



# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

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AUGUST, 1995

MEETING

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**Meetings:** The Club does not hold meetings during the summer. The next meeting will be on September 13.

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## CALENDAR

**Thursday Evenings and Saturdays, Rock Climbing.** The rock climbing group meets on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. This group usually climbs a wide variety of technical climbs; some easy, some hard, most top-roped, some multi-pitched. Beginners are encouraged to come and gain some experience. Also, on an arrange-type basis, this group will climb some local mountains such as Canyon Peak in the Bitterroots or Mount Calowahcan (Harding) in the Missions. See last month's trip report below. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

**August 6, Sunday, Little St. Joe Peak.** Hike and scramble to Little St. Joe Peak (9033 feet), which is located in the Bitterroots, about five miles south of Florence. A logging road will take the participants to the trailhead at about 6000 feet. From there, the route follows a trail through an alpine forest. Once above treeline, the trip will involve hiking over rocky terrain to Little St. Joe Peak. This portion of the trip should be especially pleasant with spacious views of the mountain and the Bitterroot Valley below. If participants desire, it is possible to continue and scramble to St. Joseph Peak (9587 feet). This will be an intermediate-level trip for the average hiker. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for details.

**August 12-13, Saturday-Sunday, Selway Bitterroot Trek.** Backpack trip through the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness beginning at the Elk Summit Guard Station, which is a few miles past Lolo Pass, and finishing at Blodgett Creek near Hamilton. The 30-mile route follows a well-maintained trail system along several creeks through a heavily wooded area. Big Sand Lake is about ten miles from the Elk Summit trailhead and Blodgett Pass is about eight miles further. From Blodgett Pass, the route follows the Blodgett Creek trail for about 12 miles to the trailhead. This is an intermediate-level backpack trip. Some of the details of this trip, including the dates, may change. For more information, call Matt Grandy at 728-0647.

**August 20, Sunday, Holland Peak.** Hike and scramble to Holland Peak (9356 feet), which is located in the Swan Range about 30 miles north of Seeley Lake and on the border of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Most of the route follows a trail to Upper Rumble Creek Lake. From the lake, the route goes off-trail and follows the ridge with some scrambling required. This should be a very impressive portion of the trip with spectacular views of the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the east and the Swan Valley and the Mission Mountains to the west. The west side of the ridge is very steep and lots of exposure will be apparent, however, no climbing is anticipated. The total elevation gain for this trip is 4800-5000 feet, making it a moderately strenuous trip for most hikers. Call Art Gidel at 543-6352 for details.

**August 26, Saturday, Weather and Blacktail Peaks.** Hike and scramble to Weather and Blacktail Peaks, which are located to the southeast of Gray Wolf Peak on the south end of the Mission Mountains. This 4,100 foot climb will offer the combination of gnarly bushwacking and splendid vistas which is typically found in the Missions. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for details.

**Mid August, Canadian Rockies.** One or Two week climbing trip to the Canadian Rockies. Several mountains will be climbed. Most routes will be over snow, ice and rocks, requiring technical rock and ice climbing ability. If interested, make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

**Future Trips.** If there is enough interest, other mountaineering trips will be scheduled in August and September. Possibilities include: Granite Peak, Glacier Park, North Cascades, Grand Teton via the Black Ice Couloir or Exum Route, or other peaks in the Tetons. Granite Peak has been nominated by a couple of people. If interested, make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

**Wanna lead a trip?** If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

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## TRIP REPORTS

**Rock Climbing, June-July.** The rock climbing group has been busy during June and July. There has been a lot of participation; one day, ten

climbers were climbing in an orderly and safe manner. Most of the time we have beginners in the group, so we've kept the difficulty of climbs within their reach. Our main goal is to prepare for mountaineering; rope handling skills are very important. We have practiced many rope handling techniques: belaying from the bottom, belaying from the top, rappelling, working with prusiks, prusicking up a rope, crevasse rescue with a z-pulley system, and general work with the rope and anchors. Climbers last month include: Dale Bickell, Dan Chisholm, Matt Grandy, Brigitte Hendrix, Justin Ivary, Pat Judge, Bob Markewich, Eric Moles, Gerald Olbu, Martin Oleksiewicz, Glenn Parks, Dave Siemens, Judy Stack, and Paul Wilson. - Gerald Olbu.

McDonald Peak, July 1-2. In an attempt to climb McDonald Peak before the Grizzly Bear Conservation Zone is closed for the summer, Dan Chisholm, Matt Grandy, Gerald Olbu and Judy Stack headed out on a Saturday morning. We didn't hike very far the first day and made camp by a rippling creek. We set out with our day packs Sunday morning. We all were astonished with the thick brush. Apparently, it is a very heavy brush year. In fact, there is brush where last year, I thought it was an open boulder field. We continued painstakingly through the brush and reached the point where the route goes up some cliff bands next to a creek. Our plan was to climb on the rocks next to the creek. However, that was not possible since the creek now was at high water and was covering the rocks from one direction, and the brush expanded, covering the rocks from the other direction. We either had to swim/climb up the creek, or...more bushwhacking. We ate our lunch and traded stories about how much we hated bushwhacking. What was the worst? Thick alders? How about those thorns? What about those layers of evergreen things where you sink in well above your head and your feet still don't touch the ground? How could brush possibly be any worse than this? About that time, it began raining. The hike out was uneventful and character building. As we sat at the Bison Inn Cafe in Ravalli eating a much deserved buffalo burger and cleaning out their beef ribs smorgasbord, we remarked at how doing off-trail travel makes you feel independent; you can go anywhere. - Gerald Olbu.

