



# MOUNTAIN EAR

**Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers**

**HIKING-CLIMBING-MOUNTAINEERING-SKIING-  
EXOTIC TRAVEL-EXPLORATION OF PEAKS AND  
MOUNTAINS OF MONTANA AND OF THE WORLD**

**\*\*\*October 2002\*\*\***

## **The Rocky Mountaineer's Cabin**

A lot has been written in this and the last issue about work parties to our cabin in the Bitterroots. We thought we might provide a little information to you more recent members on the background of this cabin. Early in its existence, the Rocky Mountaineers had a cabin on the shores of Lapi Lake up a side drainage from Bass Creek. The story of this cabin will be researched some other day; we want to focus on the cabin we have now.

The original cabin was located on land that became part of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and so the club had to abandon this site and find a new location. According to Bret Doucett, long time club member Bill Morgan, who at the time worked for the Bitterroot N.F. and who now is a Ranger in Hungry Horse, was the main guiding light in getting the permit and selecting the present site. Expert telemark skier Bob Benson, who served in almost every club office during the 70's and 80's, is credited with being the chief of the construction crew. Here are some terse words penned by Bob in an old newsletter at the end of the 1974 construction season:

"To an experienced cabin builder, the ski shelter being erected on Little (East) St. Joe Mountain is a disaster, but to the participants in the project it is a work of (art?). The inside dimensions are about 12 x 18 feet, give or take some. The entire structure is made from dead whitebark pine, cut near the cabin site. This has proven an exciting material to work with, as most trees are shaped like coke bottles and have twisted grain, which makes for some rather unique fitting corner notches."

Then, as now, the main purpose of the cabin was as a shelter for back country skiers. It was deliberately located in a dry area, with only winter snow to melt for water. And it was roughly half way between the trailhead and the wonderful open slopes of Little St. Joe.

Nowadays there is a gate on the road, not too far from the Bass Creek parking area. It is a lot longer ski up to the cabin, but a lot of people still use it. One big area of

controversy has been the use of the cabin by nonmembers. Club members were supposed to keep the location top secret. But late in the 90's it was obvious that a lot of people knew about it, including everyone in the outdoor stores. Rather than continue the charade the current officers decided to be more open, advertise work parties and seek donations for repair and maintenance. After all, our Forest Service Permit does require the cabin to be kept open to the public. Please join us if you can for a work party on Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>, or send a cabin fund donation to the address below.

### **CLUB CONTACTS**

Rocky Mountaineers      P.O. Box 4262  
Missoula, MT 59806  
rockymountaineers@hotmail.com

President-      Julie Warner      543-6508  
Treasurer      jawkal@hotmail.com

V.P. -      Steve Schombel      721-4686  
Editor      ssbell@montana.com

## **October Meeting**

We will meet as usual on the second Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM in the second floor meeting room of the Court House Annex on Pine Street. We will have a slide show entitled "A Meek Mountaineer in the Alps" by long time club member Bill Meyers. He has made many trips to Europe and has been on the Matterhorn, the Eiger and many others. Coincidentally, Bill was also club President during the early years of our cabin.

Our meetings are free and open to the public. We try to keep them fun by saving all but the most important business for the end for the active members who wish to stay. Bring a friend and enjoy the show.

## TRIP REPORTS

### August 5<sup>th</sup> Mount Borah

Steve Schombel and his friend from New Mexico, Mark Lindstrom, took a short vacation and climbed the high point of Idaho after waiting out some thunder and lightning storms. We took the standard route, which is a steep but heavily used path all the way up. The knife edge ridge didn't seem so bad compared to some other things we've done, someone had left a fixed rope at the one short vertical downclimb, and the snow was completely gone, so there was no danger of sliding. What a large magnificent mountain. We also just happened to be going up the same day a large group of Easterners from an Appalachian Club were doing an excursion, so we got to hear a lot of interesting stories.

### August 11<sup>th</sup> Holland Peak

We had a cool and partially cloudy day - great for hiking, and we took the standard route, which is a distinct but very steep trail from Cooney Lookout to Rumble Creek Lakes. Two of the guys had enough at the upper lake, and spent a few hours enjoying the sub alpine scenery; while the other two kept up a good pace and made the top and back with no problems. After looking at maps we decided it was over 5000' up from the car, quite a challenge. Participants were leader Bret Doucett, Ron Pierson, Steve Schombel and Kirk Arnold.

### August 18<sup>th</sup> Stonewall Lookout

Four of us got an early start and had a pretty drive to Snowbank Lake on a road easily travelled in a passenger car. The first few miles of trail had some deadfall but was mostly just steady uphill hiking with a few lingering flowers and some berries. When we reached the ridge top and junction with the longer trail coming up from Lincoln we were disappointed to find that it is now an OHV route, wide and dusty. Actually only a few 4-wheelers passed us going up and down, and they were friendly, but we were hoping for something more wild.

