

Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS
OF WESTERN MONTANA

DEC. 1964
Vol. IV, No. 4



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The MountainEar is published monthly, September through June, by the

Rocky Mountaineers of Western Montana
2100 South Avenue West
Missoula, Montana 59801

Editor.....Virginia Vincent
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Subscriptions.....Shirley Braxton

Subscription: by membership in the Rocky Mountaineers (\$3/year)
or \$1.50 for 10 issues

Please notify us about change of address as soon as possible.

We appreciate your contributions of articles, maps, and notes on hiking, climbing, and ski-touring. Please submit articles typed and double spaced. Black and white photos and colored slides are especially useful and can be traced easily onto our multilith stencils.

Officers for 1964-65

Pete Hall, Pres.....549-3636
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ANNOUNCING - Dec. 8th - Monthly meeting of the Rocky Mountaineers.

Room 107 of the Geology Bldg. on the MSU campus (old bldg.
just south of Main Hall on the oval). Bring your ski-mountaineer-
ing equipment for demonstration.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS - This is between seasons and no formal activities have been planned. However, persons wishing to get up trips should contact our "Clearing House" (9-2513) where the Braxtons will have information on who wants to go where.

REMINDER - to all participants in club activities: The Rocky Mountaineers of Western Montana, its officers, instructors, trip leaders, and other members do not assume any liability for accidents, or medical or evacuation expense incurred by individuals who are participating in the club's activities.

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE MISSION RANGE OF MONTANA by Arthur C. Tate
Condensed by Pat Leonard from Bulletin, Appalachian Mountain
Club, Vol. 17, No. 4, Dec. 1929

"The country is largely unknown and unmapped and there are no trails leading through it. It is steep and very broken, and I do not consider it advisable for anyone who is not thoroughly familiar with getting about in that sort of country to undertake a trip into it. There is a good trail as far as Lagoon Lake. Beyond that horses cannot be taken; all travel will necessarily be on foot, and in order to see much of it, it means a three or four days' back-pack in either direction from the end of the trail. From a scenic standpoint, however, I do not know of any country that excels it, and if you are able to tackle that sort of trip I am sure you will feel fully repaid for the effort."

Such was the letter by Theodore Schumaker, of the U. S. Forest Service, answering an inquiry about the Mission Range in Western Montana. My son and I traveled west to Missoula where an outfitter, Captain Eli Laird, and his wife met us with a car for the eighty-five mile ride to his camp. The Captain was just starting to build a lodge at the outlet of Elbow Lake, the name of which has since been changed to Lindbergh, in honor of the famous aviator, who spent a week there some months later.

The Missions carry much snow and ice on their eastern or Swan River Valley slopes and far surpass their neighbors in variety and attractiveness. There are numerous snowfields, several small glaciers, and a dozen beautiful alpine lakes. Four of these lie right next to the high peaks and are of good size. Beginning on the north they are: Turquoise, exquisite in color and true to its name; Lost, a remarkable blue green; High Park; and Gray Wolf. The first two are of highly colored glacial water; the others are clear as crystal. I was informed that all had been very imperfectly explored and that any trip taken was sure to lead into virgin territory, with the thrill of the real explorer as compensation for the effort.

The first few days we spent at trout fishing, of which the region provides the very best. Then, with Captain Laird and a wrangler called "Babe," our pack string started out for Lagoon Lake, the "jumping-off place" at the end of the trail.

While Cap and Babe were making camp at Lagoon Lake, Mac and I climbed the slopes to the south and looked down upon Turquoise Lake, shoreless throughout and surrounded by steeply sloping walls, with an inspiring background of high snow-clad peaks.

Right above the camp loomed an impressive rock pinnacle which promised a good viewpoint. The next morning a two hours' scramble made it, but just as we arrived a heavy clap of thunder ushered in a snow flurry which blotted out the view; however, this was soon over and the lifting clouds disclosed a fine sight. From this vantage point we studied out possible routes, and the following day started along the steep northern slopes of Turquoise for Lone Tree Pass, only two miles from camp in an air line but requiring four hours of hard going. There are no level spots, all the rocks being steeply inclined and the constant side-hill travel is both difficult and fatiguing. We struck snow "en route" and continuous snow near the pass, which we approached from slightly above.

