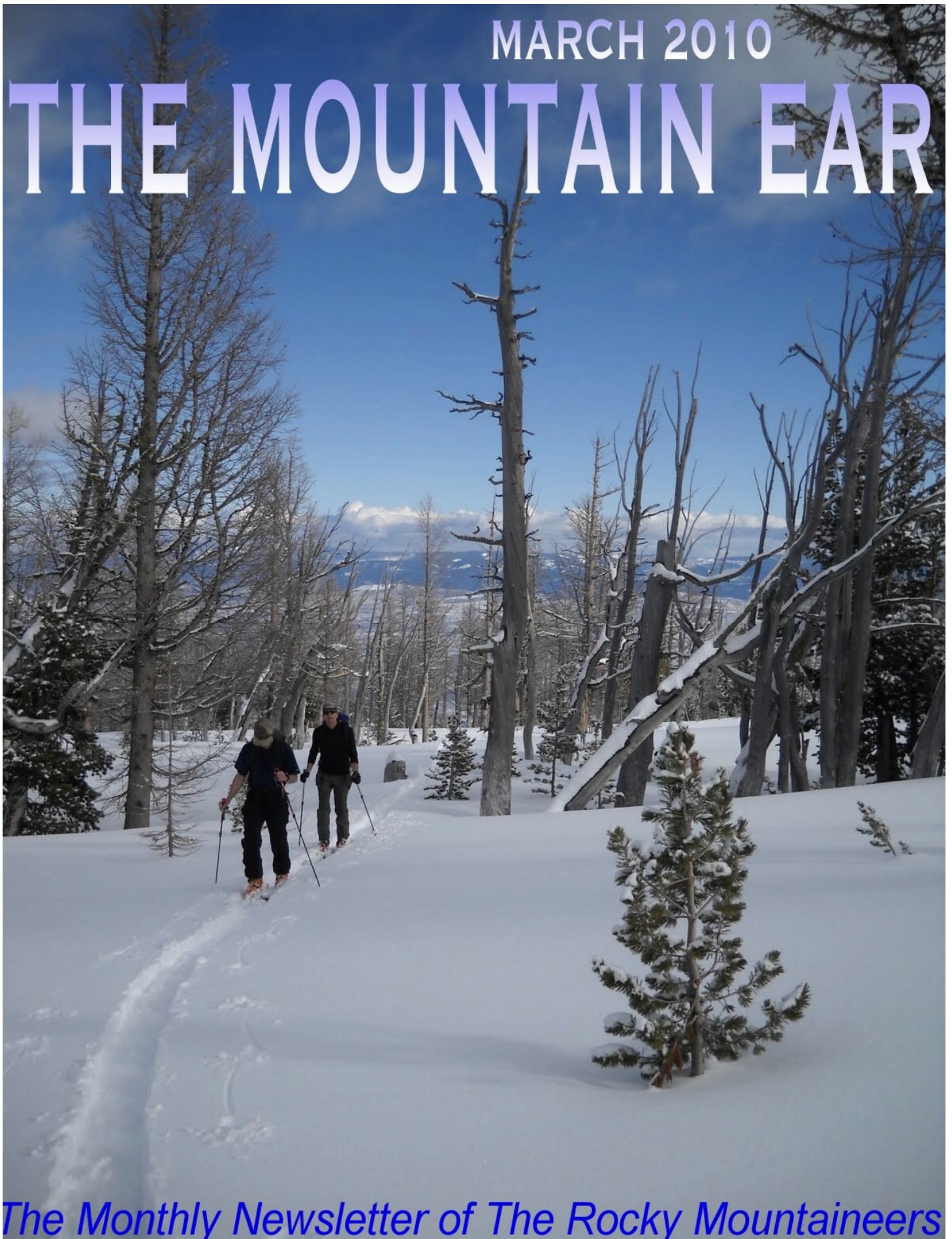


MARCH 2010

THE MOUNTAIN EAR



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

February Meeting

White Cliffs Float Trip- by Julie Kahl

In September of 2009 three members of the Rocky Mountaineers did a four day float trip of the White Cliffs section of the Missouri River. Putting in at Coal Banks, in two canoes and a kayak, they camped at the Eagle Creek, Dark Butte and Slaughter River sites, then took out at Judith Landing. Please come and join us as Julie Kahl presents a slide show of the trip.

The Presentation will be held on **Wednesday, March 10 at 7:00 PM**. Location as always is Pipestone Mountaineering on Front Street. Please also join us for our business meeting which begins at 6:00 PM.



