

by Gary Schenk

# From A to Z: Mt. Abbot

**M**t. Abbot was awesome and fatiguing. Ron Zappen got up there a day ahead of us. He tried Mt. Dade, but the Hourglass Couloir was dry and just too ugly.

Mary Jo Dungfelder and I picked up our permit and hiked in to rendezvous with Ron at Treasure Lakes. Every trail should be like Little Lakes Valley: flat and beautiful.

We took the standard reported route, leaving the trail before Gem

drought year, we only had to deal with a couple of snowy spots, and then arrived at the base of the North Couloir. We donned crampons and climbed a short distance to just below where the couloir branches. We then followed a “use trail” to the beginning of the rock portion of the route. We saw axes and crampons lying there, which explained the voices we had heard earlier.

Luck was with us, just as we were jettisoning our snow gear, the oth-

us to hang out while they got out of the line of fire, which we did.

We took off up the rock, staying close together. We moved carefully and had no problems. The underlying rock is solid, it’s just the muck on top that is problematic. It’s a well ducked route, which provided some guilt-ridden reassurance.

We made the ridge and started our traverse, Mary Jo doing the route finding. The rock here was superb. Easy third class, with just a couple of exposed moves. We enjoyed this very much.

We signed in, Ron earning his well deserved SPS Emblem on his 112th peak, thirty years after his first attempt on Abbot. Abbot has a “swell view,” by the way.

We then down climbed carefully, only discharging one group of rocks on the descent, fortunately no one was below us. Again, we stayed close together, so there was never any problems.

Then came the endless talus hop back to Treasure Lakes.

The next morning we slept in and hiked out, following the outlet from Treasure Lakes this time. This went mostly very well. We made it out in time for breakfast at Tom’s Place. Budweiser really is the breakfast of champions.



*Ron Zappen on Abbot, his 10th emblem peak.*

Lake, crossing the ridge and down to the lakes. We hollered for a bit and found Ron.

The next morning we got a late start, 7 am. We did the endless talus thing to Treasure Saddle. Being a

er party appeared above us. They warned us to watch out and take cover. We did, hiding behind some rock. They came on down, dislodging only a few harmless bombs.

They gave us some beta and asked

MT. PERKINS,  
MT. WYNNE,  
MT. PINCHOT & COLOSSEUM MTN.  
May 25-27, 2007

**4 peaks in 3 days on a loop route.  
Go early in the year, you need some  
snow but not too much.**

First - a **quick summary** of the trip with more details to follow. Begin in Armstrong Canyon. The first day, hike into the bowl east of Mt. Perkins and climb the north side of that bowl up to the sierra crest. From the crest, climb Mt. Perkins. Descend the class 2 west side down to the lakes to camp. On day two climb Wynne, traverse to Pinchot and break camp. Move down the canyon and into the bowl just west of Colosseum and north of Mt. Cedric Wright to a new camp. Day three, climb Colosseum and traverse the north ridge of Colosseum to Armstrong col. Descend the col back into Armstrong canyon to the car.

**Day One.** Begin early and pack light. Except for the food you eat, you will be carrying all this gear TWICE over the Sierra crest. The first day is a long day. Armstrong Canyon is dry and you have no water except snow. Follow a "use" trail that comes off the dirt road. It goes up on the south side of the canyon. Once you are into the upper part of the canyon, it might be wise to put some snow in a black trash bag and lay it out flat and anchor it down with some rocks. That way when you come back 2 days later it will be your water. Just remember where you put it so you don't leave it. Near the upper area of the canyon (about 3000M), move to the north side of the valley. Climb the class 2 slopes north-north east of Mt. Perkins. Keep toward the trees where the terrain is easier. Once you get above the trees, the footing is solid.

As you reach 3600m, start angling westward, staying on the ridge as it goes west toward the Sierra Crest. There is a little class 2 right near the top, then suddenly you are peering over the west side to see Wynne, Pinchot, Arrow, etc. It took me just under 5 hours to reach this spot. The worst of day one is over. From the crest you can look directly south toward Perkins. Descend slightly to the saddle on the north ridge of Perkins and drop your pack. If you are low on water, put snow in a black trash bag again. If it is a sunny day, you will have at least a quart of water in the bag after climbing Perkins. If it is overcast and cold, forget it. The climb up Perkins will take just over one hour to climb and come back to the pack if you don't lounge around. During the climb if you stay on the crest it is third class and loose. If you stay about 15 to 30 feet on the west side of the crest, you will avoid many ups and downs and find easy class two.

After climbing Perkins and you are back to the pack, start descending the class two slopes to the west heading for the small pair of lakes at 3415 southeast of Mt. Wynne. These lakes are just east of where the John Muir trail makes a turn to the west. Look around for the best descent. It goes. Camp here for the night. I was lounging by the lake at 3:30pm.

**Day Two.** Climb the east ridge of Mt. Wynne. This is class 2 if you stay on the ridge. Near the summit, go slightly to the north side and up. This should take less than two hours. While relaxing on the summit, you can easily view the class 3 traverse toward Pinchot. This is why you climbed

Wynne first so you could scope out the traverse. It looks much worse than it is. By doing Wynne first you will be climbing the class 3 stuff rather than coming down it had you climbed Pinchot first. Now, traverse over to Pinchot for some great views. Descend the class 2 east ridge of Mt. Pinchot and make your way back to camp and pack up. Pick up the John Muir trail and go south for about three fourths of a mile, then head cross country south east, over easy slopes up into the canyon forming a bowl just north of Mt. Cedric Wright. Stay on the north side of the stream until you reach the three little lakes around 3315M. There are plenty of nice camp sites in the trees on the north side of the two highest lakes. I was sipping hot chocolate and soaking in the Sierra karma by 2:00pm.

**Day Three.** The plan is to climb Mt. Colosseum and go out to the cars. One can do this two different ways depending on your climbing ability and comfort with exposure. If you are comfortable doing class 4 climbing with all your gear, then you can pack up camp, climb Colosseum, and traverse its north ridge to Armstrong col. If you are not comfortable with this, then you should day hike Colosseum with only a day pack, return to camp, pack up gear and climb up the class 2 slopes just east-north-east of camp going to Armstrong col.

