



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

March
~~APRIL~~, 1996
MEETING

Meetings: DUE TO A SPECIAL PRESENTATION, THIS MONTH'S CLUB MEETING WILL BE HELD AT 7:30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 1996, IN ROOM 356 OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA. However, Club meetings are normally held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the Missoula County Commission's meeting room, which is located on the second floor of the annex (newer portion) of the Missoula County Courthouse.

Program. This month we have lined up a presentation so good that the UM Outdoor Recreation Department asked to co-sponsor it! In order to provide adequate room for the crowds who are expected to attend, the presentation will be given at the University. We are grandiosely, but appropriately, advertising this slide show as "Highlights of an Epic Climbing Career." U of M geology professor Gray Thompson will present a retrospective slide show of highlights of his extensive climbing career which has spanned four decades. Gray has made numerous first ascents in the Canadian Rockies, Alaska and the Himalayas. In 1966, Gray made a first ascent of the West Ridge of Mt. Logan. In 1967, he was a member of the first ascent team on the American Direct Route of the South Face of Denali. He also made first ascents of peaks in the Himalayas. In 1968, he became the first American to climb the North Face of the Matterhorn. Gray's climbing career continued with a sequence of first ascents of several north faces in the Canadian Rockies, including Mt. Columbia, Mt. Kitchener and Mt. Forbes. Gray also made a second ascent of the East Face of Mt. Edith Cavell. Don't miss this spectacular slide show!

CALENDAR

March 16-17, Sat-Sun, Trapper Peak. Overnight ski trip to Trapper Peak (10,157 feet), which is southwest of Darby and the tallest peak in the Bitterroots. The trip will involve some road skiing and/or off-trail skiing until the trailhead is reached, then the trail will be followed. There are several possible campsites. The overall elevation gain to the peak will probably be about 5000 feet. This is a moderately strenuous trip and endurance and winter camping skills are required. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

March 17, Sunday, Lolo Pass to Lee Creek. Ski touring trip from Lolo Pass to the Lee Creek campground, which is located six miles down the highway from the pass. There are two possibilities: the "A" trail or the "B" trail. The "A" trail involves two miles of uphill skiing followed by six miles downhill. This route is intermediate in difficulty and there may be snowmobiles. The "B" trail is rated "most difficult" by the Forest Service. It begins with a steep climb (requiring skins) to scenic Wagon Mountain. Then, it descends eight miles down a narrow and twisting trail. There will be no snowmobiles on this route. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or Julie Warner at 543-6508 for more information. (Since Steve already has a Lolo Pass parking permit, no one else needs one.)

March 24, Sunday, Chief Joseph and Lost Trail Pass area. Moderate-level ski touring in the Chief Joseph and Lost Trail Pass area which is located south of Darby on the Montana-Idaho border. This is an exploratory trip and the route taken will depend on the skiers' preferences and expertise. There are opportunities for road skiing as well as some narrow downhill trails. It may be possible to arrange a car shuttle, which would allow for a one-way ski trip from the pass. Call Ed Monnig at 721-2707 for more information.

March 30, Saturday, Ice Climbing. Enjoy a day of technical ice climbing suitable for beginning- and intermediate-level climbers. The exact location will depend on ice conditions at the time; possibilities include: Mission Falls, Como Falls, or Swan Slabs. Two ice axes and crampons are required, however, some equipment may be borrowed or shared. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 13, Saturday, Como Peak. Climb the north face of one of the Como Peaks. These are the three symmetrical peaks which can be seen from the highway south of Hamilton. The middle peak has a large snowfield which is composed of three ramps leading to the summit. An ice ax will be required and crampons may be needed. This will be a long and strenuous trip. The first portion of the trip follows a trail, and then bushwhacking is required until we reach the snowfield. The snow climb portion should be a great mountaineering experience. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

Kayaking. Want to simulate the raw thrill of spring kayaking? Wander into your favorite fast food franchise, ask for a jumbo cup of crushed ice, and dump it inside your shirt. Eeeeyow! If you want to go kayaking, contact Art Gidel at 543-6352 or Peter Dayton at 728-8101.

