



The Sierra Echo

Volume 70 ▲ Number 4 ▲ October-December 2026

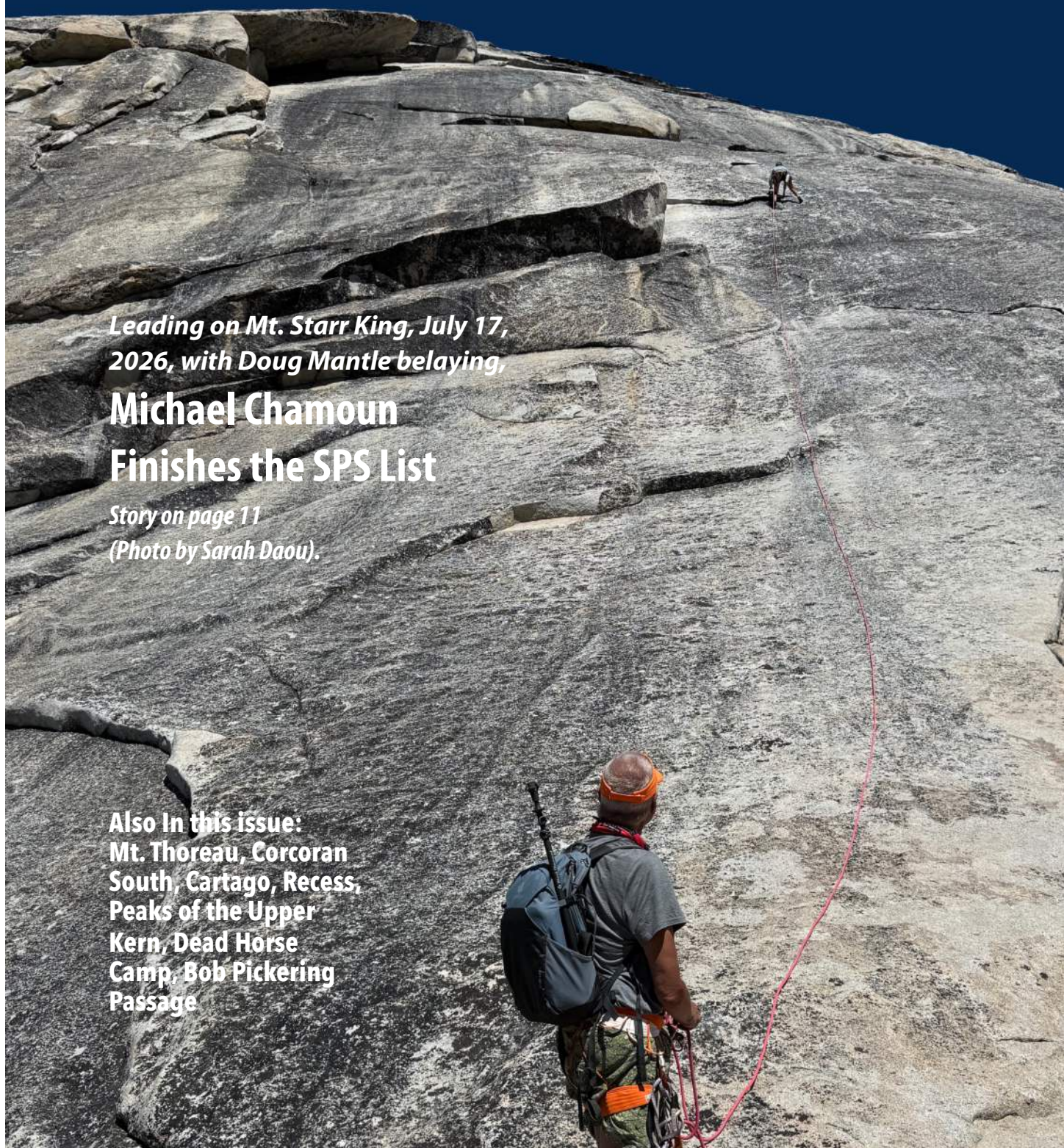
*Leading on Mt. Starr King, July 17,
2026, with Doug Mantle belaying,*

Michael Chamoun Finishes the SPS List

Story on page 11

(Photo by Sarah Daou).

Also In this issue:
Mt. Thoreau, Corcoran
South, Cartago, Recess,
Peaks of the Upper
Kern, Dead Horse
Camp, Bob Pickering
Passage





Echoes from the Chair

By Michael Chamoun

Another summer gone. What we anticipate for all year long has sailed into the night, and for most of us our Sierra peak climbing hibernation begins. I hope the collective was able to take advantage of the favorable conditions this year because next year may be different. NOAA is predicting a high probability of a “super” El Niño, and that means the atmospheric river freight train may be upon us shortly. That could mean either an incredible snow season or a wet slushy one; time will tell.

I’d like to throw this out there to the membership: perhaps two members, every quarter,

can recommend a book they’ve read that is generally pertinent to the section and that could be interesting to the membership. Your photo could be published (if you so choose) with a quick blurb on why you thought the book was good. It’ll give the membership two options, and the time between publications can give readers a chance to read one and submit comments and thoughts on what they thought of it. We can publish a few of those comments, and it can be called something like “The Echo Chamber.” A poor man’s version of Oprah’s Book Club if you will. If we’re meeting up less and less in the mountains, it doesn’t mean there aren’t other ways to build bonds. Does anyone care to start the process? If so, email me at nano.michael@gmail.com.

The banquet is fast approaching, so keep an eye out on information on our presenter, dates, and a new location! Just kidding, we are married to Almansor Court for life. Anyway, please continue to submit your stories to the *Echo*, Instagram stories and photos to our outreach chair, Dylan, and quarterly presentation submissions (we need presenters!). Let’s showcase to everyone what you’ve done and been up to. Happy trails!

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2026 Sierra Peaks Section Management Committee



Elected

Michael Chamoun	Chair nano.michael@gmail.com
John Sheehee	Vice-chair/banquet johnsheehee@gmail.com
Phil S. Bates	Treasurer sierrapeakstreasurer@gmail.com
Daryn Dodge	Secretary Daryn.Dodge@oehha.ca.gov
Dylan Kilby	Fifth officer/outreach dylanrkilby@gmail.com

Appointed

Archives	Romain Wacziarg Rwacziarg@gmail.com
Conservation Chair	Sharon Moore justslm@earthlink.net
<i>Echo</i> editors	Tina Bowman tina@bowmanchange.com , Beth Epstein
<i>Echo</i> mailer	Tina Bowman
Emblem Committee	Daryn Dodge, Kathy Rich, Ron Bartell
IT Support	Greg Mason admin@sierrapeaks.org , Harry Lagenbacher admin2@sierrapeaks.org
Keeper of the List	Tina Bowman
Merchandise	Patty Kline patriciakline@aol.com
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Outings	Gary Schenk gary@hbfun.org
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Webmaster	Joe Wankum jbwankum@aol.com
Asst. Webmasters	Harry Lagenbacher register@summitregister.org , Tina Bowman tina@bowmanchange.com ,

Regional Representatives

San Diego, Joe White; Central California, Daryn Dodge; Northern California, Lisa Barboza

SAVE THE DATE

2027 Sierra Peaks Section Banquet



Sunday, January 31st, 2027



Almanson Court • Alhambra, CA



Guest Speaker: **Eric Gilbertson**



Our 2027 SPS Banquet

We are thrilled to welcome Eric Gilbertson as the guest speaker for the 2027 Sierra Peaks Section Banquet. Eric is a peakbagger, high-altitude climber, explorer, and professional surveyor working toward an extraordinary goal: climbing the highest mountain in every country on Earth.

Eric has climbed the highpoint in 156 of 196 countries, and his expeditions have taken him from technical, high-altitude objectives—including K2 without supplemental oxygen and Pik Pobeda in Kyrgyzstan via the Abalakov route—to week-long jungle bushwhacks in Suriname and a

1,500-mile kite-ski expedition across Greenland. In places where a country's highpoint is uncertain or has never been climbed, he brings surveying equipment to establish the answer. His work has helped identify new country highpoints in nine countries and has been published in scientific journals.

For additional information on Eric and his climbing adventures, please visit his website: <https://www.countryhighpoints.com/>.

The banquet will be held at Almanson Court in Alhambra, California, on Sunday, January 31, 2027. Additional details will be available later this year and posted on social media.

Call for Nominations

It's that time of year when we're looking for members to run for the SPS management committee. Are you interested? Know someone who might be willing to serve? Please contact Mary McMannes, chair of the nominating committee, to make suggestions. Her email is marymcmannes19@gmail.com.

Call for Award Nominations

It's that time of year for members to nominate SPS leaders for the SPS Leadership Award. Established and first given in 1997, the award has been described thus: "Created by the SPS Membership to give recognition to those individuals who have shown outstanding leadership and service to the SPS over the years and who have fostered new leaders."

Please send your nomination and list of qualifications to the chair, Michael Chamoun at nano.michael@gmail.com. For more information, here's what the Policies and Procedures say about the award:

(Continued on page 4)

Call for Award Nominations, continued from page 3:

From time to time the Management Committee may choose to honor a leader for extraordinary service to the SPS. The award shall be given at the annual banquet with an article in the banquet issue of *The Sierra Echo* to honor the leader. The award may be given posthumously. By submitting a letter to the Management Committee indicating why the leader should be so honored, members may nominate possible recipients. Management Committee members may also nominate recipients and should draw up a list of qualifications to be mentioned in an *Echo* article published each year in a mid-year issue along with a solicitation for nominees. Factors that may contribute to the selection of recipients should include leadership on numerous trips over a period of at least ten years, fostering new members and leaders, achievement of at least an "M" leadership rating, and setting the example of well-planned and safe trips. The Management Committee shall vote whether each nominee is to receive the award. More than one person may receive the award each year, but it need not be given every year.

Past recipients are

Dave Dykeman and Bill T. Russell (posthumously), 1997

Doug Mantle and Duane McRuer, 1998

Dan Richter, 1999

Larry Tidball, 2000

Barbee Tidball, 2002

Tina Bowman (Stough), 2015

Neal Robbins, 2016

Kathy Rich, 2017

The SPS now has a Lifetime Achievement Award, first given in 2016 to Barbara Lilley and Gordon MacLeod, then to Jerry Keating in 2017, Doug Mantle in 2018, and Tina Bowman in 2022. Please contact the chair if you would like to nominate someone. Here's the description of the award from the Policies and Procedures:

From time to time the Management Committee may choose to honor a member for outstanding service to the SPS over many years. Such service may include leading copious outings, serving in various elected or appointed positions on the Management Committee, contributing to the *Echo*, and inspiring others by their mountaineering accomplishments. Members may nominate a possible recipient by writing to the Management Committee and indicating why the person should be so honored. The Management Committee shall vote whether each nominee is to receive the award. More than one person may receive the award each year, but the award need not be given every year.



New Stock of SPS Tees!

Patty Kline, our merchandiser, has a new stock of SPS tee-shirts. These are made of a 50% cotton/50% polyester blend and are available in M, L, and XL; the color is ash (gray). The graphics are the same as in the past, with North Palisade on the front and the full SPS list on the back, ready for you to check off the peaks you've climbed. In addition, we still have some 100% cotton tee-shirts, which was our original fabric over the years, in sand (M and L) and ash (S and M).

New Andy Smatko Explorer Emblem Patch



The Andy Smatko Explorer Emblem patch, designed by member Donovan Pair, is now available for purchase. Why not add an SPS section patch also? Each is available from SPS merchandiser Patty Kline for \$10.00, which includes shipping. Send your order to Patty at 7409 Hermosa Ave., Yucca Valley, CA 92284.

... And SPS Patches for New Members



New SPS members will be given a beautiful SPS patch.

Welcome, New Members!

Taylor McElroy

Taylor grew up in Alabama but spent her summers on family road trips out West, camping around the Sierra Nevada, where she was always captivated by the landscape and the way it made her feel. This left a lasting impression on her, and she was never quite able to shake the pull of these particular mountains. Over the years, her job took her in many different directions around the world, but one thing that remained the same was her yearly trips back to the area to be surrounded by the wildness she had fallen in love with. This year, she finally fulfilled a longtime dream of moving closer to the Eastern Sierra, and she couldn't be more thrilled! She's excited to keep chipping away at the SPS list but is equally looking forward to exploring as much of the range as she can and connecting with fellow SPS members along the way!