Just beyond the pass we stood upon the shore of the little Lake of the Clouds, frozen solid although the date was July 16. After lunch we continued west and came to the brink of a remarkable drop-off, with a glorious view of McDonald Peak, 10,000 feet elevation and the highest in the range. Then, turning slightly, we climbed a steep ridge and looked right down into frozen Icefloe Lake. The trip thus far had been done before, so we decided to return by the south bank of Turquoise, which was a new route. This proved very arduous and we were four tired men when we got back to camp that night.

Directly south of camp rose a fine, high peak known as "Daughter-of-the-Sun," the first to receive and the last to lose the light of day. We left camp about eight o'clock to climb it. Crossing the outlet of Turquoise on a log jam we started up a steep shale and rock slope. Then over much snow, coming out on a snow bench above which snow slopes rose steeply to the cliffs above. Cap spied a mountain goat not far off. It was a young male and looked wild indeed in the savage surroundings of ice, rock and snow. We tried to see the bigger billy sure to be around but could not. Then we roped up to ascend a steep snow slope, cutting steps in the hard surface. Once we were on the rocks, on what had looked from below like a very feasible route, our troubles began. The way was exceedingly steep, with cliffs and chimneys and much loose slide rock all ready to come down. We spent three hours in hard, nerve-racking climbing, using the rope all the time, and made the first and slightly lower summit at 1:30, all much tired out with the long strain. The top was a mass of immense boulders with huge caves between them, some fifty to one hundred feet deep.

The view, a superb one, was most extensive, and the day was of the best for clearness. Lost Lake lay just under us to the south, a beautiful blue-green in color. Mountaineer Lake, at the base of the peak of the same name, was frozen solid. The mountains in Glacier Park showed faintly, far to the north. Finding no evidence of former visits, we built a cairn, ate lunch, and then went over to the highest peak and built another cairn. We returned by a different route, using the low point in the saddle of the ridge to the east, descending some cliffs, and reaching a snowfield on a ledge below. We followed this to a point just above Turquoise where we lingered for some time to watch the sunset.

As the sun went down the light left the upper snowfields, the cliffs became faint and shadowy, the Turquoise Lake turned to a deep sapphire. A slight breeze rippled the otherwise calm expanse and in places bright golden flecks of light shimmered on the surface. We reached camp dead tired at 7:15. It had been a very sporty climb, taken in the most difficult way in spite of our planning. We learned later that it was a first ascent.

After our return to Elbow Lake we took several short trips, among them one to Crystal Lake, some three miles above the upper end of Elbow and 500 feet higher. Here we caught a glimpse of country not seen on our recent pack trip. It had a very inviting look and we determined to make it the field of another summer's trip.

Accordingly, the summer of 1928 saw us in Montana once more, and an old Indian trail known as the Jocko was used by our pack outfit as far as Summit Lake, which we supposed was close to Gray Wolf, the most southerly of the big lakes before mentioned. Beautiful by day, Summit Lake proved to be a place of torment at night. Although we were at 6000 feet, the night was not cold and the mosquitoes for size, noise, and fierceness broke

all records. Shortly after sun-up they disappeared, and after an early breakfast we made our way through the trailless forest to Gray Wolf Lake, which proved to be some two miles distant.

All went well until we reached the middle of the lake, where the sides were steep and in one place all but cut us off. At the head of the lake we ate lunch in a veritable flower garden, and then started up the cliffs, finally coming out on the steep snow slopes of the Mission Divide.

We followed an easier slope, much more slowly, and finally came out on a knife-edge ridge with a tremendous drop on its western side and a fine view in every direction. Gray Wolf Peak was nearby at the south and to the north lay Mountaineer Peak (9200 ft.), our old friend Daughter-of-the-Sun, and the snowy giants surrounding Turquoise Lake. Our return was made over the Gray Wolf Glacier and the south side of Gray Wolf Lake. It was night before we got back to camp once more, and we had a hard time to locate it in the darkness.

It was easy to see that with such rough country and no trails anything worth while must be done by back-packing, so we rested a couple of days and then with only the essentials started out again. At Gray Wolf Lake the Captain suggested the advisability of a "short cut" over a high pass to get us into the High Park country, our next objective. This was the delectable region we had seen from Crystal Lake the previous year. A strenuous scramble up the pass revealed a steep slope on the other side, with a bright little gem of a lake as its base, but, alas! another high ridge beyond and High Park Lake undoubtedly beyond that. So somewhat ruefully we retraced our steps and followed our route of two days before to the head of Gray Wolf, where we climbed a northerly divide revealing High Park Lake in the valley below. The trip down the long slope was made memorable in one place by a regular golden carpet of buttercups, literally millions of them.

