



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

JUNE, 1996

MEETING

Meetings: The Club does not hold meetings in the summer. The next meeting will be on September 11, when we will have our traditional potluck slide show of pictures which Club members took on trips during the prior year. Start assembling your contribution to this slide show now; if you don't have any interesting slides yet, well, get out there and take some!

CALENDAR

Thursday Evenings and Saturdays. The rock climbing group will meet on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. The group will climb a variety of climbs suitable for beginning- and intermediate-level climbers. This is an excellent way to prepare for some of the Club's mountaineering trips. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

June 22-24, Sat-Mon, Bass Lake-South Fork Lolo Creek. Three-day backpack trip on a loop route that goes through some very scenic Bitterroot country. On the first day, the group will hike along Bass Creek and camp at Bass lake. The lake is ice-covered and participants may need to camp in the snow. On second day, the group will hike over a pass and begin the trip down the South Fork of Lolo Creek. There may be time for some side trips such as Bass Peak. On the third day, the group will finish the hike down the creek. It may be possible for some participants to make this a two-day trip by returning to the Bass Creek trailhead on the second day. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for details.

June 30, Sunday, Como Peak. Climb the north face of one of the Como Peaks, which are the three symmetrical peaks south of Hamilton in the Bitterroots. The middle Como Peak has a series of three snow ramps leading to the summit. This trip has been scheduled, postponed, rescheduled, attempted, etc. It's a long trip, but is worth attempting again because it is a very nice snow climb. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

July 5-7, Fri-Sun, McDonald Peak. Spend the Fourth of July weekend on McDonald Peak. The route will begin on a trail, followed by lots of off-trail travel through brush, rocks and snow. We will try to camp on a flat spot below the peak. During the evening, we can contemplate a route up the mountain - either snow or rock. An ice ax, fourth-class climbing and lots of endurance are required for this trip. Views of the Missions from the summit will be spectacular. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

July 13, Saturday, Gray Wolf Peak. Climb Gray Wolf Peak (9001 feet), which is the impressive, double-humped peak on the south end of the Missions and can be seen from Highway 93 north of Evaro. The route to this mountain usually isn't very brushy and not too long, making it one of the more pleasant approaches in the Missions. An ice ax is required to climb the south snow couloir and then fourth-class climbing over snow and rock to reach the summit. Call Dan Chishoim at 542-1266 for details.

Summer Trips. Plans are being made for some interesting trips this summer. Mount Rainier, Grand Teton, Canadian Rockies, and a Mission Mountain Trek are good candidates. If interested, make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

Kayaking. Shhh! If you listen carefully, you can hear boulders clanking together under the roaring waters of the Clark Fork River. Or maybe that is the sound of kayaker helmets bouncing off rocks. If you want to venture forth in your kayak to figure out the source of all the noise, 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

Owyhee River, May 4-8. Art Gidel, Jeff Lohn, and I (Peter Dayton) took a 5 day, 130 mile, wilderness kayak trip which started on the South Fork of the Owyhee in northwestern Nevada, and continued down the Main Owyhee across southwestern Idaho and southeastern Oregon to Rome, Oregon. This river flows through spectacular basalt and rhyolite canyons in remote high desert country, with outstanding scenery everywhere, and no people anywhere. There is even a great warm spring in the middle of the trip. The water ranges from long sections of flatwater to a Class V portage, with everything in between. The climate can be miserable in this area in the spring, but we lucked out and had clear and sunny weather

for the entire trip. Information on the Owyhee River is a bit hard to obtain, and I somehow underestimated the length of the trip by twenty miles. We discovered this boo-boo on the second day, and ended up putting in several 25-mile days in order to finish the trip on schedule. I don't think that Art and Jeff are going to let me forget that mistake for a while. - Peter Dayton.

St. Joseph Peak, May 5. Under ideal conditions, Bret Doucett and Gerald Olbu eagerly took on the challenge of hiking to and climbing St. Joseph Peak, which is the highest peak in the northern portion of the Bitterroots at 9587 feet. We didn't realize until after we began that the elevation gain along the route was almost 6000 feet. But, fortunately for us, the previous cold night made the snow firm and relatively easy to kick steps all the way to the top. We climbed 3000 feet in three hours. We reached the top and had great views of St. Mary's Peak, Heavenly Twins and Bass Peak with almost a clear blue sky. We came down a slightly different route which took us through a very beautiful bowl still filled with its winter snow. We reached the trailhead after 14 long hours and were thoroughly exhausted. - Gerald Olbu.

Jarbridge and Bruneau Rivers, May 9-12. As soon as Art Gidel, Jeff Lohn, and I (Peter Dayton) got off the Owyhee River, we drove to Bruneau, Idaho, and began a 69-mile wilderness kayak trip on the Jarbridge and Bruneau Rivers. Our streak of good luck with the weather continued; we didn't have a drop of rain, and it kept getting warmer every day. These rivers have just about the best scenery and whitewater imaginable, with good hiking as well. We returned to Missoula entirely satisfied with our week of kayaking. Unfortunately, when I got my slides back from the trip, I discovered that the viewfinder on my Nikonos V camera had gotten knocked out of alignment in a slip and fall accident on a previous trip, and a lot of my slides featured more of the nose of my kayak and less of the canyon rim than I wanted. I guess I'll just have to do the trip again so I can get the pictures which got screwed up on this trip. - Peter Dayton.

