On Independence Peak with Doug Mantle, Tina Bowman signals for the helicopter after finishing the SPS, DPS and HPS lists for the second time each — in a single 24 hour period. Page 8
Eat, Drink, Be Merry

Plan now to attend the Sierra Peaks Section Annual Banquet. The event will be held Saturday, February 3 at Les Freres Taix Restaurant, 1911 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles. Festivities kick off at 5:30 with a no-host bar, followed by dinner. Complimentary wine will be served at each table; dinner choices are Roast Top Sirloin, Salmon, and Vegetarian Pasta. Cost is $32 per person.

The Speaker for the evening will be Mike Gibbons, who has climbed six of the Seven Summits. Mike will be sharing his wonderful video documenting his climb of Vinson Massif, the highest point of Antarctica.

To register, complete the form below, include payment (checks made payable to “SPS”), and mail to Henry at the address shown. Henry will have a list of attendees at the Restaurant; see him when you arrive to get your dinner ticket(s).

Sierra Peaks Section Annual Banquet

Name(s) ____________________________________________________________

Number of Guests ($32 each) ________ Amount Enclosed $ ________

(make check payable to SPS)

Dinner Choices (indicate number of each):

Beef ______ Fish ______ Pasta ______

Return completed form with payment, no later than Friday, January 26 to: Henry Arnebold, 2459 Escalante, La Verne, CA 91750-1136

Sierra Peaks Section Annual Banquet

Food Choices

Meat (indicate number of each):

Beef ______ Fish ______ Pasta ______

Please mail to: Henry Arnebold, 2459 Escalante, La Verne, CA 91750-1136

Ascent Behavior

Alex Ames Secretary, Sierra Peaks Section

Tina Stough Bowman completed her second SPS list finish October 7, 2006 on Independence Peak and her third Emblem Peak completion on Red Slate Mountain October 2, 2004. Her accomplishment October 7th included her second HPS list finish (Five Fingers) and second DPS list finish (Wasouoba) as well.

John Chelidash’s 175th peak and all Emblem peaks for Master Emblem status were achieved August 14, 2006 on Mt. Garett, and his 25th Mountain’s peak was achieved July 9, 2006 on Deerrhorn.

Daryn Dodge reached both Senior and Master Emblem status August 26, 2006 climbing North Palisade. He has climbed 29 of the 35 Mountainier’s peaks, all 15 Emblem Peaks and has a total count of 196 SPS-listed peaks under his belt.

Two SPS members have achieved active membership status: Kathy Rich on Mt. Goethe August, 2006 and Doug Owens also in August, 2006 on Florence Peak.

April 1, 1916

In Memory of Sid “San Jac” Davis

October 16, 2006

In Memory of Sid “San Jac” Davis

As an active member of the Desert Peaks Section, Sid climbed on many scheduled trips plus many private trips with notable climbers as Andy Smakto, Jerry Keating, Eric Shumacher, Doug Mantle. He emblazoned on Navajo Mountain in 1964. In 1967, Sid and companions (Bob Mason, MarinClark) climbed the Mexican volcanoes. Later, he invited the Mexican Search and Rescue team, La Brigada de Rescate del Socorro Alpino to journey to L.A., where Sid housed them and accompanied them on a climb up Mt. Whitney. From 1968-1975, he was a vital member of his local Mountain Rescue Committee. His daughter Jill recalls he almost missed her wedding, because he was out rescuing a lost hiker. They found the missing fellow. Sid invited him to Jill’s wedding, and they all remained friends from that point on.

The last six years of his life in Palm Desert, Sid watched the rising and the setting of the sun on his favorite peak along with his lovely new friend, Shirley Friesen. She said he related her with stories of the legend and lore of his climbing, and one particular trip up 395 seemed to take forever, because he had so many peak stories. He told Shirley she was the love of his later life, but Shirley says, “His real love was with San Jac.” The rangers of San Jacinto are naming a trail, the Sid Davis Trail, in 2011 (the required time after his passing.) He was told this shortly before his death, and he was greatly pleased. Sid was preceded in death by wife Norma and is survived by daughter Jill and grandson Steven (the youngest climber of San Jac when he was barely three years old). Sid once wrote in a poem,

My ashes will be cast atop San Jac,
In the holes and in the crack.
The pine tree will say, ‘Sid, you are mine.’

