

Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

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NOVEMBER, 1998

MEETING

Meeting: Club meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month in the lower-level meeting room at the Missoula Public Library. However, this month's meeting will be held on the third Wednesday of the month, November 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Program: World-class kayaker and Missoula resident, Doug Ammons will present a slideshow on a trip he took last summer down the Alsek River in the Yukon. A lot of the Alsek River is flat and slow and a great place to raft. Near the bottom is a narrow gorge called Turnback Canyon where most people fly out or portage. Doug believes this canyon has only been done 8-10 times total. There is one place where you have to skirt the Lowell Glacier which dams and fills the river with icebergs. Some of the icebergs calve so violently that they seem to explode from the toe of this glacier. Next, is the passage past the Tweedsmuir Glacier where the river is squeezed into a narrow chute of extreme white water. Doug says this is one of the most beautiful wild rivers he has been on and he got some unforgettable slides.

Next month: Next month's meeting will also be held on the third Wednesday of the month, December 16. Internationally-known mountaineer, Gray Thompson will be the featured speaker.

TRIP CALENDAR

November 21, Saturday, Lolo Peak. (**)** Ski, snowshoe or hike (slog) to Lolo Peak (9096 feet) which is the snow-covered peak visible from Missoula to the southwest. The road to this area is closed from December 1 to May 15 each year, so this is almost the last opportunity this year for easy access. The snow conditions this early in the year will probably only be marginal for skiing. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

December 5, Saturday, Moonlight Ski Trip. Enjoy a moonlight ski trip to the Lolo Pass area two days after the full moon. We will leave in the late afternoon and keep this and other night-time trips short and mellow and suitable for beginner and intermediate skiers. We also stay on definite trails so there is no danger of getting lost in the dark. The quiet and solitude is great at night. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more information.

December 5, Saturday, Sweeney Peak. (**)** Snowshoe and scramble trip to Sweeney Peak (9161 feet), which is located in the Bitterroots west of Florence. Hopefully, we will be able to drive all the way up the road. From the trailhead, the route follows a trail for about three miles, then goes cross country to the peak. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

December 12, 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 Matt Grandy at 728-0647 for more information.

December 19, Saturday, Bass Creek Crag. (**)** Climb one of the Bass Creek Crag, which are the jagged spires easily visible from the highway west of Florence. The first portion of the route follows the Bass Creek trail for a few miles, then goes cross country into the cirque below the crags. The snow conditions will be uncertain, so we'll climb whatever looks inviting. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

(**) Note.** Dates for trips marked with (****) are best guesses. The exact date and location will depend on the weather and participants' interests. Also, since these are respectable mountaineering trips, we have a couple of simple rules: 1) the group sticks together and 2) these are low impact trips. As always.

Gerry Moffit - triple crown is Alaska & Yukon
scitva.

May/June 1999, Mount McKinley. A trip is being planned for Mount McKinley (20,320 feet) in Denali National Park, Alaska. If interested, contact Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 or Tony Sabol at 728-7221 to express an interest.

Want to lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Matt Grandy at 728-0647 or e-mail him at matthewg@montana.com.

