



Mountain Ear

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

MARCH 2000

*The Rocky Mountaineers are dedicated to the exploration of Western Montana's mountains
and other high peaks throughout the world.*

MEETING

CLUB MEETINGS: The Rocky Mountaineers normally meet on the second Wednesday of each month, in the lower meeting room, at the Missoula Public Library. This month we are meeting on March 8th at 7 p.m.

FEBRUARY'S PROGRAM: Jim Ullrich, will give a slide presentation of his trip to the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere – Argentina's Aconcagua (22,841 feet). Jim climbed to the summit by way of the Polish Glacier Route in 1979. This route ascends the prominent glacier on the northeast slope of the mountain and is the second most popular route on Aconcagua. Jim has been a long time member of the Rocky Mountaineers and has climbed countless peaks in Montana, the Northwest, and Alaska's Mount McKinley. Come and see the wonderful slide show that one of our own members has put together for us.

TRIP CALENDER

March 18th, Saturday, Lolo Pass Moonlight Ski Trip: Actually this is a couple of days before the full moon, so we will leave and ski late, after moonrise. But hey, it is Saturday! So if you are not too wasted from your St. Patrick's Day celebrations, give Steve Schombel a call at 721-4686.

March 25th, Saturday, Ice-Axe Training Workshop: Join the Rocky Mountaineers for an instructional workshop on proper ice-axe use and self-arrest techniques. This trip will be a prerequisite for future glacier travel trips that will be listed this summer. The workshop will be held at either the Rocky Mountaineers winter cabin or Marshall Mountain Ski Area. Please call Penny Palm at 258-2000 for more information.

March 26th, Sunday, Eagle Point: Eagle Point (7928 feet) is located on the Sapphire-Bitterroot Divide just East of Victor. The point can be accessed from either the Rock Creek Drainage or from the Bitterroot side. We will most likely start from the Bitterroot Valley and follow the Burnt Fork drainage. Snowshoes will be required. Call Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

Upcoming trips will include Mt. Ranier (June), Mt. Olympus (July), Mt. Athabasca (August), and Aconcagua in the year 2000.

TRIP REPORTS

Rock Creek Winter Trip, February 13th: The original plan was a winter attempt of Quigg Peak, but due to very icy conditions on the Rock Creek Road, we opted for a destination closer to the I-90 exit. We decided on Welcome Point (7723 feet), in the Welcome Creek Wilderness, by way of the Solomon Ridge Trail. Jim Ullrich, Sally Wenning, and Tami Sabol almost immediately reached the ford at Rock Creek. After staring into the water for several minutes, we decided it was too cold and icy to try and cross what looked like an icy ocean of waves. Hypothermia wasn't in the equation for the day. Therefore, we hiked up the Babcock Creek drainage for a couple of miles. It was a picture perfect day – crisp blue sky and lots of sunshine! The trail was extremely icy, but we still had a great time – Tami Sabol

Beginner's Ski Trip, February 19th: This was a beautiful day for a beginner's ski trip. The sun was shining overhead and snow conditions were great! Fred and Eileen Schwanemann, Charles Tree, Steve Schombel, and Lois Crabul joined me at Lolo Pass. Unfortunately, so did an entire "poker run" of snowmobiles, so we bagged the trip we had in mind and skied the Pack Creek Loop, to get some peace and quiet. It was the first time the Schwanemanns had the opportunity ski on real good snow. They loved it! Everyone else had a good time also - Julie Warner

Welcome Creek Wilderness, February 20th: Due to fluctuating temperature changes and warm weather, we decided to do a winter mountaineering trip instead of the scheduled ice-climbing trip. Tony and Tami Sabol started out with brilliant blue skies and lots of sunshine. We strapped on cross-country skis and traveled for approximately 5 miles up the Eightmile drainage to the Sapphire Mountains-Bitterroot Divide. Upon reaching the ridge top, we switched from skis to snowshoes. We went on a snowshoe hike for approximately 3 miles, until we reached a rounded point in the Welcome Creek Wilderness. We could see everything – the Swan, Mission, and Bitterroot Ranges! Squaw Peak looked like a tiny bump in the distance. The point we reached is shown on the map as 7608 feet, just west of Welcome Point. We were both tired and thirsty, and breathed a sigh of relief when Tony remembered he had packed hot chocolate. We snowshoed back out of the wilderness, donned our skis, and reached the truck just after a beautiful sunset – Tony Sabol

Lolo Ski Trip, February 27th: For all the years that I've been leading trips for the club, I have been asking people to call me and suggest a trip. Mary Retting finally did just that! She wanted to ski the Pack Creek trail at Lolo Pass. We set up a date and time. Mary recruited four of her friends and we did the eight-mile ski. It was raining slightly at Lolo Pass, and some harder rain was coming down when we reached the Brushy Fork. However, the ski conditions remained decent and we all enjoyed the trip, despite the weather - Julie Warner