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

TRIP REPORTS

Rock Climbing, February 17. Even though it was February and mid winter, the recent week of warm, sunny, spring-like weather made it impossible to resist rock climbing. Venturing out for the first climb of the season were six climbers: Len Broberg, Jim Day, Andra Duran, Mark Gillmore, Gerald Olbu, and Steve Turnbaugh. We warmed up on an easy climb and then moved on to a more difficult climb. It was a very pleasant day; it sprinkled a bit but the rocks were warm. We're looking forward to spring and plan to go rock climbing on a regular basis. - Gerald Olbu.

More driving around in the rain, Glacier Park, February 17. After a week of warm weather, Nancy Braun, Barb Farrell, Colleen Hunter, Lisa McKenzie, and I (Peter Dayton) drove up to Marias Pass, which is on the southeast side of Glacier Park, to stay in the Challenge Cabin for the three-day weekend. Because the weather had been above freezing all week, somebody called somebody and was told, yes, there was still snow up at Marias Pass. But the weather did not look propitious as we left Missoula. It began to rain around Arlee, and it rained all the way around Flathead Lake. We became nervous and dejected. The conditions began to look better as we entered Badrock Canyon. There was a foot or so of nasty icy snow on the ground, there were banks of snow beside the road, there was a skiff of new snow on the ground, and the rain began to turn into snow. We became more hopeful, and began to cheer up. A few miles beyond West Glacier, however, the conditions took another turn for the worse. The rain was pounding down, and there was a lot of water standing in the road. We began to get demoralized again, but continued to hope that the conditions would improve as we gained altitude towards the pass. We kept reminding each other of how bad the snow conditions often are up Lolo Creek until you get a few miles from Lolo Pass. But when we reached the trailhead, the conditions were as bad as ever. Some snowmobiles drove up, throwing up sheets of water like jet skis, and reported that it was raining all the way to the top of the ridge. A few minutes of standing around in the rain, discussing the best wax to use for running water over glare ice, was enough to dampen our enthusiasm for the seven mile trudge into the cabin. We piled back into our cars and slunk back to Missoula. I'm too embarrassed to tell you the reading on our car's trip odometer when we reached Missoula at the end of the day. To salvage something from ruins of the weekend, we got together, cooked dinner with the food we had packed for the trip, and watched the slides from Colleen's bicycle trip from Missoula to Anchorage last summer, which involved 73 days of mostly rainy weather. We were certainly in the mood for those slides. On Sunday, Art Gidel and I went kayaking on the Lochsa with six other Missoulians. It rained a lot, but we were prepared to get wet, and the river was at a great level. - Peter Dayton.

Stemple to Fleisher Pass, February 18. Jon Bonnickson and Ed Monnig set off in the freezing rain for Lincoln where we planned to meet a pack of east side skiers. There we were to split into two groups, one of which would ski from Stemple Pass to Fleisher Pass, and the other the reverse. By the time we reached Lincoln the rain was pouring steadily. The dozen or so skiers we met there were rather non-complimentary about weather on our side of the divide. After much discussion and cajoling we all headed en mass to Stemple Pass, with the thought that some of us could ski through and the rest could shuttle cars around before heading back to the dry side of the mountains. The road to the pass was basically a sheet of ice with water running over it. About two thirds of the way to Stemple Pass the eight skiers from Great Falls deserted. Five of us persevered to the top, including Dave Fuller of White Sulphur Springs, Barb Cosens of Helena, and Joe Gutkowski of Bozeman. As some of the old-timers may remember, Joe was a charter member of the Mountaineers. The conditions were surprisingly good at the pass. We five skied along the Continental Divide Trail about half way to Fleisher. Convinced we could have made it through quite handily, we ate lunch and headed back to Stemple. The clouds actually broke in the afternoon, which provides nice views southeast to the prairies and north to the Scapegoat country. - Ed Monnig.

Mission Falls Ice Climbing, February 24. One of the most beautiful places for ice climbing is the Mission Falls area, which attracted Andra Duran, Mark Gillmore, Mark Heppe, Gerald Olbu and Steve Turnbaugh. Just getting there is fun. We hiked up the steep trail and across a narrow, snow-covered ledge. Then, we crossed the creek on an ice bridge at the base of the falls. It was a semi-mountaineering experience to climb up a 45-degree snow, ice and rock-filled gully to the place where we were going to set up the climb. The entire west face of this gully was a massive curtain of ice. We set up a 60-foot climb on a vertical section of ice. It was beautiful bluish-green ice with lots of interesting features, almost like chandelier ice. There are lots of opportunities at Mission Falls for ice climbing and on this particular day there were three other groups, which made it quite interesting. We all had a great time climbing and made it back to town before the pizza place closed. - Gerald Olbu.

