



AUGUST 2008

THE MOUNTAIN EAR

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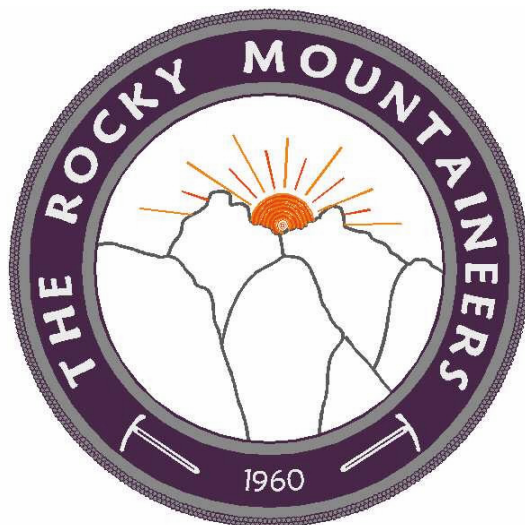
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The Monthly Newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers



Climb. Hike. Ski. Bike. Paddle.
Dedicated to the Enjoyment and Promotion of
Responsible Outdoor Adventure.

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The Mountain Ear is the club newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers and is published near the beginning of every month. Anyone wishing to contribute articles of interest are welcomed and encouraged to do so- contact the editor.

Membership application can be found at the end of the newsletter.

ABOUT THE CLUB:

Mission Statement:

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of responsible outdoor adventures.

Meetings and Presentations:

Meetings are held the second Wednesday, September through May, at 6:00 PM at Pipestone Mountaineering. Each meeting is followed by a featured presentation or speaker at 7:00 PM.

Activities:

- ☐ Hiking
- ☐ Backpacking
- ☐ Alpine Climbing & Scrambling
- ☐ Peak Bagging
- ☐ Backcountry Skiing
- ☐ Winter Mountaineering
- ☐ Track Skiing
- ☐ Snowshoeing
- ☐ Snowboarding
- ☐ Mountain Biking
- ☐ Rock Climbing
- ☐ Canoeing & Kayaking
- ☐ Rafting
- ☐ Kids Trips
- ☐ Terracaching/Geocaching

President's Message

Well folks, I'm happy to announce that the officers voted to make the Grizzly Man Adventure Race an official Rocky Mountaineers event! We are currently in the process of securing Lubrecht Experimental Forest for our April 19th, 2009 venue. The tentative course involves trail running, cross country travel, mountain biking and boating! As this is now a Rocky Mountaineers event, I would like to see anyone (and everyone) in membership get involved. Involvement can take many forms and I believe that everyone who is willing to donate some time could have an integral part in this exciting process. Course development, volunteer recruiting, fundraising, and aid station preparation are only a few of the tasks that need addressing. I would really like to hear from members who are interested in helping to promote the club and make this event a success. The earlier you get involved, the better the Rocky Mountaineers will be prepared on race day. It is going to take the help of a great many volunteers to make this event happen and I am hoping to hear from many of you. Please call or email to offer any input, feedback or criticism!

As an aside, I would also like to state that I very much value the diversity of both age and ability that our club encompasses. It is important that we continue to offer monthly trips that cover the full spectrum of outdoor recreation. (by the way, we need more trip leaders!) As our newsletter states, we promote activities that range from geocaching/terracing, cycling, cross country/backcountry skiing, hiking, rock climbing, canoeing and kayaking, at all levels! Please understand that this adventure race is meant in no way to portray or restrict our club to being an exclusive group of elite athletes. That is not what I believe The Rocky Mountaineers is supposed to be.

Joshua Phillips, President

From your Treasurer

We currently have 79 paying members. Of those, only 13 still receive paper newsletters. Those 13 paper newsletters cost approximately \$260 annually to produce and mail. At \$20 for a paper newsletter membership, we are merely breaking even, and that does not account for any of our time. In an effort to cut costs, provide a superior product, and be more "Green", we have decided to wean everyone possible off paper newsletters. If you have an email address, you have the ability to read, and probably print a newsletter. At the end of your membership year you will automatically be converted to e-newsletters and your dues will decrease to \$10. If you must have a paper newsletter, at the end of your current membership year, your membership dues will be increased to \$30, and you will have to plant a tree or purchase carbon credits. *Steve Niday, Treasurer*

News and Notes

This month we host one of our biggest and most fun events- The Glacier Classic. Now in its fourth year we hope you can partake in the festivities and join us up in Many Glacier later this month. See the following page for all the details.