Seeley Lake Ski Trip, February 27th: The ski up Blind Canyon went off just as advertised, except due to some unexpected plowing one can drive all the way to the Blind Canyon turnoff. Those of you who decided not to go at the last minute missed out on a nice warm and short day with great snow conditions. And, just dumb luck, but there were no snowmobiles after leaving the car and the Cottonwood Creek Road! There was even time to explore a side road and get a taste of untracked snow. The rain held off until reaching the car early in the afternoon – Steve Schombel

Want to Lead A Trip? If you are interested in being a Trip Leader for the Rocky Mountaineers, contact Club President Matt Grandy at 728-0647 or e-mail him at matthewg@montana.com.

Memo From the Club President -

Recently the Missoula Independent, referring to the internal rift between our club and the New Rocky Mountaineers said, "get out in the woods together where you belong". Notwithstanding several inaccuracies in the article, this is some very good advice.

To a large degree, our club has become very uncivil, and it is time for this to stop. We are The Rocky Mountaineers, a group with a long and proud tradition. I see no point served in becoming the "Anti-New Rocky Mountaineers". Our group can set the example by speaking the truth and behaving in a civil way toward all mountaineers.

Our past president, Gerald Olbu, has told other members, friends, and the Missoula Independent, that he was forced from the club. This is untrue. What is true is that some members made Gerald feel unwelcome. To be honest, these same members made me feel unwelcome too. At last May's meeting, when I was elected President and Gerald was elected Vice-President, I had high hopes for the club. Gerald and I handled the criticism in different ways, I choose to try and moderate the issue, Gerald chose to resign as Vice-President.

Gerald went on to found a group calling itself the New Rocky Mountaineers, and began spreading half-truths about events surrounding our club. One thing he is correct about is the lack of civility in our club. Despite the Missoula Independent referring to his "ouster" from our club, Gerald remains a dues-paying member of our club. He has even begun attending our meetings again. I expect all members to respect his choice to attend our meetings again, and treat him with the same respect accorded any other member.

Our club cannot continue to tear itself apart over trivial issues. The individuals who raised their voices at last years meeting, making both Gerald and myself feel very unwelcome in our own club carry a heavy burden. They made demands for change. The harsh reality is that our club is only what we each make of it. And those individuals have not carried out their end of the bargain. When trips meeting their specifications were scheduled and listed in the newsletter, not a single one of the individuals demanding those trips showed up. There has been a marked decline in trips listed in the newsletter. Several qualified trip leaders, myself included, are choosing to keep our trips private rather than risk the criticism of members. And that is a very bad trend for our club. If you think a particular trip is too hard or too easy, just don't go. But don't ridicule other club members and trip leaders. The same goes for activities like ice climbing. Not everyone enjoys ice climbing, but don't ridicule those who do and demand that these activities not be listed. That is what leads us to the current situation. To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, "ask not what your club can do for you, ask what you can do for your club". A club exists when members are joined in the pursuit of common interests and goals. A mountaineering club cannot exist if there are no activities or trips for its members. As the above paraphrase notes, don't simply sit around waiting for trips to come to you. Rather, please volunteer your time and abilities once in awhile to help build this into a great mountaineering club. We currently have close to 70 members, but only 4 or 5 people routinely lead trips. If each of you volunteered only one or two trips per year, we could have more than 2 trips per week...and what a diverse array of trips we would have then, eh?

We need to stop this petty bickering, agree to disagree, and get back to why we are all here. I joined the Rocky Mountaineers several years ago because I enjoyed Montana's wide-open spaces, and the club seemed like a fun place. I assume every one of you joined the club for similar reasons. Now, the club has become very political, and to be honest, it really is not much fun anymore. Especially being the Club President during all this turmoil. I used to be a close, personal friend of Gerald. Now he won't even talk to me, apparently he considers me a traitor for standing by the club and it's long history. It is very sad that I have lost a friend over such a petty issue. But we need to move on, and end this turmoil once and for all.

I would like to extend a personal invitation to any New Rocky Mountaineer, including Gerald, to join our club again. I see no point in having two mountaineering clubs in town. And to any current club member who does not want to behave in a civil manner and get along with others, I invite you to leave our club. We are here to enjoy the mountains, not fight like little children.

Matt Grandy



CLUB OFFICERS

President	Matt Grandy	728-0647	Treasurer	Julie Warner	543-6508
Vice President	Tony Sabol	273-2566	Secretary	Penny Palm	258-2000
Vice President	Steve Schombel	721-4686	Newsletter Editor	Tami Sabol	273-2566