President's Message

At the time of this writing, the forecasted high for today (Sunday, February 28, 2010) is 54 degrees and there's hardly a cloud in the sky. El Nino has, indeed brought us a mild winter. I guess I have resolved to adopt a "glass is half full" perspective and embrace the warm weather. This weather could bring a very different GMAR course out at Lubrecht Experimental Forest! Perhaps there will be more terrain free of snow to allow widespread mountain bike travel. I'm hoping so. Our registrant numbers are ever increasing and we have confirmation from new sponsors every week. I hope many of you are either racing or volunteering; it's shaping up to be an even better race than last year! Check out www.grizzlymanrace.com if you are interested in learning more, or would like to volunteer.

We had our first of two Navigation Clinics at REI on February 18th. We covered UTM coordinate system basics, using a UTM grid reader to plot coordinates, reading topographic map features, and dead reckoning skills. The second clinic is scheduled for Thursday, March 18th, 7pm at REI in Missoula. This clinic will cover compass use and using a compass in concert with a topographic map. Bring your compass, we'll provide a map! The clinic is free and open to the public. You don't have to be a GMAR racer to join in. Hope to see you there! - *Joshua Phillips, President*

Avalanche Clinic: Snow Pits & Transceiver Training

Sunday, March 14, Lolo Pass
9AM Departure from K-Mart parking lot to car pool.

Join us for a field day to cover transceiver practice at the Lolo Pass Beacon Park followed by basics on snow stability assessment via snow pits, shovel shear tests, compression tests, and Rutschblocks and modern rescue digging techniques. Finish up the day with a little backcountry skiing. Non-skiers welcome as snowshoes will suffice. Bring backcountry equipment: shovel, transceiver, probe and snow transport device (skis w/ skins or snowshoes) as well as a bag lunch. Extra transceivers, probes, and shovels available.

Instructor: Minot Maser
Backcountry Access Regional Rep
Level III US Certified; Canadian Level I

Questions? minotmaser@aol.com, 546-2771

6th Annual Glacier Classic

2010 will mark the 6th installment of our signature event- the Glacier Classic! We have decided to host this years events at Apgar- just inside the west entrance of the Park. Dates of the event are Friday, August 27 through Sunday, August 29. More information will be forthcoming. If you would care to lead a trip (and we encourage you to do so) please contact Forest Dean at the following email: mtnear1@gmail.com

Trip Forum

Smith River Float- Just a reminder-several of us have talked about putting in applications for a Smith River Float next summer. The time has arrived to submit those applications. People who are interested should start talking to each other. We have to decide what time of year we want to go, and if we want to have several people apply for the same launch date. Or do we want to stagger them, Sun., Mon., Tues etc.? There are several other details involved, but we have until the end of February to get organized and submit applications. Joining this group who are going to submit applications will not require you to go on the trip, unless you are the person who gets the permit. The rest of the group will be very upset if you back out after that. Julia Kahl can give information, or contact me, Steve Schombel at 721-4686; stephenschombel@yahoo.com . We should exchange phone numbers and e mail addresses. NOTE: Supposedly, a trip permit has been obtained for June 19th.

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, March 6 – BOULDER PEAK (Bitterroots)

Rating: Moderate-Hard, Class 3 terrain; *Mileage:*15; *Elevation:* 4500'

Description: Looking up the north face of this peak while climbing Trapper, sent tingles down my spine, so here we go. Meet at 6am, carpool down to Barn Draw road south of Darby and do our best to drive up to the trailhead. We will follow the ridge route as best we can to the summit. Plan on a LONG day out in full on winter conditions, and remember your headlamp! Please call me for the meeting place and to discuss a few simple logistics and considerations.

Special Equipment: Ice axe, Snowshoes or BC ski setup (I'll be on snowshoes)

Leader: Shawn Bennett (cell – 493-4892)

Thurs-Mon, March 11– March 15- MICHE WABUN BASIN (Glacier National Park)

Rating: Class 2-5, *Mileage:* minimum 36 miles, *Elevation Gain:* It depends.

Description: Miche Wabun basin is the headwaters of the North Fork of the Belly River, which drains the true north side of the Mount Cleveland massif and then runs for miles into Canada joining the Belly River. Conditions would have to be very good to try an ascent from this basin, but I would like to take a look.

Special Equipment: Winter backcountry gear, good attitude.

Leader: Steve Niday– 721-3790, email: seniday@yahoo.com

Saturday March 13 – SNOW SHELTER FIELD DAY (Lolo Pass)

Description: Come join me up at lolo pass where we will practice building Quinzhees, Dugloos and Igloos. Also we will cover trenches that compliment tents and tarps. Anyone willing is then welcome to then spend the night in his or her shelter of choice, and share a nice fire and dinner with the group before bed (If you don't know to much about making fire in the snow, I can teach a little about this as well). Nice late start at 9am, meet at the old big lots parking area (between the carmike 6 and K-mart)

Special Equipment: Ski's with skins or Snowshoes, Snow shovel (please rent one if you don't own) and a snow saw if you have one.