The monthly meetings and presentations will resume in September. As always, the first meeting of the year will be a BYO Pictures and Potluck. In other words, members are invited to bring along some of their pictures from their trips over the past year to show to everyone else. And of course, it all goes better with food and drink. Meeting will be the second Tuesday of the month at Pipestone Mountaineering. See next month's newsletter for more details.

A big congratulations goes out to our Vice President David Wright and his wife Deidad who welcomed their first child into the world on June 7th. Sophia Maria checked in at 9 lbs, 3 oz and 22 inches long! (Unknown sources claim the new parents deprived little Sophia of ice cream on a recent trip to Big Dipper. Child Protective Services have been contacted.)

4th Annual Glacier Classic

Dates: August 22-24, 2008

Place: Many Glacier area

We would like to encourage everyone to join us in Glacier National Park for our annual Glacier Classic this month. Once again we plan to have a wide variety of climbs and hikes to go along with the camping fun! Our plan is to drive up on Friday, secure some campsites at the Many Glacier (NPS) campground, then eat, drink, tell tall-tales, etc. Saturday we will have some scheduled hikes/climbs, as well as Sunday (see below). You are more than welcome to come along and do your own thing or nothing at all, as well. We had about 25 attendees last year and it was a great time. To enable us to get a good head count for securing an adequate number of campsites, please call either Steve Niday (721-3790) or Forest Dean (240-7612) and let us know you are coming and how many others might be coming with you. You can do this right up until Friday morning, August 22. Feel free to call either of us with any questions! Hope to see a bunch of you there!

Saturday

ALTYN PEAK

Rating: Class 2; Distance: 5 miles; Elevation: 3000'

Description: From trailhead on the north side of Swiftcurrent Lake, ascend grassy slopes to the saddle between Mt. Henkel and Altyn Peak, then up ridge to the summit. Excellent wildlife viewing; Bighorns, Mtn Goats, Bears and Dean's group ascending Mt Wilbur. Bring binocs. Another option is to also go up Mt Henkel which I went up 25 years ago. Mt Henkel (8,700' El) is class 2 & easy class 3 with better views of Mt Wilbur and Iceberg Lake.

Leader: Tom Hanou

ICEBERG PEAK

Rating: Class 3-4

Description: This climb will ascend via the Iceberg Notch Route. See J. Gordon Edwards guidebook for details on this route.

Leader: Steve Niday

MOUNT WILBUR

Rating: Class 5, *Distance:* 4 miles; *Elevation:* 4500'

Description: We will get an early start and ascend via the "Stairstep Approach" to the "Thin Man's Pleasure Route". While this is not a sustained technical climb, it will involve a couple pitches of technical climbing and likely some rappelling or downclimbing on belay. Participants should have some proficiency with all of this. Group size will be limited to 6 climbers.

Special Equipment: Harness, belay device, helmet.

Leaders: Levi Webb and Forest Dean

PTARMIGAN TUNNEL

Rating: Class 1; *Distance:* 10 miles; *Elevation:* 2300'

Description: This will be a hike from the Many Glacier campground up the Ptarmigan Trail to Ptarmigan Tunnel.

Leader: Julie Kahl

Sunday

ALLEN MOUNTAIN

Rating: Class 3

Description: Route will be determined by those interested in making the climb.

Leader: Steve Niday

Contact: Forest Dean (mtnear1@gmail.com or 406-240-7612) or Steve Niday (seniday@yahoo.com or 406-721-3790) for more information.



Swiftcurrent Lake and Mount Wilbur near Many Glacier.

UPCOMING TRIPS AND ADVENTURES

Trip Notes:

Please contact the trip leader for more information regarding any listed trips.

Mileage listed is round trip mileage. Elevation listed is gain only. For information on Class Rating see below:

Class Rating System

CLASS 1 – HIKING Mostly on trails, but may also include some easy cross country travel.

CLASS 2 – EASY SCRAMBLING Rugged off trail hiking, no hands required.

CLASS 3 – SCRAMBLING Use of hand to ascend some sections of rock. Little to no exposure; a fall would not likely cause serious injury.

CLASS 4 – CLIMBING Easy climbing, great exposure; a fall would quite possibly cause serious injury. Use of a rope and protection at times possible.

CLASS 5 – TECHNICAL CLIMBING Use of rope, protection and belay are a must.

CLASS 6 – AID CLIMBING Use of equipment to support your weight as you climb.