Eric Wang

Eric has been drawn to the mountains since the wee age of ten, staring out at the San Gabriel Mountain peaks from the suburban sprawl below and wondering aloud “how does one get up there?” Fast forward some decades, Eric is now making good on the childhood promise of finding out how to get out there and up there. Following a few years of solo (and sometimes misguided) first-run adventures into the classic parts of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, Eric has enjoyed the steady improvement that comes with frequent backpacking, from the initial and costly steps of gearing up to the paradoxically costlier process of trimming down. But really, he found true quality-of-life improvement in joining the Sierra Club, signing up for WTC, meeting such great people in class and on experience trips, and falling in love with the Range of Light. In particular, he loves photographing the Sierra Nevada mountains and basking in the alpenglow moments. When not backpacking or hiking, Eric serves as the operations director of a nonprofit that teaches photography, filmmaking, and other media arts to young people. Eric is proud to join SPS and looks forward to getting to know more members and having future adventures into the Sierra Nevada range.



Welcome, New Members!

Jon Shade

Jon is a current member of the Hundred Peaks Section—Queen Mountain in Joshua Tree marked his one hundredth peak in late 2025. He's been exploring the San Gabriels and the Sierra on skis over the last couple of years and hopes to get in more telemark turns and overnight ski tours in the coming season. He teaches middle school and enjoys starting his summer breaks by volunteering at the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center.



Max Marquez

Max grew up in Visalia, California. Because of his close proximity to Sequoia National Park, he would frequently go there with his mom as he grew up. As a child, however, he would dread hiking, and it wasn't until 2024 during his freshman year of college that he truly fell in love with being outdoors. Being outdoors lets him clear his mind and escape the pressures of school and work. In July of 2025 he climbed his first SPS peak (Half Dome), and ever since then he has been hooked on peak bagging. His goal is to finish out 2026 with at least ten SPS peaks completed.



FREE First Year's Membership or *Echo* Subscription

New subscribers and members can receive their first year's subscription for free! Download the Membership Application Form at <https://forms.gle/N3GjHJdwmQ7kP2NC6>. Please contact the chair or membership chair if you have any questions.

Welcome, New Members!

Noah Koch

Noah did not take up hiking until 2023 during his second semester at UC Berkeley, home of the Bancroft Library that stewards the SPS's historical summit registers. Over that summer, he made his first trip to the Desolation Wilderness, where he fell in love with the Sierra and mountaineering. It would not be until 2024 that he summited his first SPS-listed peak in the wilderness, Pyramid Peak. Since then, he has dreamed of joining the SPS with the ultimate goal of being a list completer. While he has yet to explore the southern half of the range, he hopes that as he becomes more experienced in the mountains and comfortable with technical peaks that his journey will take him to every corner of the Sierra and beyond.



Congratulations!

Our chair Michael Chamoun, seen at right on Middle Palisade, finished the list, leading Starr King on July 17th. Read his list finish story starting on page 11. Congratulations, Michael!



Congratulations!

Marcus Sproll, pictured at right in front of Mt. Abbot, earned his emblem on North Palisade on August 17, 2024. (Marcus describes his climbs in the Upper Kern in a report starting on page 30.)

And congrats to Signe Swensen, who earned her third Andy Smatko Explorer Emblem on Eagle Peak near Mt. Reinstein, on August 25, 2024.



Dare to Lead!

***Virtual Leadership Training Seminars
Fall Seminar: Sunday, October 25, 2026***

Becoming a Sierra Club outings leader starts with curiosity and a love of the outdoors. What better way to step up and lead than by taking advantage of the training opportunities that the Angeles Chapter's Leadership Training Committee provides each year?

As home to one of the largest outings programs on the planet, the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter's many groups, sections, and committees sponsor thousands of trips ranging from beach barbecues to mountaineering expeditions. You can take the first step toward becoming a leader by attending a five-hour class offered virtually via Zoom.

The seminar covers all the basics of leadership. Experienced leaders will tell you how to plan a trip, prevent problems on the trail, and make sure that everyone—including you—has a great time. They'll also explain good conservation and safety practices. And they'll give you tips for getting your "O" rating quickly and, if you choose, then pursuing more advanced ratings. We will also have a Safety Management Plan exercise.

The class costs \$15. See more information about the seminar and link to the application here: <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-seminar>.



around-the-web/ *By Dave Sholle*

Editors' note: Dave Sholle is our correspondent for this column, sharing web links that SPS members may find interesting. If you see something you would like to share with other members, please send it to Dave at dsholle@verizon.net.

Some of these links may be behind paywalls.

Sierra and California

[Story of 7-year-old "climbing" El Cap is complicated and here](#)

[History of Horseshoe Meadows Road](#)

[Snake Dike bolts removed](#)

[Speed climber dies in Sierra Nevada](#)

Other United States

[Extraordinary rescue on Mount Hood](#)

[Three Latvian climbers die on Denali](#) and [here](#)

[Longest unsupported hike ever](#)

[Second grizzly attack in a month in Glacier NP](#) and [here](#)

[National Park deaths](#)

[High school student attacked by a bear on his first hike](#)

[Denali Ranger Robin Pendery dies in crevasse fall](#)

[National Parks reportedly told to say silent on deaths](#)

[Pay to poop in the backcountry](#)

[Hiker dies after fall from Colorado's Little Bear Peak](#)

[Campers did everything right and bear still attacks](#)

[Trump shrinks two National Monuments in Utah by almost 3 million acres](#)

[Her pack list helped save her when she got stranded on a Colorado 13er](#)

[Engagement hike turns into engagement rescue in New Hampshire](#)

[Grand Canyon mystery illness](#)

[Hiker impales himself on trekking pole and walks 10 miles for help](#) and [here](#)

[One dead, three injured in Mount Rainier rockfall](#)

[Ten hardest day hikes in the US](#)

[Colorado 14er traffic dropped to a low in 2025](#)

[Hiking with a dog more than doubles your risk in bear country](#)

Andes

[Robot climbs 6,000 m peak](#)

Alps and Europe

[Huge rockfall on the Matterhorn](#)

High Asian Peaks

[Tyler Andrews breaks Everest speed record](#) and [here](#)

[Kama Rita Sherpa](#)

[Bartek Ziemiński ski expedition on Everest and Lhotse](#)

[Sherpa guide on Everest rescued six days after going missing and here](#)

[Nanda Devi Unsoeld's death on the mountain she was named after](#)

[What does a climbing sherpa take to the top of Everest?](#)

[Gamble to bring Everest's most famous body home](#)

[Andrzej Bargiel climbs and skis all of Pakistan's 8,000 meter peaks](#)

[Nirmal Purja and 9 others die in Broad Peak avalanche and here and here and here](#)

Other

[Bygone backpacking trends](#)

[Pattie Gonia vs Patagonia](#)

[Beth Rodden teaches Charlize Theron how to climb for the film Apex](#)

[Three exercises to make you less clumsy on trail](#)

[New FDA approved sun lotion ingredient](#)

[Douglas Tompkins' story](#)

[What keeps Kilian Jornet going](#)

[How properly to remove a tick](#)

[Auto Belay deaths](#)

[More climbers are saying they aren't interested in climbing outdoors](#)

[How to hike in a heat wave](#)

[Why you get constipated on a backpacking trip](#)

[Bug bite guide](#)

[Emma Hunt breaks women's world speed climbing record](#)

[Jimmy Chin—risking too much or too little](#)

[Google maps as a backcountry tool has limitations and here](#)

[Hiking umbrellas](#)

[Descents are harder on legs than climbs](#)

Get Featured on the SPS Instagram Account!

From Dylan Kilby

The SPS Instagram account (@sierrapeakssection) wants to feature your climbing stories in our **Climber Spotlight** series! Got a cool set of climbing photos and a trip report from a recent outing? Do you have something unique and cool from historical climbs? We'd love to hear about it! The new series will focus on highlighting our climbers' peak accomplishments and accompanying stories, and that includes you! Climbers of all experience levels and emblem status are encouraged to send in their shots so we can brag about how cool you all are.

To submit something for a Climber Spotlight, send an email to dylanrkilby@gmail.com (make sure you get that "r" in between "dylan" and "kilby") with the following contents:

- Up to ten photos in an appropriate format—PNG, JPEG, or TIFF. (Please make sure they are as close to the original size as possible.)
- A brief write-up of the trip, photo, or venture (maximum 1500 characters, no minimum)
- Names of the photographers
- Any social media handle that you would like us to tag.

If you want to send photos and/or stories for more than one post, please email them **separately**. That will make it much easier to organize for posting.

Thanks, and climb on this 2026 season!



More Than a List

By Michael Chamoun

This chapter that started, unbeknownst to me, on half a dome in the summer of 2004 in Yosemite National Park, closed on another dome twenty-two years later on July 17 on Mount Starr King. As the crow flies, they are three miles and a few thousand feet of vertical gain apart. To accomplish the same thing, it took me 3555 (Sierra) miles and 1,245,606 feet of gain in this great wilderness. One could say I took the scenic route. But as I look back on my completion of the 247-peak list that was born in 1955, what was astounding to me wasn't the sheer number of mountains climbed. Or the statistics and measures. It was the fact I could remember some detail from *every single one* of them. If I wasn't solo, with whom I did each one. What trailhead we started from. Where we camped. What the conditions were on that trip. What the flowers were like. If the bugs were bad. What the overall experience was like.

During my first visit in the Sierra backcountry, I learned a lesson one can only really feel: that



experiences are best when shared. And in this case, in an arena where there are no easy mountains. In an arena where bonds are grown and love is its fruit. I could not have done this without my friends who entered that arena with me over these last eight years when I purposefully started this journey. A lot of life can happen in eight years, and I can say unequivocally that it did not spare me. Sustained low points, divorce, regret, life-questioning uncertainty. And with that, unintentionally, the list became my North Star. It was sustenance and guidance for a starving and chaotic soul, and all I had to give it in return was a deep well of energy. Dedication. Respect. Love. Intentionality. So through those tumultuous years, through my deficiencies and faults,



Top: Michael Chamoun with his new SPS List Finisher pin, with Doug Mantle and Joel Peach behind. Above: Doug Mantle and Michael Chamoun (Photos by Peter Carey).



Celebrating Michael's list finish on Starr King's summit, left to right: Sarah Daou, Doug Mantle, Michael Chamoun, Lauren Cappocia, Joel Peach, Gilberto Gil, Peter Carey (Photo by Peter Carey).

my Sierra friends stood with me, and reborn from those ashes was not only a more learned student of the mountains but a better human being than when I started this wild ride. In both life and in these incomparable mountains, one needs an incalculable amount of perseverance, effort, toil, luck, and help. And I would be remiss if I didn't write a word or two about my greatest Sierra friend and mentor, Doug Mantle. I knew about the list and I even printed it out back in 2011 (I still have and use that original printout), but never in my wildest imagination did I think people climbed *all* of them. That would be preposterous. I used it as a reference having only done a handful here and there. But on that fateful day in the summer of 2017 in Onion Valley where I learned that not only do people finish the list but one stood out among the rest having done it an astounding seven times at the time, possibility permeated the part of my brain that thought it impossible. He was more than willing to share his experiences, expertise, ideas, and advice. And beyond the mountain mentorship he was there through my very hard times, lending an ear and company that have continued over these many years.

It was truly an honor to learn, grow, climb, suffer, bleed with my Sierra brothers and sisters, and I will forever cherish, love, and protect those memories and experiences in the greatest range on earth.