Leader: Shawn Bennett – (cell – 493-4892)

Friday-Saturday, March 19-20 – MT. HAGGIN (Pintlers)

Rating: Class 2-3, *Mileage:* 14.4 miles, *Elevation Gain:* 5150

Description: A fairly easy mountain that rises over 10,000 ft above Anaconda. We'll probably drive up Friday after work, hike in a few miles, maybe to Hearst Lake, camp, and climb it Saturday, heading back Saturday evening. I have to be somewhere Sunday morning, which is why I am doing it this way.

Special Equipment: Snowshoes or skis.

Leader: Chris Dunn-203-4962, email: hammaneater@gmail.com

Sat-Sun, March 13-14- CHIEF JOSEPH PASS SKI TOURING

Description: Several of us have been going down to Chief Joseph for the past several years for a weekend of skiing. We usually spend the night at Sula. They have large kitchenette units with several beds, and small and medium cabins. Lost Trail, or Medicine, Hot Springs also have nice cabins and a large indoor naturally heated pool. But they require a two night stay. There are also cabins at the Broad Axe, and, farther away, motels in Darby and Hamilton. Chief Joseph is a great cross country area, with groomed trails for all abilities and ungroomed and backcountry skiing nearby. You can pretty much do what you want to this weekend. We like to have dinner together on Saturday, feel free to join.

Leader: Steve Schombel- 721-4686

Sat-Sun, March 27-28 – BASS PEAK (Bitterroots)

Rating: Class 3; *Distance:* 22 miles; *Elevation:* 5500'

Description: This will be an early spring overnighter trip to climb 8855' Bass Peak via the Bass Creek drainage. Depending on conditions, we may attempt the actual climb on Saturday afternoon, or early Sunday morning. Participants will need winter camping gear, ski's or snowshoes, crampons and an ice ax (minimum requirements). The pace will only be fast enough so as to complete the climb and trip in the two days (in other words, the trip leader will be a bit rusty!).

Special Equipment: See above. Shovels, transceivers, helmets, and ice tools are other possibilities.

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

Fri-Sun, April 2-4 – FREEZEOUT LAKE (Near Choteau)

Rating: easy hike -maybe on snow, standing- maybe in snow, could be windy

Description: We will probably get accommodations in Choteau, MT (Gunter Hotel?), car pooling and group lodging available. Your own food. The Wild Fowl Refuge has roads to important viewing sites and causeways that can be walked. Can just come for 1 or 2 days, if you wish. Most birds are snow geese and some swans & cranes.

Special Equipment: The birds may be a long ways off -binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras & tripods, dress for wind & cold

Leader: Julie Kahl 406-543-6508, jawkal@hotmail.com

TRIP REPORTS

February 2– North Ridge, Gash Point – Sweathouse Creek, Bitterroots

I got a call from Paul Jensen to head down to the Bitterroots to ski Gash Point. Getting a late start (10am), we drove down and met up with Rob and Linda Mcleod west of Victor. The road was icy, so we piled into Rob's truck. Parking at the gully, we skinned up to one of the false summits of Gash. Linda skinned up to the Gash summit and skied back down the way of the skin track. Dropping north down into Sweathouse Creek, Rob, Paul and I skied down a narrow, rocky couloir. We found decent coverage and fairly good powder. With stable snow conditions, we decided to skin up a different way to check out some other lines. We ended up skinning up a very steep, easterly facing line that drops into one of the south forks of Sweathouse Creek. The line was so good, we all wished we had enough daylight for a lap on it. Once back to the ridge, we were greeted by stunning alpine-glow on the Heavenly Twins and St. Mary Peak. We skied down the skin track and made it back to the truck by headlamp where Linda was patiently waiting. *Joshua Phillips*

February 6-7 – Little St. Joseph Cabin and Summit (Bitterroots)

Our fearless leader Shawn bailed out due to sickness so it was only John S. and myself, left leaderless and afraid. We met at 6:30am on Saturday and carpooled up. I wanted to grab a little beer for that evening in the cabin so we stopped at Safeway on the way. However, they would not sell me any, explaining that there was some kind of law or something prohibiting the sale of alcohol before 8 am. The cashier said it was Federal, I said it was B*****! We tried again at Wild River in Florence, but they gave me the same story. This time they said it was State and I said it was G***** M***** B***** - and it's my God-given right to get drunk anytime I want!! (I didn't really say that). Oh well, plan ahead ladies and gentlemen.

