

DECEMBER 2009

THE MOUNTAIN EAR

This Issue:

- *Avalanche Awareness Presentation***
- *Calendars for Sale!***
- *TRM Party!***
- *Trips!***
- *Trip Reports!***

The Monthly Newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers



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

Club Contacts

Website: <http://rockymountaineers.com>

e-mail: info@rockymountaineers.com

Mailing Address:
The Rocky Mountaineers
PO Box 4262
Missoula MT 59806

President: Joshua Phillips
mtsurveyor@gmail.com

Vice-President: David Wright
mountaineer@dkwright.com

Secretary: Julie Kahl
jawkal@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Steve Niday
seniday@yahoo.com

Webmaster: Alden Wright
alden@wrightmontana.com

Newsletter Editor: Forest Dean
mtnear1@gmail.com

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

December Meeting

Avalanche Awareness Presentation

We will have a show on "Avalanche Awareness" by **Steve Karkanen** of the West Central Montana Avalanche center. Those who have seen these shows know how much valuable information they contain. Those who haven't should come, it might save your life. Steve has updated his program, and will have some details from the recent Gem Lake Avalanche below Trapper Peak, and will talk a lot about other early season avalanche dangers.

The Presentation begins at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, December 9th at Pipestone Mountaineering. The Business meeting is held at 6:00 PM. Anyone interested can attend either. Hope to see you there!

January program:

Smoke Elser will be giving a talk and slide show on "Tales and Trails in the Bob Marshall". He is a near legendary outfitter around Western Montana, and has a lifetime of tales and many fine pictures.

The Rocky Mountaineers 2010 Calendar!!

Our first ever Rocky Mountaineers Wall Calendar is almost ready! We received a bunch of pictures taken by YOU, our members. Thanks to all who took the time to submit some photos. After narrowing it down with a voting process, we arrived at 12 photos to make up this inaugural edition. Much thanks goes to Julie Kahl for the idea of a calendar, and Chris Dunn, who took it upon himself to spearhead the effort. Want one? Here are the details!

Price: \$12.00/each

**To order: Call or email Steve Niday at
721-3790 or seniday@yahoo.com**

OR

Purchase one at the December Meeting!

Membership Renewal Changes

Currently a membership runs for one year, starting the day dues are paid. To make it easier for members and administration, we have decided to make the membership year common for all, from May 1 through April 30. Those dates were chosen because of our by-laws, which state "A member's dues must be current the last day of the month before the annual meeting to be eligible to vote." We vote during our May meeting. All current memberships will be extended through April 30, 2011. All members with delinquent dues as of the date of this newsletter need to renew before the extension is applied. All new memberships will expire at midnight on April 30. The potential loss of revenue is not significant due to the current state of our treasury.

Steve Niday, Treasurer.

President's Message

I'm sitting at my desk and I'm wondering why it stopped snowing. The ground was covered a little while ago, but now the sun is shining and there is no snow in sight. I can't help but remember Chris Farley's Saturday Night Live "El Niño" skit.....

"Yo soy El Niño! For those of you that don't habla Español. El Niño is Spanish forTHE NIÑO!"

Classic. However, I wonder just what kind of a winter it will be? Will El Niño rob us of a great ski season? I guess I'm just going to have to stay positive, and be patient. I'm eager to start leading backcountry ski trips!

I'm pleased to see more trips in the newsletter and am hoping more of you will decide that leading trips isn't such a bad idea.

Be sure to join us for a special presentation on Avalanche Awareness given by Steve Karkanen of the West Central Montana Avalanche Center at our December meeting on the 9th.

Joshua Phillips - President

Holiday Party!!

**Friday, December 11th at The Press Box
(corner of Van Buren and East Broadway)
Upstairs Dining Area
6:00 PM**

This will be an informal party. Please come, have some dinner and drinks and a good time! Meet other members, create winter trip plans or next summer plans! Bring family, friends, anyone interested! Contact Forest Dean if you want more information: mtnear1@gmail.com or 240-7612

Cover Photo: Practice ice climbing at Swan Slabs in Blodgett Canyon. Steve Schombel photo.