Saturday, August 16 – GRAVE PEAK (Bitterroots)

Rating: Class 1-2; *Distance:* 9.0 miles; *Elevation:* 3050'

Description: Shortly after you drive over Lolo Pass into Idaho, you can see a group of mountains straight ahead of you, in the area to the south of Lochsa Lodge (Powell). The tallest peak in this group of mountains is Grave Peak (8282 feet). The easiest route to Grave Peak is from the southeast via Kooskooskia Meadows. From the end of the road we'll hike about 4.5 miles on a little-used but adequate trail to the peak, which contains the last D-6 cupola type lookout remaining in Idaho, according to a sign in the lookout. If you count all the ups and downs, the hike involves a total of 3,050 feet of climbing and descending. The scenery is good throughout the hike.

Leader: Peter Dayton, 251-3032, pdayton@q.com

Fri-Sun, August 22-24 – 4TH GLACIER CLASSIC (Glacier National Park)

See all the information for this trip in article on page 5.

Sat- Mon, Aug 30-Sept 1 – MOUNT LOGAN (Glacier National Park)

Rating: Class 3, *Distance:* 24 miles, *Elevation:* 4500'

Description: For this Labor Day weekend adventure, we will start Saturday morning and hike into either Gunsight Lake or the Blackfoot Glacier Basin and camp. On Sunday we will attempt Mt. Logan (9239') by its West Face Route (class 3). Back to camp and hike out on Monday. This will be a moderately paced trip. Anyone wishing to come along and not climb is welcome.

Leader: Forest Dean - 240-7612, mtnear1@gmail.com

Fri-Sun, Sept. 12-14 – KINNERLY PEAK (Glacier National Park)

Rating: Class 4-5; *Distance:* 14.0 miles; *Elevation:* 5100'

Description: We will hike in on Friday to the Upper Kintla Lake environs and camp. Saturday will be the attempt of this 9,944' peak via the Northwest Face Route. Most of this route is class 3, but there are apparently a couple 4-5 pitches in the upper regions as well. Hike out and drive home on Sunday. If the weather is nice a late summer/early autumn climb in this fabulous NW corner of the Park is sure to be wonderful!

Special Equipment: Harness, helmet.

Leader: Forest Dean - 240-7612, mtnear1@gmail.com

TRIP REPORTS

July 4 – Lolo Peak Independence Day Ski Trip (Bitterroots)

The evening before the outing, several interested parties left messages stating that the scheduled 5am start seemed a bit much for one of the longest days of the year. We altered the meeting time to 7:30am and everyone



that had called or emailed me was quickly notified. Leaving the trailhead at 8:45am, Minot Maser, Joe Jewett, Peter Dayton, Steven Senden (The Netherlands), and I reached large snow patches near the top of Carlton Ridge. Steven stopped here as he had intended this to be a rest day before continuing his tour (via bicycle) from Portland to Denver. The rest of us headed down to the dam on Carlton Lake and donned our skis. Skinning up the northeast face proved a bit tricky as the sun cups reduced our skins' ability to gain traction on the snow. Eventually the steepness required

us to kick steps and pack our skis to the top. We reached the summit and found that we were not alone. Having started earlier, Bret Doucett was waiting to greet us. After a break, we carved turns down the 800' northeast face; foregoing the northwest face in favor of an earlier return time. In the brilliant sun, the snow had softened to ideal skiing conditions. Joe went for two laps on the face, taking full advantage of this 4th of July skiing opportunity. Bret joined us on foot for the decent and we reached Steven back at the car at about 4:30pm. Thanks for a great day, you guys! *Joshua Phillips. Photos by Peter Dayton.*



July 3-5 – Hollowtop/Jefferson Mtns. (Tobacco Root Mountains)

As planned we left for the Harrison-Pony area on Thurs. evening, 7/3, grabbing fast food as we left town. We stopped by Butte to get some desert and thunder storms were starting, marching east. We arrived at Pony around 8:30 and went looking for the road we wanted to Cataract Lake. Once again staying on the road took us to an alternative developed trailhead. But we could see the road we wanted on the north wall of the valley and kept an eye on it while we back tracked to the junction. The little cabin by the spring, I was using as a landmark, was gone. In 23 years the road back to Cataract Lake hadn't changed, you still needed granny low to navigate it's washouts with rocks easily 8-12 in. tall in the road, or deep ruts. We left the main road on a road going through private land, and most of Cataract Lake is private now. No one was camped there, but there did seem to be day use activities (saw a guy fly fishing). We continued up the road and the public land started not much beyond the lake and the area was pock marked with raw dirt from prospect holes. It was starting to get dark and after not finding a good spot to camp we went up a side road to an old mine and pitched our 3 man tent among the sage brush and wild flowers. The thunder storms continued in the distance but never caused us any problems. I fell asleep wondering if the 'aroma therapy' people ever used the scent of western sage to help people sleep.