On to the trip! We arrived around 7:30 I suppose. The road was gated as expected and there was another truck parked there. I thought it looked vaguely familiar and suspected it may have belonged to Roger, whom I had never met. We followed the road a ways until we hit the north side of the Bass Creek drainage. I thought the best route would be to follow the drainage straight up, as did the tracks of the mysterious stranger. However I betrayed my intuition and followed the road for a long switchback. Once back at the drainage I plowed straight up. After a long haul following fresh snowshoe tracks I worried that the tracks I was following might be going straight up to Little St. Joe with no regard for finding the cabin. I didn't have a map and had only been to the cabin once, at which time I had gone too far up, but was able to follow the sounds of Steve's saw down through the woods, and so wasn't very sure where it was. I thought I remembered it being further away from the drainage so I veered inland for a while battling deep snow and deadfall with no luck finding a trail within. I popped back out onto the tracks and went up, keeping vigilant for any obvious blaze, remembering Steve's description of three blazes on a tree. I went up and up with



no idea if I was above or below the cabin. I took a couple of detours off the tracks inland only to find harsh conditions and no cabin. After a long haul up, I arrived at a clear view of L.S.J. and realized I was too high. I thought to cut over and drop down on the cabin which I attempted, but after a while got into thick vegetation and was worried I'd miss John on his way up, so I cut back to the tracks. I called out for John at the top of my lungs a couple times. It was so loud I heard echoes resound off the crags, but I heard no reply. I descended a considerable distance and found no sign of John. I was a little worried. At long last, and after a long descent, I found John. He had followed the road up so was far behind me. I had hoped to make an attempt on BIG St. Joe so had brought along crampons and ice-axe, in addition to overnight gear, an ample supply of water, emergency overnight gear, etc. My heavy pack was exhausting to haul up and I knew this detour would cost me an attempt at BSJ. I was with John on the way up while we looked for a blaze designating our turn off, but found nothing. We eventually ran into Roger coming down. He had been up LSJ and tried to find the cabin with GPS, but to no avail. We invited him to help us find it, but he said he'd had enough. Upon arriving at one of my earlier turnoffs we decided to follow it deeper in and up, spreading out a bit in hopes of stumbling on the cabin, though we did not know if the cabin was above or below us. John did have a map of the area, but the cabin's location was not marked. I made it to the far drainage and went straight up from there. The snow and blowdown were horrible. Every step dropped me down at least half a foot, often 1-3 feet, and sometimes I fell into holes up to my chest. I was exhausted. I was getting ready to give up ascending when I spotted the cabin, arriving finally at about 2:00.



After a decent break we regained the energy to head up to LSJ. On the way up we spotted Roger's tracks. He was just above the cabin and from that angle the cabin is invisible due to its being built into the slope and its snow covering. We also found my tracks going down. I was within 50 feet of the cabin, but did not see it. On top of the mountain, we lingered long enough to watch the sunset. There had been an inversion earlier in the day so we had blue skies and a sea of clouds below us, but by now there was a grey ceiling above.

The sun was able to peek through the gap between the clouds and horizon making for an incredible sunset which lit up the mountains, valley, and clouds in red, orange, and yellow. It isn't often one can be on top of a mountain at that time of day so we felt very privileged. We even managed to make it back down to the cabin before dark. The sky cleared up and the stars shone brilliantly above the shimmering lights of the populated Bitterroot Valley below. It felt weird to have battled our way up to the cabin, only then to see the city lights just below us. That night we had a fire and a good sleep. The next morning we were awoken by the sunrise pouring through the cabin's small window. We made our way down into the fog of another inversion the next day. I dreaded abandoning the blue skies for the dense grey below. As we entered the fog, the sun seemed to filter through the trees in solid beams of light. This trip turned out to be, in some ways one of the best, and in some ways one of the most frustrating I have been on in the Missoula area. I might attempt St. Joseph Peak with a cabin stay, perhaps in April, now that this excursion has solidified in my mind the *precise* location of the cabin. *Chris Dunn*

February 13- St. Mary Peak (Bitterroots)

I left Missoula at about 5:50, arriving in Stevensville shortly thereafter. I met Roger around 6:20 and we made our way up the St. Mary road. We arrived in the dark and hopped on his snowmobile for a cold, windy ride up to the trailhead. I was very thankful that I didn't have to walk all the way up that road. We booked our way through the deep snow up to the summit, arriving in a couple of hours. I had a bite to eat and looked around at the lookout. We had enough clear sky for a view south and east. I was hoping to see St. Joe, but it was clouded over. We didn't linger long due to the wind and made our way down the ridge. We descended down a steep bit near a cornice. Roger went first at a quick pace and as I took a step above him, a crack shot out from under my foot and suddenly an avalanche broke off the edge of the cornice and fell off to the left of us down the northeast side towards the drainage below. Roger couldn't see it from his vantage. I had sat in on the avalanche center's avalanche course that week so it was neat to see it in action. Luckily we stayed far enough from the edge of the cornice. I made it back to Missoula by early afternoon. *Chris Dunn*



Chris Dunn battles wind on the way to the St. Mary Peak lookout tower.