Random Facts:

Favorite Peak: Devils Crag #1 (x3)
 Peaks done solo: 139 peaks (of 247)
 Day Trip Peaks: 160
 Overnight Trip Peaks: 87
 Largest single day for one peak (hours): 21 hours
 Largest single day for one peak (miles): 35+
 Largest single day for one peak (ft gain): 12,238 ft

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SPS TEES



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Backpacking to Mount Thoreau (Peak 12,691')

June 26-27, 2026

By Daryn Dodge and Kathy Rich

Participants: Daryn Dodge (leader), Kathy Rich (leader), Gary Schenk (leader), Mary Jo Dungfelder, Victor Hanson-Smith, Noah Gottlieb, J. Heiser, Jodi Young

Our trip to climb Mt Thoreau was inspired by Kim Stanley Robinson's presentation at this year's SPS Banquet. On USGS maps, the peak is simply marked as "Peak 12,691," although as noted in Secor's book the first ascenders had in 1940 proposed the unofficial name of "Mt George Davis" for the Sierra cartographer and explorer. Mr. Robinson, along with several fellow writers and poets, wished to revise the unofficial name to "Mt Thoreau" because of its location

across Piute Canyon from Mt Emerson, named for another famous American writer. They felt that it was remiss that nothing was named in the Sierra commemorating Thoreau, whose books were known to have had a critical influence on John Muir. (On the other hand, George Davis already had nearby Davis Lakes named after him.) In 2014, the group visited the summit to place a new register in the hope that the name "Mt Thoreau" might stick. Their endeavor is detailed in the book *Naming Mt Thoreau*, edited by Laurie

*View of Mt Thoreau on the way to camp at Wonder Lakes
(Photo by Kathy Rich).*



Glover (available from the Mono Lake Committee). Although Peakbagger still calls it Mt George Davis, Google maps now has it named as Mt Thoreau.

On Friday June 26, our group of eight assembled in the North Lake hiker parking lot at 8:00 am for the standard trail talk where we covered the day's plans and Leave No Trace ethics. We originally had two more participants planning to join us, but they texted earlier in the morning that they had come down with a viral illness. In terms of carrying a backpack, this was not going to be an ambitious day of many miles. Our first goal was to hike up the numerous switchbacks to Lower Lamarck Lake, where we then left the main trail to hike around the north side of the lake. This was the most challenging part of the day getting to camp, as the north side of the lake was a bit steep and rocky. There was an ephemeral use



Above: Summit register, showing excerpt written by Kim Stanley Robinson from book Naming Mt Thoreau by Laurie Glover (Photo by Daryn Dodge). At right: Polemonium flowers nestled in the rocks near the summit (Photo by J Heiser).



trail to follow here and there—just enough to keep us on the easiest path.

Once past the lake, the cross-country terrain was a little easier. The plan was to find a camp near the largest of the Wonder Lakes at an elevation of about 10,900 feet. We found some nice spots in the trees for the tents at the southwest end of the lake. Since the hike into camp was only three miles, we had the afternoon free to climb Mt Thoreau, which loomed above us. After lunch at camp, we set out northwest of the lake to go around the south face of a headwall below Mt Thoreau. This kept the climbing to class 2. We then proceeded up towards the east shoulder of the peak, encountering some steep gravel and scree that lasted for 200 feet of elevation gain. This was the most tedious part of the climb, although this provided easy plunge-stepping on the way back down.

Once on Thoreau's east shoulder, the climbing was relatively easy up to the summit rocks. It was a little chilly and breezy at the top, so we all put on extra layers of clothing. Beautiful polemonium flowers were in full bloom just below the summit, the only place on the peak where we found them. Great views included Mt Emerson and the Humphreys Basin to the north, and Mt Goethe and Keyhole Plateau to the southwest. In fact, Keyhole Plateau was to be our climb for the following day, but I could see that snow still blocked the two key chutes that would have kept the climbing to class 2-3. Steep snow climbing was beyond the difficulty level for this trip, so we reluctantly had to abandon the idea.

We returned to camp essentially the same way we went up. We did take a more direct line down the headwall near our lake, so we had a few spots of easy class 3 to descend. Back at camp during dinner, we more or less decided to hike out the next morning. There were a few unnamed minor peaks around we could have considered to make up for not climbing Keyhole Plateau. But the consensus was to hike out after successfully getting our entire group up to the summit of Mt Thoreau. So, the next morning we hiked back to North Lake. Thanks to all participants for making this a wonderful weekend in the Sierra!

Above: On the summit, L to R: Gary Schenk, Kathy Rich, Daryn Dodge, J Heiser, Mary Jo Dungfelder, Jodie Young, Noah Gottlieb, Victor Hanson-Smith (Photo by Victor Hanson-Smith).

A Climb of Mt. Corcoran—South Peak (Elev. 13,725 feet)

June 29 to July 1, 2026

By Daryn Dodge

North of Mt. Langley along the Sierra Crest, there are a series of five peaks that can be seen from the vicinity of Lone Pine. These peaks together are known as the Comb Ridge. From north to south, they are Mt. LeConte, Mt. Corcoran, Sharktooth, Mt. Corcoran-South Peak (aka Middle Tooth) and Mt. Corcoran-Far South Peak.

One of the “teeth” of Comb Ridge, Mt. Corcoran—South Peak, was recently added to the so-called California 13,500-foot Peaks list, which can be found on

www.peakbagger.com. To qualify for the list, in addition to being 13,500 feet high, a peak must also have at least 300

feet of prominence. This means that there must be at least a 300-foot drop from its summit to a saddle on either side of the peak along the Sierra Crest before reaching the next highest peak (likely Mt. Langley to the south and Mt. Corcoran to the north). At this point, I might have already lost some readers of this report with all the silliness about prominence. But to a small (but growing) community of peakbaggers in the United States, prominence means everything.

Up to 2024 or 2025, this 13,500-foot list stood at about fifty-four California peaks, although there were several more



The Comb Ridge as viewed from our Upper Rock Creek campsite. From left to right, Mt. LeConte, Mt. Corcoran, Mt. Corcoran-South Peak, and Mt. Corcoran-Far South Peak (Photo by Daryn Dodge).



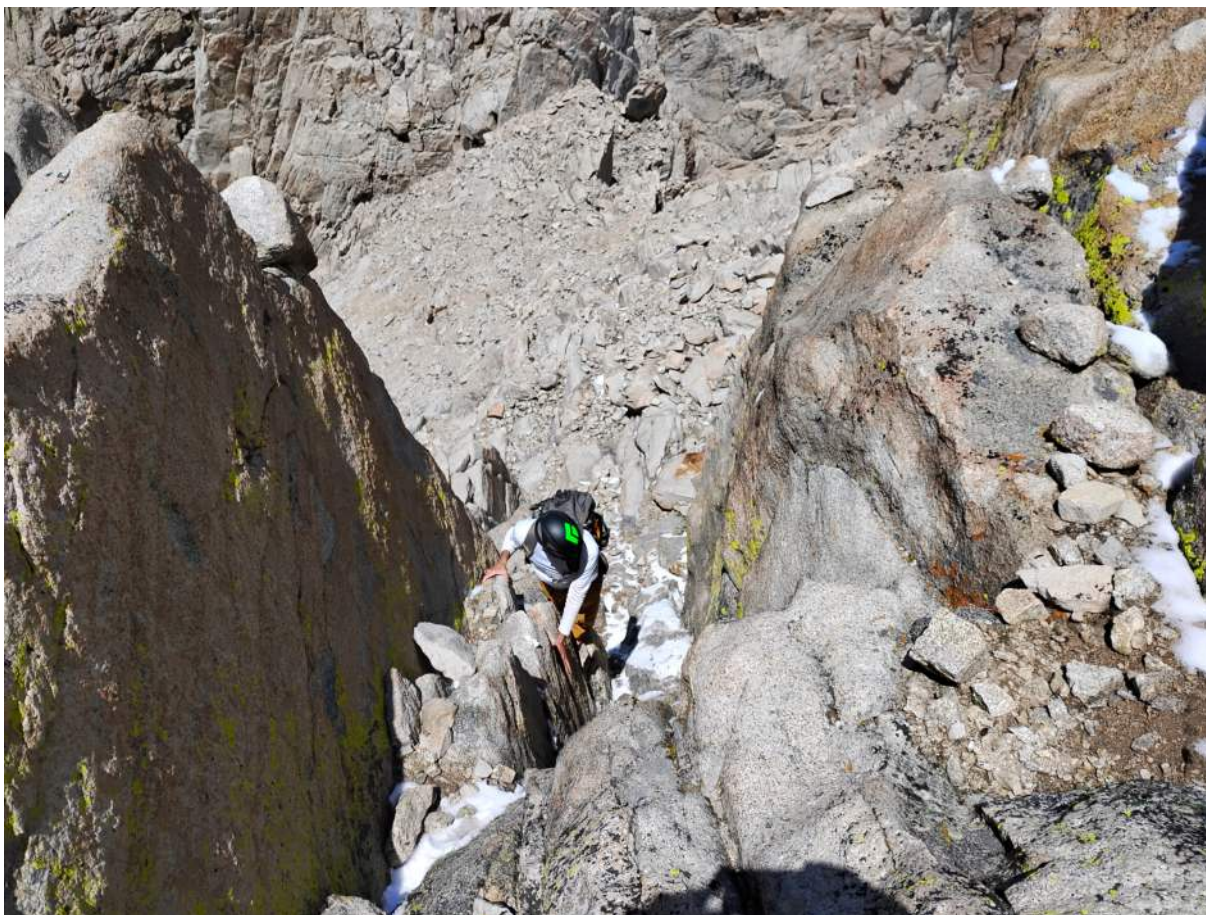
peaks that were thought possibly to qualify. It's just that the technology was not present to determine precisely all the ones that had just over 300 feet of prominence. Then along came Lidar radar which can determine the prominence of a peak to less than a foot. The webmasters of www.peakbagger.com dutifully used this information to determine prominence and update the California 13,500-foot Peak list. The list now stands at 63 peaks and is likely the final word for the number of peaks on the list.

Prior to 2025, I had climbed all the known 13,500-foot peaks in California. But then the Lidar update added nine more peaks to the list, some of which I had already climbed, but others I hadn't. Mt. Corcoran-South Peak was one of the peaks I hadn't. Lidar established the prominence of this peak to be 323 feet, so on the list it went. One of my climbing buddies, Keith Christensen, was also a finisher of this list—until he wasn't. So, Keith and I planned a backpack trip to climb Mt. Corcoran-South Peak. You may think we are slaves to silly peak lists. Perhaps we are. But I would also like to think this update to the 13,500-foot Peak list gave us a nice excuse to explore a new peak in one of our favorite mountain ranges, the Sierra Nevada.

Because this peak is somewhat obscure, there is little specific information about its climbing routes. Secor's Sierra guidebook briefly describes a ridge-run route that climbs all 5 peaks along the Comb Ridge, which goes class 5. A trip report by Bob Burd describes an east-side approach from Tuttle Creek that involved class 4 climbing on loose rock. These two routes appeared more difficult and dangerous than we could handle, so Keith and I decided to investigate a west-side approach via the upper Rock Creek drainage, where the climbing may have less technical difficulty. I didn't know if it would work, but we would have fun at least trying.

We backpacked in the first day from the Horseshoe Meadow trailhead, over Cottonwood Pass, and up the upper Rock Creek drainage to a camp near tree line at about an elevation of 10,900 feet. We covered about ten-eleven miles this first day. During the night a cold storm came through and covered the ground with a thin layer of light snow. People who know the Sierra will say that it could snow anytime of the year. I now believe them. In the morning it was cold, so we started with down jackets on. We hiked a few miles to Iridescent Lake, located at the base of Mt. Corcoran-South Peak. We then climbed up talus rubble

Above: Keith Christensen taking in the views after a several hundred feet of gain up to the main Corcoran chute (Photo by Daryn Dodge).



several hundred feet into the main chute that eventually goes up to a col just south of Mt. Corcoran. At an elevation of about 12,530', we reached big chockstones blocking the chute that involved class 4-5 moves to get around.



However, Keith found a class 2 workaround above the chockstones on the north side.

Descending on sand back into the chute just past the chockstones, the chute almost immediately branches. The main chute above is blocked by more huge chockstones. After briefly checking out the huge chockstones, which went at least class 4 to get around, I backtracked and followed Keith up the farthest-right branch. The beginning of this branch is marked by some vertical black stains. We climbed class 3 rock for a few hundred feet, to where the steepness lessened to class 2 for

Above: Keith ascending the class 3 chimney just below the summit boulders. At left: Nearing the end of the final chute just before our ascent of the class 3-4 face to the right in this photo (Photos by Daryn Dodge).