I opted for the traverse. I was on the Summit of Colosseum in less than 2 hours. This is an easy climb. The traverse on the north ridge going down from the summit toward Armstrong col has 4 major hazards. I will describe these in order of DESCENT from the summit.

Start off the summit on its southeast side and drop 40 to 50 feet. Traverse back toward the north under the summit block below its east facing headwall. There may be a snowfield. Below the snowfield are rocky cliffs. The traverse across the snow field ends at the first notch. You now go around a pinnacle on its east side to the second notch. It is only about 50 feet of easy class 2. While standing in the second notch facing north, you look at a

headwall. Climb from the notch up the headwall toward the crest of the ridge. There are several possible routes going up. I would rate each of them class 4 due to the exposure. The rock is pretty good with good holds, but there is exposure and it is rather vertical. I found the best holds on the most exposed route. Climb the wall and gain the crest staying on the west side. Once back near the crest, you can start descending again toward the north on low class 3 rock. I stayed near the crest but on its west side. You will gradually begin to see the ridge drop down into the third big notch.

Drop down into the notch. While standing in the third notch facing north you are now facing yet another blocky headwall. The rock here is more loose than the previous climb. Test every hold. Climb the blocks toward the crest of the ridge. There are several possible routes but all end up right near the ridge crest. I would call them class 4 due to exposure. Once on top of the crest again, I stayed near the crest on the west side as I descended again going north toward Armstrong col. As you approach the final of the four notches, it begins to get quite steep. At first there is not an apparent route that drops you down into the notch. I moved slightly off the crest toward the west before I could drop into the chute coming off the notch. The north side of this fourth and final notch is a major wall that is fifth class. From the notch I descended down the chute toward the west. There is a secondary chute that joins in about a hundred feet below the crest. I climbed up this secondary chute. It is loose class 3 and has some ice in the bottom, but it will go back up to the crest. This is the last major problem. From here it is class 2 all the way down toward Armstrong col.

From the col, I had a nice glissade down into Armstrong canyon. Add some snow to the black trash bag you left a couple of days ago to cool off the water for a refreshing drink and now on to the car.

A good three days.

Nile Sorenson



# Red Slate Mountain (13,123)

June 9, 2007 Alex Amies, Greg Mason, Steve Curry and Nile Sorenson met at 9 am at the Convict Lake Trailhead to climb Red Slate Mountain via the North Couloir. This was an E provisional trip for Alex.

## North Couloir 45 degree snow grade III

by Steve Curry

We hiked above Convict Lake and beneath Mt. Morrison and Laurel Mtn. and up the Convict Creek trail to Mildred Lake where we stopped for our noon repast.

The weather was warm and pleasant, the meadow above Mildred Lake soft and comfortable and the water in the creek cold and refreshing. Above all this could be seen the climb--the North Couloir of Red Slate Mountain. Continuing to Lake Dorothy we made camp along the Southeast shore among trees in a hardened campsite about 2 p.m. and after an afternoon's rest and relaxation we found a moderate slope with snow to practice our double rope technique. Dinner and an alpine start

lead to turning in early and the night was warm and starlit.

4:30 a.m. found everyone up and ready and onto the approach and after several hours of crossing the talus slopes below Red Slate we were roped up and climbing into the North Couloir at 7:30 a.m. Alex carried 6-2' snow pickets and about every 100' would drive a picket, attach a sling and carabiner and continue ascending.

As the members of the party passed the picket they would clip the rope through the carabiner so their tie-in knot would remain on the up hill side of the carabiner and allow progress without unclipping. As Nile gained each picket he would remove it and when he had accumulated 4 pickets, Alex would set a 2 picket anchor and we would all ascend to the anchor and relax while



photo by Alex Amies

the pickets were passed to the leader (Alex) and the procedure repeated.

That was the simplicity of ascending this 1000' of snow at a 45 degree angle. The actuality was that the party was not as practiced at double rope technique and it became easier to clip both ropes through each picket rather than alternating clip-ins and rather than setting two pickets to create an anchored belay it was more expedi-



photo by Alex Amies

**Greg Mason  
Resting with the Top  
Half of Couloir still above us**

tious to exit onto a ledge that presented at the appropriate time. Rock fall became a hazard however climbing onto the steep rock outcropping. There was a party of two climbers below us and several times it was necessary to warn them of rockfall.

After 800' of climbing in this style we crested onto a snowy arete and could see the last 2 sections of climbing.

Crossing a icy gully we ascended 100' of 45 degree snow to a second slope of about 100' with a 60 degree cornice at top. As Alex approached the cornice I kept expecting him to go left or right to gain the rock on either side. But he went right up the middle and over the top! So we all went up the middle and over the 60 degree cornice to the top.

We were on the summit at 1:00 p.m. after 5 1/2 hours of climbing with ice ax and crampons. A remarkable day.

Half an hour of photos and snacks and spotting peaks and then it was a rapid scree descent off the west side and a glissade back to camp. Back at camp at 3:30 p.m. Packed and moving at 4:30 p.m. for the trailhead and at the TH parking at 8:30 p.m. Everything but Denny's and Von's closed in Bishop on Sunday night at 9:30 p.m. So, grab a quick bite and onto the drive home for LA.

Greg and Alex had car problems after the rideshare drop off and it was necessary for Greg's wife to come and get them in Burbank at 3 a.m. The saga of our long

suffering spouses continues without whom it would be impossible to do what we do. Greg let Alex borrow his car to get home and to work the next day. Alex- did you get any sleep?