February 13– South Bowl, Gash Point, Bitterroots

Again, I got a call from Paul Jensen (what a consistent partner!) about a large group that was forming to head down and ski Gash. We met up at the Big Lots parking lot and carpooled down to meet up with others in Victor. There ended up being 12 skiers in our group on this outing! This time, we drove up the Bear Creek Overlook road and made it to the ridge that leads up to “Mini Gash” (a small summit that sits on the ridge connecting Gash Point to Bear Creek Overlook). After some vehicle shenanigans, we headed up toward Mini Gash. Setting the skin track, Rob and I exchanged leads and bypassed the summit of Mini in order to gain the rim of the south Gash bowl. Once we gained the ridge north of Mini Gash, we began triggering large

whumphing accompanied by cracks in the snowpack. (This was on relatively flat, wind-loaded terrain.) We gained the rim of the south bowl and found evidence of natural slides near the head of the drainage. Very



leery of snow stability, we backed down the ridge and opted for a shorter portion of the headwall. Rob triggered a slide on his way down but easily avoided getting caught up in it. I skied the debris and we met two skiers (who shall remain nameless) skinning up directly below the headwall...not a smart travel plan, guys. Skiing one at a time with multiple spotters and minimizing exposure to steep slopes is a must because of days like this. Rob and I enjoyed great powder on our way down to the bottom of the bowl. We turned back and began skinning up, hoping to meet up with the others in our party as close to

the top as possible. I cut high across a steeper slope to gain the safety of the ridge and triggered another slide. Lucky for us, slide propagation was exclusively laterally, leaving me standing on top of a 14" crown. The shorter slope also inhibited the slide from gaining too much energy. Back on the ridge, we headed up and met the rest of our party. Quickly transitioning, I joined in the decent. Another slide was triggered when one of our skiers dropped the short slope to access the main bowl. (OK, this write up is getting embarrassing. That's 3 slides we triggered, right?) The rest of the party skied the debris and we enjoyed a great lap down the lower angled bowl. Once in the bowl, we avoided steeper sections and roll-overs (convex slopes). Near the bottom we met up with other skiers that had triggered slides previously in the day. After transitioning, we headed up the way we came down, limiting any further exposure to slopes that had not yet released. After traversing back to the west ridge of Mini Gash, the decent was good until just above the cars. The mandatory, evening melt-freeze crust always seems to be waiting at the lower elevations.

Note: The avalanche advisory that came out just before this outing reported MODERATE hazard above 6000'. However, dangerous pockets of unstable snow (as we found) may exist. Also, wind events that took place hours after the advisory was issued may have greatly increased the hazard. Backcountry travelers MUST be aware of these possibilities and take responsibility for their own safety by inspecting snowpack and ALWAYS implementing safe travel practices. Be safe, folks! *Joshua Phillips*



February 20- Trapper Peak (Bitterroots)

Chris Williams, Chris Dunn, Shane Mcmillan, Peter Dove and I , met up at 6:15 and quickly headed south for Darby. We arrived at the departure point from our car on Larvene Creek Road. at 8:40am and began a brisk ascent to the trailhead proper of north Trapper peak. After a few grinding hours through the forest we broke into the magnificent upper snow slopes of the mountain and stopped to take more than a few pictures, and have snacks. The final traverse of the ridge before the summit was enveloped in heavy cloud that constantly caused Chris Williams to vanish while in front of me. After a few windy moments on the summit we began to descend the ridge to find Peter Dove, who made an excellent judgment call, to not navigate the ridge while suffering from a migraine and dizziness. After a quick two hour descent to the car, we headed back to Missoula for some McKenzie River pizza, and booze. Good climb, great friends, amazing day. *Shawn Bennett*

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

Minutes Feb. 10th 2010

A. Called To Order 6:16 PM

B. Attendance: David Wright, Steve Niday, Julie Kahl, Chris Dunn, Alden Wright, Paul Jensen

C. Treasurer's Report Checkbook \$978.66, GMAR acct. \$840.13,
they owe us about 4,500 in registration fees for current race.