*Keith Christensen on the summit of Mt. Corcoran-South
(Photo by Daryn Dodge).*

another few hundred feet. We were aiming for another set of chockstones blocking the end of the chute above us, which had a little window in the boulders.

Before we reached this feature, we left the chute and started up the very steep face of Corcoran-South Peak to our right. We were now at an elevation of about 13,250' at the crux of the climb. This was the crux of the climb. There were ledges to climb and enough rough features in the rock to keep the climbing to class 3 most of the time. But we couldn't avoid a few difficult spots on this face that went class 4. This face reminded me of a more difficult version of the standard east face route up Middle Palisade. We found Bob Burd's trip report and GPS track helpful in determining where to start climbing this face.

The steepness suddenly eased after 100+ feet of climbing to more like class 2. A previous climber had marked the top of this transition in difficulty with a large rock duck. This rock duck looked like it had been there for some time, maybe decades. We then worked our way up to the summit rocks where we found a steep class 3 chimney that climbed about twenty feet. At the top of the chimney, it was only a

minute more of boulder-hopping and we were on the summit!

It felt good to pioneer a route up this peak. One of the joys of climbing in the Sierra is finding your way to a summit with little previous climbing information to work from. It seems unlikely, however, it seems unlikely we were the first to find it. I didn't work very hard to find any other documentation for this approach before our trip.

We had brought a rope, but we were just competent enough to reverse the route down without really needing it. We also had an ice axe in case we had to chop steps in any hard snow blocking our route, but we easily bypassed the frozen snow patches we encountered in the chute. We wore rock helmets the entire time in the chute. There was quite a bit of loose rock, which slowed our climbing and descending as we took several sections one at a time to avoid dropping rocks on each other.

We were back at camp a little before 5 pm, taking nine-to-ten hours to do the climb. Our hiking distance was only about six miles round trip this day. The next morning, we hiked back to the Horseshoe Meadow trailhead. We met several people along the way that were hiking the Pacific Coast Trail or heading for Mt. Whitney. I really enjoy this part of the Sierra—particularly the Foxtail Pines that cover the area, which is one of my favorite trees.

Claw Marks and Battle Scars: Climbing Cartago Peak



By Meghan Cason

Cartago Peak is both near and far. It casts a shadow over the 395, its craggy pinnacles looming above the community of Cartago (population 62, per the 2020 census). Unfortunately, there's no good way to reach its summit. The prospective climber has two choices: a schlep straight up from the desert floor, gaining nearly 6,500 feet of elevation in under five miles, or a long approach from the northwest—about sixteen miles one-way via Horseshoe Meadows.

Trip leaders Mat Kelliher and Kat Jankaew chose the latter option. Co-sponsored by SPS and WTC, the trip was a three-day backpack around a single peak. At one point during our weekend together, Kat would remark, "This is the most miles I've ever hiked for just one mountain."

On Friday, June 6, 2026, our group gathered in the parking lot where Horseshoe Meadows Road dead ends. Earlier in the week, we'd had a roster of nine, but that day, only five brave souls showed face. In addition to Mat, Kat,

and me, two other participants were game for our very long walk: Katherine Park, an active member of SPS and HPS, and James Yuan, a current WTC student in San Gabriel Valley Group 5.

Though I was now an assistant WTC group leader in West LA, I'd taken WTC with Mat in San Gabriel Valley almost a decade ago. In fact, one of my student experience trips had been led by Mat, and we'd met in this very same parking lot. The trip had been a success: we climbed both Langley and Cirque, my first two Sierra peaks and my first 14er. At the time, I wasn't particularly interested in peakbagging, but here I was nine years later, plugging away at a very long list.

At the trailhead, Mat reiterated something the group had discussed over email. The viability of our itinerary hinged on whether we could find water near our planned campsite, Ash Meadow, roughly the halfway point to Cartago. Members of our group had reviewed old trip reports and were monitoring PCT beta, seeking confirmation that water in Ash Meadow was likely. There was no consensus. The backup plan, Mat explained, was to climb Muah Mountain on Saturday instead of Cartago. It was a less exciting prospect and a repeat for

Cartago Peak summit block (Photo by Meghan Cason).

Mat, but one with guaranteed water from Diaz Creek.

On day one we covered roughly eight miles, departing Horseshoe Meadows for Mulkey Pass. After the Pass, we hit the PCT—a new section of that ubiquitous trail for me. We paralleled Diaz Creek for a while, and I eyeballed Muah, contemplating our plan B. As we walked, I learned that Mat had stepped down from WTC leadership. "Will you still lead outings?" I

asked. He assured me he would. Meanwhile, Kat would take over as Group 5's leader. While I was sad to hear of Mat's departure, I was stoked for Group 5, which had a history of female leadership. Kat is an accomplished mountaineer, and I knew Group 5 would be in capable hands.



*Above: Mat Kelliher and Meghan Cason leaving Horseshoe Meadows (Photo by Katherine (Han) Park).
Below: Bear lurking behind Megan's tent (Photo by Meghan Cason).*



It was prime PCT season in the southern Sierra, and we were hiking against high-speed traffic. The thru-hikers came at us in droves, unmistakable in what has become the standard-issue uniform of the long-distance hiker: sun hoodie, short shorts, Dirty Girl gaiters, dangling inReach, and a bear canister strapped to the outside of a pack. Mat counted forty of them.

Upon arrival at Ash Meadow's campsites, we immediately dropped our packs and began our scout for water. We made a beeline for the meadow below camp, which was indeed wet—promising, though not ideal for collecting water. From the meadow, we headed south, trying to locate flowing water. Kat steered us toward the dense brush, a clue that there might be water present. Bingo. The water flowing through the creek was plentiful. We were confounded by all the trip reports that claimed the meadow was dry this time of year. I wondered if anyone had looked very hard.

Water problem resolved, we elected to call Ash Meadow home for

the weekend. The campsite was well-established and spacious, directly off the PCT. Our group spread out and pitched our tents. I chose a shaded spot furthest from the others. When we reconvened in the central area to snack and chat, someone noticed a bear sniffing around my tent, about fifty feet away.

"Do you have any food in there?" Katherine asked as we all watched the bear.

"No," I said. "I'm not sure what he's after."

It was unusual to see a backcountry bear so close, so indifferent to our presence. The bear appeared to be an adolescent, but we couldn't be sure. Fascinated, we took photos and watched him poke around the perimeter of my tent. When it became clear that he wouldn't depart of his own volition, we grew concerned. "Hey, bear!" We took turns yelling. "Leave, bear!" The bear was undeterred. This continued for a few minutes until Mat got up to chase it away. "Get out of here, bear!" he yelled while banging a utensil against his cookpot. Mat's tactic did the trick. The bear finally lumbered away, though its lack of urgency was notable.

When I returned to inspect my tent, I discovered that the bear hadn't merely been nosing around. In fact, he'd chewed up

my water bladder. Bad News Bear, I thought. Since I'd pitched my tent the furthest from the group, I decided to relocate, picking up my belongings and re-pitching my shelter closer to the others. Safety in numbers, I figured.

We enjoyed a nice happy hour spread with no further ursine interruptions. After dinner, bear still on our collective brains, the group took extra care stashing their bear cans. Mat and I had brought Ursacks. I usually tie my Ursack to a tree trunk, but since Mat was hanging his PCT-style, I requested to get in on the action. Bags hung, we retreated to our tents before dark. We had a big day on the morrow: approximately seventeen miles round-trip to the summit and back, about a third of which would be cross-country. A good night of sleep would serve us well.

The next morning we rose early. Before hitting the trail, I collapsed my tent, which requires a trekking pole to pitch. I looked around, taking stock of our campsite: Ursacks were hung, bear cans were stashed, and I could see nothing to encourage our Bad News Bear. Still, I had an uneasy feeling, but no time to dwell on it. We were hiking by 6 a.m.

We breezed through the first 5.5 miles, a mostly downhill stretch of the PCT along the Sierra Crest with views of the Owens Valley below. Interesting columns of stacked granite blocks lined the trail in this section, almost like piles of Tetris blocks, speckled with yellow and orange lichen. To the south, Olancho appeared majestic in the early morning light. I'd climbed her for the first time only a few weeks prior, and I kept stopping to take her picture. Before long, it was time to leave the trail and descend into the ominously named Death Canyon, which, despite the name, teemed with life into June, water from Death Canyon Creek still flowing.

The continued elevation loss was a shame, however. Over the next four miles, we'd gain back nearly everything we'd lost. Indeed, the day's elevation profile appeared to be a rollercoaster, undulating with big climbs and long drops. So it goes in the Sierra.

Mat led us through the canyon, where the route-finding was fairly straightforward. We followed the creek to the northwest and then veered south around 9,400' toward our objective. About 300 feet below the summit, the terrain opened up into a large plateau, the incline becoming more gradual toward the summit block. Again, the lichen-splattered granite hoodoos were prevalent, creating an amphitheater dotted with wizened foxtails and limber pines. The overall effect was maze-like and surreal.

Cartago's summit block consists of several pinnacles, and we'd read trip reports claiming it can be tricky to identify the true high point. Thanks to GPS, Mat easily isolated our objective, and it was just a matter of finding the best third-class route to the summit. Kat started



*Katherine Park and Kat Jankaew heading to Cartago on the PCT
(Photo by Meghan Cason).*



climbing a west-facing vertical slab with excellent hand- and footholds. I quickly followed Kat's lead to the summit, the others not far behind.

The summit was narrow and exposed, so we didn't linger too long. We signed the register, snapped a few photos, and admired the expansive views. The Owens Valley spread out beneath us, the LA Aqueduct a visible scar on the landscape. To the south, my new friend Olancho watched over us; to the east, I spied my old friends Langley and Cirque. I picked out Mt. Kaweah to our northwest and the wall of the Great Western Divide.

One at a time, we descended the summit block, carefully reversing our hand- and footholds and retracing our moves back to the plateau. After enjoying lunch in the shade of a foxtail pine, we started our return hike to camp. Initially, we kept to our previous route, but shortly after hitting the creek again, we headed north, paralleling the PCT from within the canyon and shaving about a half mile off our return. Kat took the lead on navigation, seeking a direct route to reconnect with the PCT while trying to avoid an unnecessary rock scramble. Eventually, she identified a hillside that would take us where we

Above: Kat Jankaew leading Cartago Peak's summit block (Photo by Meghan Cason). Right: Meghan Cason reaches Cartago's summit, Olancho behind (Photo by Kat Jankaew).

wanted, and up we slogged through the sand, exposed to the sun, gaining nearly 500 feet over a half mile. The long day was taking its toll, and James needed to take frequent breaks, showing signs of mild heat exhaustion.

We were thrilled to rejoin the PCT finally, but our work was not yet done. We still had another four miles and a few hundred feet to gain on our way back to camp. Still, we cruised, grateful for the comparatively easy terrain. A well-groomed trail can feel like the Autobahn following a cross-country uphill slog. As we approached Ash Meadow around 5 p.m., my Garmin watch clocked roughly 17 miles and 3,500' of gain for the day.

We returned to camp in high spirits, eager to celebrate the day's success with food and drink. Sadly, our Bad News Bear had other plans for us. Carnage awaited. While the Ursacks dangled from their branch unscathed, the bear cans we'd tucked away were strewn about camp — chewed, but unopened. Our gear was less fortunate, however. James's tent had a small tear, and his sit pad had been chewed. The frame of Katherine's tent was bent and damaged. Amazingly, Mat and Kat's tents were unharmed.

My gear had fared the worst, which came as no surprise given the bear's previous interest. My tent had been dragged from where I left it, detritus scattered about. My new camp mug was in pieces, chewed up and spit out. The lid of my



cookpot was dented. But my shelter had suffered the most — slashed in several places, the pattern of bear claws unmistakable. I unzipped the tent and found my sleeping pad punctured and a tear in my quilt.