Mount Rainier, July 9-11. Dale Bickell, Keifer Hahn and Gerald Olbu drove to Washington to climb Mount Rainier. When we arrived in the park, our enthusiasm was dampened as we were greeted by a torrential rainfall. No way could anyone stay dry in weather like that. We checked at the ranger station and found that Rainier Mountaineering Inc. cancelled their trips and a ranger only made it half way to Camp Muir before turning back. Conditions on the mountain were very nasty and had been for the last nine days. We thought about going to Seattle instead. The next morning, we saw a small amount of blue in the sky before it clouded up again. We went back to the ranger station. The ranger on duty now was a very young guy who looked more like a high school student than a ranger. He was extremely optimistic and said the storm was breaking and there should be great conditions up on the mountain. Well, we sure didn't have anything better to do, so we decided to check it out for ourselves. The young ranger was right. On the way to Camp Muir, not a single drop of rain fell on us. Other climbers at Camp Muir remarked at how quickly we hiked up there. However, it was a casual pace for Keifer who is a marathon running champion and Dale who is a mountain bike racing champion. For some strange reason, other climbers were constantly asking us for advice. After reflecting on this, we think it was because we were somewhat experienced and willing to talk to them. Climbers were coming and going all night long. We got a good night's sleep. We awoke the next morning to beautiful conditions and quickly headed out on firm snow under a blue sky. We were making great time and knew we could easily reach the summit. However, just as we reached Ingraham Flats one of our crampons malfunctioned and we could not fix it. As much as we wanted to make the summit, we knew we only had one choice. Our biggest disappointment was still to come when we found that Yakima does not have any good pizza places. - Gerald Olbu.

Gray Wolf, July 15-16. Even though Gray Wolf can usually be climbed in one day in the summer, Dale Bickell, Justin Ivary, Gerald Olbu, Judy Stack and Paul Wilson opted to make it a casual two-day trip. We hiked to Upper Riddle Lake where we made camp and spent the evening playing gin rummy and bouldering. The next day, we headed for the peak. The snow in the couloir was almost gone, so we climbed up the face. We roped up for an 80-foot section. The rest of the trip to the summit only involved route finding, but did not require a rope. Views from the top were great except it was a little hazy. A note on camping in a pristine area like this should be made. It is very important to be low impact / minimal impact. Be easy on the vegetation, pack it in, pack it out, and use a cook stove rather than a fire. We take great pride in looking back as we leave and knowing it would be hard for someone to tell we had camped there. - Gerald Olbu.

South Fork of the Salmon, July 29-30. The South Fork of the Salmon River is located east of McCall, Idaho. It flows into the Main Salmon below McKay Bar, which is about twenty miles from the end of the "River of No Return" wilderness section of the Main Salmon. Floating the South Fork involves a 31 mile roadless whitewater float on the South Fork, followed by about 23 miles of mostly flat water on the Main Salmon. At levels of 3-4 feet, the South Fork has two Class V rapids and a lot of exciting Class IV+ whitewater, with great scenery. Rafters tend to pass up this river due to the difficulty of the rapids; most trips on the river are by self-supported kayaks. Due to work pressure, Art Gidel and I did this trip in two days. The water level was about 2.5 feet, which is on the low end of moderate. It rained a lot the first day, but the water remained clear and green while we were on the river. However, about half an hour after we stopped for the night, the water suddenly filled up with huge amounts of debris and mud. At one point it looked like twenty percent of the surface of the water was covered with rafts of debris, mostly small pieces of wood. Then the water became extremely muddy and opaque, the color of dark chocolate cake icing. Instead of being white, the holes and breaking waves were even darker than the rest of the water, because of the shadows created by the foaming water. It looked very odd. It was clear and sunny when we set off the next morning, but the river was still filled with mud and debris, and the water smelled earthy and peat-like, sort of like wet potting soil. We really had to pay attention, because the lack of contrast made it much harder to spot holes. There are a lot of neat rapids on this river, like Devil Creek, Surprise, Elk Creek, and Hettinger Ranch, but the biggest rapid is the last one, Fall Creek. This rapid is over a third of a mile long, and it ends in a staircase of holes which cascade down through huge boulders and piles up against a cliff. After scouting the last section of Fall Creek,

I eddied out behind a boulder while Art charged over the horizon line and disappeared. I peered down through the boulders but couldn't see whether he made it. What the heck, I followed him over the lip, blasted through four holes in a row, splatted into the water piled up against the cliff, shot off to the right like a rocket, crashed through the tail waves, and spun out into the eddy where Art was waiting. Hey, pretty fun! Then we had to slog out down the Main Salmon to Carey Bar. While driving from Carey Bar to Riggins, we passed the beginning of the muddy water, and got back into clear green water. We haven't found out yet what created the mud and debris. - Peter Dayton.

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OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail a check payable to

"Rocky Mountaineers" to

Dave Pengelly

P.O. Box 4262

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$8.00/year) \_\_\_\_\_ (9398)

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