D. Old Business

1. Location of Glacier Classic

a. Steve N. did research on campgrounds available Aug. 27-29th

1) Cutbank -no water

2) Bowman Lake good for canoeing etc. but no hikes close

3) Avalanche - no reservations

4) Other suggestions: Goat Haunt, Outside Park at Pole Bridge

b. St. Mary's & Apgar best locations, because of the 50th Ann. this year and the possibility of a larger group voted for Apgar, Steve N. will reserve their group site.

2. Classes offered by TRM

a. UM does a mountaineering class in March for \$30, the instructor set the time, location etc

b. Chris Dunn wants to do a Glacier Travel Class, Steve N. supports it. Where?

Carlton Ridge -Julie, Lolo Peak Alden

c. Wilderness Essential Medicine class we can do, David will get info

3. GMAR

a. Going fine, 67 registrations so far, get free TRM membership,
GMAR will donate the funds to TRM

b. Still need volunteers, especially volunteer coordinator

c. Same general location as last year, Lubrecht & Paws-Up,
more demanding white water this year

E. New Business

1. Solicitation or incentives for new speakers

a. Once again Steve Schombel is wanting others to take over this task

b. Key is finding people

c. Don't have to have speakers could do classes or videos instead

d. Put something on the website and let people volunteer

1) Web site too cluttered?

2) Also put in newsletter

3) Can end up being abused by people with agendas

2. Paul Jensen asked if the cabin GPS coordinates needed to be on the website. Steve Niday said yes as he was asked too often by others for them

G. Adjourned at 7:PM

The Rocky Mountaineers 50th Anniversary

A talk with Bob Bensen plus more selections from old newsletters

By Chris Dunn

I had only heard about Bob Bensen from others. Stephen Schombel mentioned that he was a great telemark skier. Jim Ulrich told me that Bob had led some canoe trips and had built the cabin single-handedly. It turns out that the first parts were true, but that the cabin bit wasn't quite accurate. Bob joined the Mountaineers in around 1969 or 1970. He mentioned that the trips were mostly pretty ordinary things that you would expect. They mostly went out in the summer, often as dayhikes in the Bitterroots. Sometimes they would leave on a Friday after work and hike into a lake where they would camp. If they were feeling frisky, they might do a little skinny dipping. He says he had been into just about every canyon. They also did some winter trips later on, once cross country gear began to catch on in the early to mid seventies. They would use these skinny skis, or use downhill skis that allowed the heel to lift. These skis had skins made of actual seal skin. The hair only slid one way so it worked well, and for small ups and downs you could just leave the skins on. Bob recalls making a trip to Yellowstone for a few nights in the winter where he skied through heavy snow to get to geysers. He used to also head into the Missions. He recalls on a few occasions climbing Grey Wolf from the rez side, heading up a steep coulor where an "iceball" at the top could keep potentially keep you from the summit. One time this happened and some goats moved in below, so Bob and his fellow climbers stayed and watched them for a while.

We talked the longest about the cabin. The original cabin was way up Bass Creek on Lappi Lake. It was built by Old Man Lappi in the early 1900's as a place to stay while working on the lake's dam. The dam was put in place to control the flow of the creek for irrigation purposes and occasionally they would have to maintain it. It was eventually abandoned and so the Mountaineers would make an occasional winter trip up there. When the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964 the ranger at Stevensville "figured it was his duty" to get all the old stuff out of what was now the Wilderness, as there were lots of old cabins, corrals, and other "junk." The Mountaineers pleaded with him to keep it, but he refused. Instead they made a deal with the Forest Service to be allowed to build a new cabin outside of the wilderness and they agreed to haul out some of the old stuff, like the cabin's stove. This stove served in the new cabin for awhile but is now gone.

Though Jim was wrong that Bob built the cabin single-handedly, when the cabin was being relocated Bob did happen to have a lot of time on his hands so he did do a lot of work. In the fall of 72, the Mountaineers went looking for a new spot. They liked the idea of it near Little St. Joe because of the nearby skiing. However, they wanted it in trees for shelter and for easy access to materials. In the summer of 73 Bob spent lots of time up there doing work. He initially wanted to dig into the hill and level it out, but he quickly realized that this wouldn't happen mostly due to rocks. He did, nevertheless, dig down about 1.5 ft. The Forest Service said they could use any standing dead trees, but there was still a challenge of finding straight trees. The two main logs which form the base of the cabin are white bark pine. There were other challenges as well. For one, it was a lot of work to roll the logs up the hill. Also, noone knew how to notch, which explains the quirks in the cabin's construction. They decided to put the door in the floor due to the slope and also so snow didn't have to be shoveled out of the way. The floor was initially made of log rafters and black plastic. Bob mentioned that during construction, one lady put a little dog in the roofless cabin to keep it from running away, but a fellow threw a log inside and knocked out the dog out cold.