This was more than made up for by the extremely friendly volunteer manning the lookout. He came down to greet us and invited us all up and spent several hours showing us around and telling us what we could see in the distance, and other stories from his years in the mountains. One interesting feature of this lookout was the homemade bear proof door. It was solid metal with hundreds of long sharp spikes pointing out, and looked more like it belonged in a medieval torture chamber than on a mountain top. It was installed after a bear had broken in and marooned a lady lookout who had stayed up there in prior years.

Participants were Kirk Arnold, Fred Schwanemann, Steve Schombel and the leader, Lois Crepeau.

### August 25<sup>th</sup> Trapper Peak

It doesn't get better than the Sunday Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> hike to Trapper Peak; good weather, good company and a great trail. The weatherman had promised us a cloudy cool day, but the weather was sunny and warm but never too warm at this high of an altitude. Eileen and Fred Schwanemann stayed in a motel in Darby, David Kahl and I had planned on camping at the trailhead the night before until rain sent us to a motel also. We met at the trailhead a little before 8 AM and knowing a long hike was ahead of us, set a leisurely pace, stopping to gawk at the scenery or drink water when ever we wanted. Upon reaching the saddle east of the false summit the way to the peak appears to go over the false summit, consisting of large scree. I remembered from being there during the summer (15 years ago) that there was a route that went most of the way to the top on vegetation but it wasn't readily visible. We all started across the scree, and I went far enough around to find the trail that I remembered, coming down from the saddle between the real and false summits. We had lunch on the summit then came down by the grassy route and going across land to the trail rather than back up to the saddle. For those that don't want to do the scree route, this trail is below the summit scree, and requires dropping down from the saddle and following the grass edge around. We had dinner in Hamilton and a pleasant drive back to Missoula.

### Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> - Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> Glacier Backpack

Three of us left Missoula on Friday afternoon with the intention of spending two days hiking into Martha's Basin, climbing Mount Stimson and then doing the long 17 mile hike out and drive home on the fourth day. We started out as planned, and found a good place to camp about 11 miles from the car. On the second day it looked like rain, and we thought about turning around right then. But we decided to press on. About 1:00 we were at the turnoff to Martha's Basin and rain was immanent. Camping out at high altitude and climbing a mountain was doubtful. However, we decided to head down Nyack Creek and at least do one of the longest and wildest backpack loops in Glacier.

After crossing Surprise Pass it really did start to rain. The brush got soaked and we all got wetter and colder as the day wore on. By the time we reached the Upper Nyack Patrol Cabin we were getting hypothermic. What a relief to find a covered front porch and a clearing to pitch the tent in. As we were fixing dinner the rain did stop, and we were able to dry out

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Family Yearly Membership: \$13.00

Make checks payable to: "Rocky Mountaineers"

and send to: Rocky Mountaineers

P.O. Box 4262

Missoula, MT. 59806

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this release and indemnity agreement and have fully informed myself of its contents before I have signed it. When I join or renew my membership I also sign on to this agreement.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian if Participant is Under 18 Years of Age \_\_\_\_\_

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby state that I wish to participate in courses and/or activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, a non-profit organization. I recognize any outdoors activity may involve certain dangers, including but not limited to the hazards of traveling in mountainous terrain, accidents or illness in remote places, forces of nature, and the actions of participants and other persons. I further understand and agree that without some program providing protection of its assets and its leaders, the Rocky Mountaineers would not be able to offer its courses and activities.

In consideration of and as part payment for the right to participate in the activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, I agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any and all liability, claims and causes of action arising out of or in any way connected with my participation, or the participation of any minor that I am signing on behalf of, in any activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers. I personally assume all risks in connection with these activities. If I am signing on behalf of a minor, I further agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any liability, claims and cause of action, which the minor may have arising from the minor's participation in activities. The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and indemnity agreement for my heirs, personal representative, and for all members of my family, including any minors. (Parents or Legal Guardians must sign for all persons under eighteen (18) years of age).

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### TRIP REPORTS cont.

and warm up. Just before dark a search and rescue ranger and a summer helper showed up. They were looking for a lost hiker, which explained the helicopters that had been circling around. He could have given us some grief over rules we were breaking, but was really cool and even let us store our food inside the cabin instead of hanging it. He even joined us around the fire later that evening and shared some stories.

The third day was sunny and the brush was fairly dry by the time we got hiking. A few miles from the cabin we saw our only bears of the weekend, a black mom with a cub. She went "huff, huff, huff,..." and the cub scooted up a tree like a little monkey. Then she climbed about 20 feet up the tree. We decided to quickly and quietly pass through, and she kept huffing until we were out of sight. We had some good views of Stimson and other peaks through the clouds, and could see from the banner clouds that the wind was just howling up there. It would have been a marginal day to climb a mountain. Late in the afternoon it clouded up again, and so we stopped at the Lower Nyack Patrol Cabin just in case we needed a sheltered porch again. But it cleared and we set the tent up in the meadow and a cooking area under trees 150 yards away like we should.