The Rocky Mountaineers turn 50!

An Early Day Climb by Past Members

The Rocky Mountaineers are going to celebrate their 50th anniversary next year. It is quite an accomplishment for a small club to survive that long, especially considering that they are not a local chapter of some larger, supporting organization. Our club is truly a grassroots organization. It makes one wonder, who were the people involved in the club in the early days, and what they accomplished? A capsule history can be read in the first few volumes of the club newsletter, the Mountain Ear. Here is part of a trip report that was in the November 1962 issue:

In the original Missoula Mountaineers scrapbook (MSU Library) is a description of their trip to Canyon Peak in the Bitterroot Mountains directly west of Hamilton, Mont. The peak, and it really is one, lies at the head of Canyon Creek and rises to 9100'. The scrapbook article describes the route as leading from the dam of the middle Canyon Lake up a NE ridge to the N ridge, thence south to the peak. The last 75 yards are considered a knife edge of firm granite. This mountain "requires unusual skill even under ideal conditions, probably the most difficult mountain in the Bitterroot Range."

The first known climb was in October, 1932, by Lynn Ambrose, Prof. E. M. Little, and Prof. Hampton K. Snell. The second climb, by Robert Rutherford, Michael Clapp, Clifford Walker, and Prof. Snell, was September 30, 1934.

With this information, several members of the present club went on several reconnoitering trips to this area, culminating in the ascent on June 27, 1962, by Sam Braxton and Pete Maclachlan.

The trip report continues with a more detailed description of the route taken in 1962, and other information. There is likely more valuable history in the old newsletters. The U of M used to be called MSU, but it is not known if there was a group called the Missoula Mountaineers at that time, or if it should be the Montana Mountaineers.

We would like to talk to some of the early club leaders in the next few months. Are there any readers out there who would like to help with this project? Someone who could do oral history and make recordings would be ideal. Or someone who could take notes and ask questions and write an article would also be helpful. If interested call Steve at 721-4686.

Our club is planning to have a party in 2010 to celebrate the 50th anniversary. Wouldn't be nice if several of these early members would join us?

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, December 5 – LOLO PASS SKI (Bitterroots)

Description: We will do a short ski around one of the groomed loops. This will be a good trip for beginners.

Anyone who wants to do a longer ski should plan on bringing their own car.

Leader: Steve Schombel 721-4686

Sat-Sun, Dec 19-20 – LITTLE ST. JOSEPH- SKI/SNOWSHOE/CABIN STAY (Bitterroots)

Rating: Class: variable, Mileage: variable, Elevation Gain: variable

Description: Meet at old big lots parking area @ 7:30am, drive to bass creek TH, park at the gate and follow the ridge up to the cabin. Drop off overnight gear then, ski/snowshoe/explore to hearts content for the rest of the day and tomorrow. I'll probably just be skinning up to the Little Saint Joe summit, and trying to survive the decent back to the cabin on my touring gear.

***Please contact me prior to the morning of the trip, as I probably won't show up at the meeting place if I don't receive any calls or e-mail.

Special Equipment: Ski's w/skins, Snowshoes/ possibly: standard avalanche gear as well as interesting stories, and your booze of choice.

Leader: Shawn Bennett – shawnedwardbennett@gmail.com (cell – 493-4892)

Saturday, January 2- LOLO PASS MOONLIGHT SKI (Bitterroots)

Description: This will be a couple of days after the full moon, but I wanted to avoid conflicts with New Year's Eve activities. This year I propose doing something we haven't done for a few years; that is, go up to Lolo Pass late in the afternoon and have a cook out on the porch. Then, after the moon is up, there would be several options. There is an easy groomed loop or a road to ski down and out into Packer Meadow. These are pretty under the moonlight. There are longer and steeper options for the more adventuresome.

Leader: Steve Schombel - 721-4686.

Sunday, January 10 – FINLEY CREEK (Rattlesnake)

Rating: Class 1-2, *Distance:* a few miles

Description: This is a popular ice climbing spot, but I just want to take a hike and check it out.