As I climb through the roots into the limber pine.
Climbing, climbing ever higher.
Reaching, reaching to my heart’s desire.
And the thrill that I seek,
Is to stand atop my mountain peak.

And if you ask me how or why
All of this happens beneath the sky,
I don’t know the reason why
But as a mountaineer, I’ll never die.

Sid was a bold and courageous climber with a generous and kind heart. We can only admire one who became legendary in climbing a peak he loved so ardently. John Muir often said, “Going to the mountains is going home.” Sid San Jac has gone home and is resting in the mountain heart. Thanks for being our great friend and climbing companion. Rest in peace and walk with us when we climb your peak.

— Mary MacManus

Winter, 2006
Minor Planet Named for Pioneer California Conservationist

(from Sierra Club Conservation Newsletter July 2006)

The International Astronomical Union (IAU), through the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory's (SAO) Minor Planet Center (MPC), has announced the naming of a newly discovered minor planet in honor of pioneer conservationist John Muir. The announcement was made in the June 2006 issue of the Minor Planet Circular, published by the SAO.

The tiny, 1-mile diameter celestial body, now named "Johnmuir", was discovered in August 2004 by amateur astronomer R.E. Jones from his backyard observatory located in a Los Angeles suburb. Mr. Jones was making photographic measurements of the position of another small celestial body — a near-Earth asteroid discovered by professional observatories just the night before — when he noticed a second, much slower moving object in his photographs. A check of catalogs and positions of known objects in the Solar System suggested that the second object was likely a new discovery.

Subsequent observations by the Franciscus Observatory (the name of Mr. Jones' observatory in the Santa Clara Valley) and by professional observatories including Mr. Palomar in California and Kitt Peak in Arizona confirmed the new find, and Franciscus Observatory was credited by the IAU/MPC with discovery of Solar System object number 2004PX42.

Once 2004PX42 had been observed a sufficient number of times to enable the calculation of a very precise orbit (which occurred in early 2006 following additional measurements by the Kitt Peak Observatory), Mr. Jones was given the opportunity to propose a name for his discovery. The name Johnmuir was submitted to the 15-member Committee on Small Body Nomenclature of the IAU and approved just prior to publication of the SAO/MPC's June 2006 Minor Planet Circular.

In the official citation for the name proposal, John Muir is recognized for his scientific contributions to the fields of geology and botany in the late 19th century, and for his tireless promotion of the National Park concept in the early 20th century. John Muir joins a select group of individuals whose work and commitment to environmental conservation is reflected in a newly discovered minor planet.

TRIP REPORT

Wonoga Peak & The Alabama Hills

SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2006

by JERRY KEATING

Seventeen persons interested in celebrating the SPS's first 50 years appeared Friday afternoon at the Turtle Creek Campground with two days of leisurely climbing to follow plus two nights of extended campfire camaraderie. Two of the participants were SPS founding members, and several others traced their Sierra Club climbing activities as far back as the 1940s.

Adding to the historical focus of the trip above Lone Pine were written well wishes from Founding SPS Secretary and 1957 Treasurer Pat (Meixner) Gentry, who resides in Bellevue, Wash., and from 1966 SPS Chair Rick Jali, who lives at Mammoth Lakes but who was en route to Tibet when the trip occurred.

“I have fond memories of my hiking and climbing adventures in California,” wrote Gentry. "I carried that love of the mountains with me to Washington and the Cascades. The poem I wrote, "My World," says it all."

“A line on the map and too much gain/The gathering clouds show signs of rain/My mind says NO, but my heart says GO/For that inward eye sees rock and snow/And trails that climb thru flowers—/A sparkling world of rainbow showers."

“A world I know I can resist/It comes with moss and ferns and mist—/Still hidden lakes, frost tinted leaves/Summit meadows and fragrant flowers on the trail. I lift my pack/This is my world. I won't turn back.”

Among those enjoying Friday night's campfire levity were Founder Frank Bresel and his “outlaw hiker” wife, Joanna; founding member/list finisher Barbara Lilley; and Fred Johnson, who started climbing with the Sierra Club in the early 1940s and joined the SPS in the 1960s. The “outlaw hikers” were active before the SPS's formation in October 1955.