### Note from Alex: Thanks to . . .

- Steve for the write-up
- Nile Sorenson for hauling the aluminum canister for the register all the way up
- Steve for driving back to LA. I slept like a baby in the back of the pick-up all the way from Independence
- Greg for loaning me his car so I could get home and get to a very important meeting the next day

It was a long, strenuous, rewarding day. Thanks Alex, Nile and Greg for an excellent climb and adventure.



photo by Alex Amies

*Left to right: Nile Sorenson (co-leader), Steve Curry, Greg Mason. Photo by Alex Amies*



# BEAR CREEK SPIRE

## Ulrichs Route in the Snow

by Travis Linds

We (Tom = Bechtt, Augie = Mountain Impulse & me = Travis) started our trip to Bear Creek Spire the morning of Saturday, October 7, 2006 at 7:00 am from the Mosquito Flat Trailhead. It was a beautiful, clear, cold morning. The frozen mud made for easy hiking and the spectacular views of the mountains and amazing fall colors made the time fly by. We had clear views of our destination all the way along the trail, the views impressed us at the same time the apparent great distance intimidated me. We hiked along the stunning Little Lakes Valley Trail past Long Lake where we picked up a use trail that followed the small creek that feeds Long Lake. The trail follows a rocky gully up over a ridge to Treasure Lakes, where we set up camp. We camped here rather than Gem Lakes for closer proximity to Mount Dade for our Day 2 planned hike (which ended up not happening). We set-up camp and had lunch, the sky was so clear and the weather so perfect that we didn't see the need to put the flies on our tents nor cover our packs. The campsite had beautiful views of Bear Creek Spire, Pipsqueak Spire and Mount Dade. We discussed

our route, and decided to climb the easier Ulrichs Route rather than the Northeast Ridge. This was my first

dering the snow. We continued up the rocks, scrambling and climbing up to the bottom of Cox Col where



Photo by Travis Linds

*Bear Creek Spire Morning View*

hike on snow/ice and with my good views of the intimidating, snow covered Hourglass Col to Mount Dade (class 2?) I was not comfortable with the class 4 northeast ridge. So we packed up our daypacks and left camp for Cox Col. We left our camp at Treasure Lakes under blue, clear skies, hiked along the west side of the lakes up a large boulder field to a chimney leading to Dade Lake. The chimney was not difficult, but the rocks were very loose, and a couple very large boulders shifted uncomfortably under our weight. The safer option is likely the bergshrunn to the west (which is what Tom and Augie did on the descent). We went up around Dade Lake and followed the shoreline to a snow field, which we crossed and started gaining some serious elevation along the rocks bor-

dering the snow. We continued up the rocks, scrambling and climbing up to the bottom of Cox Col where we donned our crampons and ice axes and headed up the center of the col. The snow was hard and icy; the crampons did not penetrate very far. We progressed up the col fairly quickly up until the last stretch before reaching the rocks. We went up the (southern) left chute and the snow/ice got very steep near the top. I did not feel very secure on the hard, icy snow and let Augie lead the way. We ending up dead ending up against some serious rock that neither of us could climb. Tom had stayed more to the right and was able to climb the rocks and get above us. Augie and I had to backtrack and hook up with Tom's route. From that point it was fairly simple class 3 rock climbing to the top of Cox Col. We took a break, ate some food and noticed the first snow flakes. The sky

had clouded over fairly quickly, and it was already 12:30 pm. A sense of urgency fell upon us.

From Cox col we made our way up the class 2 and then class 3 rock in the light snow. Tom and I were hiking together at this point, and we both made it up past the class 4 sections fairly easily and quickly,



*Photo by Travis Linds*

*Tom on Class 4*

taking time to snap a few photos. The elevation had been slowing us both down, plus to add neither of us had properly hydrated nor ate enough on the way up. Even though BCS is not a 14'er, at 13,713 ft it is up there. We went up the second chimney (first one seemed too narrow to fit) and ascended up on to the summit ridge. The view was nonexistent; I considered it near whiteout conditions at this point. The worsening weather made us question whether we should try to traverse the very exposed ridge and gain the summit block, the snow was accumulating fast which made the rocks very slippery. But we decided to



*Photo by Travis Linds*

*Ascending the Cox Col*

press on, and after the very short, but tricky traverse along the ledge and after taking into consideration the extreme exposure of the summit block and the holds, one quick move and I was on the top. I was thankful that I could not see very far down in the whiteout, otherwise I might

not have had the guts for this final class 5 move. Anyway, no time to hang around, I stayed long enough for Tom to take a photo, descended (even trickier than ascending) and took a few pictures while signing the tattered summit log with a large, felt tip marker (note: someone should bring a new log book and pencil for the log).



*Photo by Travis Linds*

*Traversing the Summit Ridge*

Before we started down, 2 other climbers summited, the only other climbers we had seen that day. They were in sneakers, only small hip packs and one had no gloves, definitely unprepared for the weather. Tom was nice enough to lend one guy his extra pair of gloves and I gave him a couple of my chemical hand warmers, he was very appreciative. We chatted for a bit and all headed down.

I was amazed at how quickly the snow had accumulated since our



ascent. It was hard to find the correct route; everything looked different under the fresh blanket of snow. The class 4 that was relatively easy to go up was a lot tougher descending with snow covered rock. Everything was slipperier and every step took much more care. One slip

the upper traverse, then crossed the rock section and continued down on snow rather than rock as we did on our ascent. Once the grade lessened, I took off my crampons and hastened my ascent. Whereas the snow was not very steep, traversing it was difficult. In the near whiteout

conditions my depth perception on the white snow was terrible. I would step expecting a 6" drop, and find out I was stepping into a small bowl in the snow which usually resulted in a tumble onto my ass, over and over. I kept my ice axe handy and descended basically all the way to Dade Lake in this manner. Once I neared Dade Lake the visibility improved and the snow stopped. From Dade Lake I basically followed my ascent path, taking more time to traverse the freshly snow covered rocks, being careful not to slip. Once back at camp I cleared the snow off of the tents and bags, it was cold enough that our gear did not get wet, just snowy. The sunset made for some beautiful photos on the nearby peaks with reflection on Treasure Lakes. But with the sun gone, the temperatures dropped quickly, we boiled some water, ate and got into the warmth of our tents/sleeping bags. It was cold, but as John Muir said, "You may be a little cold some nights, on mountain tops above the timber-line, but



Photo by Travis Linds

*Augie Descending Cox Col*

and it could be bad. In near white-out conditions we continued down past the class 3 and class 2 and on to the top of Cox col. The thought of descending the col was intimidating, it was tough coming up in good weather, now there was fresh snow, poor visibility and descending is always tougher. We donned our crampons again and descended the section of mixed rock/ice/snow climbing to the hard packed snow/ice. At this point I took this photo showing Augie trying out one possible decent. We ended up basically following our ascent path for