Leader: Chris Dunn, phone: 203-4962 email (preferred): hammaneater@gmail.com

TRIP REPORTS

November 8th - Mt. Sentinel Hill Climb

We enjoyed perfect weather for the UM Triathlon-sponsored Mt. Sentinel Hill Climb. In places there was a skiff of snow on the trail, making it a little slippery. The temperature was about 30 degrees at the start, but the sun came out during the race and I saw the guy in front of me taking his shirt off up near the summit! It was a great turn out as well. Over 60 runners showed up for the challenge. This year's race followed the newly constructed trail above the "M". This trail maintains a much lower grade than the previous race course. More of the course is runnable, but many participants still found the need to walk certain portions.

I bumped into Marvin Webster and his wife Wendy at the race start. Marvin was the first place finisher in the Solo Men's category of the 2009 GMAR! Watch out for him and his wife at the 2010 GMAR! Rumor has it they may compete as a team. Also, local legend Bob Hayes (82) was at the hill climb...all smiles as usual. It was great to see him out on the mountain. What an inspiration he is to us all.

The overall winner was Hellgate H.S. cross country runner Adam Peterman who arrived at the summit a mere 26 minutes and 20 seconds after leaving the top of the stairs where the racers lined up. He even ran the race in his Vibram Five Fingers! Wow!

Aaron Baldwin, fellow M.E.S.S.er (see the October issue of The Mountain Ear), ran with me today and we captured 9th and 10th places in the overall. We ran down the hellgate switchbacks and back to the start before celebrating at Sean Kelly's. We couldn't seem to talk Forest Dean into joining us though.

This is a great race, folks. There was a prompt start and an organized finish and lots of prizes for everyone. Kudos to the UM Triathlon Team for keeping the tradition alive! *Joshua Phillips*

November 15th – University Mountain Bike

It was a chilly morning at the corner of Maurice and South. It was also dark. Aaron Baldwin and Bill Martin were waiting when I arrived. We got started and right away I knew I was in trouble. Aaron and Bill sped up the switchbacks and I could do nothing to stay with them. I don't think I had slept much the night before and I was going to pay dearly for it. Aaron and Bill waited for me in a few places as I was determined to make it up to the beacon. We made our way across the Cox property trail and over to the Crazy Canyon trail to gain the switchback that took us over to the road on the north side of University Mountain. Aaron and Bill waited for me again and we rode up to the beacon together...well, almost. At the beacon we snapped some pictures and enjoyed the view. Next, we rode down the ridge toward the Hellgate Saddle. The trail was slippery with snow and I ended up wrecking at one point. Once down at the saddle, Aaron and Bill were still rearing to go. I tucked my tail and rode down the Crazy Canyon trail to Pattee Canyon Road and went home. Aaron and Bill enjoyed an additional climb up Mt. Sentinel and rode back the way we had come up. Some days just don't go according to plan, I guess. *Joshua Phillips*

November 15- Lolo Pass (Bitterroots)

It was one of those Catch 22 situations. If we decided to take our skis to Lolo Pass there wouldn't have been skiable snow, if we didn't then there would have been skiable snow. We: Julie Kahl, Steve Schombel, Becky Richards and Chris Dunn who threw in with us after his own trip of the day fell through, opted to take snowshoes and "winter hiking" gear. There were people skiing on a packed Glade Creek Loop trail and I heard later from Lois Crepeau who had skied up higher that day that it was OK. There were others who opted to walk, we ran into Eileen and Fred Schwanemann headed back out after a hike. We opted to walk the "snowboarding hill" just east of the parking lot along the highway, and followed a logging road switch backing

up almost to the top. It was almost all bare dirt below, but there was maybe 8 inches higher up. We stopped in the sun with a good view for a lunch break and shortly after that the road dead ended and Chris broke us a nice trail straight down to the road a few yards from the highway. The day was partly sunny and we had nice views towards the White Mountain area of Fish Creek and west into Idaho. Becky and Chris were interested in Crystal Amphitheater on the other side of the highway, which we didn't get to see into, and what type of trees were around. We stopped for hot chocolate and Becky got info on weekend hosting. The staff was excited to tell us about their adventures to visit Snowshoe Falls, after we "found" it for them last winter. *Julie Kahl*