I performed mental triage. The quilt could be repaired with gear tape, and I was glad I'd brought a foam sleeping pad as backup. I decided to deal with the inflatable once I was home; I was in no mood to fix a puncture in the field. The tent was another story. A 12-oz Zpacks Soloplex I'd splurged on the previous year for my Colorado Trail thru-hike, it was expensive but had proven its worth over the past twelve months. Had it already been destroyed? It was painful to consider. I joined Mat and Kat on the log that served as our dining room bench. I dug into my Ursack and found my whiskey.



*Above: James Yuan descending Cartago Peak summit (Photo by Katherine (Han) Park).
Below: Tent remains (Photo by Meghan Cason).*



"Do you think it can be fixed?" I polled the group.

Responses were muted. I could tell everyone wanted to reassure me despite their skepticism. "Well, if you manage to fix it," Mat said, "it'll have some great battle scars."

He was right, I thought. My tent would have a fantastic story if I could resurrect her.

I didn't want to dwell on the destruction after an otherwise incredible day. We'd successfully climbed a bugaboo of a peak: remote, challenging, and scenic. And so our second happy hour of the weekend commenced. We shared our leftovers from the previous night and a few of us indulged in a bit of bourbon. Dinners were cooked, and I put the bear out of my mind. When I pitched my tent again later, I lay down inside and admired the moon through the claw-shaped tears.

The next day, we broke camp early and hiked out the way we came: six miles on the PCT and then another two miles over Mulkey Pass back to Horseshoe Meadows. Compared to the rest of the weekend, the trek back to the trailhead was quiet and uneventful—the best we could ask for. When the occasional PCT hiker blew past us, I imagined our Bad News Bear lying in wait.

Epilogue

It took a dozen meticulously applied Dyneema patches, but I was able to repair and resurrect my tent. She's spent roughly ten nights in the Sierra this summer since the Bad News Bear mauling, and I'm happy to report that she's successfully weathered a few storms. We live to fight another day!

Mt. Goddard? Nope!

By Tina Bowman

Tom McDonnell led our group of four over Bishop Pass on Monday, August 3, and back out over Bishop Pass on Friday, August 7. In between we had fine camps at Little Pete Meadow in LeConte Canyon, at the outlet of Wanda Lake on the north side of Muir Pass for two nights, and at about 10'000' on the Bishop Pass trail, partway up our climb back to Dusy Basin. It was warm but bearable for much of our hiking time, and we had about an hour of sprinkling at our last camp and distant thunder.

Although heavy rain was at one time predicted for Friday at about the time we expected to be back at Bishop Pass, that turned to a prediction for clear weather.

I've known Tom for years and years and first met Chuck on a trip to Kaweah a few years ago. Michelle Hudson was new to SPS outings and



was another nice addition to my climbing compatriots. We met many on the trail: hikers focused on the PCT or a section, others on the John Muir Trail, many on the North Lake-South Lake loop. We did see a small group of women with helmets on their packs, so I asked what they had climbed—Thunderbolt Peak. There were times when we went quite a while without seeing others; other times it was an almost constant stream.

Unfortunately, ten-hour days at the beginning of the trip took their toll—we just couldn't quite recover enough to move faster (the outing entailed roughly fifty miles and 11,000 feet of gain, mostly with full backpacks). On Wednesday we climbed to Wanda Pass and began the long traverse to Goddard, dropping perhaps a bit too low before ascending higher again near the Goddard Divide. On the ascent, Tom started feeling something suspicious and elected to wait for the three of us while we went for the peak. When the three of us reached a higher spot where we could see the route to the summit, we were dismayed by the distance



Top: Leaders Tom McDonnell and Tina Bowman checking out Wanda Pass from the Wanda Lake Camp. Left: At Wanda Pass, L to R Check Schillings, Tom McDonnell, Tina Bowman (Photos by Michelle Hudson).

Top: View L to R of Wanda pass, the Goddard Divide, and Mt. Goddard from Wanda Lake. At right: Michelle Hudson being eaten by the whale along the John Muir Trail/ PCT in LeConte Canyon (Photos by Tina Bowman).



we had to traverse. It wouldn't have been technically difficult but not easy walking on the side-hill traverse and then steeper climb to the summit. Not knowing how fast Tom

would be able to move with his injury to go back to Wanda Pass and camp, we decided to turn around. We did, however, take a nice break at this spot with grand views of the lakes below Goddard and out to Martha Lake (probably a better approach option because of much less gain for the outing) before returning to Tom and having lunch. We took a more direct line back to Wanda Pass—less up and down on the traverse—and made our way back to camp. Most fortunately, Tom's discomfort remained tolerable, and he was able to do the hike out, slowing a bit on the uphill sections but flying (from my slowpoke downhill perspective) on the downhill.

Despite not reaching the summit, we enjoyed being in the Sierra, sharing stories, having fun at the "whale" or "monster" rock in LeConte Canyon on the JMT, and making many enjoyable memories for future stories. And, yes, I did bring home a mylar balloon from the slopes of Mt. Goddard.

P.S. I enjoy observations from those relatively new to climbing or the SPS, so here are some from Michelle:

Highlights for me

Great start: Tom asking me about my preferred pronouns.

Enjoyable similarity: Chuck and I sharing surf stories . . . and making sense of why we got a later life re-start in hiking.

Fun moment: Tina trying to change the timbre of her voice with a lost helium balloon.

Favorite conversations: (1) How to maintain youthful exuberance while respecting the aging process, listening to our bodies and (2) Importance of leadership.

Favorite emotions: Awe and wonder.

End of trail: Tina and Chuck sharing poetry.



Recess Peak, August 14-16, 2026



By Tina Bowman

When co-leader Beth Epstein and I started our drive north to Lake Thomas A. Edison, we had a group of six for our outing to Recess Peak. By the time we reached the Mono Creek Campground near the lake, we were down two participants. It had rained earlier in the area, and we saw dark clouds as we drove in the Kaiser Pass Road. We had good weather that evening and for the outing.

After a few words of introduction and such on Friday morning, Katherine (Han) Park and Adam Finestone set off with us, sandwiched between the leaders as we made our way up the Bear Ridge Trail, which starts next to the vista point by the Lake Edison dam. Not a whole lot of people use this trail, so it was easy to secure a wilderness permit. However, due to low water, the ferry wasn't running, so we saw more hikers than we expected heading back and forth between Vermilion Valley Resort and the junction with the JMT/PCT for resupplies. Starting at 7:07, going at a rather slow but steady pace, and taking breaks in a rather leisurely manner, we reached the junction at 10:37 (5.7 miles per the Tom Harrison map and about 2200' gain). The trail begins rather steeply but then eases off for very pleasant hiking through forest.

On some maps, the Bear Ridge Trail is shown to continue straight across the JMT/PCT junction. We continued onto a use trail that soon petered out. I'd hiked this route in 2002 and remembered a well-trod horse/packer trail through open forest. That trail shows on the very large John Muir Wilderness maps one used to be able to buy at ranger stations (my 1992 edition shows a trail going to the meadows below Volcanic Knob). I suspect that those meadows have since been closed to grazing, so the packers stopped going there and most of the obvious trail disappeared. It was still lovely, open forest, but rockier than I remembered. Beth, following the Gaia trail going to the lakes west of Recess Peak on her phone, took over the lead to the lower of the two lakes. Occasionally, we passed a duck or followed a bit of use trail, but it was mostly just easy cross-country walking. After a break, lunch, short stops for route finding, we leaders checked out the lower lake, which is rimmed with grass, found a nicely flowing stream at the outlet, and saw lots of good spots for camping. We went back to our patiently waiting participants, and soon we all were claiming our spots. We arrived before 1:30 (another 800' gain and more

West Face of Recess Peak above the middle lakes (Photo by Beth Epstein).

than two miles). As expected, we saw no one after passing the junction until we were heading back down the Bear Ridge Trail on Sunday.

Saturday morning was chilly. We were on our way to Recess at 6:50, angling from the lower lake to cross the north rib of the southwest arete at 10,800', roughly 160' of gain from our camp. From there it was easy walking to the bare area on the south rib, near where it deviates from the north rib. Our pace slowed significantly as we traversed under the cliffs of the north rib over talus and below the trees, then angled up through the trees to reach the southwest face. A better route, which we took on the return, is to drop down into the drainage south of the peak and head to the steep gully that leads toward the gentler slope below the saddle between Recess to the northwest and "Mist Peak" to the southeast. This route avoids a lot of talus on the approach and thrashing through trees. Besides, once we were heading up the southwest face—almost on the southwest arete—we had to take care to avoid steep slabs, but the route went. Eventually, we were on the final talus slope to the peak, reaching the west summit at 12:33. On our climb, indeed even before we reached the JMT/PCT junction the day before, we encountered some patches of snow (hail?), which, fortunately, did not turn out to be a problem. Most of it we could avoid or make a good footstep or two to get beyond a patch.

About forty-five minutes after reaching the top, having lunch, admiring the view of so many SPS peaks, and replacing a plastic jar with a glass one to protect the ersatz register (a restaurant order pad), we started down, finding a pretty easy path down to the top of the gully that leads to the gentle terrain of the drainage. At one point both Beth and I were scouting routes down—and I came upon fairly fresh bear poop—because the gully looks like it just goes vertical. But not so! By descending mostly in the middle and briefly to the right, we kept the descent to class 2. In the valley, Beth and Adam watched a pika for a bit. Easy walking led us to a short climb back up to the bare spot, then on to a crossing of the north rib, and back to camp at 5:00.

Sunday was warmer, and we were heading out at 7:40, Beth leading the whole way back to the cars, which we reached at roughly noon with some nice breaks sprinkled in with easy hiking. We were a small but great group, and we survived the drive out on the one-lane with turnouts Kaiser Pass Road.



Above: Lower lake where we camped (Photo by Katherine (Han) Park). At left: On the summit of Recess Peak, Left to Right: Adam Finestone, Tina Bowman, Katherine (Han) Park, Beth Epstein (Photo by Adam Finestone, courtesy Tina Bowman).



Of Primrose and Predators: *A Week in the Upper Kern* July 4-11, 2026

By Marcus Sproll

The Sierra primrose is currently my favorite wildflower. It is endemic to the high-elevation rock crevices and talus slopes of the High Sierra and has striking magenta flowers with a golden center that add a vivid splash of color to these remote places. Michael Gregory and I saw a lot of primrose throughout the Upper Kern region, and it provided a welcome distraction as we suffered through rugged terrain and relentless hordes of winged micropredators over the week starting July 4th.

Day 1—Shepherd Pass

This was my fourth time crossing Shepherd over the years, and, despite the significant amount of elevation gain, this is an excellent, steady trail, up which we made good time to the pass, where we stopped for lunch and a short nap. From there we followed Tyndall Creek gently

down to the John Muir Trail, where we headed north for a very short while, before getting on the cutoff trail heading west to the Upper Kern Basin. This we walked for a few miles, eventually dropping down to the trail that runs along the banks of the headwaters of the North Fork of the Kern River, and set up camp just north of Milestone Creek, where we stayed for four nights. Almost immediately we were joined by thick clouds of mosquitoes that would haunt our free time for the duration of our stay.

Day 2—Mount Jordan and Mount Geneva

An early start saw us escaping our pestering companions and heading north along the river, eventually walking cross country into the basin between Mount

Above: Michael Gregory approaches Mt. Jordan (L) and Mt. Geneva (R) (All photos by Marcus Sproll).



Jordan and Mount Geneva. We had a good view of Jordan and, even from a distance, we could clearly see the massive summit blocks stacked against each other.

A loose climb westward up a wide scree slope took us to a narrower chute that ended at a saddle along the summit ridge. We turned south just before the saddle and headed along a series of ledges before turning again to climb some class 3 ledges directly up to the summit area. The summit block is large, maybe twenty-five feet high, and rectangular in shape, with

gaps all around and an obvious step across option from adjacent rock to a shallow sloping ramp about halfway up the block.