The cabin was built over 2-4 years (Bob can't remember exactly) and slow improvements were added over the years. Some included chinking and other improvements to make it airtight, plywood sheets from a lumber yard for the floor (as there was only split pine before which made for a poor floor). Later on the Forest Service said they had to dig an outhouse (most thought it worked fine before to just go in the snow). The

Forest Service also said it had to be public use, but apparently not winter use only, as it is now. Once, Bob and some others arrived to find a really nice note thanking them for the use of the cabin and a corresponding donation of a "Columbia Gold" "cigarette." Also of note is that at that time people could drive to the end of road, but it is now gated. At the road's end was the Bass Creek Commune. This was started by Tom Powers in the Economics department at the U. The Mountaineers appreciated them as they kept the road open, and they got to be friends with them. The commune later folded as most did, and eventually burned down. As I found out (see my trip report) the cabin can be hard to find, or as Bob puts it, "that son of a gun was tough to find [even] in the summertime." Once, Jim (Bob thinks that's who it was) tried to hike up in the moonlight to meet Bob and some others, but he couldn't find it.

Some last things Bob mentioned were that the club, though initially more focused on climbing, had been in a stage of being more of a hiking club, but this was later transformed when serious climbers started to join, and even a serious kayaker, Art Gidell, who would kayak the Lochsa in wintertime, among other things.

Following are some pictures and text about the cabin from the November 1974 Mountaineer, and according to the officer list, Bob was president at that time.

"SKI LITTLE ST. JOE"

by
Bob Benson

To an experienced cabin builder, the ski shelter being erected on Little (East) St. Joe Mountains 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.

For those who haven't camped or ski toured into this area, the shelter is located at about 7000 foot elevation on the ridge between Basscreek, and the cirque below Little St. Joe peak that forms the head of Larry Creek.

There is still a good bit of work to be done---chinking the logs, roofing, putting in the floor and assembling bunks and stove. Willing hands and \$ will be welcome!

Weather permitting we may yet get the shelter into usable condition for this season. We will plan our work trips with an eye to the weather.