Fri. July 4th was like the 5th weather wise, it was sunny in the morning, then clouded over in the afternoon with no thunderstorms but windy, then cleared up again in the early evening. We struck our tent and continued our granny low search of the area. We found the road that would take us back to the last ridge before Hollowtop but continued to follow the main road over the hill, hoping maybe there would be shorter way out, on the South Boulder River side. We ended up at the site of the Atlantic & Pacific Mine, a defunct small cyanide heap leach mine that has been partially 'reclaimed.' It was creepy to realize that much of the hillside we were walking on was covered with black plastic covered by dirt and vegetation. We couldn't see the condition of the road after it



left the mine site and went back to the road we wanted and followed it to the base of the ridge (non Hollowtop side) where it now terminates in a primitive trail head. The road continued around the ridge as it had in the past, but now is a ATV, motorcycle and snowmobile road. We back tracked a 1/2 mile or so and set up a more elaborate camp with our big tent and screen houses (one over the tent and one for a kitchen area), at 7900 feet. We never heard any fireworks, but people in the area of the old mines were shooting and there was one very large blast. Some ATV's were coming by, they were looking for someone who was lost (never heard if they found him or not). A family of climbers went up also. Mostly our camp was peaceful, I 'carbo-loaded' on 4th Of July food -like potato chips and napped and read, David went to try

View west from the Hollowtop-Jefferson saddle. J. Kahl photo

fly fishing in Cataract Creek but there didn't appear to be any fish in the creek. Our nights rest was disturbed by the ATV people still looking for their friend all night.

Sat. we were out of camp by 8:30, walked the 1/2 mile to the trailhead and followed the road around the ridge to a meadow where 23 years ago it had

stopped. Now the road continued along the side of the ridge most of the way to the drainage head where it terminated in campsites. From there a less developed road went down, presumably to Mason Lake. There was a sort of formal trail to Hollowtop (no motorized use -ha!) but about 200 yards out we lost it in a boggy area, but continued up the drainage and never really saw it again. We ended up coming out into a little unnamed lake below 'the hollow' way above where we need to be. We dropped down to the lake and I was now able to orient myself. From the lake the route is to go up a head wall at the head of the lake, mostly steep rocky grassy slopes to enter the 'hollow.' The head wall at the south end (high end) of the hollow still had impressive snow cornices.



Horse Mountain saddle and Tobacco Roots' Granite Mountain

I was investigating a snow route, and David scouted out a route with little snow and I did some 5th classing on rock and snow, with my ice-ax to get to his route. Then it was just a matter of scrambling to the top of the

summit pyramid. We summited around 12:30 and signed the register. We weren't very tired, it was cloudy and windy -hence cool and no extreme heat dehydration, and no sign of thunderstorms so we decided to do the 1/2 mile to Jefferson. We had to drop down into a saddle with some impressive rock formations and great views of the 'backside' of more peaks to the south & west. Jefferson has two summits that appear to be about equal in height, the benchmark is between them. We did both just to be sure. The grassy ridge continues SE to Horse Mountain, but the route was impassible due to a 'fault' that looks like it displaced a section of the ridge block westward so the grassy ridge was bisected with a narrow chasm with straight sided cliffs, that somewhat resembled the main of a horse. There may have been a narrow joint to the displaced block but it was hard to tell from where we were.

We Left Jefferson around 3:PM, and had to climb back up to almost the top of Hollowtop to get back on the route. At the little lake there were some guys camped for the weekend, we had seen them summit Hollowtop and play around in the snow in the lake's basin. We talked with them briefly then used the outlet of the lake to find the trail, which still was difficult to follow and we lost it in several places, doing the circle thing to find it. We were back in camp by 7:PM. The searchers were gone, and we were only disturbed in the night by one 'beer' run by the ATV'ers. *Julie Kahl*

