

Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

March 1991

MEETING

Time and Place: Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, in the Montana Power Building at 1903 Russell Street in Missoula. The March meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 13, 1991.

Program: Tom Hanou, who recently returned to Missoula after working in the Grand Canyon for a year constructing a campground, will present a slide show of various hikes in the Grand Canyon and Paria Canyon. Bring your maps and mark them up; it sounds like Tom really knows where the good stuff is.

Discussion. There will be further discussion about the Forest Service permit for the cabin and the possibility of raising dues to help defray the annual cost of this permit.

TRIP CALENDAR

General Contacts for Skiing. If you want to go backcountry skiing some weekend, but can't make (or don't like) the scheduled trips, call Dave Pengelly (728-6512), Peter Dayton (728-8101), Art Gidel (543-6352), or Ralph Flockerzi (549-7150). Chances are good that they can either suggest or organize an unscheduled trip. New skiers are particularly invited to contact these guys.

General Contacts for Kayaking. Believe it or not, the floating season has already begun. From now on various members of the club will be kayaking, rafting, and canoeing on a regular basis. Day trips, extended wilderness trips, and trips in the evening after work are planned. Call Peter Dayton (728-8101) or Art Gidel (543-6352) if you are interested in getting out on the rivers. If you have received any river permits, call collect!

March, Trapper Peak. Dave Pengelly is going to lead a trip up Trapper Peak, which is southwest of Darby in the Bitterroots, one of these weekends. Great telemarking opportunities on moderate-angle open slopes, great scenery. Call Dave at 728-6512 to suggest a date.

15-17

March 8-11, Hylite Ridge Trip. A three or four day trip down a high, undulating ridge in the Gallatin Range south of Bozeman. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for details.

March 14-17, Mount Cleveland. Steve Niday will lead a four-day winter climb up Mount Cleveland in Glacier Park, which will involve a ski approach up the Belly River followed by a significant technical climb. If the weather or snow conditions are lousy he will postpone the trip. Call Steve at 721-3790 for details.

March 30, Ward Mountain. Ski trip up Ward Mountain, which is west of Hamilton in the Bitterroot Mountains. Call Ralph Flockerzi at 549-7150 for details.

April or May, Teton Traverse. Martha Yale wants to organize a north-south ski traverse of the west side of the Tetons, through Alaska Basin and Hurricane Pass. Call Martha at 549-2163 for more information.

April 6-7, McDonald Peak. Ski and climb up the Northwest Couloir of McDonald Peak, the tallest mountain in the Mission Mountains. Could be done as a 6,000 foot one-day climb or an overnight, depending on the preferences of participants. Sheep Peak might also be bagged. A scenic non-technical snow ascent requiring the use of ice axes and crampons. Call Art Gidel at 543-6352 for details.

July or August, Ptarmigan Traverse. Martha Yale wants to organize a backpacking trip along the Ptarmigan Traverse, a 5-7 day high traverse in the North Cascades in Washington which involves glacier travel, with opportunities for peak bagging en route. Call Martha at 549-2163 for more information.

TRIP REPORTS

Mount Merrit, Glacier Park: The Hungry Horse News recently contained the following article: "A Missoula man skied and climbed to the top of Mount Merrit in Glacier National Park last weekend in what may be the first winter ascent of the 10,004-foot peak. Steve Niday found good snow conditions and favorable weather for his four-day outing. The exception was a snowstorm that forced him to huddle next to a rock for six hours during his descent. Niday skied in from the trailhead at Chief Mountain Customs on Friday and soon encountered the trickiest obstacle of his trip: crossing the unfrozen Belly River. The trailbridge across the river has no wooden planks in winter, leaving only cables across the span. Once across, he skied to the foot of Cosley Lake where he camped. On Saturday he continued up the valley, skiing the length of Glenns Lake and on past Mokowanis Lake. He abandoned his skis partway up the northwest shoulder of the mountain and used crampons and an ice axe to reach the summit, following a generally direct route up the north face. He reached the summit at 4:30 p.m. The snowstorm forced him to bivouac about 1,000 feet below the summit. He awoke six hours later to a clear, night sky brightened by the moon. He descended on the northeasterly ridge in the moonlight, encountering a number of cliffs before traversing down to his skis. He reached his camp about 8 a.m. Later in the day he negotiated the Belly River cable crossing, although it required nearly an hour, and camped at Three Mile along the Belly River. 'It was a very satisfying climb,' Niday said. 'The snow conditions were perfect and the weather held.' Niday works as a surveyor for Missoula County and recently began climbing in Glacier Park. Another notable achievement was his ascent last September of Mount Stimson's north ridge. Accompanying him was Rick Murney, also of Missoula. Niday also reached the summit of Split Mountain last summer, another of Glacier Park's technical peaks. Niday has connections in the Flathead Valley. He's the son-in-law of Denis Twohig of Whitefish. Twohig heads the Glacier Mountaineering Society. - Brian Kennedy. [For the lurid details behind this sanitized version, talk to Steve]