We made camp near the outlet of High Park Lake and the next day made our toilsome way down to the head of Crystal Lake through dense stands of yew trees and thickets of "devil's clubs." Game trails along the north side of the lake proved a great help.

At the outlet of Crystal we stood once more upon ground familiar from the previous year. During the spring Cap had cut a trail from here to Elbow and this we followed, finally crossing the river just above Elbow Lake. To get back to the Jocko trail and so reach Cap's Lodge, we had to climb a steep slope that had suffered a bad burn. But here again Nature had its good things to offer. If you have never eaten Montana huckleberries you have a treat in store. We were a tired lot as we filed into camp that night, but the fine trip, the first of its kind, had been well worth all the fatigue.

Our two seasons had enabled us to climb several peaks, to cross three passes, to see all four of the big lakes, and to traverse three of their long and difficult valleys. In conclusion let me say that while other ranges have higher peaks, bigger glaciers, and larger lakes, now where else can a greater variety of mountain grandeur be found than in the Missions, with their fine fishing and abundant wild life, all set in a truly primeval wilderness.

SYMMETRY SPIRE VIA DURRANCE RIDGE (GRAND TETON NAT. PARK)

by Pat Leonard

There were four of us: Sam and Shirley Braxton and myself - also Tom Mitchell who had agreed to guide us on the trip (he had climbed it earlier in the month).

We left the Climbers Camp at Jenny Lake (better known as the Den of Thieves and resembling an encampment of renegade gypsies shunned by such for being too scrofulous and dirty for their own insensitive noses) about 7 a.m. and arrived at the bottom of the ridge about 9:15.

It had snowed the day before as a cold front went through the area, driving us from Amphitheater Lake to the hot showers at Colter Bay. The air was cold and dry, with a stiff west wind. There were patches of snow clinging to the level spots on the precipitous south side of the Spire and icicles hanging from the rocks overhead. We put on wool sweater, down jackets, parkas, and windbreakers and were still cold. It turned out to be possible to climb but a hundred feet or so before our fingers lost all feeling. One could complete a full one hundred and fifty foot lead only if one was willing to settle for visual proof that the hands were still in their positions - we had to look to ascertain that our numb hands were still locked onto the holds. It was reassuring to notice that even after we had gained some relatively level belay stance our hands still maintained their claw-like shape and only body warmth and massage forced them to regain their natural position.

There was a little loose rock on the first lead and an occasional loose or unstable rock on the rest of the climb but in general the rock was magnificently firm and rough-textured. It made for a fine climb - one of the best climbs I had ever attempted. The total rise was about 1500 to 1700 feet, I estimate, and it was a matter of one strenuous pitch after another. A most enjoyable climb even considering the fact that we were shivering immediately when we stopped climbing.

We climbed on two 150 foot $3/8$ " ropes - Tom and I on one rope and the Braxtons on the other. Tom and I alternated lead on each pitch and Sam led his rope all the way. When we chose up ropes at the bottom of the ridge, I managed to come up with the new Columbian rope purchased that week in Jackson. It was a very soft-lay rope, pliable and easy to manage, even when new. Sam (using the older Goldline) remarked that once when I made a false start in the wrong direction and had to descent, the rope slithered back down the rock, even threading nicely through a snap link, without hanging up or looping around anything. It was especially noticeable when making a long lead - the drag of over a hundred feet of rope sliding over rough rock was made less than that of a hard-lay rope such as Goldline. The disadvantage (and a serious one) is that the softer rope absorbs much more water than its harder counterpart. This is a distinct problem when climbing on snow and ice (and, as we were doing on Mt. Owen, in waterfalls). The rope becomes very heavy and has only to freeze to become completely unmanageable. But on dry rock it is a joy to handle.

We strayed from the standard route by a few yards and found a few interesting pitches which Tom had not encountered on his earlier climb. There are a number of routes one may follow and still be on the Durrance Ridge - which makes it possible to climb it a number of times and have each climb present a different aspect. Just climbing in cold weather made it vastly different than anything any of us had done before.

6.

Symmetry Spire via Durrance Ridge (contd.)