East Como Peak, May 11. In a valiant attempt to climb the south face of the East Como Peak, Dan Chisholm, Bret Doucett, Gerald Olbu, Daphne Tuthill and Greg Zlock headed out early in the morning. It was a beautiful day as we hiked up the trail. We all hated it when we had to leave the trail and do about 1400 feet of bushwhacking; but we made good time and soon were done with it. As we reached the snowline, the rocky jagged ridge came into view. We continued up, trying to avoid avalanche prone slopes. It was a lot of work because, unlike the previous week, the snow was soft on this day. Thanks to Bret for breaking most of the trail. We reached the top of a spur ridge, ate lunch and enjoyed viewing the scenery and the rapidly changing weather. We all had enough enjoyment for the day, so we headed back. - Gerald Olbu.

Middle Fork of the Salmon, May 17-19. In the middle of May, Dan Hoheim, Seth Wilson, Art Gidel, Mike Worrall, and I (Peter Dayton) planned to fly in to the Frank Church Wilderness, kayak two days down Big Creek to the Middle Fork of the Salmon, and then float thirty miles down the Middle Fork to Cache Bar. However, the river went into flood stage, so we chickened out of doing Big Creek. But, being all packed for a trip and unwilling to waste the weekend, we instead did a 116 mile, three day (!), wilderness kayak trip on the Middle Fork. The river hit 8.5 feet on the trip, which was the highest level in ten years. We had to launch on Marsh Creek because the road to the normal launch site at Boundary Creek was still blocked by snow. There was about two feet of snow at the launch site on Marsh Creek, and we saw a lot of snow on the first day. Marsh Creek was roaring along like a runaway train, and we were sweating bullets because we had been told that there were two log jams on the upper section of the creek. The good news was that all of the log jams had been washed out by the flood waters; the bad news was that every log in the entire drainage was moving downstream with us. The waves on the Middle Fork were gigantic, with huge crashing waves for miles on end in areas where there are normally no rapids. We were able to grab some enormous surfs. The river was moving along real fast, so we didn't have any trouble making the necessary mileage, with plenty of time for side hikes. The second night a baby Canadian goose walked into our camp, peeping up a storm. It apparently got washed away from its parents by the flood waters, and decided it was safer with us than it was on its own. It spent the evening running around our feet, gobbling bagel crumbs, and snuggling under our parkas, and it spent the night in Seth's sleeping bag. We were sorry to have to leave the gosling at the campsite, as it probably got snarfed up by some predator in short order. - Peter Dayton.

St. Regis Cutoff, May 25-26. At 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, Julie Warner, George Kerscher and Steve Schombel left for an overnight backpack down the River Trail along the Clark Fork downstream from St. Regis. We missed one sign and ended up scrambling down a steep hill on an old overgrown trail to return to the river, but otherwise the trip was great. We found a nice meadow to camp in with a freshwater brook nearby and told stories and grilled steaks and watched the sun set. The river was too high and muddy to fish but we saw some wildlife, old mines, ruined cabins and lots of flowers including a few rare Ladyslippers. We would like to go back in the fall. - Steve Schombel.

Turquoise Lake, June 1. As Gerald Olbu, Jo Ellen Lyng, Anna the newcomer, and I set out from Missoula early Saturday morning, our hopes sank as we hit rain in Seeley. Luckily, the rain stopped when we arrived at the trail head and the clouds broke about two hours into the hike. Many fallen trees lined the first mile and snow covered another four miles of the six-mile trail. As we hiked through the snow, we had great views of Glacier, Lagoon and Lace Lakes, which were still covered with ice that was melting quickly. The turquoise color of Lace Lake mixed well with the snow covered mountains and the brilliant blue sky. We hiked above Turquoise lake to get a good view and found the lake still covered with a thin layer of snow. After an hour of eating, map-reading, and napping, we hiked out and finished the trip at MacKenzie River Pizza. The day was long and fun. - Dan Chisholm.

Bass Creek Crag, June 9. On a day that provided warm sunny skies, Bret Doucett, Andre Duran, Gerald Olbu and Daphne Tuthill, headed out to climb one of the impressive Bass Creek Crag which can easily be seen from the highway south of Florence. The route involved minimal bushwhacking; the worst place was where the creek was running down the trail, forcing us to bushwhack along the trail. As we entered the large

cirque below the crags, we discovered there was very little snow left. We scrambled up the talus slopes until we were greeted with vertical cliffs and steep snowslopes. We chose a snow and rock route that led to a notch in the ridge. To our left was the second highest of the Bass Creek Crags. None of us had climbed this one before, so it was a good choice. We traversed along a ledge looking for a route up. We checked out two possible routes, but they were dead ends. On the way back to the notch, we discovered another possibility. We had to check it out. The top of this chute required a fairly difficult move with lots of exposure. Andre and Bret made the move and reached the top. We all celebrated their success. The trip down the snowslope and out was quick and joyous. - Gerald Olbu.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769

Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Dave Pengelly
P.O. Box 4262

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

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