I slung a large horn and used the rope to belay Michael, who easily made the step across, whereas I tried the face of the block and ended up smearing and stemming up to reach the ramp. We were both thrilled to have completed this tricky summit and enjoyed the expansive views before rappelling down from an anchor we slung around a large boulder on top of the summit block.

We made our way back down the ledges, and once below the chute and scree slope, we began angling gradually up toward neighboring Mount Geneva. What had appeared to be unstable talus from afar, turned out to be fairly solid, and we made good time, topping out midday on the summit. We had excellent views here, both of the Kern Canyon and also of the Western Divide and the peaks we would attempt in the following days.

We carefully descended a steep chute to the east, staying level with each other on opposite sides so as to limit risk from several rocks that we sent tumbling. This deposited us on a plateau pockmarked by tarns and small lakes, one of which we used for a refreshing swim. We lingered, enjoying the sun and the silence, and slowly hiked back to camp and the waiting frenzied horde. We began a contest to see who could swat the most mosquitoes (I hit 164) while cooking and eating dinner, testing a theory that surely there couldn't be an unlimited supply; we were wrong; there is.

Day 3—Thunder Mountain

We started as the day before, heading north along the river, but turned westward earlier and walked along the shore of beautiful Casper Lake and then up a pleasant valley and granite slabs to a lake just below

Thunder Mountain. The scene was spectacular with a ring of serrated spires, Thunder Mountain in front of us, and Table Mountain not far to the south.

The route finding on Thunder was surprisingly straightforward despite what we had read from several trip reports. We wove our way through talus up the eastern ridge, and quickly saw the infamous third class traverse to the summit block. Starting the traverse, we dropped slightly and rounded an airy corner to a notch where a



Above: Michael Gregory (L) and Marcus Sproll (R) at Jordan's summit block. At left: Upper Kern Basin from Geneva's summit.



rectangular rock forms a sort of bridge. Crossing the bridge is optional, as it is possible to cross the notch directly. Once through the notch, the traverse itself is on a series of sometimes exposed ledges that are relatively easily connected by making third class moves either up, or down, before arriving at a large, smooth block bisected by an awkward offwidth crack. Thankfully, for those of us lacking adequate offwidth climbing talent, there is an existing sling secured about halfway up the crack that can be used to pull oneself up. A few more slightly awkward moves put us on the summit proper where we celebrated. We agreed with each other that the summit traverse “wasn’t all that bad” and looked more difficult than it was.



Top: Lake below Thunder Mtn. which is on the far right. Above right: Summit ridge of Thunder Mtn. Above left: Michael Gregory climbing Thunder Mtn. summit crack.



Day 4—Table Mountain, Midway Mountain, and Milestone Mountain

This was to be our biggest day so far, with three remote peaks on the agenda. We started early up a well-built trail that had fallen into a state of disrepair and eventually petered out as we made our way along Milestone Creek and into stunning Milestone Basin. We could clearly see all three peaks in the early morning light with the spire of Milestone especially catching our attention and soon turned off-trail and towards Table. After filling up water at a small lake, we navigated up granite benches and talus to the base of some cliffs, looking for a weakness and quickly finding a ramp that we took to get above the cliffs. We then followed a series of sandy ledges across, and sometimes slightly down, towards a wide chute that ended at a prominent notch to the summit plateau. This we accessed at the top of the chute by clambering through a sort of keyhole before emerging on to a large flat lunar landscape high above the surrounding basins with massive 360-degree views of many familiar mountains, both near and distant.

We arrived at the large summit cairn around midday and, after spending some time enjoying the views and well-earned snacks, we turned our attention to Midway and Milestone. The trip back down the ledges of Table went quickly now that we were familiar with the way and had marked some uncertain junctions with ducks. We headed south to a tarn below Midway, refilled water, and dipped our feet.

The East Ridge of Midway Mountain has a convenient notch about in the middle of the ridge, allowing easy access between the basins on either side. We climbed to the notch

from the tarn, and dropped off most of our gear, before heading up the blocky talus ridge to gain the summit. It now being mid-afternoon and with Milestone still on the itinerary, we didn't linger and began to make the final push. From the notch we entered the upper reaches of Milestone Basin, crossing slabs and large talus blocks to cross a small snowfield below the imposing summit tower. Nearing the peak, we found our route information slightly confusing, but basically it is a matter of following the prominent talus slope up until it becomes a narrow chute

blocked by a large chockstone. Although Secor calls this obstruction "easy" class three, depending on your height, it can be quite awkward, especially on the down climb; certainly, the fatigue of a long day setting in didn't help.



Top: Milestone basin. Milestone Mtn. (L), Midway Mtn. (C), and Table Mtn. (R). Above: Sandy ledges on Table Mtn..



Once past the chockstone, there is solid and fun third class scrambling to the summit.

We congratulated each other on completing the three summits and discussed our route back to the trail, dinner plans, and of course those pesky campsite mosquitoes that we had grown to dread. Coming back to camp tired but exhilarated, we began to discuss the next several days of our itinerary. Michael decided he would head back to Shepherd Pass as he wanted to try Mount Williamson and Mount Tyndall—two fourteeners that I had already completed early in my SPS career. I planned to stick with the original plan of moving camp south and bagging Picket Guard and Kern Point, then going up to Wallace Creek and the JMT to bag Mount Hale and Young, and finishing by hiking back out to Shepherd Pass where Michael would pick me up.

Day 5—Moving Camp and Picket Guard Peak

We broke camp and said our goodbyes. I headed off solo down the trail along the Kern River towards Junction Meadow, where the High Sierra Trail turns up towards Wallace Creek. The trail was overgrown in places, and I lost it a few times before connecting with the HST and finding the turn to the Colby Pass Trail at Junction Meadow. I made my

way up into the Kern-Kaweah River watershed, startling a mule deer that had nowhere to escape to and ended up shadowing me for several miles. The trail passed along the banks of the appropriately named Rockslide Lake and shortly thereafter around midday I found an excellent and well-used campsite next to a pleasant cascading waterfall. The days and miles were beginning to wear on me, and I napped and tried to motivate myself for an afternoon climb of Picket Guard Peak.

This hike was actually quite enjoyable, starting with steep class-two slabby slopes and a meandering route through small pockets of trees, and ending with some solid boulder hopping to the summit. The views from here were incredible, overlooking Picket Creek, the Kaweah Basin, and the serrations of the Kaweah Peaks Ridge. As others have said, Picket Guard is likely the deepest peak on the SPS list, furthest from any trailhead, and it certainly felt that way. Tired but satisfied with this accomplishment, I arrived back at camp for a refreshing bath under the cascade, followed by a large dinner and double dessert as a treat (brownies drizzled with warm raspberry sauce and pecans!).

Above: Michael Gregory nearing Milestone Mtn.



with another expansive view, which again included the Kaweah peaks, but also the peaks around Mount Whitney. Two in particular, Mount Hale and Young, caught my eye as I tried to imagine climbing them the next day. Boy, did they look far away. . . .

I descended, broke camp, and headed back towards Junction Meadow in the heat of the day. The sun was relentless as I hiked up the High Sierra Trail toward its junction with the John Muir Trail/Pacific Crest Trail. This junction at Wallace Creek must be one of the busiest in the High Sierra, and I saw at least twenty parties camping among the trees, or even

Day 6—Kern Point and Wallace Creek

This was the hardest day of the trip. Not only did I experience a dip in energy, both emotionally and physically, but the terrain on Kern Point was more varied and challenging than I had expected. Instead of the consistent features on Picket Guard, the steep slopes and chutes of Kern Point seemed to present a constant shift from vegetation, to loose scree, sand, and medium-sized unstable talus. To distract from the frustrating circumstance, I lost myself in the short stories concerning that famous literary detective Sherlock Holmes. On these rare remote solo trips, I often rely on audiobooks to escape temporarily from what can sometimes feel like a kind of madness that finds me slogging up an uninspiring, loose distant peak by myself. For forty minutes “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” pulled me away with a tale of “revenge and romance, even a touch of comedy.” Presently I found myself atop Kern Point and was rewarded

almost directly on the trail itself, and at least another dozen passing through. As a result of the mix of abundant water and warm-blooded bodies, the concentration of mosquitoes here in early July is mind blowing.

Above: Approaching Picket Guard Peak. Below: Marcus Sproll on the summit of Kern Point, the Kaweahs behind.





Day 7—Mounts Hale and Young and Tyndall Creek

I woke up with very stiff legs, but excited for the last two peaks of the trip, and felt grateful for the continued excellent weather. I approached Mount Young directly from the northwest, heading up talus and sandy slopes to the summit.

Atop the peak, stunning views of the Whitney area opened up, and familiar peaks came into view: Langley farther south; Whitney and Russell immediately to the east; and Barnard, Tyndall, and Williamson to the north. Dropping down the eastern slope, I encountered an abundance of Sierra primrose thriving along the base of large boulders sitting atop the lunar gravel surface. It seemed an appropriate bit of pageantry for this majestic area, providing a triumphal welcome for the completion of ten challenging SPS peaks on this journey.

From Mount Hale I made good time down the south slopes to join the JMT near Timberline Lake. Passing through busy Crabtree Meadows, where I encountered the eclectic mix of hikers that he

area around Whitney always seems to attract, I headed back towards Wallace Creek. I grabbed my gear, and pushed on northbound on the JMT to Tyndall Creek, where I spent my final night and patched together a meal with my dwindling food supplies,

Day 8—Exiting Shepherd Pass

With the peaks done, my body and mind seemed to be on auto pilot with one singular priority: get back to the trailhead and get food, lots of fresh food. As I descended Shepherd Pass, I encountered a hiker, who had climbed Mount Tyndall and would be driving north towards Bishop. She offered me a ride, and, as soon as I could get service, I notified Michael, who agreed to meet us for tacos. My chauffeur was a PCT veteran, having completed two back-to-back tours, and earning the moniker “Lightening Rod.” Turns out we had a mutual friend and were soon chatting about trail life, peaks, and nineties radio “butt rock,” which we played at high volume as we bounced along the deep ruts from the trailhead at Symmes Creek towards Onion Valley Road and the 395 beyond.



Above: View from Mt. Young summit. Right: Mt. Young (front right) and Mt. Hale (back left).



Royce and Merriam Peaks seen from Royce Pass (Photo by John Southern).

Mt. Julius Caesar (13,196'), Royce Peak (13,280'), and Merriam Peak (13,103')

August 6th-10th, 2026

By John Southern

Day 1—Inbound to Honeymoon Lake (10,400') Basecamp

Our party started at the Pine Creek trailhead around 11:30 am, climbing past the old Pine Creek tungsten mine (idle since 2001) and the granite scarps above it, with views up to Mt. Tom, which I'd climbed last November. Water was plentiful the whole way up. The Pine Creek Trail has the usual annoying stock steps and is pretty steep, but it gets you up fast. It took us about 4.5 hours to clear 6.51 largely exposed miles from the lot to the basecamp at Honeymoon Lake at 10,400'. There are several great spots to be had around the lake, and we chose one that was off the trail and slightly away from the water and that included views of the unnamed massif to the south. The tents went up just ahead of a thunderstorm as the convection cycle rolled in at 4 pm. We rode out the storm in our tents until around 7:00, made dinner, and went to bed.

Day 2—Mount Julius Caesar (Successful Summit)

Up at 5am—alpenglow means “time to go.” We followed the glacial moraine on an easily discernable trail, up toward Italy Pass, crossing granite slabs, tarns, wildflower meadows, creeks, and finally Mt. Julius Caesar came into view off the flank of Italy Pass. We had second breakfast at the pass, looking out over Lake Italy to Mount Gabb, Mount Hilgard, and Seven Gables. From there we made good time up solid and stable talus to the summit that offered us 360° views across the range: circling counterclockwise from Mount Morgan (South) in the northeast to Red and White, Hilgard, Gabb, Seven Gables, Royce, and Humphreys to Tom a little south of east. We could even make out the entire Palisades Group with Mt. Sill sticking up in the

middle. Clouds tightened into real thunderheads mid-lunch, so we started down. The team beat the weather back to camp (9 miles, 8.5 hours round trip), but it caught us right as we started dinner. After waiting out more rain in the tents, we got in a swim, made dinner, then got some sleep.