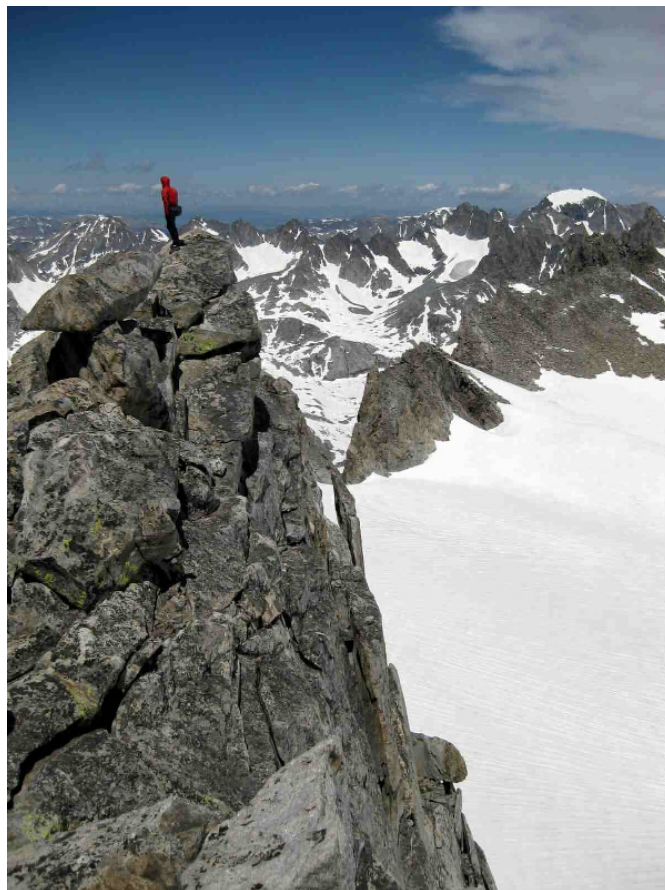
July 11-12 – Gray Wolf Peak (Missions) *CLASSIC SERIES TRIP*

Joshua Phillips, Bret Doucett, Forest and young Frank Dean, and myself had a Friday afternoon rendezvous at the Wye, from where we proceeded toward the Missions. The drive to the Grey Wolf 'trailhead' was made more interested by disagreements between the assorted members as to the best way to navigate the Jocko Road vortex, and with much arm waving, head scratching, and I told you so's, we proceeded to get thoroughly lost somewhere east of Arlee. However, after we all closed our eyes and visualized success, Forest's truck popped through a wormhole and came out right at the Grey Wolf 'trailhead' near Twin Lakes. For a mid-July late-afternoon climb of several thousand feet over as many miles, it really wasn't too treacherous, and the weather was surprisingly cool and pleasant. The beargrass was in rare form, as were the white Trilliums, purple penstemon, Elderberries, and some yellow flowers that may have been Butterweed, or something else. Also lots of big green Huckleberries, promising a decent crop this year. We topped out at Riddell Lakes basin, pulled off a few eager ticks, and then proceeded through some snow-patches over the low ridge to Scenic Lakes along the east side of Grey Wolf late in the evening. The basin was still under snow in many places, and the lakes were largely still frozen, but we managed to find small tent sites for everyone before dark, where Forest and Frank introduced me to the concept of camp-stove tortilla pizzas, which I have since reproduced with great success. After a clear and chilly night, observation of the still-snowy peak led to some divergent opinions over which route would be the best option, and the matter was complicated by the fact that only Joshua and I had brought crampons. We powow'ed and decided to head for the notch on the Northeast ridge, as originally planned. Once the sun hit the valley, we headed out, working our way up cliffy ledges in a roundabout way toward the notch at the base of the Mountain Proper. Snow along the narrow ridge just before the notch forced us to do a bit of scrambling, and when we finally reached the notch, we stopped again to re-evaluate. The short vertical pitch just beyond the notch was snow-free and looked good, but the notch itself and the ridgeline about the steep pitch were still covered in what appeared to very solid snow-ice, and it didn't look like the sort of thing best attempted without crampons. After pacing around a bit and picking our noses, we decided to call off the climb at this point and keep the group together in the interest of safety. The views from the notch, however, were still splendid, and we took a nice lunch break above the Grey Wolf glacier, admiring the Missions and Sapphires and everything else we could see on that bluebird morning. On the way back, young Frank showed up all the old-farts by free-soloing a few previously unclimbed trad routes up the southeast face of the Grey Wolf notch, and in fine style. After tromping back and packing up our camp, we located what appeared to be an old cache near Riddell Lakes, which lead to a fierce round of speculation as to the age and origin of said food box. After Joshua sampled some well-aged 16-year-old tuna fish, we continued down the knee-jarring trail to the car, plumes of beargrass pollen billowing behind us. On the way out, we resolved to take careful note of our route so that others could return by the same way with less trepidation, but all I can recall now is that there are a lot of

left turns on roads signed alternately 5000, 5100, 5200, and 5300. Maybe Forest took better notes. In any case, the general consensus was that a trip by the same route later in the summer of fall would have a high chance of success, and that next year may be a great time for an attempt of the steep eastern ice couloir to the gap between the main and south peaks. *Lewis Kogan*