I must admit that most of the straying from the standard route was due to my occasional lead in the "wrong" direction - a fact which I do not regret. Once, however, I was faced with the decision of going right or left and I chose right (less exposed). Climbing up about six or seven feet I espied a rusty ring angle piton above me. Some climbers call these "psychological pitons." I prefer to think of them as Dead Men's pitons, hardware driven into the rock while the owner was clinging to some unstable and unsafe hold on the brink of imbalance, a desperate attempt to gain some security out of a perilous situation - just before he fell. Well, in spite of my convictions, the very firm-looking piton did have its usual psychological pull and I inched my way up the next three or four feet to within arms reach, gradually being forced by the rock out past vertical. I intended to try to use that piton as a momentary hold which would allow me to lean out away from the rock and thus see where I was to go next, there being no other good handhold visible. Reaching up with my right hand - left hand down grasping an "under" hold, cheek pressed to the cold rock - isn't this dramatic? - I touched the piton, inserted forefinger into the ring and tugged gently. It dropped out onto the back of my hand! (That was dramatic!) I stood there hissing and grumbling fervently to myself, vowing to never again stray from my convictions about such things. When my cheek finally began to grow cold and ache from being held against the frigid stone, I gently began to climb down and to the left, back to the ledge. Once there I stood a few more seconds jingling the old piton before my eyes and saying something like 'oh, no, you bloody fool! See what you did? It almost got you, didn't it? It's about 60 feet down to Tom. That is a 120 foot fall, you clumsy oaf'.

Properly chastised, I then anchored myself, called off belay and requested that guide Tom come up and salvage my lead for me.

The last of the difficult climbing came with a spectacular wall, broken by one ledge and riven by one vertical split. Tom made his belay half-way up in slings and I climbed over him to continue. Pictures taken at the top of that pitch count among my more prized possessions. Looking down, the pictures reveal the edge of the platform on which I stood, Tom's shiny hard-hat, the Braxtons below him (and almost obscured by him, the wall was so steep), and where we had begun the climb, over 1200 feet down.

Arriving at the top of "Cemetery" Spire (that is what Sam had been calling it for a week and after climbing the thing Shirley and I were willing to agree with him), it was too cold to do much except sign the register, hastily coil the ropes, and start down by the west col.

The rest of the trip was spent exclaiming to ourselves what a magnificent climb it was, cold weather and all. More than one of us vowed to return and climb it again, hopefully on a warm day.

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SWAN PEAK (elev. 9255) - NORTHWEST RIDGE ROUTE

by Hal Kanzler

Starting point is in the Swan valley about 10 miles south of Swan Lake at the Goat Creek Ranger Station at about elevation 3200 ft. Take the Goat Creek loop road traveling east for about three miles. Then turn south on the Squeezer Creek road, cross the bridge across Goat Creek and continue south about two miles by car. In a clear-cut area a prominent road turns off to the left (east) and climbs the side of the mountain, with numerous switchbacks and frequent cross trenches. The latter will drag a trailer hitch. Continue on this road as far as you can drive, which will likely be to the upper limit of the logged area. Elevation is about 5000 ft. at end of road.

Hike up the nose of the ridge and you will soon find a well-used elk trail. Continue on the trail up the nose of the ridge until you approach the crest. You will see a saddle in the main ridge to your right. A branch of the elk trail turns right and climbs directly into this saddle. Turn south at the saddle and observe the high knob about a quarter mile away. The logical direction would be to traverse around the left (east) side of this knob, but cliffs will prevent this. Hike to the top of the knob and enjoy the view. Elevation here is about 7200 ft. In the canyon to the north you can see beautiful little Scout Lake, which drains into Goat Creek. To the south you look directly down into Squeezer Creek. The main ridge to the east leads straight to the North Ridge of Swan Peak. Travel east on this ridge for about three miles with very little change in elevation. At each "camel hump," the game trail will lead around the right (south) side and then continue on the top of the ridge. At the last saddle before the ridge joins the main north-south ridge, stop and make a choice between what we called the "high road" and the "low road."

The "high road" is a side-hill traverse across the face of some easy rock, mostly on goat trails with a couple of tricky gullies to cross. You don't see them until you arrive at the edge and then it requires a little up and down to get across. On this route, head for the lower edge of the scree slopes below the pond (tarn) shown in the photo, which is the head of the North Fork of Squeezer Creek. There is a small water trickle coming out of the tarn and over a falls. Incidentally, this is the first water we found after leaving the car. We were four hours reaching the tarn and even with the plastic lemon we always carry, we had a mouth full of cotton before we reached the water.