*Descending the Col*



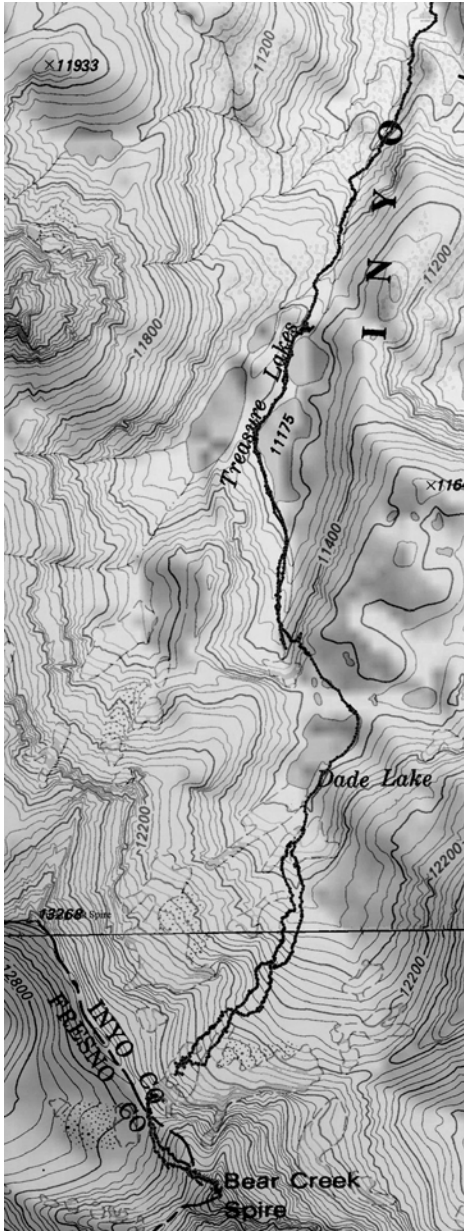
you will see the stars, and by and by you can sleep enough in your town bed, or at least in your grave.”

The next morning was crisp, cold and awe inspiring. The sunrise presented some more impressive photo opportunities as we waited for its warm rays to hit our camps and evaporate the layer of frost over everything. In the relative warmth of

the sun we packed up and prepared for the hike out.

The hike out was even more beautiful then going in, the fresh layer of snow in the morning sunlight was serene. Especially beautiful was the meadow at the south end of Long Lake, the meandering creek and meadow with a light snow dusting was another unforgettable photo

opportunity. We were going to hike Mount Dade before leaving, but with the fresh layer of snow over the route and the difficulty maintaining traction we decided against this climb and headed for the car. Our earlier than planned departure allowed me to get home in time for a spare of the moment Canadian Thanksgiving Dinner with my Beautiful family, a great end to a great weekend.



*BSC Map w/GPS route overlay*

### Epilogue:

Living in southern California has a way of screwing up my internal clock, not having clear seasons to differentiate and segregate the year. This trip had a way of calibrating my internal clock. As John Muir said, “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while care will drop off like autumn leaves.”

I feel refreshed and invigorated, and ready for winter. The natural beauty of the area and ruggedness of the mountains is already calling me back. I am eager to plan another trip, but at the same time I must maintain the delicate balance between family, work and adventure.