July 18-27 – Wind River Range Trip

It ended up being a great week in Titcomb! The mosquitoes offered us extra motivation to get away from camp and onto the summits. However, the weather kept us wondering if we were making the right decisions! I drove down with Brian Quilter and the Dean family (Forest, Angie, Frank and Karya) arrived at Elkhart Park trailhead a day after us. Eager to be in the basin, Brian and I packed in in one day. Ugh. The next day (Sunday) was a day of rest. Monday, Brian and I went for Fremont. However, the route we chose was not “tennis shoe friendly” and I had to back down. Tuesday, I was prepared with appropriate footwear, but the weather kept us wondering if we should commit. We hung out under an obliging overhang with Forest and Frank and wondered if the weather would break. After some time at Mistake Lake, Brian and I made a dash for the summit. The weather held and we had a great summit experience. What a mountain! Once back at camp, the skies darkened and we huddled in the tent as a fearsome lightning storm passed through the basin. ...glad we weren't on the summit!



Brian Quilter atop Fremont Peak. J. Phillips photo.



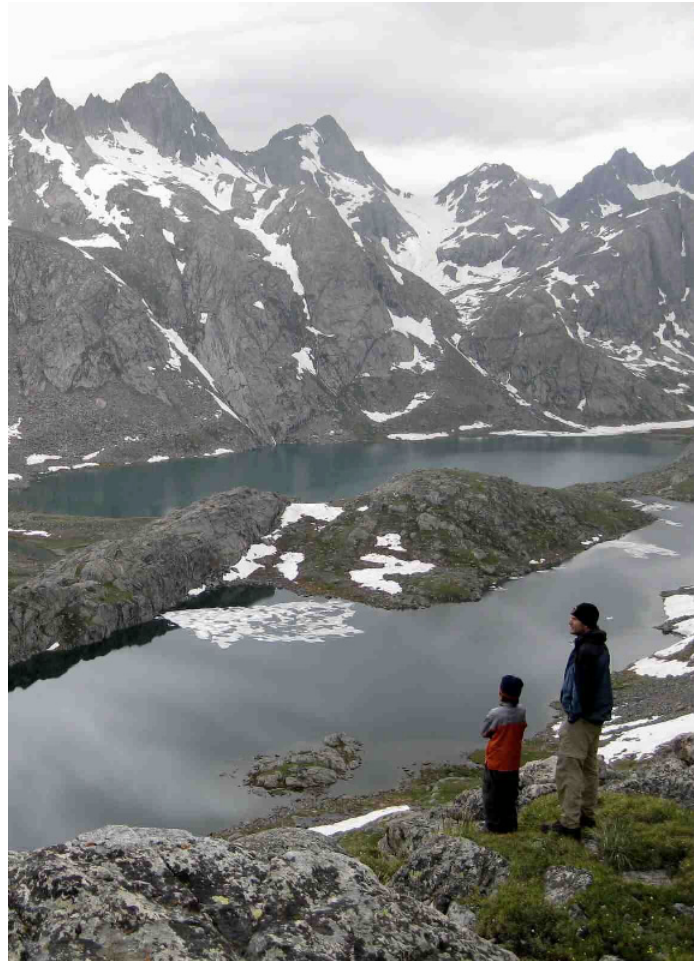
We woke up Wednesday keen on climbing the North Arete of Ellingwood (also known as Harrower). We hiked to the base and waited for about an hour as the weather was, again, unstable. We spoke with Forest and Frank who were on Fremont via radio. They had a better look at the incoming weather and said we should go for it. After much deliberation, steeling glances of the committing 1,500 foot route towering above us, we decided to go for it. We climbed like mad men. 25 minutes per 200 foot pitch. 12 pitches went by quickly and we stood on the summit at 4pm. We took our time getting back to camp and hiked around to Island Lake to take in the view. Meanwhile Forest and Frank had made the ascent of Fremont Peak summitting at about noon and arriving back at camp around 5:00 after a nice hike through Indian Basin. For nine year old Frank this was by far his highest summit ever (13,745-Wyoming's third highest peak). His dad was pretty proud!

I was ready for a rest day. Thursday I accompanied the Dean Family to a fishing hole as Brian hurried off to tick American Legion Peak. (By the way, Brian seemed to have an endless supply of energy on this trip. I didn't know where he was getting it. Maybe his secret was the Mountain House "Sweet and Sour Pork with Rice" he was eating every morning for breakfast! ...icky!) The fishing was great and we ALL stuffed ourselves on pan fried trout that evening.