The "low road" route is to drop down onto the bear-grass slopes about 500 ft. below and then work up the valley to the same point. This is easy walking but discouraging to lose the elevation and then have to regain it. Having tried both routes, we rated them about a toss-up.

After inspecting the mud flat at the creek for grizzly tracks, climb up the rock cliffs to the tarn as shown in photo (Class 3 and 4). Turn right and climb up the rock at the right hand edge of the snow field, to the very prominent sloping shelf. This shelf heads back southwest and will put you on the crest of the northwest ridge of Swan Peak. Pick up a very plain goat trail and travel, in a climb, now heading southeast, to the edge of a pocket which almost had another tarn in it. You can see the summit

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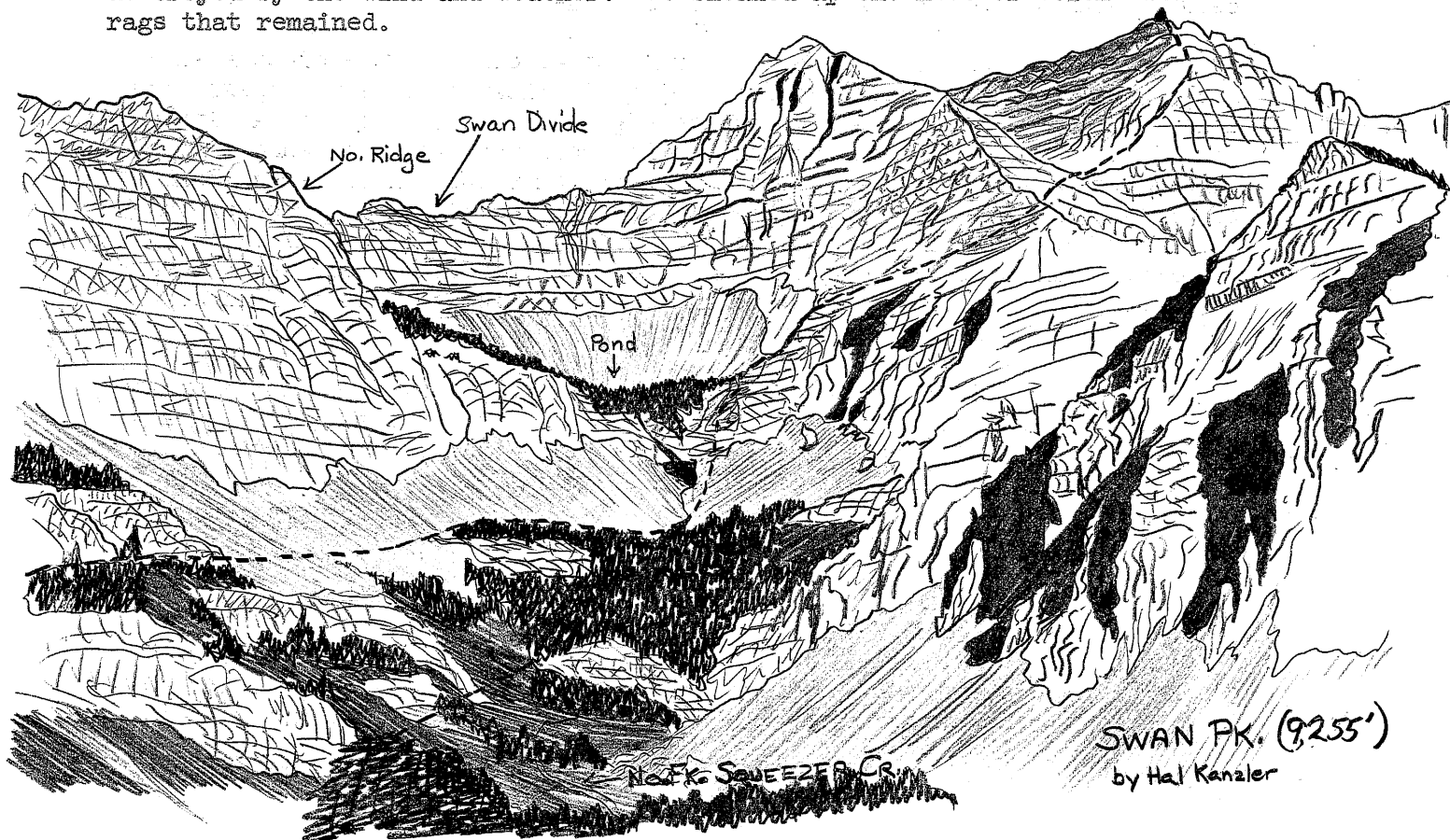
very plainly - straight ahead - and can also see the two lakes below to your right which are the headwaters of the main fork of Squeezer Creek. If there is snow in the pocket to your left, as you approach the peak, there will likely be grizzly tracks there also. Make sure the grizzly isn't still in some of them before proceeding.