Lolo Pass, February 25. Five skiers, Lori Anderson, Joan Fosterelli, Andrew Martin, Steve Schombel and Julie Warner enjoyed a beautiful day of skiing at Lolo Pass. Lori was more experienced, so she and Steve headed for the Packer Meadow trail and had a great ski trip. Andrew, Joan and Julie went off in another direction and skied about 4 miles along the beginning of the A and B trails. They enjoyed being off the snowmobile tracks and away from the noise. Everyone had a great time! - Julie Warner.

Typical spring kayaking, March 2-3: On Friday, March 1, after a spell of cold and wintery weather, the sky turned blue and the temperature rose to 40. I contacted various sources in Idaho, and was told that the weather was warm, the Lochsa was at a decent level, and there was no ice floating down the river. The weatherman predicted similar weather for Saturday, but cooler weather for Sunday, so Art Gidel and I decided to kayak on the Lochsa on Saturday, and then ski on Sunday. After crossing Lolo Pass on Saturday morning, we were relieved to see that the upper Lochsa was free of floating ice. However, after driving a few miles downstream we began to see slush floating on the surface of the river in flat sections. As we got closer to the section we were going to float, the chunks of ice gradually got bigger, and we got increasingly nervous. Getting clobbered

by breaking waves in a rapid is one thing; getting clobbered by flying thirty pound hunks of ice in a rapid is quite a different thing. We figured we were probably screwed. Then about ten miles above our launch site the ice suddenly disappeared. We got into the water fast, in hopes of keeping ahead of the ice floes which were sweeping down from upstream. There was a lot of snow on the shore, but the weather was warm, the rapids were at a playful level, and the water was free of ice. However, we dallied around from play spot to play spot, and in the afternoon some ice began to catch up with us. I would be going through a rapid and all of a sudden I'd discover a big block of ice boinking against the bottom of my boat. I'd shoo it away, but five or ten minutes later the same piece would be back again, like a friendly cat rubbing against my legs. Certain pieces of ice seemed to follow us down the river like remoras, and we became familiar with them. On Sunday morning the weather was overcast and cooler, so Art and I headed up to Snow Bowl, as planned. However, when we reached the parking lot we discovered that the falling temperatures had turned Saturday's corn snow into nasty looking ice. We headed back into town, unloaded our ski gear, loaded our kayaking gear, and headed out to the Alberton Gorge. It was pretty chilly and snow was falling, but the river was free of floating ice. We were surfing on a fast and active wave at Triple Bridges when I looked upstream and spotted some huge hunks of ice looming up over the horizon line. We whipped into the eddy and let them go past, but more icebergs followed. It looked like a big section of ice dam debris had broken loose from the shore someplace upstream. We got out of our kayaks and watched the ice rumble past while we ate lunch. After about 45 minutes the ice thinned out, and we climbed back into our kayaks for some more surfing. One of us would stand lookout from the eddy while the other person surfed. The pool at the head of the rapid was above our heads, so we could only see icebergs for a few seconds as they approached the lip of the rapid. The icebergs would remain visible for a few feet as they slid over the horizon line and down into the rapid, but as soon as they hit the first wave they would get covered with water and become invisible. When the lookout spotted an approaching iceberg he would whistle, and the surfer would peel off the wave and back into the eddy. We kept a sharp eye out for ice the rest of the trip. Above Tumbleweed I slid my kayak up onto a block of ice about eight feet across and announced that I was going to ride the floe through the rapid, but chickened out and let the berg go through without me. It was snowing heavily as we ran through Fang Rapid and headed for the takeout to wrap up a typical weekend of winter boating. -Peter Dayton.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769

Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

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Name: _____ Phone: _____

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

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Dave Pengelly

P.O. Box 4262

Missoula, Montana 59806

THE MOUNTAIN EAR
P.O. BOX 4262
MISSOULA, MT 59806

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