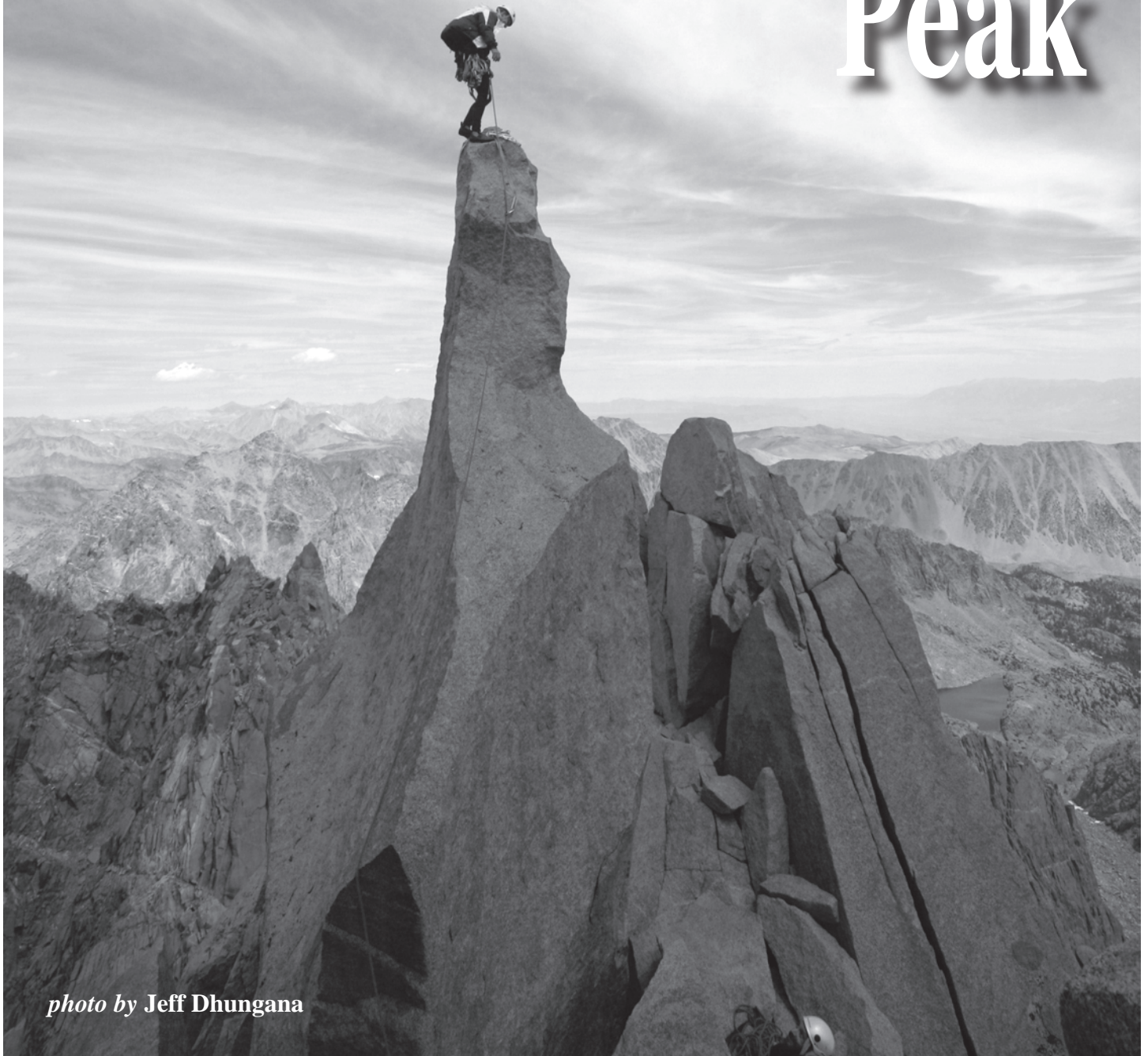
### SUNSET OVER PIPSQUEAK & BCS

TRIP REPORT  
JULY 13-15, 2007

by Alex Amies

Alex Amies  
on the Summit Pinnacle

# Starlight Peak



*photo by Jeff Dhungana*



## Jeff Dhungana rappelling down one of the steeper sections of the West Chute



*photo by Alex Amies*

This was a three day SPS trip on July 13-15, 2007 with Randall Danta as co-leader and Jeff Dhungana, Ed Cottone, and Will Duonola. We started at South Lake on Friday July 13 at 7 am. We hiked on trail up to Bishop Pass, where we left the trail and headed cross country over talus to Thunderbolt Pass. The loose talus was hard going with our packs on. From Thunderbolt Pass we dropped down to about the 12,000 ft level, where we made camp in the early afternoon.

Our plan was to hike up Starlight via the class 4 West Chute route, traverse to North Palisade and descend the Southwest Chute of North Pal. We left camp at 5 am on Saturday and hit the West Chute of Starlight about half an hour later. The chute was mostly class 3 with numerous class 4 moves and considerable loose talus.

After we entered the chute from the base we moved right and up into an adjacent chute that forked. At this point we continued straight up rather than taking the right fork of the chute, which seemed to end in the middle of the West Buttress. This turned out to be a mistake. We got to the top of the chute aiming for a notch into another chute (the so-called 'Upper Chute'). However, the headwall of this chute proved to be too difficult. Somewhat baffled, we headed back down to investigate the right fork of the lower chute.

The right fork turned out to be correct. It ended in a 30 degree slab at the notch as per the route description. There was a short 'cat walk' at this point, which was a little exposed but easy class 3. We headed up this chute (the 'Upper Chute') to the top, arriving at the ridge.





*photo by Alex Amies*

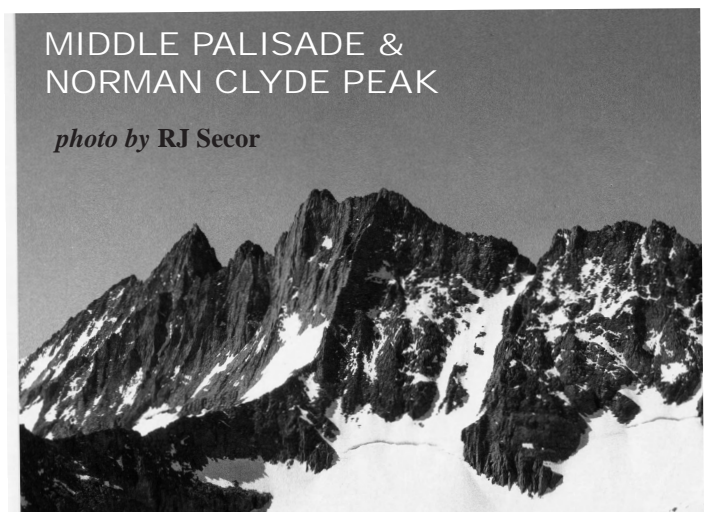
*Resting next to the summit Pinnacle. Left to right: Will Duonola, Randall Danta, Ed Cottone, Jeff Dhungana*

At the ridge we pulled out our rope and rock shoes to climb an approximately 100 ft section of low fifth class rock. This brought us to the base of the Milk Bottle at about 11 am – good time considering the time we had lost in the lower chute. This was the exciting bit and Jeff scrambled up an adjacent rock to take hero shots. I led the summit pinnacle and found a good sling on the top to clip, setting up a top rope. Everybody made it to the top and Jeff, Ed, and I mustered the considerable nerve to stand up. Only Jeff and Ed had smiles on their face at this point.

**W**e headed back down to the crest to check out the unlikely looking traverse to North Palisade, whose peak was only several hundred yards away. After reading route descriptions several times and visually checking over the terrain we could not make out a class 4 route across. Having had enough adventure already we decided to head back down our route up

Starlight rather than traverse to the summit of North Palisade. We got back to camp just before 4 pm.

The next morning we headed back across the talus to Bishop Pass and down the trail to South Lake.



MIDDLE PALISADE &  
NORMAN CLYDE PEAK

*photo by RJ Secor*

# IN HIGH PLACES PORTUGAL

by Burton "Cool Hands" Falk



PICO FROM FAIAL

*CABECO GORDO, HIGH POINT  
OF THE ISLAND OF FAIAL*

*PICO, HIGH POINT OF PORTUGAL*

*TORRE, HIGH POINT OF  
MAINLAND PORTUGAL*

It had been a long trip—yesterday, Palm Springs to Newark; last night, Newark to Lisbon; and today, Lisbon to the Azorean island of Faial. As our TAP airliner began its descent, I awakened, fastened my seat belt, returned my seatback to a full upright position, and glanced out the window. Off the left wing, I saw a tall snow-covered peak.

Wait a minute! Tall snow-covered peak...in the Azores...in the middle of the Gulf Stream...in mid-April? Figuring it was an apparition due to jet lag, I rubbed my eyes and looked out the window again. Nope, it was still there. Suddenly, my rudimentary knowledge of Azorean topography kicked in. The mountain had to be 7,713' Pico—Portugal's high-point—over which I knew we'd be flying just before we landed on Faial.

Ohmygosh! All this travel and expense, and I hadn't brought the proper gear or clothing to climb a snowy peak.

Consisting of nine major islands, the Azorean archipelago lies along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, some 800 nautical miles west of mainland Portugal and 2,100 miles off the east coast of the U.S. The islands are di-



vided into three groups: Grupo Oriental, the easternmost, consisting of São Miguel and Santa Maria; Grupo Central, made up of Terceira, Graciosa, São Jorge, Pico and Faial; and Grupo Ocidental, the westernmost, home to Flores and Corvo. In terms of latitude, Pico, Lisbon and Washington DC, all lie at approximately 39 degrees north.