Day 3—Royce Peak (Successful Summit) and Merriam Peak (Aborted Due to Weather)

Our party slept in till 6AM, ate a hasty breakfast, and then headed cross-country from camp, over Royce Pass near Treasure Benchmark and down into the Royce Lakes basin, one of the most stunning glacial moraines I've seen in the Sierra, ringed by the buttresses of Treasure Benchmark, Royce, and Merriam Peaks. Up we went through the couloir below the Royce-Merriam Saddle. After caching our water, we debated which peak to start with. The convection cycle was starting earlier than usual, and it was pretty obvious, that unless things changed, we'd only be bagging one peak. We voted for Royce and made good time up Class 2 sand and talus, to the summit plateau. From there it was a quick stroll to the blocks of talus that make up the summit. (If someone wants to haul a nicer summit box up there, it might be appreciated. The current one is about the size of a notebook and is not weathering well.)

We knew the weather window was closing and wanted to be off by early afternoon. But as we were eating lunch, the weather rolled in ahead of schedule. The three of us ducked under a boulder twenty feet below the summit to check the forecast on the Garmin, decided it was better to run than to hide, and down-climbed fast, with controlled scree-skiing back to the saddle. After a quick break, we descended back into the chute below the saddle and on down to Lake 11,658. From there we cut cross-country at a rapid clip in order to intercept the Pine Creek Trail, which meant crossing a wide, treeless, boulder-strewn moraine—the alpine equivalent of a dinner plate—while watching a bolt of lightning hit Middle



Above: David and Emerson Freeland scrambling up Mt. Julius Caesar from the saddle. Below: The author on the summit of Julius Caesar (Photos by John Southern).



Palisade several miles south. The storm abated, though hail had hit the basin below us not long before. The wind shifted, and the storm reformed, pushing back north as we descended through a narrow gap between two cliff bands on wet granite ledges, finally dropping into tree line and back to camp.

Day 4—Outbound

Our team got in a polar plunge at dawn, then broke camp and headed down. It was a pleasure to be on the downhill and enjoy the surrounding geology and massive trees that surround the trail. Views of the Owens Valley and White Mountains opened up almost immediately, and it made for a great morning after some summit success. An easy, long descent back through the golden door into the noise of the modern world.

Dead Horse Camp

By Mark Maier

My father, Ted Maier, was an SPS founder. Among his SPS stories was one I called “Dead Horse Camp.” It was a story my father told vividly, in part because of the macabre nature, which suited him well. He had a little thing for macabre stories, and classic horror movies, and especially delighted getting kids excited by them. My mother was not enthusiastic about this, but most of my friends loved them. I always wondered if Dead Horse Camp was really true, or mostly true, or heavily embellished. After meeting some SPS people in winter 2025, I discovered that a short account of what must have for sure been the actual trip was published in a *Sierra Echo*. I also discovered some movie film that I had inherited when my mother passed. After I had the film digitized, I realized that it must have been shot on the notorious trip. Here is the tale he told.

Several days into a long backpack we came into a camp near a river late, after dark. We noticed an odd smell around the camp but it was too dark to see, and we were too tired to go searching around with flashlights. I went straight to bed.

The next morning I got up and walked down to the stream for some water. I dipped my Sierra cup into the stream and was putting it to my lips when I looked up in the stream and saw a horse’s head. A horse’s head sitting in the middle of the stream with dried blood running down its nose to the stream. I looked down the stream and saw a leg, upstream another leg. Looking around the trees I saw stuff, like guts, hanging from the branches. I ran back to camp to wake everybody up but one guy would not wake up.

That morning we sent two people to run out to the nearest trailhead to get help. That night I could hear him going into Cheyne-Stokes breathing. It sounds like somebody breathes less and less, then seems to stop breathing, then suddenly starts gasping (insert gasping breath sounds) breathing harder and harder. Then it slowly dies away until you don’t hear breathing anymore. Just about the time I think I better get up and start rescue breathing, he gasps again, and it all happens over again. This went on all night.

The next morning a big sheriff with a six shooter on his hip arrived with another man and a pack train of horses. He had shanghaied a doctor from the local hospital to come along. They also had a mule equipped with a stretcher. The



Doctor and patient (from Ted Maier’s film, digitized by his son Mark Maier).



Heading to Shepherd Pass during the evacuation (from Ted Maier's film, digitized by his son Mark Maier).

doctor examined the man for a while and eventually he pulled out a syringe and filled it from several bottles. I asked him what he thought was wrong and he said "I'm not sure, but whatever it is this ought to kill it."

We got the man into the stretcher, and they got him attached to the mule and started packing to leave. At one point I asked the Sheriff:

"Why do you have a mule for the stretcher?"

"Well, mules have better endurance than horses. They're more surefooted than horses. And they just behave better, are easier to lead around, and get the job done."

Then why don't you all ride mules?"

"CAUSE THEY'RE MULES!"

A few weeks later we learned what happened. Some horse packer was in the area when one of his horses died. He was way back in the backcountry so no way did he want to try and bring it out. He didn't want to have to bury it. Turned out he was transporting some dynamite and thought nobody would be back here for a long time, so . . . We heard the sheriff made him go back there and pack everything out.

Some notes: I learned that this story has been told in the 60th Anniversary issue of the *Sierra Echo*, and reprinted on page 9 here: https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/sps2026_v70-3_0.pdf. Events are compressed in the version I was told, with the dead horse camp encountered on a Monday and the illness happening on a Thursday. Whether that compression was in his story or my memory will never be known. The person who had to be evacuated was Roger Gaefcke. A few years ago when my

mother passed, I came into possession of many Sierra slides and some super 8 movies. After having some digitized, I believe I found that my father had shot film of the weeklong trip described in the *Echo* article. I posted the section that appears to show the rescue at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfV9wxhZR6FiVxCZzzU7Sng>. The pictures used here were taken from that film. The full film can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDgfJbeMaiU>.

Outings



We've chosen the photo at left taken by Mat Kelliher, showing climbers ascending Tower Peak on an SPS trip, to represent the outings section. Do you have a photo you would like to see here? If so, please send your submission as an email attachment to tina@bowmanchange.com or via USPS to Tina Bowman.

Sept 12-14 | Sat-Mon SPS

I: Mt Bago (11,870'): Join us Sat for a jaunt over Kearsarge Pass (11,811') to camp at Charlotte Lk (10,400') for two nights (4.7 mi, 2650' gain to the pass and about 4 mi down to the lake). Sun we will take the trail back a short ways and then go x-c to cl 1-2 Mt. Bago, roughly 2 mi, 1500' gain. On the summit we'll enjoy great views into Kings Canyon and of surrounding peaks. We'll more or less retrace our steps to camp. Sun, hike out. Medical form and bear canisters required. Send conditioning to Ldr: Tina Bowman, Co-ldr: Gary Schenk.

Sep 26 | Sat LTC, WTC, HPS DPS, SPS

I: Navigation: Mt. Pinos Navigation Noodle: Navigation noodle at Mt. Pinos to satisfy the basic (I/M) or advanced (E) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address, telephone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. (This

is a backcountry outing; a medical form will be required.) Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leadership Reference Book* for more information.

Oct 17-18 | Sat-Sun LTC

Wilderness First Aid for Sierra Club Outings

Leaders: Get information and register for this course here: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po0000267ufMIAQ&mapLinkHref=https://maps.google.com/maps&daddr=Wilderness%20First%20Aid%20for%20Sierra%20Club%20Outings%20Leaders@34.360588,-117.631898>.

Note: Please check the bottom of the SPS home page (<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-peaks>) or Leadership Training Committee home page (<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings>) for more training and other outings.

Please note: Currently the Sierra Club requires all participants on an outing more than an hour from help to complete a medical form, and leaders for such outings must complete a safety management plan. Both are fairly simple forms, which are available at the LTC web site here : <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/forms-resources>. You can now register for an outing online and complete the medical form there (no need for the other). You can also sign the waiver online there.

OUTINGS

Leaders in this issue's schedule:

Tina Bowman tina@bowmanchange.com
Karla Kellems karlakellems@gmail.com
Tohru Ohnuki erdferkel944@yahoo.com
Robert Myers rmmyers@ix.netcom.com
Gary Schenk gary@hbfun.org
Ann Pedreschi Shields apedreschi@sbcglobal.net

Oct 17-18 | Sat-Sun

LTC

M/ER: Rock Practice/Check Practical Exam: The Rock practice/checkoff event is a restricted outing. Please join the Rock and AMP Leadership team for a weekend of practice and checkoff for the rock climbing skills necessary to lead Sierra Club M and E outings. Approval is required, and the participant must apply with the Rock Chair at the following website page: <https://www.advancedmountaineeringprogram.org/p/sierra-club-rock->

From the Outings Chair

Gary Schenk, SPS Outings Chair, gary@hbfun.org

SPS Leaders,

I hope that by now all of our leaders are aware of the new First-aid, Wilderness First-aid, and CPR requirements starting January 2027. The Angeles Chapter Outings Management Committee (OMC) is doing their best to minimize the impact on our trip leaders. Efforts are being made to enlighten the national office about the negative effects on our outings program.

Trying to make this as painless as possible, Angeles Chapter may reimburse up to \$250 for a Wilderness First-aid course.

The following is from the OMC:

As things now stand, National's new first aid policies will go into effect on January 1, 2027. Those policies say that

At least one leader on each backcountry outing must be current in at least a 16-hour Wilderness First Aid course;

All leaders on each backcountry outing must be current in CPR;

At least one leader on each front country outing must be current in CPR.

This helpful page, <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/first-aid>, from the Leadership Training Committee has an overview of the new first aid requirements and resources.

1. Wilderness First Aid: This page, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FUNI58jg2yQitZV5cRSs-5Uiubbl16J5/edit>, has more detail about the Wilderness First Aid requirements and how to

take or renew WFA. If you scroll down the page, there is a list of WFA providers and courses, some in our area and some not. Some notable nearby WFA courses:

The San Geronio Chapter's Karla Kellems is organizing a very affordable 16-hour WFA course on October 17-18 at Harwood Lodge:

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po000022wSQ9IAM&mapLinkHref=> . (The course requires currency in CPR, but if there's enough interest, a CPR course might be added for that Friday afternoon/evening.)

John Jacobs's Adventure Risk Management holds WFA courses in Idyllwild. They have one 24- hour course this fall and two 16-hour courses,

<https://adventureriskmanagement.com/wilderness-medicine/course-schedule/#wilderness-first-aid-wfa>.

Steve Schuster's popular fall 24-hour Wilderness First Aid course in Fullerton is full, as is its wait list. In October or November, Steve will be opening registration for his spring course. You could email Steve at steve.n.wfac2@gmail.com to be put on an email notification list.

2. CPR and Basic First Aid: There's info about providers on the Leadership Training Committee First Aid page, <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/first-aid>. We expect that the Chapter will sponsor some more CPR/AED and Basic First Aid classes this fall, but the dates haven't been set yet. We'll let you know when they are.

3. Reimbursements for active leaders or leader candidates: the Chapter will reimburse up to \$250 for approved WFA courses; this page, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FUNI58jg2yQitZV5cRSs-5Uiubbl16J5/edit>, also has info about this. Some entities are also setting aside money for WFA reimbursements.

OUTINGS

[rating-me.html](#). With the application, all participants are to provide a climbing resume with details on rock climbing skills, achievements, and any participation on Sierra Club M/E outings. Please also reference the Rock M/E Checkoff form located here: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/rock-newme-1217.pdf>. All AMP graduates are welcome to attend, but please fill out application. Preference will be given to AMP graduates and current SC I-rated leaders (provisional status OK) with ambitions to achieve M or E rating. Ldr: Greg Mason, Co-Ldr: Tohru Ohnuki.

Nov 21-22 | Sat-Sun
HPS, DPS, SPS

LTC, WTC,

I: Navigation: Mission Creek Preserve Navigation Noodle: Navigation noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, and homework. Sunday checkoff or additional practice. Send email with contact info (mailing address, phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. (This is a backcountry outing; a medical form will be required.) Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leadership Reference Book* for more information.