Chase the goats out of the way, and continue up to ridge, directly to the summit. About 200 ft. below the summit, the easiest route is to get into the very obvious chute and go straight up it to the top (Class 3 and 4).

The view from the top is great. On a clear day (which we had), you can see as far as you care to look. The only thing nearby that looks like a mountain is Holland Peak to the south. Everything else appears dwarfed. On the north side of the east ridge, below the summit, is the only real ice I have seen on the Swan Range. It is the remains of the once-large Swan Glacier. Below, to the east, is a wonderful bird's-eye view of Sunburst Lake about 4000 ft. below.

You can see the panorama of the Mission Range: Great Northern Mountain; the peaks of Glacier Park; most of the Bob Marshall Wilderness; and the Cabinet Mountains. Swan Peak is a view-point, to put it mildly.

Jim K. and I made this trip the latter part of August '64. It took six hours from car to summit, an hour on top to enjoy the view, and five hours to return. A very early start is recommended, to avoid getting caught in the dark. Carry a full canteen from the car. There was no register on the summit, so we left one in a plastic wide-mouth water bottle. We also fixed the cairn, which was badly scattered around. Someone had erected an aerial photograph target on the summit which had been destroyed by the wind and weather. We cleaned up the mess of sticks and rags that remained.



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Of interest to ski-tourers and mountain-climbers--

Snow Bowl Ski Shop will be open with the first day of ski operation and will carry ski equipment and accessories for sale, and rentals of skis, boots, and poles. The shop is located on the main floor of the lodge at Snow Bowl Ski area, northwest of Missoula.

For the touring skier and mountain-climber, equipment can be ordered at a reduced price. Orders can be taken for touring skis; "Rottefella," "Jofa," and "Tempo" touring bindings; and touring boots, poles, and waxes. A complete line of French "Lafuma" packs of all types is available. In the shop there is a complete selection of "Optimus" camp stoves (small, for backpacking). Also some camping equipment can be ordered at reduced prices.

Stan Cohen is the man to see, or contact him at 549-8488.

HANS GMOSEK to present his ADVENTURE BOUND in
Missoula on December 16th

Sentinel (South Ave.) High School 8 P.M. in the
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Admission 50¢ children thru grade school
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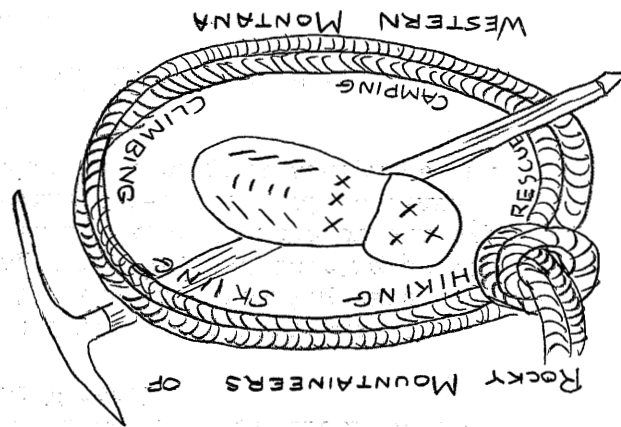
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NOTE to people who don't bring their own lunch on club trips!:

There are plenty of non-perishable foods that can be kept in a dorm room closet or window-sill.

Crackers or Pilot Bread	Hard (cheddar) cheese
Raisins or any dried fruits	Oranges Grapes Apples
Chocolate chips, semi-sweet	Tea bags Instant coffee
Candy bars Hard candies	Powdered fruit drinks (Tang,
Nuts Cookies Fig Newtons	Wyler's fruit ades, etc.)
Instant soups to be prepared in a canteen cup	
If kept cool, salami-type meats, hard-boiled eggs	

Loose or powdered items can be placed in one-pint plastic bags.