Geologically, the Azores are comparatively young—Pico is a mere 200,000 years old, while the other eight islands originated between one and five million years ago—and remain volcanically active, with underwater seamounts continuously rising and falling adjacent to the islands. As recently as 1957, an eruption occurred on the west end of Faial, destroying and damaging hundreds of buildings and farms, and adding about ¾ of a square mile of new land to the island.

Weather-wise, the island temperatures are influenced both by the Gulf Stream and the “Azores’ High,” a semi-permanent high pressure area which affects the weather throughout Europe. The average summer temperature is 73F, and the average winter temperature is 55F. Rainfall increases from the easternmost islands, with 30 inches per year on São Miguel, to twice that amount on Corvo, the westernmost.

Historically, the islands were pristine—similar to the Hawaiian archipelago prior to the arrival of the Polynesians—until the first Portuguese landed, circa 1427. Due to inhospitable coastlines, dense vegetation, and extremely rocky soil, however, settlement was difficult. In fact, there was so little interest in developing the islands, that the Portuguese King Alfonso V encouraged immigration from Flanders—where religious prosecution was rife at the time—and for awhile the Azores were known as the Flemish Islands.

Emigration from the islands has also played a major role in Azorean history. Due to a multiplicity of reasons, including war, crop failures, earthquakes, eruptions, the 1987 ban on whaling, and job opportunities elsewhere, large numbers of islanders have emigrated

to Brazil, Canada, Hawaii, and the east coast of the United States. More recently, many of those who left are returning to enjoy retirement in what they consider to be a safer and better environment, and to live on social security benefits earned while working in their host countries. It was surprising to me to discover how many Azoreans—most of whom speak perfect English—once lived in New England.

Today the population of the Azores stands at approximately 250,000, with 130,000 living on Sao Miguel, the largest of the islands and home of the Azorean capital, Ponta Delgada. The islands of Pico and Faial host a population of 15,000 each, while a mere 400 live on Corvo, the smallest of the islands.

Gazing out of the picture window of our restaurant in Horta, Faial’s only real town, on our first night in the Azores, Ron Richardson, my climbing partner, and I were treated to an outstanding view of Pico, the mountain, on Pico, the island, a mere 5 mile, half hour ferry ride to the east. Warmed by a bottle of an excellent local white and enjoying a tasty fish dinner, we watched as the setting sun cast an equally warm glow over the beautifully symmetric peak. “Hey, I think the snow might be melting,” I remarked, hopefully.

**A**wakening the next morning, however, a low layer of clouds obscured our views of both Faial’s and Pico’s high points. We breakfasted at our hotel, the Do Canal, then crossed the plaza to the ferry terminal, where we found, to our relief, that in April four crossings were made each day to Pico (and more in the summer). That being the case, we decided to explore Faial that day, Monday, April 16, and to make the half hour crossing to Pico the following morning.

We rented a small Peugeot, and headed for Caldeira, the main mid-island crater, on the rim of which 3,422’ Cabeço Gordo (Fat Head), the island highpoint is located. Arriving at the trailhead parking area about 11 a.m., we walked through a tunnel in the rim to get a

### ODDS AND ENDS

As we discovered the hard way, a better time to climb Pico would be during the summer months. The Azores Express offers daily flights from Boston to Horta from mid-June into October. Prices run about \$1,300 for a round trip. During the rest of the year, the airline schedules only three flights/week.



look at lakes at the bottom of the crater, about 1,200' below, and then we began to hike counter-clockwise around the rim.

Well, it rains a lot on Caldeira, so not only was the use trail muddy, but because cattle are allowed to run on the slopes, we had to take care to avoid the cow pies in the well-trampled quagmires. In addition, the first part of the path was lined by hedgerows of non-indigenous hydrangeas, just beginning to leaf out in mid-April. No doubt the shrubs are beautiful in mid-summer, but in the spring they merely confined us—and the cattle—to the narrow, sloppy pathway in between.

As we progressed, the wind began to gust up to 40 or 50 m.p.h.—strong enough to knock us over on occasion—but even so we make it about 7/8ths of the way around the rim. And we did ascend Cabeço Gordo, which, because of its higher elevation, was shrouded by an ever-forming cloud. While attempting to descend from the antennae-covered summit and continue on toward our car, however, we discovered that, due to the swirling fog and the fact that cattle tracks had obscured the trail, we couldn't be sure how to proceed. After making two or three futile attempts to find a route along the indistinct rim, and certainly not wanting to mistakenly descend either into the steep-sided crater or down the outside of the rim, we opted to return the way we had come. Overall, the hike took about five hours, and by the time we got back to the car we were cold, tired and hungry.

We then drove around the north slopes of the crater, heading toward Capelinhos, at the western tip of Faial, where between September 27 and October 24, 1957, some 200 eruptions took place, adding new land to the island, but also destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, killing crops, depositing a layer of ash over a large area, and causing hundreds to migrate to the U.S. and Canada. Observing the area fifty years later, it was clear that much of the barren new landscape, consisting primarily of soft volcanic deposits, had already eroded back into the sea.

On Tuesday, April 17, we caught the late morning ferry to Madalena, the largest town on the island of Pico, just across the channel from Horta. Because it was raining when we arrived, we suspected it might be snowing

on Pico's higher elevations. That being the case, we decided it might be in our best interest to hire a guide, as we understood that the trail up Pico could be difficult to follow even without a cover of snow. Fortunately, the staff at our Madalena hotel, the Caravelas, was able to recommend a local guide, Joaquim "King" Nene, whom we called that afternoon. King told us he had guided ascents of Pico in all sorts of weather, and reassured us by adding, "No problem. There won't be enough snow on the peak to keep us from reaching the summit." He said he would supply transportation to the trailhead and lunches, and that his fee would be a total of 150 Euros. He also said he would check the local weather conditions and let us know which one of the next two days would be best for making our attempt. When he called back later that evening, he reported that the next day, Wednesday, April 18, would be the best. We agreed.