November 25- Canyon Peak (Bitterroots)

Slog Fest!!!!!! We hit knee deep snow at around 6000ft and felt like begging for mercy as we battled through waist deep and deeper at 7000ft. A map reading oops put us at the col with the S. Ridge of Canyon, and peak 8578, which was fine because we were beat and the N. Ridge would have been about a mile further if we had gone there directly. Even the s. ridge looked intimidating given our exhaustion from the battle up to the col. We opted out of canyon peak, postholed up to peak 8578 and dropped down the other side and back to our camp from the previous night. There was much cursing as we continuously broke through into air while walking over the ever present boulder fields. It was a fun trip in that cold, windy, suffer-fest kinda way. Also it was clear skies with great views of the surrounding peaks.

To make an attempt on Canyon at this time of year, snow shoes or skis are highly recommended. I would go for the south ridge and leave skis at the highest point possible and return to them, or if possible take to the top (could be hard though) and ski off top. The other option would be to ski to N. Ridge, climb and then rap the whole thing, and down climb where not scary. I would like to go back some time, and try again, but now with a better idea of what is required. The south ridge, and south face could be a very cool spring ski mountaineering objective.

Snow pack: still unconsolidated, but there is a rain crust at about 70cm at higher elevations and I suspect the wind will start to form slabs in the next couple of weeks. *Matt Henderson and Chris Dunn*

November 29- Mt. Calowahcan (Mission Mountains)

Chuck M. and I met at 5 am on a surprisingly warm morning and headed up to Calowahcan in the Missions. I had made the attempt 2 years before with Forest, Lewis, and Joshua, but due to a slight mishap, we were not successful. We had some route finding difficulties, but managed to find the trailhead. In the dark, it was hard to tell which way to go. I scouted the area out and picked a worn logging road that cut to the left, towards the ridge we wanted. We got to the end of the road without finding any sort of trail so we began the bushwhack. After about an hour of this, we did manage to find a faint trail on top of the nw ridge marked by some old, occasional ribbon. A few hours later we got to about 7100 ft. The snow was really rotten and things were soaked in hard at 7000 ft. We were punching through rain crust and a pit revealed unconsolidated snow, another layer of crust, and depth hoar. We were postholing bad and called it a day. On the way down we found that the ribbons, though sparse and hard to follow led down to the road we had started on. Despite my second failed summit attempt of the week and my second failed summit attempt on Calowahcan, it was nice to be out. Fall is definitely the time to attempt this when the brush is manageable, but I would recommend arriving the night before and coming earlier in the season than we did. *Chris Dunn*

Rocky Mountaineers Merchandise

Short Sleeve T-Shirt	\$13.00 (\$17.00 non-members)
Long Sleeve T-Shirt	\$18.50 (\$23.50 non-members)
Caps	\$18.00 (\$23.00 non-members)
Fleece Beanie's	\$16.00 (\$20.00 non-members)
Stickers	\$ 1.50
Newsletter Archive CD	\$20.00

All of the Mountain Ear newsletters since 1960 on one CD!!



Shirts and hats are available in various sizes and/or colors. For more information, or to place your order email: seniday@yahoo.com or call Steve at 721-3790. Additionally, all of the above will be available at the Club meetings as well as the racks at Pipestone Mountaineering



THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00 for electronic newsletter

Note: Membership includes all members of a family or household.

Make checks payable to 'The Rocky Mountaineers' and send to:

The Rocky Mountaineers, PO Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

Name: _____

Additional Family Members Names: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone (optional): _____

Email: _____

Additional Email (optional): _____

Joining or maintaining your Rocky Mountaineers membership has never been easier!

PayPal is now available on the Rocky Mountaineers website. Click on the membership link on the main page.