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS
OF WESTERN MONTANA

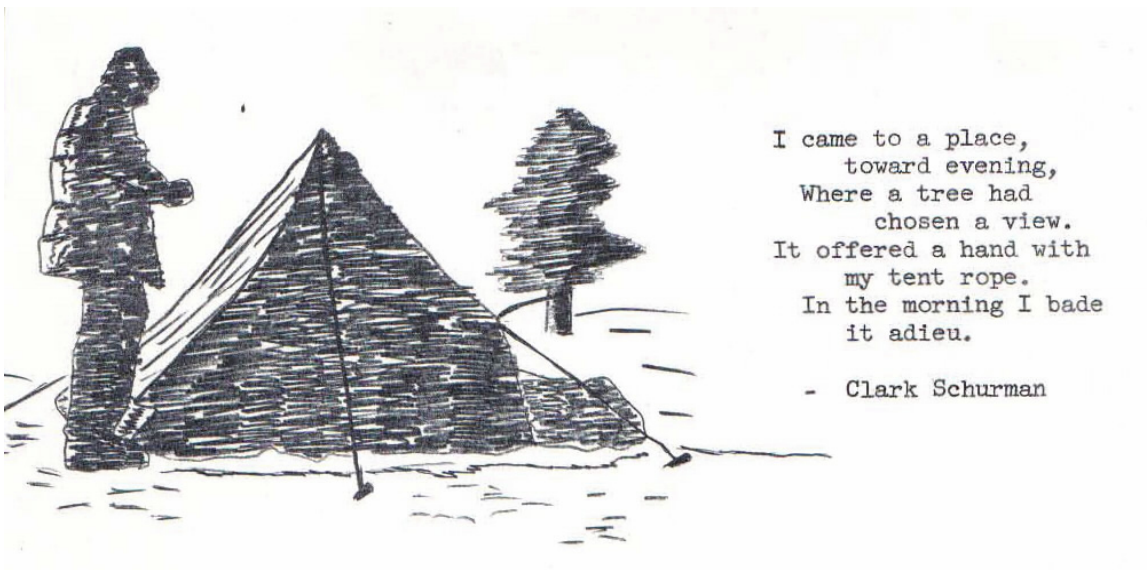
Vol. XIV No. 2
November 1974





October, 2009

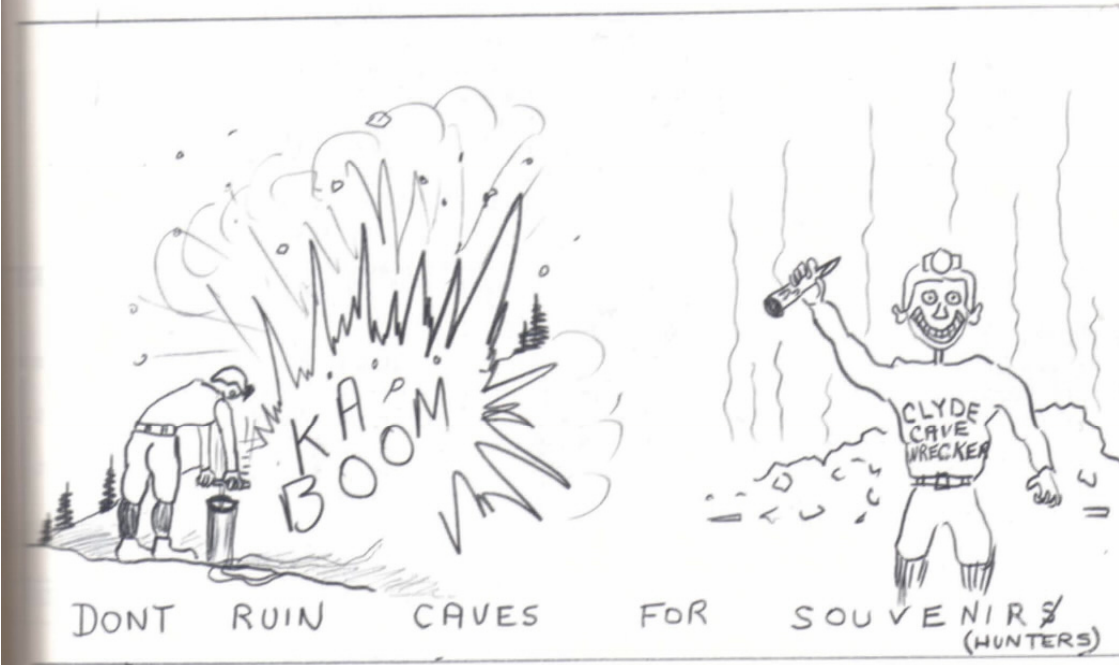
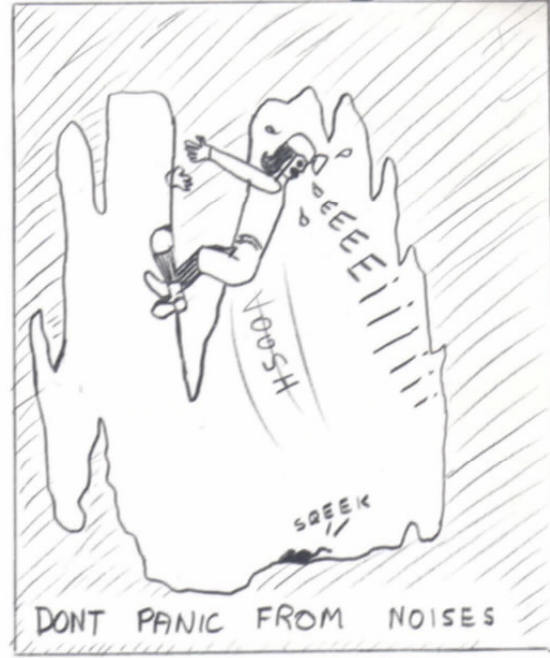
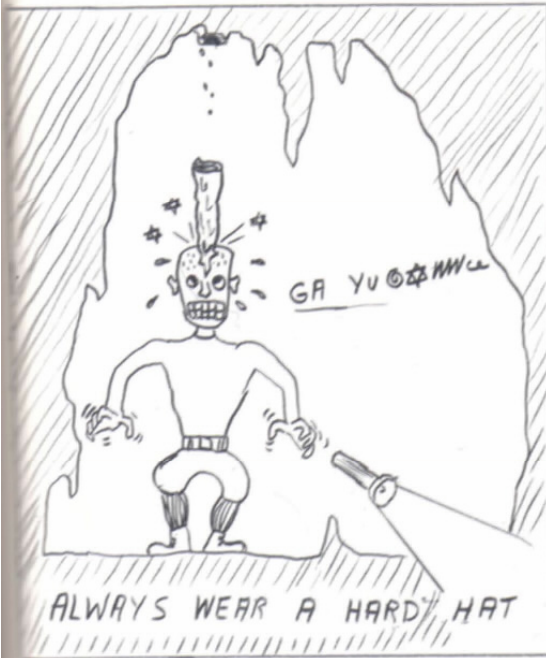
Finally, here are some old newsletter selections. I've just included some random ones that are interesting.



From June-July, 1964

MORE ON SAFE CAVING

by R.R. DIETRICH



From April 1965

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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