King suggested a 7 a.m. pickup, but, since the Caravelas Hotel didn't begin serving breakfast until 7:30 a.m., we opted instead for an 8 a.m. start. Piling into his car, we drove east out of Madalena, gradually ascending the western slope of Pico, which at lower altitudes is covered with lush green pastures. Arriving at the 4,000' trailhead at 8:30 a.m., we noticed that a new mountain hut was under construction nearby. Once we started up the steep use trail, however, it occurred to me that the money spent for the hut might be better used in improving the track.

In fact, the trail was steep and rocky. And as we gained altitude, encountering a light rain and leaving behind all traces of vegetation, it became even more treacherous and difficult to follow. Guide posts had been erected over the years, but many of them had disappeared in the interim. I was quite pleased we had King to lead the way.

I wasn't so happy about my personal comfort, however. The problem was that, after the first couple of thousand feet of gain, we entered a cloud layer and it began to snow. A cold wind howled. My hands, protected with only fingerless sun-protective gloves, became icy and numb. I began to shiver. Not bringing thermal underwear, a wool hat or warm gloves had been a major error. There was no way I was going to turn back, however, after coming that far.

We reached the rim of the crater at noon, and that's when hiring our guide paid off big time. Indeed, there were no markers whatsoever to guide us across the crater's floor to the volcanic cone on the other side, the high point of Portugal. Because of the dearth of guide posts and the fact that a thick cloud enveloped us, Ron and I might never have found the route.



*The Cold and Windy Summit*

As it was, we reached the base of the summit cone with no difficulty, and began a short, perhaps 10 minute, class 3 ascent of the final summit. Once on top, and after snapping the requisite summit photos, King called our attention to the fact that the summit rocks were warm due to the underlying volcanic activity. My fingers, however, could feel nothing—they were like ice cubes. To confirm the alleged warmth, I had to use my palms.

We descended to a sheltered spot on the crater rim, ate lunch, and uneventfully continued down the slopes, reaching our car at 3:45 p.m. Total round trip time was 7-1/4 hours—about average, according to King.

At a Madalena restaurant that night, Ron and I enjoyed yet another tasty seafood dinner, this time a cataplana, a traditional shellfish stew, along with a bottle of Terras da Lava, a really nice Pico-grown white. The only lingering effect of the day, as far as I was concerned, was a slight case of frost nip on the tips of my fingers.

We rented a car the following day, and drove clockwise completely around the long and narrow island. Looking north across the 7 mile channel, we could see the neighboring island, São Jorge, which is similar to Pico in its elongated shape, but which sports a much

lower profile. The two islands, in fact, are considered to be among the largest linear volcanic ridges on earth. We had hoped to get to São Jorge during our Azorean stay—with the idea of bagging its highpoint—but found that the April ferry schedules weren't amenable to our idea.

That afternoon, just prior to returning to Madale-

na, we visited the famous Pico vineyards—designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO—which consist of hundreds, if not thousands, of small plots, averaging 15' square, surrounded by loose rock walls. The vines, just beginning to leaf out in mid-April, had been pruned close to the ground so that, in combination with the protective walls, the grapes would be warmed and protected from the salt winds.

Next morning, our last full day on Pico, we signed up for a whale watching cruise, a popular Azorean tourist



*Cataplana and Local White*

activity as several types of cetaceans can usually be spotted cavorting around the islands. That afternoon, we drove almost the entire length of Pico's volcanic backbone, a disappointing venture as we were surrounded by a pea soup fog most of the way.

Saturday, April 21, we ferried back to Horta, and from there, following a 6 hour weather delay, we flew on to Lisbon. The following morning, we began a 6 day tour of mainland Portugal, which included overnight stays at Nazare, Aveiro, Porto and Coimbra. Between Nazare and Aveiro, we drove to the top of 6,532' Torre—situated in the Serra da Estrela, near the Spanish border—the highpoint of mainland Portugal. The summit of Torre is above timberline and is the home to a small chairlift, two or three cafes, and a handful of shops selling local cheese, country hams, and hats, gloves and jackets



*Torre, Mainland Portugal's High Point*

fashioned from sheepskin.

On the cool afternoon of our visit, a bus-load of orange-jacketed elementary schoolers was milling around the austere summit monument.

# Outings

**Sep 14-16 | Fri-Sun**

**SPS**

**MR: Mt Fiske (13,508'), Mt Huxley (13,086')**

Friday Backpack from Lake Sabrina to near Echo Lake (7 mi, 3000' gain). Class 3, ice ax & crampons may be needed) and climb the peaks (about 8 mi rt, 4000' gain, class 3). Mts Wallace and Haeckel may also be climbed. Return to cars Sunday. Send email or 2 sase with phone #s, address, \$5 for permit fee, resume of experience and current conditioning, carpool info to Ldr: RON HUDSON, Co-Ldrs: BARBEE AND LARRY TIDBALL

have excellent conditioning, comfort on exposed class 3 rock (on Black Crown Pk), & a positive attitude. 2-day approach from Wishon Reservoir via Coyote Pass, camp at Blue Canyon. Climb peaks along the length of the White Divide, return via N. Fork Kings River. Shuttle at Courtwright Reservoir. Be prepared for 7 strenuous days: total 65+ mi, 21k'+ gain. Restricted to SC members. Send email w/ recent experience and conditioning, SC#, medical form to Ldr: JEFF DHUNGANA, Co-Ldr: DOUG MANTLE

**Sep 21-28 | Fri - Fri**

**SPS**

**MR: Tunemah Pk (11,894'), Finger Pk (12,404'), Black Crown Pk (12,323')**

Climb remote SPS peaks, explore obscure canyons. Must

**Sep 22-23 | Sat-Sun**

**SPS**

**I: Florence Pk (12,423'), Vandever Mtn (12,520+')**

Join us for 2 day hikes in the Mineral King area. Sat 10+ mi, 4,500' gain. Sun 8+ mi, 4,100' gain. E-sase or sase to Ldr: TINA BOWMAN, Co-ldr: MARY MCMANNES.