SPS safety chair Doug Mantle notes that the INYOSAR (Inyo Search and Rescue) site on Instagram is a useful tool for determining the latest safety risks in the Sierra with related stories.

SPS outings can always be viewed online on the electronic Angeles Chapter Schedule of Activities:

<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/activities>

<https://sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-peaks/outings-schedule>

Treasurer's Statement Year to Date (1/1/26–6/30/26)

Money In		\$6215
Donations		780
Interest		0.00
Membership		1030
Banquet Income		4375.00
Merchandise Income		30
Office Income (Opening Deposit USBank)		0.00
Money Out		-\$2500.86
Banquet		-1943.10
Speaker Honorarium 2026		-1000.00
Speaker Expenses 2026		-521.09
Printing 2025		-126.85
Banquet Refund 2026		-170.00
Almanson Final Payment 2026		-125.16
Echo Expense		-219.30
Merchandise Expense		0.00
Office Expenses		-251.97
PayPal Expenses		-77.45
Taxes		-6.98
	Money In	\$6215
	Money Out	-\$2500.86
	Net Total:	\$3714.14
ASSETS		5/31/2026
Paypal		\$3642.04
USBank Checking		\$7083.61
NET WORTH		\$10,725.65

OUTINGS

Thinking of leading a trip or looking for info on a trip you've already decided on?

SPS Safety Chair Doug Mantle invites you to e-chat about it, get his input, flesh out your ideas—sierradoug@icloud.com.

Most wilderness permit reservations are now made through <http://recreation.gov>. For day use permits for Desolation Wilderness, get a free permit from a local Forest Service office any time of year or at the trailhead in summer. For overnight permits year round, go to recreation.gov.

INYO NATIONAL FOREST

Web site: www.fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/home

All wilderness permits are reserved through <http://recreation.gov>. Follow instructions regarding permit pick up. This includes the “walk-up” permits (and you now have to pay for them!).

Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center, Lone Pine, CA
(760) 876-6200

White Mountain Ranger Station
Bishop, CA 93514
(760) 873-2500

Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
(760) 924-5500

Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center, Lee Vining, CA 93541
(760) 647-304

KERN PLATEAU

Web site: www.fs.usda.gov/sequoia

Wilderness permits are required only for overnight stays in the Golden Trout Wilderness. For trips departing from a Sequoia National Forest trailhead, permits are free via email using the application you'll find at https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sequoia/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev3_059517. For entry into

the Golden Trout Wilderness from Inyo NF or Sequoia/Kings Canyon NPS, make your reservation through <http://recreation.gov>.

Cannell Meadow Ranger District
105 Whitney Road
P.O. Box 9
Kernville, CA 93238
Phone: 760/376-3781
Fax: 760/376-3795

Tule River Ranger District
32588 Highway 190
Springville, CA 93265
Phone: (559) 539-2607

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Web site: www.nps.gov/yose

Yosemite wilderness permit reservations become available by lottery twenty-four weeks in advance through <http://recreation.gov>. Any remaining reservations become available on a first-come, first-served basis after the lottery process is complete for that week's reservations up until seven days in advance. May-October walk-up unreserved permits (40% of the trailhead quota) are available on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the day before the intended date at permit issuing stations. Reservations aren't needed from November through April, but permits are required. Trailhead quotas are in effect in winter. See <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm>. If your starting trailhead is outside Yosemite NP, obtain your permit from the land agency that manages that trailhead.

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NP

47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA. 93271-9599
Phone (559) 565-3766 for permit & trail info. Fax (559) 565-4239

For general information go to www.nps.gov/seki. For wilderness permits go to <https://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/backpacking.htm>

Up to six months in advance of your trip, permits may be reserved at <http://recreation.gov>. Permits may be self-issued outside the quota period, from roughly mid-September to mid-May.

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST (WESTSIDE) ENTRY

Web site: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sierra>

Ansel Adams Wilderness—North
Bass Lake Ranger District
57003 Road 225
North Fork, CA 93643
Phone: (559) 887-2218

Ansel Adams Wilderness—South
John Muir, Kaiser, and Dinkey Lakes
Wildernesses
Pineridge/Kings River Ranger District
29688 Auberry Road
Prather, CA 93651
Phone: (559) 855-5355

See https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sierra/passes-permits/?cid=fsbdev7_018115 for wilderness permit information; reservations are made at <http://recreation.gov>.

PASSAGES



Bob Pickering

By Kathy Rich

Bob Pickering touched the lives of quite a few peakbaggers, so it was both shocking and sad to learn of his death at age 77 from a fall near the summit of Mt Washington in Oregon while on a solo climb on July 9th. Bob was a highly accomplished, skilled, and knowledgeable climber. He not only completed the SPS Peaks List, but he also had earned a record of six Andy Smatko Explorer Emblems (the most of anyone).

As Phil Bates commented, "I feel lucky to have served with Bob for two years on the SPS Emblem Committee, where Bob was always an energetic, knowledgeable and opinionated participant. He will be a very difficult person to replace on the Emblem

Committee. I found Bob to be a very generous person in terms of sharing his knowledge on climbing and Sierra peaks. Numerous times I reached out to him for beta on upcoming climbs or for input related to route ratings for the Scrambler Ratings project; Bob always provided prompt and very helpful feedback and opinions."

I first reached out to Bob in 2019 when I learned he was looking for company to go climb Finger, Tunemah, and Reinstein, three deep SPS peaks that both of us needed towards completing the SPS list. Since we both lived in the Reno area, Bob suggested we do a local hike to see if our hiking speeds would be compatible. We met up on a hot June morning to climb Tohakum Peak, a peak north of Reno on the Western States list. All went well, so we planned a five-day Sierra backpack for early September. Along with successfully bagging the peaks (our climb of Finger Peak on September 9, 2019, was Bob's penultimate peak to complete the SPS list),

*Bob Pickering climbing Two Eagle Peak, 2022
(Photo by Ben Fadder-Ratner).*

PASSAGES

while passing time on the long hike in and out, I learned that Bob was quite an interesting character. Before he became an avid peakbagger, he was once an amateur race car driver in Southern California. After moving to Reno about twenty years ago, he and his wife Dovie bought a ranch where they trained mustangs. Bob always talked enthusiastically about how much he enjoyed working with horses and looked forward to his daily ride with his favorite mustang. (I got to visit his ranch one time to pick up my lost boots.) Another passion of Bob's was computers and processing data, skills he learned working in the early days of the gaming industry in Reno. This, combined with his extensive experience climbing peaks, made him a valuable asset on the SPS Emblem Committee, reviewing people's Smatko Emblem submissions. As Phil commented. His presence on the Emblem Committee will be sorely missed.

Apparently, the gaming company that Bob worked for had a mountaineering club, and this was how he got into climbing and peakbagging. I remember his telling me that Lost Cannon Peak (by Sonora Pass) was one of his favorite climbs and that during his working years he enjoyed taking newbie climbers up there. At first, he didn't pay much attention to lists and would just climb peaks that looked fun. At some point he learned about the SPS list and discovered that he'd already climbed three-quarters of the list without even trying. So, then he was on a mission to complete it, which he did in 2019. Another goal he set for himself was to recomb all the California Fourteeners at age seventy (many of them he'd climbed several times already, including Mt. Shasta thirty-five times).

Bob liked to take young climbers under his wing, one of whom was Amin Faraday. When I heard that Bob was planning to take Amin up Starlight in August 2020, I got him to agree to add Daryn Dodge and Sean Casserly to the trip roster. They had a very successful trip, bagging Thunderbolt and North Palisades as well. Daryn recounted Bob's telling them about his impressive solo traverse of the Palisades back in 1991 (the first time he completed all the 14ers). Thunder Mtn is another tough peak that needs a confident lead climber, and both Corrine Livingston and I still needed it to finish the SPS list. At Corrine's request I successfully lobbied Bob to plan a trip there for early August 2020. Bob didn't need



*Bob Pickering leading Starlight Peak, August 22, 2020
(Photo by Amin Faraday).*

to do Thunder again, but he agreed to take us as long as we plied him with chocolates). We ended up with quite a large group on Thunder as Craig Barlow, Samantha Olsen, Louie Kroll, and Bill Carpenter also joined us. We were all very grateful for Bob's excellent lead, and he was happy too that it went so well.

Other lists that I managed to turn Bob onto were the Vagmarken and Tahoe Ogul lists (since discovering the SPS list, like many of us he became a bit of a list addict). Reno is a good base for many of these peaks, and by 2024 Bob had finished both lists. Another peak that piqued Bob's interest after Phil Bates told us about it was Jakes Peak, a fairly difficult climb on the west side of Lake Tahoe near Rubicon Peak. A plan was hatched in October 2024, to check it out. Along with Daryn and me, *(Continued on page 46)*



Mystery Peak Challenge Answer

First to answer the puzzle of a photo taken by Ted Maier on an early SPS outing was chair Michael Chamoun, writing, "The peaks are Bear Creek Spire and Mount Dade. The lake is Long Lake? I am unsure about that one." One of the co-editors asked him, "Can you really see the summit of Dade?" His reply was (after Ron identified the lake—see the following), "You're right. I got too eager. You can't see



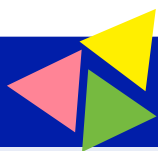
Dade as it is north (right) of the Hourglass Couloir." Next was Ron Bartell with "Bear Creek Spire at left and the Dade hourglass. Will have to look at maps tomorrow to try and ID the lake," and he later added Long Lake and Pip-Squeak Spire for the peak in the middle of the photo, adding, "I climbed it in 1975 (I think before it had a name)." Daryn Dodge, another regular in the puzzle contest, was next and wrote, "Without consulting a map or using AI, I am guessing (again) from memory that the group is at Ruby Lake and that is Bear Creek Spire in the background. Please send prize money for my correct answer via Venmo." The co-editor suggested that Daryn look again and change his mind about the lake. He later suggested one of the Treasure Lakes. The co-editor had thought so too, until she looked at a photo she'd taken of BCS from one of the Treasure Lakes. As far as other details of interest, the co-editor was rather worried about that ice axe sticking out so dangerously! Kelty packs were very popular then.

Bob Pickering Passages, continued from page 45

Samantha and Louie joined us as well. It turned out to be an all-day affair with lots of cross country, but as usual Bob had done his research well, and we managed to find a way to the impressive summit, up loose granite with few handholds. It was a fine day and another memorable climb with Bob.

The last time we saw Bob was just a month before his passing when we tried a novel scrambling route up another Tahoe area peak, Red Lake Peak, organized by Don Palmer, who finished the list years ago and whom we had recently met on a local hike. On that day Bob was in good spirits and excited to be on the home stretch to

completing the Western States list, which at 283 peaks is no small feat. The Western States list was another list that Bob "complained" that I had gotten him addicted to, but I think he really enjoyed the purposefulness of chasing a list, especially when some might consider him to be "over the hill" in his late seventies. In the last two years alone, Bob had climbed around fifty peaks on the WSC list. At the time of his death, he only had seven peaks left including Mt Washington and North Sister, both 4th class climbs in the Cascades of Oregon. All were planned for this summer with a list finish on Avawatz Peak (on the DPS list) in the fall. Amin Faraday and Ben Fadder-Ratner were among those planning to attend. Sadly, it was not to be.



Mystery Peak Challenge



This occasional just-for-fun puzzle is for you to figure out which SPS peak or peaks are featured in the image. If you have a fine mystery peak puzzle to challenge *Echo* readers, please send it to tina@bowmanchange.com. We welcome any mountain images, including those from popular culture—imagery used and abused in film and print!

Four peaks on the SPS list are visible in this photo. What are they, left to right? Where was the Mystery Peak photographer? Good luck!

Send your answer to Tina Bowman at tina@bowmanchange.com.

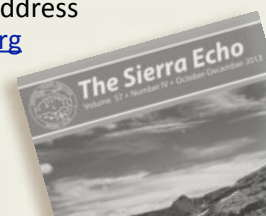
The Sierra Echo

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Deadline for all submissions is three (3) weeks prior to the publication date, i.e., Feb 22, May 25, Aug 25, and Nov 24.

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