The last day was the best day weather wise, and we hiked through some of the best scenery - a spectacular gorge and waterfalls. Then we were out of the mountains and had several tedious miles through a thick forest. We were looking forward to getting home at a decent hour, and unloading our

gear. Bret Doucett, Ron Pierson and Steve Schombel agreed that they would like to do a similar trip again, and perhaps reach the top of Mt. Stimson next year.

### September 8<sup>th</sup> Stuart Peak

Nancy Shrader and Eileen and Fred Schwanemann started this hike about 7:15 AM with cold and very damp weather. It actually helped us conserve water. We made good time getting up to the ridge above the three mile limit. As we progressed up and up, we saw fresh bear tracks and mountain lion scat. As the mist was lifting, we got a beautiful view of Missoula about six miles into the hike. The final switch backs, some quite long, brought us to the Wilderness Boundary. We persisted and came around to the face of Stuart Peak with Twin Lakes and Farmer's Lake in a cirque 500 feet below us. Nancy talked to Art Gidel who was coming down from the peak. The sun came out and we had lunch with a million dollar view. Then we climbed the last half mile to the top. Our efforts were rewarded with a four direction beautiful panorama hat cannot be described. After views and pictures, we reluctantly came down and started the long way back. We saw six grouse, a family, about a third of the way down. This hike was eighteen miles long with a 4,000 ft. plus gain in elevation. The distance is the more difficult part. It took us about five hours to go up and four and a half to come down. We finished this gorgeous trek to Stuart Peak about at 6 PM.

## UPCOMING TRIPS

### September 22<sup>nd</sup> Mountain Bike Ride

Mountain Bike on the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route. This is a route that stretches from Roosville, Canada to Antelope Wells, New Mexico. We will ride the portion near Holland Lake. We will ride approximately 25 miles round trip, with 5 miles of this being single track. The mileage can be decreased or increased depending on the group. We also can take a side trip "hike" to Clearwater Lake. A bicycle helmet will be required for this trip. Meet at the chamber of commerce at 9:00 Call Karen Aplan 542-3737 for details.

### September 22<sup>nd</sup> Bass Creek

If you don't bike, Julie is willing to hike up Bass Creek. This can be a short or moderate hike depending on the group. It is a good trail for children or people of all ages. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for the details.

### September 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> Glacier Park Hike

We will drive up to Glacier Friday afternoon and camp at Apgar. On Saturday we will meet Fred and Eileen Schwanemann, shuttle one car over to Many Glacier and then hike from Siyeh Bend over Piegian Pass down to Many Glacier. We will probably camp a second night and sight see on Sunday, but could drive home Saturday night if the group desires. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686.

### October 6<sup>th</sup> Welcome Creek

We will do the whole Welcome Creek Trail the easy way, leaving a car at the footbridge. Sunday morning we will drive up Three Mile Creek, hike the mile or so up and over the Sapphire Divide, and then the ten miles down Welcome Creek. We will put a "For Sale" sign on the upper car, since it will be left there all winter. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more details.

### October 13<sup>th</sup> Cabin Day

We have a chain saw owning volunteer, and are also hoping to have a man who knows how to chink cabins participate. At least we will have proper materials to work with. Some of us will get out the rope and ladder and patch the roof, while others will clean up the small piles we left last month, and try to fill the wood bin. Wouldn't it be nice to have the cabin in good shape again? Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 or Steve Schombel at 721-4686 if you'd like to help out.

### October 20<sup>th</sup> Lolo Pass Exploration

Julie and Fred and Dave have been talking about exploring trail #295 from Lolo Pass, AKA the Lee Ridge Trail. Since what we fondly remember as the "B" trail, known to some as the Lewis and Clark Trail, has been chewed up by some misguided logging, this trail may be an alternative ski trip. They are thinking of shuttling two vehicles and trying to see if this trail goes all the way down to Lee Creek Campground. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 or Fred Schwanemann at 542-7372 if you want to participate.

### October 26<sup>th</sup> Fisher Peak

Join us for a late season day before hunting season climb of this rugged mountain near Seeley Lake. This mountain was rated (C) in the *Climbers Guide to Montana* by Pat Caffrey; not a scramble. If the weather is snowy we can substitute Ptarmigan Ridge or some other hike near Seeley Lake. Call Bret Doucett at 728-6461 or 543-4927 for the meeting time and place.

### November 3<sup>rd</sup> Blodgett Canyon

Kathy Burleson and her son Michael invite everyone to join them on a short and easy hike up this famous canyon. It will be a good trip for children and people of all ages. Not many people visit this canyon late in the fall. Call Kathy at 543-9558 for information.



**Rocky Mountaineers**  
P. O. Box 4262  
Missoula, MT 59806

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