Friday was our last chance to climb another route as we were planning on hiking out on Saturday. We awoke with clear skies and our sights set on the West Face of Sacagawea. The long approach surprised us as the route had been visible from our tent all week! We started climbing at 11am. The route finding kept us wondering, but frequent fixed gear boosted our confidence. I lost count, but I believe we climbed 10 pitches. Some of the moves were quite a challenge! We were signing the summit register by 6pm...the first ones to sign it in one year. We were eager to get off the summit as the descent route looked very complicated. After a long down climb of the north ridge, we were back at the trail in time to see a fabulous display of alpenglow on the wall we had just climbed. Back at camp, dinner was taken by headlamp.

We hiked out Saturday in perfect weather. In fact, we had not seen such stable weather since the previous Saturday! At Photographer's Point, Brian and I lingered as we took in our last look at the great peaks of Titcomb Basin.

Back at the trailhead, we shared stories with other hikers and climbers before hitting the road. Before driving through the night, we met up with the Dean Family at the Snake River Brewing Company (in Jackson) that evening for what has become the customary "out of the wilderness" dinner. Brick oven pizza! *Joshua Phillips*



*Frank and Forest pondering Titcomb Basin.
J. Phillips photo.*

July 25-27 - North Fork of Blackfoot River

As one of the expected participants injured a knee -that just didn't get better in time, after a few comments about taking the game cart, we scrapped the backpacking. Instead we spent the weekend car camping at the Clearwater Crossing trailhead, way up the West fork of Fish Creek, where the fly fishing was good. David and I were joined by Abby (11) & April (16) Roth and Gharrett Warner (13). The camp sites at the trailhead are designed for packers going into the Great Burn Proposed Wilderness from there and there aren't very many, but they are large enough to accommodate several tents with multiple vehicle parking. We spread our camp over the one on the end. Abby & Gharrett made great fires, April made great marshmallows. Saturday morning two moose came by camp but only David got to see them. David did a bit of fly fishing, Gharrett did some and April & Abby tried their luck with spinning rods. I tromped around with my video camera. Saturday was hot in the 90's and we wiled away the afternoon playing cards or napping. A nice camp in a great spot. *Julie Kahl*

August 2 – Bitterroot “Grand Traverse” (Bitterroots)

As stated in previous newsletters, the object of this trip was to attempt to climb El Capitan, The Lonesome Bachelor, and the three Como Peaks (West, Middle, East) in a single day. This was certainly not the first time this had ever been done but I was intrigued and wanted to give it a try. The planned distance was around 20 miles with around 8000' of elevation gain. On Friday evening about 9:00, Joshua Phillips, Ben Keggi and I piled into Joshua's vehicle and drove down to the Little Rock Creek trailhead. We arrived shortly before 11:00 and threw down our sleeping bags on a tarp and caught a few hours of sleep. At 3:00 we arose, had a quick bite to eat, then hit the trail. With headlamps ablaze we started off trail running and then hiking rapidly back to

Little Rock Creek Lake. This trail may quite possibly be the worst in the Bitterroots and so it wasn't real conducive to trail running- especially in the dark. However, we made good time, arriving at the lake just after 5:00am. After a quick snack we began hiking around the lake and then bushwacking along the north side of the drainage back to the lakes below El Capitan. We stayed high enough to avoid the brush, but sidehilling for 2 miles on beargrass with unseen small boulders underneath and mosquitoes biting in full force wasn't really a lot of fun. We kept moving rapidly, however and arrived back at the lakes around 6:30. Here we loaded up on water and switched footwear and got bit by more mosquitoes. Then we hiked over and started up the snow



Ben Keggi and Joshua Phillips ascending El Capitan. Lonesome Bachelor is in background. F. Dean photo.

couloir to the east ridge of El Capitan. We had chosen not to bring crampons. The snow was quite firm and thus we had to kick steps up approximately 600' of 40-45 degree snow. A fall would not have been good. For Ben, this was his first time climbing snow and using an ice ax. He did incredibly well though only slipping once but catching himself immediately. We all arrived safely at the top and then proceeded up the ridge to the summit of El Capitan. We arrived on the 9983' summit at 9:10am (5:45 after leaving trailhead). After a couple pictures we descended off the summit block and had a little snack break. Then we started the trudge down El Cap and over to The Lonesome Bachelor. This was quite time consuming as nearly the entire traverse over to the Bachelor is done by hopping from boulder to boulder. We had to descend down to roughly 8200' to gain the south ridge which then rapidly took us up towards the summit of the mountain. But then....trouble! Based on reports I had read and advice I had received, we had chosen to leave our rope and harnesses at home. Roughly 150 vertical feet below the summit we ran into a spot which none of us felt real good about climbing unprotected. It certainly wasn't highly technical rock, but the risks were more than the three of us wanted to take. Perhaps we were in the wrong spot, but we spent much time looking around and didn't come up with an easier route. So reluctantly and disappointingly we moved on (and down). Some of the steam had been taken out of the grand traverse idea and we debated our options at this point. However, the only retreat was to descend the steep snow couloir we had earlier ascended, and this certainly didn't appeal to any of us. So after considering a couple other options we decided the easiest route back was to just continue our traverse as planned. (This is indeed a committing route. Once on the ridge it is easiest to just continue up and over the West Como Peak). The West Como Peak looks a long ways away from Lonesome Bachelor when you are descending from that peak. Again, it is nearly continuous boulder hopping to get there. We had to descend to roughly 8000' before beginning the long trek up the west side of the “West” peak. Things went rather well here