TRIP REPORTS

Heavenly Twins, October 17. Doyle Gerrard, Gerald Olbu, Hillary Wood and Mike Wood set out under sunny blue skies to climb the Heavenly Twins. We hiked most of way up the St. Mary Peak trail, then began a long cross-country journey through beautiful alpine country. It was slow and difficult in places with 2-3 inches of snow on boulders; we slipped and hit our butts many times. We traversed westward along ridge tops and talus slopes until we were below the peak of the south Heavenly Twin. We climbed up a snow-filled couloir, which ended at the top of the ridge. We saw difficult climbing above us and realized we should have climbed onto the south face further down. We thought we could do it anyway and proceeded to climb up the ridge and onto the north face. This face was quite steep and exposed and the snow on black lichen-covered rocks made for slippery conditions. It looked as though after a few difficult moves through an exposed area, we would have easier climbing ahead. We went ahead and found that what looked like easy climbing was actually difficult and exposed. We climbed up some more and evaluated the situation. We were up vertical, snow-covered rock face, 50 feet above a two-foot wide ledge with a 200-foot dropoff down the north face. What we had climbed was probably rated as 5.6 technical and we were climbing it alpine style in our leather boots with packs. It looked like 50-100 feet of the same above us with no guarantee we wouldn't reach a dead end. We decided to retreat. Slowly and carefully we climbed down to the ledge. After the difficult climbing we just did, the climb down the couloir seemed relatively easy. We began the slow journey back, knowing that it would be long because we had to do a lot of traversing and climb up two ridges, with the second one being 1300 feet high and coming at the end of the day when we would be real tired. We reached the top of the second ridge just as it turned dark. The easy walk along the flat ridge top was the most enjoyable portion of the trip. It was cold and windy with blowing snow and low clouds making white-out conditions, or in this case, "grayout" conditions, since it was dark. Then, came the descent down through the scrub brush which seemed like cruel torture at this late hour in the day. We reached the St. Mary Peak trail and enjoyed the relaxing walk down to the trailhead in the dark. - Gerald Olbu.

East St. Mary Peak, October 24. On a sunny day, Len Broberg and Gerald Olbu headed for East St. Mary Peak which is located in the Mission Mountains. We hiked up the steep ridge in record time, easily scrambled up East St. Mary Peak and enjoyed views of Gray Wolf and West St. Mary Peak. The forecast called for clouds in the afternoon and rain in the evening, but we still had a clear blue sky; however, there was lots of haze in the sky from the many slash burns and prescribed burns. To the northwest was West St. Mary Peak, separated from us by a narrow ridge with snow in places. We couldn't resist. The traverse of the ridge was mostly a scramble with a little bit of fourth-class climbing. The crux was a section where we had a choice to either climb through a notch in the ridge where it was exposed and covered with snow, or climb on the face which was dry but steeper; we climbed it both ways. We continued on to the west peak, aided by a ledge system, which easily led to the summit. Even though there was very little snow on the west side of the ridge, there was lots of snow in the Sonielem Lake basin to the northeast of the two St. Mary Peaks. We climbed back to East St. Mary Peak and then scrambled down the ridge and arrived at the trailhead before dark. - Gerald Olbu.

Gray Wolf Lake area, October 31 and November 7. We are planning some ski trips into this area this winter, as well as a possible winter climb of Gray Wolf Peak. The purpose of these two trips was to check out the terrain and its suitability for skiing. Doyle Gerrard, Matt Grandy, Mark Mencil and Gerald Olbu participated in the first trip in which we began at the North Fork of the Jocko River, followed the trail past the Snow Survey Cabin and on to explore the area around Buck Lake. Doyle, Matt and Gerald went back the second time, began at the Beaver Creek trailhead, followed the trail along the ridge top to Buck Lake, then continued on to Gray Wolf Lake. During the first trip, we had a beautiful autumn day with a clear blue sky. A week later there were 2-3 inches of snow on the ground and mostly cloudy skies. In order to climb Gray Wolf Peak from the east, the shortest route to Gray Wolf Lake begins at the North Fork of the Jocko, but this route passes along a few potential avalanche slopes and would need to be evaluated in the winter; the climb of the peak would require ice axes and crampons. For an enjoyable one- or two-day ski trip, the ridge above Beaver Creek should be ideal; it rises very steeply 800 feet above Lindberg Lake, then is mostly level for ten miles to Buck Lake. We're looking forward to some good trips this winter. - Gerald Olbu.

OFFICERS

Matt Grandy, President - 728-0647
Tony Sabol, Vice President - 728-7221
Steve Schombel, Vice President - 721-4686

Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508
Gerald Olbu, Newsletter Editor - 549-4769

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

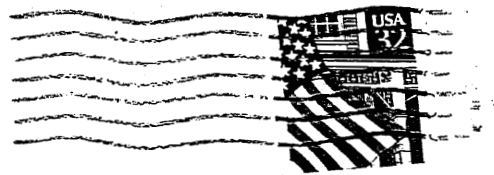
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Check one: Individual (\$9.00/year) _____ Family (\$12.00/year) _____

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