



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

MARCH, 1997

MEETING

Meeting: PLEASE NOTE THE NEW MEETING TIME AND PLACE: Club meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the lower level meeting room at the Missoula Public Library. This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 12.

March Program. Jim Wilson will present a Mountain Safety for Climbers seminar. Jim has extensive experience leading major mountaineering expeditions and teaching local climbing classes. He is the owner of Pipestone Mountaineering, Inc. The information presented here will be invaluable to all mountaineers.

Upcoming Programs. In April, Peter Dayton will present a slide show on caving.

CALENDAR

Wednesday evenings, 6:00 p.m., Mount Sentinel. Need a little bit of mid-week exercise? Meet at the trail head at 6 p.m. for a leaderless tour of Mount Sentinel.

March 15, Saturday, Ice Climbing. Enjoy a day of technical ice climbing suitable for beginners and intermediates. The location will depend on conditions, but Como Falls, Swan Slabs and Mission Falls are possibilities. Heavy boots, crampons and two ice axes are required, however some equipment may be borrowed or shared. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

March 22, Saturday, Ice Climbing. Enjoy another day of ice climbing, if there is any ice left. We may ski to Ward Mountain instead. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for the latest forecast.

March 23, Sunday, Lolo Pass-Lee Creek. Enjoy a moderate six mile ski tour along roads and trails from Lolo Pass to the Lee Creek Campground. This is a point to point trip and mostly downhill. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more information.

March 29, Saturday, Big Creek. Enjoy a backcountry ski touring trip in Big Creek Canyon, which is in the Bitterroots near Victor. This is perhaps the easiest drainage to ski in the Bitterroots. The trail is quite gentle; it's wide and doesn't gain much elevation. Big Creek Lakes are 9-10 miles up the trail, but there are many options. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 5, Saturday, Holland Point. Ski to Holland Point (8053 feet) which is northeast of Seeley Lake in the Swan Range on the border of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The six-mile route with 4000 feet of elevation gain will involve both on- and off-trail skiing through various conditions. One should have great views of the Missions to the west and the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the east. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 12-13, Saturday-Sunday, 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/April, Mountaineering Skills Practice. This will be a one-day event to practice mountaineering skills that are usually required on big mountains. Topics to be discussed include: self arrest with ice ax, snow anchors, rope-team travel, crevasse rescue, z-pulley system, climbing a rope with prusiks, and more. The exact date will depend on coordination with the private landowner, so if interested call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 to express an interest and when the date comes, you will be informed.

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

TRIP REPORTS

Mission Falls, February 8. Mission Falls is one of the most beautiful ice climbing areas, with bluish-white ice flows covering several rocky cliffs. Crossing the creek on an ice bridge right below Mission Falls is quite spectacular. Enjoying all of this were: Pat Caffrey, Andre Duran, Mark Gillmore, Geordy Kerscher, Toni Keyhase, Gerald Olbu, Martin Oleksiewicz, and Ben Osburn. We set up a top rope on a 60-foot section of vertical ice. The ice was quite intricate, like a chandelier, and brittle in some places. Most of us climbed it twice. We got back to the trail head at dusk.

and enjoyed some fine Canadian beer, compliments of Pat. - Gerald Olbu.

Lolo Pass, February 16. Anne Dowdy and Judith Marten took advantage of this offering to enjoy a beautiful day at Lolo Pass. Though neither had cross country skied before, they both had some downhill experience which served to help them "catch on" almost immediately. After a short introductory ski, they spied some hills they wanted to try out. From there, we moved to some bigger hills. I think that they may have had the most fun of any beginners I have ever taken out. - Julie Warner.

Moonlight Skiing, February 21. This was Gerald Olbu's idea and he was joined by Penny Palm, Karen Adland, Steve Schombel and myself for our second great night of moonlight skiing this year. We left town about 6:30 and got to Lolo Pass around 7:30. There were some clouds, but the moon was coming up. There wasn't anyone else in the parking lot. We started out on a trail, but were breaking trail in new powder after awhile. We went up a road that would give us some good views of the Pack Creek area. When we reached our destination and stopped for lunch, the skies cleared and the bright full moon gave us the view we wanted. - Julie Warner.

Swan Slabs, February 23. Swan Slabs is a 250-foot, 50-degree slab of ice located in Blodgett Canyon. Venturing out for a two-pitch climb were: Len Broberg, Sean Gauer, Geordy Kerscher, George Kerscher, Gerald Olbu and Martin Oleksiewicz. The ice was covered with a bit of snow, but was soft and easy to climb. We climbed it in true mountaineering style, with full packs. The end of the first pitch was 150 feet up the slope. With our ice axes, we chiseled a belay ledge - a bench to sit on, and another flat spot for a foot plant. Ice screws were our anchor. In order to climb the second pitch, we prusikked up a fixed rope. The descent was simple walk down. We climbed it more than once and several people got a chance to lead a pitch. It was great mountaineering practice. - Gerald Olbu.

Swan Slabs, March 1. On March 1st, Matt Grandy led a party of five ice climbers to Swan Slabs in Blodgett Canyon, near Hamilton. The climbers were Alex Berke, Matt Grandy, Geordy Kerscher, Gerald Olbu and Jacob Shinnars. At the trailhead, we found a stuck F-150 with license plates "BIVY" with two dudes claiming to be climbers trying to push it out. Matt's Bronco has a tow strap, so we yanked them out. This is the second climbing trip this month that we have found stuck vehicles at the trailhead. ***IMPORTANT* DO NOT USE THE CLIMBING ROPE AS A TOW STRAP!** After an invigorating two-mile hike, we were at Swan Slabs. It is a 45-degree angle, two-pitch climb. Gerald led the first pitch, followed by Geordy. They set up a four-ice-screw anchor and chipped away a belay ledge. They then set up a fixed rope the rest of the way up. With Gerald belaying above, and Matt as safety observer below, the two novice ice climbers (actually, they both have quite a bit of rock climbing experience) went up. Matt soon followed. Then, we took down the top rope and Geordy went up on the "sharp end." Everyone commented that prusikking up the fixed rope made us feel like we were on a Himalayan climb (K2!). While others climbed, several folks bouldered about at the bottom, practicing traversing the vertical ice at the bottom. After several hours, everyone's arms were pumped up, so we headed for home. We stopped by the Trailhead store in Hamilton to buy some webbing. A topic of discussion all day had been the reliability of the ultra-cheap Russian-made titanium ice screws we had been using. With Black Diamond ice screws costing \$40, how safe is a \$7 Russian ice screw? The Trailhead staff responded by giving us 40 percent off, and we now have some All-American, Made-In-The-USA, Black Diamond, chrome-moly ice screws beefing up our racks. - Matt Grandy.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508

Len Broberg, Vice President - 549-6031

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mail a check payable to

"Rocky Mountaineers" to

Address: _____

Rocky Mountaineers Outdoor Club

P.O. Box 4262

Check one: Individual (\$9.00/year) _____ Family (\$12.00/year) _____ (9398)

Missoula, Montana 59806

THE MOUNTAIN EAR

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