



# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

APRIL, 1997

## MEETING

**Meeting:** 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, April 9.

**April Program.** Peter Dayton will present a slide show on spelunking in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. For those of you who are challenged, vocabulary-wise, "spelunking" means "caving." Peter will provide photographic proof that caving offers year-around socially acceptable opportunities to hike, crawl, climb, rappel, swim, raft, view scenic wonders, discover previously unknown cave passages and major paleontological specimens, wear out the toes of your boots and the knees of your pants, and get totally soaked and muddy, all in total darkness and at a steady temperature of approximately 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Club members with no prior acquaintance with caving will also be intrigued and charmed to discover that caving offers many of the same kinds of pleasures and challenges as bushwacking in the Missions, kayaking in the winter, and enlisting in the marines. As they say, "don't miss it if you can avoid it."

**Business.** **WARNING:** At the April meeting, nominations will be accepted for Club officers for the next year. Person who do not attend the meeting risk being nominated, and ultimately elected, to an office in the Club.

## 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.

**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, after which we will follow the trail. 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.

**April 20, Sunday, East St. Mary's Peak.** Ski/snowshoe trip to East St. Mary's Peak (9425 feet), which is in the Mission Mountains near St. Ignatius. The first portion of the route will go up a steep and heavily-forested slope until the tree line is reached. From there, hopefully, it will be a beautiful snow-covered and windswept ridge to the peak. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**April 27, Sunday, West St. Mary's Peak.** Ski/snowshoe trip to West St. Mary's Peak (9372 feet), which is in the Mission Mountains near St. Ignatius. The first portion of the route will go up a steep and heavily-forested slope until the tree line is reached. From there, hopefully, it will be a beautiful snow-covered and windswept ridge to the peak. West and East St. Mary's Peaks are separated by a half-mile ridge, which probably can not be traversed with snow cover. It should be interesting to look at the ridge from either side. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**May 4, Sunday, Chief Joseph Pass area.** Enjoy a day skiing around the Chief Joseph cross country area. Last year, Julie and I had great spring skiing here on Memorial Day, and there is even more snow this year. I'll be out of town Friday and Saturday, so call early if you need more info, or meet at the Chief Joseph parking lot at 11 a.m. I have a wine-red Geo Tracker with a ski rack and Missoula plates. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or leave a message with Julie Warner at 543-6508.

**May 11, Sunday, Kakashe Mountain.** Ski/snowshoe trip to Kakashe Mountain (8575 feet), which is in the Mission Mountains near St. Ignatius. The first portion of the route will go up a moderately steep and forested slope. Some interesting route finding will be required near the summit and snow gullies will need to be assessed for avalanche danger. If conditions permit, a scenic descent route may be chosen. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**Summer Mountaineering.** Plans are being made for a few multi-day mountaineering trips this summer. Trips being considered include: Mission Mountain trek, Mt Rainier, Mt Baker, Grand Teton and a Canadian Rockies trip. If interested, make early arrangements with Len Broberg at 549-6031 or 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

**Edith Lake, March 8-10.** For a relaxing weekend, Andre Duran, Gerald Olbu and Rick Rister headed for the Pintlers. We skied for three miles along the road before reaching the trail. The highlight on the first day was a moose that had been bedded down on the trail. We found a nice, flat campsite near the creek. The next day, we headed out, but it was slow due to the deep snow. We came to an open slope which looked like it could be avalanche prone, so we stopped and dug a snow pit. There were several ice layers in the snow; the top one was about a foot below the surface. The shovel shear test failed with just a touch of the shovel. Likewise, the Rutschblock Test failed with just Rick's weight. The slope was extremely avalanche prone and it wouldn't be any better above us. We needed to find a different route. The only other alternative was a very steep slope that was heavily forested and relatively safe from avalanches. After a grunt, we came to the outlet of Edith Lake, which was still snow- and ice-covered, and very much still in the dead of winter. The wind was blowing, it was cold and would be dark in an hour. We had to get back to camp. Skiing down the steep, forested slope was actually easier than expected and we were back at camp just as it got dark. During the night a foot of snow fell. We woke to a winter wonderland. On our way out, a flock of geese flew overhead. It was an interesting mix of spring and winter. - Gerald Olbu.

**Last Ice Climb of the Season, March 19.** Geordy Kerscher and Gerald Olbu headed for Mission Falls on a warm day. The forecast called for a week of warm weather. We knew this would be the last opportunity for the season. Luckily, the ice bridge across the creek was still there. The ice we were going to climb was sparse and of marginal quality, but we found a 150-foot section we could climb. We had two main concerns. First, since it was so warm, the ice might break away from the rock; but, the route we chose was on either thick ice or bare rock. Our second concern was stuff falling on us from above; but, there were trees above us and we were not in a gully, so were relatively safe, even though ice was falling all around us. We warmed up by bouldering on the lower ice, then began the climb. Just as I was about half way up the pitch, our attention was suddenly focused on the other side of the canyon. An avalanche about 1000 feet across at the top of the ridge came crashing down a draw and landed at the base of Mission Falls. We continued our climb and occasionally we would see or hear an avalanche (7 total for the day), although not as big as the first one. And, of course, chunks of ice were falling all around us. We got to the top, rappelled down, packed up, and hiked out across fresh avalanche debris. - Gerald Olbu.

**Lee Creek Tour, March 23.** On Sunday, March 23, Charles Tree, Julie Warner and Steve Schombel skied from the Lolo Pass Visitor's Center to the Lee Creek Campground. In the morning, the snow had a hard crust so it was easy climbing to the saddle, even though there were no tracks. Later, it softened and slowed our descent a bit, but there was plenty of snow all the way down. Good weather and great snow made an enjoyable day, and we saw only a few people once we got off the groomed trail. - Steve Schombel.

**Big Creek, March 29.** It began as an overcast day in Missoula, but a blue sky greeted Paul Moomaw and Gerald Olbu for a ski touring trip in Big Creek Canyon. We drove to within a mile of the trailhead, then we skied down and then up to the trailhead. As we skied up the trail, sunbeams shone through the trees. We went about three miles up the trail to the bridge and ate our lunch by the banks of the creek under a blue sky. It was nice to bask in the sun and made us look forward to spring. - Gerald Olbu.

**Holland Point, April 5.** Missoula has had a lot of warm spring days lately and on one of these days, Gerald Olbu and Tony Sabol embarked on a ski trip to Holland Point. There were a few bare spots on the trail, so we took our skis off. Then, we found the snow was hard-packed and easy for walking. We kept expecting to use our skis, but there was no need, so we carried them. As we were walking up the ridge, we had great views of the heavily snow-capped Missions with a clear blue sky in the background. We kept going up and soon we had our first view of Holland Point. We stopped for a snack, ditched our skis, and 45 minutes later were standing on top of the snow-buried Holland Point Lookout. We had great views of the Missions, the Bob and the Swan Range. The trip down was fast; it only took us about two hours to reach the trailhead. - Gerald Olbu.

### 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

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(STAMP)

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