in a while: check out http://squall.sfsu.edu/gif/sathts_pac_500_00.gif.

The low is still off the West Coast and rain is falling in the San Francisco area. Light snow is falling from the Sherwin Summit to north of June Mountain. Snow levels may rise to 7,000 ft this evening but then drop to the 6,500 ft elevation. The Owens Valley will see rain at the valley floor.

There is a winter storm warning for Inyo and Mono counties for this afternoon through Sunday night. For the southern Sierra, 20-30 inches of new snow is expected above 8,000 ft by Sunday evening. Strong and gusty winds over 70 mph are likely in the southern Sierra with whiteout conditions.

For Mono County, 2 to 3 feet of new snow is expected above 7,000 ft by Sunday morning. Terrain above 9,000

ft could see 4 ft of new snow by Sunday night.

As the jet stream passes over the Tahoe area, winds in Mono County will reach 50 mph along 395 and over 130 mph on exposed ridgetops. Storm wind directions will begin from the south and southeast and shift to the southwest by Sunday.

Temperatures for Saturday and Sunday will range from the teens to low 20's.

SNOWPACK AND AVALANCHE DISCUSSION

The only thing that could make conditions worse would be a buried surface layer deep in the pack. Things are bad enough with up to 4 feet of higher density snow falling on top of 1.5 to 2 feet of 6% snow from the Thursday night and Friday storm, though Mammoth Mountain reported 11%.

Snow stability yesterday was good in non wind loaded areas- this was helpful as we needed steep terrain to keep skis turning through two feet of new. Stuffblock tests and extended column tests had hard results. The old snow/new snow layer seemed well bonded at the 10,000 ft elevation in Rock Creek. Control results from Mammoth Mountain showed steep slopes went on hand charges on either density changes in the storm snow down to the old sun crust.

With forecasted snowfall rates of 2-3 inches an hour for tonight, it is easy to visualize the load being applied to yesterday's snow. Add the additional loading brought on by strong winds and there is a possibility of deep avalanches running to the old snow surfaces of the last two weeks. I expect to see a widespread avalanche cycle occur during this storm.

The avalanche danger rating increases to HIGH by this

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evening. Natural and human triggered avalanches are likely. Likely means it is almost certain a light load will trigger an avalanche. Unstable slabs will be found on a variety of aspects and slope angles. Travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended.

BOOK AND MOVIE REVIEWS

Steep" – The Story of Big Mountain Skiing

"Steep" is a 90 minute documentary film about the sport of mountain skiing on the extreme edge of steepness, and what motivates the athletes who risk life and limb for the adrenaline high they seek on each challenging ride they take.

The film examines the history of extreme skiing beginning in the early 1970s when Bill Briggs skied from the summit of the Grand Teton in Wyoming; and in France, where skiers such as Anselme Baud and Patrick Valllencant were skiing radical lines in the Alps above Chamonix. The film includes interviews and impressive archival footage of these pioneering skiers. We are then introduced to modern skiing legend Doug Coombs and his first descents on many big peaks above Valdez, Alaska. Other well known skiers such as Scot Schmidt, Glen Plake, Chris Davenport, Shane McConkey, Seth Morrison and Andrew McLean are also featured.

What drives these skiers to risk their lives is examined, and some of their quotes include: "without risk there is no adventure""I tried to be a normal person with a job, but that didn't work""you can expect to die, you don't want to die, it was my way of life to become a man" ..."as soon as I got out of jail, I went skiing, that's where I had to go to make it all right again"..."I take the risk because it is the ultimate".

The film fully captures the airy, white knuckle rides these athletes take while sliding their way down the wild slopes of the backcountry. It put me on the edge of my seat, and I felt that same nervous feeling one gets before the first turn down a steep exposed slope.

"Steep" has already made a brief showing in LA and Orange Counties, but is still appearing in other California cities. You can find where by going to the following website: http://www.thedocumentarvgroup.com, and also view trailers to the film and a well recommended interview with the film makers. I saw the film twice, and can't wait until it's out on DVD.

SKI THE 14ERS - A VISUAL TRIBUTE TO COLORADO'S 14,000-FOOT PEAKS FROM THE EYES OF A SKI MOUNTAINEER"

by Chris Davenport & Art Burrows, forward by Lou Dawson.

Hard cover, 12"x13", 144 pgs, over 200 photos, \$49.95.

Chris Davenport of Aspen Colorado needless to say is an accomplished big mountain skier. A former alpine downhill racer, the winner of several World Extreme Skiing Championships in Valdez, Alaska, ski movie star, and avid climber and mountaineer. In January 2006 he started on a new project to ski all of Colorado's 14,000' peaks. On January 19, 2007 Chris completed his final turns down Longs Peak, becoming the first person to ski all 54 peaks within a 12-month period. Chris follows in the steps of Lou Dawson, the first to ski all of the 14ers, but over 13 years.

The book includes a summary of early ski mountaineering in Colorado, including the famous Chris Landry (noted for his definition of extreme skiing: "if you fall you die") descent of the 60-degree east face of Pyramid Peak. Chris Davenport became the first in 28 years to repeat the same descent line. The book's chapters each describe and illustrate a different range of Colorado peaks containing 14ers that Chris skied. A majority of the pages are dramatic photos of the peaks and of Chris skiing. Colorado is known for its thin snow pack, and it shows in many of the narrow, rock-studded routes that Chris had to ski when conditions were less than ideal. The narrative in the book is not a blow-by-blow account of each peak skied, but rather a summary of highlights. Details of each peak skied can be found on Chris' website: www.skithe14ers.com

"Ski the 14ers" is a great addition to any ski mountaineering library, and I highly recommend it.

Mark Goebel





PRIVATE TRIP REPORTS: SEND 'EM IN

"Back in the day" SMS group trips were the norm and massively well attended. Today, with inexpensive and extensive transportation and probably tighter time schedules, a lot of our backcountry skiing is done on private trips. If you take an interesting private trip, let Mugelnoos know about it. It's not much of an effort these days to type it up on the computer and email it and some digital pictures to me.

Mugelnoos

Pat Holleman 1638 6th Street Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

FUTURE MUGELNOOS ISSUES

- More Day Trippers (day tours)
- · Book reviews
- · General Mountain Stuff
- · Backcountry Skiing Website update

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