**Sep 22-23 | Sat-Sun** **WTC, SPS**  
I: **University Pk (13,632')**  
The longer way via Kearsarge Pass. Sat backpack from Onion Valley, over Kearsarge Pass to camp at Kearsarge Lakes, 5.5 miles, 2600' gain. Sun steep xc climb to summit, 2 mi rt, 2500' gain. Then pack out and return to cars. Send sase, or use email, with info on Sierra experience, WTC leaders name, and conditioning info to Ldr: ED MORENTE, Asst: JOHN CYRAN

**Sep 22-23 | Sat-Sun** **WTC, SPS**  
MR: **Mt LeConte (13,680')**  
Restricted to Sierra Club Members with third class climbing experience; helmets required. Pack in 4 mi, 3500' gain to camp at Meysan Lake from Meysan Lake trailhead. Sun climb LeConte, 2 mi, 2600' gain and pack out. Medical form required. Send climbing resume, recent conditioning, sase/esase, H&W phones, \$6 permit fee to GAREN YEGPARIAN, Asst. VIRGIL SHIELDS. Provisional

**Sept 30 | Sun** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
I: Grinnell Ridge Navigation: Navigation Noodle in San Bernardino National Forest for either checkout or practice to satisfy Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, rideshare info, H&W phones, prefer by Email to Ldr: HARRY FREIMANIS. Asst: PHIL WHEELER

**Oct 13 | Sat** **LTC**  
Leadership Training Seminar: Become a qualified Sierra Club leader. For info, see LTC section in front of Schedule. Deadline for receipt of application and payment is Sep 29. No registration after this date or at door. Next seminar: Spring 2008. Ldr: STEVE BOTAN

**Oct 13 | Sat** **LTC, WTC**  
I: **Mt Lowe (5603')** Beginning Navigation Clinic: 5 mi, 500' gain. Spend the day one on one with an instructor, learning/practicing map & compass. Beginners to rusty old timers welcome. Not a check off. Many expert leaders will attend; many "I" rated leaders started here. Resent no-shows require a \$25 deposit, refunded at trailhead. Send large sase early with ck made out to Sierra Club, H&W phones to Ldr: DIANE DUNBAR. Co-Ldr: RICHARD BOARDMAN

**Oct 21 | Sun** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
I: Indian Cove Navigation: Navigation noodles at Joshua Tree NP for either checkout or practice to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, any WTC, rideshare info, H&W phones, prefer by Email to Ldr: HARRY FREIMANIS. Asst: PHIL WHEELER

**Nov 2-4 | Fri-Sun** **LTC, Harwood Lodge, WTC**  
C: Wilderness First Aid Basics: Runs from 8 am Sat to 5:30 pm Sun with optional airway/breathing skills Fri eve. Fee includes lodging, meals and practice first aid kit. Airway/breathing skills (7:30-9:30 pm Fri) required for those without CPR during previous 4 years. Fee \$160 with SC#/\$170 non-member; airway breathing skills \$15 additional (full refund thru Sept 28). For application contact Ldr: STEVE SCHUSTER

**Nov 17 | Sat** **LTC, DPS, SPS**  
E/M: Mt. Rubidoux Rock Workshop/Checkoff: This intermediate and advanced workshop is based on the rock requirements for M and E leadership. Checkoffs for M and E rock must be pre-arranged. It is a restricted trip; to participate you must be a member of the Sierra Club and have suitable rock climbing experience. Helmet, basic climbing gear, and completed medical form required. Send or e-mail climbing resume, SC#, address and phone# to ldr: TINA BOWMAN. Co-ldrs: DOUG MANTLE, TOM BOWMAN

**Nov 17-18 | Sat-Sun** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
I: Indian Cove Navigation: Navigation noodles at Joshua Tree NP to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Sat for practice, skills refresh, altimeter, campfire. Sun for checkout. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, any WTC, rideshare info, H&W phones, prefer by Email to Ldr: HARRY FREIMANIS. Asst: PHIL WHEELER

**Dec 1 | Sat** **LTC**  
Basic GPS Class, Eaton Cyn Nature Center, contact PHIL WHEELER for details.

**Dec 2 | Sun** **LTC, WTC**  
C: Wilderness First Aid Bridge: Open only to those who take Wilderness First Aid Basics (see Nov 2-4). In conjunction with Wilderness First Aid Basics, satisfies first aid requirement for I/M/E leadership candidates.

Taught in Garden Grove from 8 am 4 pm. Fee \$25. For application contact Ldr: STEVE SCHUSTER

**Dec 8 | Sat** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
**I: Mt Lowe (5603')** Beginning Navigation Clinic: 5 mi, 500' gain. Spend the day one on one with an instructor, learning/practicing map & compass. Beginners to rusty old timers welcome. Not a check off. Many expert leaders will attend; many "I" rated leaders started here. Resent no-shows require a \$25 deposit, refunded at trailhead. Send large sase early with ck made out to Sierra Club, H&W phones to Ldr: DIANE DUNBAR. Co-Ldr: RICHARD BOARDMAN

**Dec 9 | Sun** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
**I: Warren Point: NP: Navigation** noodles at Joshua Tree NP for either checkout or practice to satisfy the Basic (I/M, E) level navigation requirements. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, any WTC, rideshare info, H&W phones, prefer by Email to Ldr: HARRY FREIMANIS. Asst: R. MYERS

**Dec 15 | Sat** **LTC, WTC, HPS**  
 Basic GPS Class, Eaton Cyn Nature Center, contact PHIL WHEELER for details.

## Outings Sign-up

Email contact info for the ldrs of these trips appears below. To apply as a participant on an outing, send a SASE (or email if requested), SC member number, experience resume, conditioning routine, home and work phone numbers, email address (if applicable), rideshare information and, **for restricted trips only**, the medical information form. All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver, available at [www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms](http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms), or from the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528. All outings designated MR or ER are restricted trips open only to Sierra Club members with the appropriate rock or snow skills. Participants are required by the National Sierra Club to complete the medical information form, available at [www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/participantforms/forms medical](http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/participantforms/forms%20medical).

# Outings Leader Directory

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## Other Info

The Sierra Echo is a quarterly publication of the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter. For more information, see the back of this newsletter. All questions, copy and photo submissions should be directed to **Sara Danta, Editor, The Sierra Echo**, preferably via email at [s\\_wyrens@yahoo.com](mailto:s_wyrens@yahoo.com). Mailing address is 9741 Reseda Blvd., Unit 46, Northridge, CA 91324. The Echo will also be available (*with leader contact info omitted*) as a PDF download at the SPS website.