Alberton Gorge, Clark Fork River. Art Gidel, Peter Dayton, Jeff Hauk, and Paul Faucett kayaked the Alberton Gorge on February 17 and 24. The river was at excellent levels for playing both days, with flows similar to late summer. Although there was thick ice along the shore in places on the 17th, dry suits kept our bods warm. After some initial trepidation, we ended up playing pretty much as hard as we do in the summer. The weather was downright balmy, and we saw lots of birds. -Peter Dayton

Glen Peak, March 3: In a heavy, wet snowstorm, Dave Pengelly, Ralph Flockerzi, Peter Dayton, and Art Gidel skied up above Glen Lake, which is in the Bitterroot Mountains northwest of Victor. There was about a foot and a half of heavy new snow. The route undulates across some vague, low-angle ridges, and we experienced some navigational difficulties due to the low visibility. We called it a day at the bowl below the summit and headed out. When the descent down the ridge grew tedious due to the deep snow, we dropped off into the steep drainage to the east in search of excitement, which we proceeded to find. We did fine, but I wouldn't recommend this route unless there is lots of snow to brake your descent, and even then I wouldn't recommend it. If you know what I mean. We returned to the car quite wet, but moderately satisfied. - Peter Dayton.

Bass Creek Crags: On February 10th I skied up Bass Creek about 2.5 miles to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary. I left the trail at that point and walked on firm snow, with my skis on my pack, south up the ridge that is the wilderness boundary. The first 1500 feet is pretty thick with small trees, brush, and downfall, and would be exasperating with soft snow. At about 6100 feet the timber thins and I soon entered the open basin on the NE side of Peak 2564M (8412 feet). As I ascended the basin I noted a number of progressively steeper gullies that lead up to the wilderness boundary ridge. The head-on view of the face looked more difficult than what I wanted to try, so I kept ascending, intending to take one of the gullies. Eventually I was on the face and decided it wasn't so bad after all. The snow was steep, up to 60 degrees, but was very firm. Almost too firm with no crampons, but the axe gave a very secure self belay. The exposed rock was minimal and was problematic only in that my skis kept catching on the rock overhead. I found a break in the summit cornice a couple hundred feet east of the summit and topped out around 3:00 p.m. I skied down the east ridge, which is very nice ski terrain for about 1000 feet. Things get a bit dense toward the bottom. The NE face and part of the basin is quite visible from Florence. The climb is not as hard as it looks from this vantage point and is very enjoyable given firm snow. As a ski destination, it's not worth the effort to get through the timber. - Steve Niday.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Mail a check payable to
"Rocky Mountaineers" to
Arnold Finklin, P.O. Box
4262, Missoula, Montana

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) _____ Family (\$8.00/year) _____ 59807

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OFFICERS

Dave Pengelly, President - 728-6512

Arnold Finklin, Treasurer - 543-8705

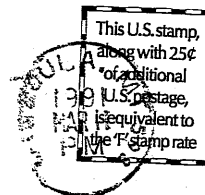
Peter Dayton, Secretary and Newsletter Editor/azilator- 728-8101

Steve Niday, Vice President - 721-3790

Ralph Flockerzi, Refreshments - 549-7150

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