though and the last 300' or so are actually some fun continuous third class climbing to the summit. We arrived at the 9624' summit at 2:45pm. Roughly 11 hours into our trip and 2/5 of the peaks achieved. The skies were now starting to cause us some concern. Clouds had been building slowly but surely over the past couple hours. Things didn't look too bad yet, but we were starting to openly discuss. We descended the rather steep east ridge down to a saddle between the West and Middle Como Peaks. In the 25 minutes this took, the skies darkened considerably. Down at the saddle we again had a meeting on what to do. Joshua was having a bit of an issue with his knee bothering him when descending all the boulder fields and decided he had had enough of that. So he decided to begin descending down this drainage back to the trail. Ben decided he would like to go up the Middle Como Peak and see what happens after that. I joined him and we rapidly (20 mins) topped out at this 9530' peak, arriving at 4:10pm. We took a good hard long look at the ridge leading over to the East Como Peak, but looking back at the approaching weather essentially left us with only one possibility...descent! We downclimbed as quickly as possible back to the saddle we had come from just as the first few drops of rain started to hit and thunder started to rumble directly overhead. Ben and I ran down some snow fields as fast as possible but were only able to make it to some very small trees as the brunt of the storm hit us. Half inch sized hail started pummeling us and lasted for a good ten minutes. A cold downpour followed. We tried to keep as dry as possible, but were basically soaked. As soon as we could we started moving to keep warm. Everything was now wet- rocks, beargrass, cliffs, etc. A major concern as well was Joshua was not with us. Having been up this drainage in the past, I knew it was a real difficult descent with two major cliff bands. Joshua is an extremely competent climber, but knowing that he would be running into those cliffs with all wet rock and without a map or previous knowledge of the terrain had me a bit worried. Luck was on our side, however. After descending for roughly 10 minutes we heard a shrill whistle suddenly just below where we were standing.



Middle and East Como Peaks. F. Dean photo.

There was Joshua stuck in a place he could neither ascend or descend! He had been almost to the bottom of the major cliff band when the storm had hit, instantly turning the rock wet and stopping his descent. He tried reascending the cliff but again wet rock made the way very dicey. We came upon him and with a very determined effort he climbed up and out of the spot he was in. It was great to be an intact group again, and along with cursing ourselves for not bring a rope and harnesses, we also condemned ourselves for leaving the two way radios at home! We now had to climb up and to the west side of the drainage where we finally found a descent route down huge boulders on the far west end of the cliff bands. We achieved this then descended down through steep miserable wet brush to another smaller cliff band. Again we were able to bypass these by descending a boulder field on the far west side of the drainage. After that it was more slogging through wet brush down to the Little Rock Creek valley bottom. Finally, around 8:00pm we arrived at the trail. Although this trail is nobody's idea of a good one, it certainly was a welcome sight to our eyes! We slowly limped out the last 3.5 miles arriving at the car at about 9:30 pm. After 18 hours of hiking, 20 miles, 8500' of elevation gain (and another 8500' elevation loss), a hail storm, and three 9000' summits, we were exhausted. The "Bitterroot Grand Traverse" had not been achieved, but we were all happy with our efforts and vowed to return. Call it a reconnaissance trip! A big thanks to my partners who made this a memorable trip! *Forest Dean*

2008 Classic Series

<u>Month</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Leader</u>
August	4th Annual GLACIER CLASSIC	<i>Various</i>	S. Niday/F. Dean
September	SWAN PEAK (Swans)	Scramble/Climb	Lewis Kogan
October	LOLO PEAK (Bitterroots)	Scramble	Lewis Kogan
November	MT. CALOWAHCAN (Missions)	Scramble/Climb	Forest Dean
December	LOLO PASS (Bitterroots)	Backcountry Ski	Steve Schombel

*When you walk out the door in the morning
and see this.....*



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