Others present who are or have been SPS active members included list finisher Ret Moore; list finisher Elothan Fletcher and wife; Pat, former Angeles Chapter Chair Bob Kanne; Ben Freyer, who now lives in Rancho Santa Fe; list finisher Gordon MacLeod; and list finisher Jerry Keating and wife, Nancy.

On Saturday, one individual remained in camp while 16 persons headed up the paved road toward Horsethoe Meadow. Four persons spent time hiking or exploring in meadow area. The 12 others stopped just after Wal's Point to begin an ascent of Wonoga Peak (10,371'). The route to united Wonoga starts at 9240' where Little Cottonwood Creek flows under the road. An unsigned, overgrown trail bypasses the looks like difficult terrain and then, after getting by the difficulty, drops to and crosses the creek. Less than 0.25 mile farther, a primitive fire pit marks where to leave the trail and begin following cross-country terrain. The route ascends a usually dry water course that eventually reaches a small flat, from which the summit, is clearly visible. The group climbed slowly through a brusky area with scattered boulders to the top of the ridge to the left, then followed the ridge to the rocky summit (Class 2). The views directly down to the Owens Valley were striking, and there also were good views of the high country. The register contained a notebook left by MacLeod in 1981, but no sign was found of the 1964 SPS trip led by Frank Sanborn and Ron Jones. The 1964 ascent started at least 200' lower because today's road was only partly finished.

After a second night of enjoyable campfire activities beside Turtle Creek, eight persons drove down to Lone Pine and then northward on U.S. 395 for about 5 miles to the Moffat Ranch Road. It and other unpaved roads led to the starting point for the high point (5354') of the Alabama Hills. The route wound through winding spurs and up Class 2 terrain. From the summit, the views of the peaks along the Sierra crest were spectacular. The register revealed many familiar names, including those of Steve Roper, Jim Nichols, Mark Adrian and Bob Michael.

Leaders were MacLeod and J. Keating with Lilley filling in for Keating on Sunday.
**TRIP REPORT**

**Mt Harrington**
**JULY 7 – 8, 2006**

by GREG GERLACH

I had my eye on this peak for quite some time, but was reluctant to give it a try on my own because of its third class rating. I studied the trip reports on Climber.Org and the SPS website. I zeroed in on Ron Hudson’s write-up and the guidebook vaguely described the summit ridge as third class. I decided to go for the peak and see for myself who was right. I was up at 6:00 a.m. and on the road by 7:00 a.m. for the 300 or so mile drive to the trailhead. Although a wilderness permit is not required for the Deer Cove Trailhead, which is located just outside Kings Canyon National Park along the Cedar Grove road, I obtained the required fire permit for my stove from the Sequoia National Forest service office located in the town of Three Rivers. I arrived at the trailhead at 9:00 p.m. and 5 minutes later was hiking up the trail. The trailhead starts off at 4,400’ in elevation and the temperature was in the mid-90’s. By the time I hiked up the trail to Deer Cove Creek the map shows that there are two trails that lead up to Deer Cove Saddle from the creek, but the trail that goes north disappears shortly after leaving the creek. The southern most trail is the correct route. I convinced the other leader we were over an open meadow and then ascended roughly 1000’ bump, then dropped down to the valley via some class 2-3 slabs, then scrambled the rest of the way up to the summit at 10,060’. The climb to the summit is on the west side of the north ridge. I made an easy class 3 move to get onto the ridge, continued up some class 2, climbed about 30’ easy class 3 slabs, then scrambled the rest of the way up to the summit ridge and down the north face. The route to the summit is on the west side of the north ridge. I made an easy class 3 move to get onto the ridge, continued up some class 2, climbed about 30’ easy class 3 slabs, then scrambled the rest of the way up to the summit ridge and down the north face. I was on top of the peak at exactly 9:00 a.m., just 1-1/2 hours after leaving Grizzly Lakes. Also, the register was placed on September 26, 1987 by an SPS group, is only about 7 miles away and was the first and only person to summit so far this year. After signing the register, I made my way down the ridge to the 100’ high bump, then dropped down to the valley via some class 2-3 slabs. I arrived back at Grizzly lakes at 10:30 a.m., packed up my gear, then hit the trail. I arrived at the trailer at 2:30 p.m. and was home at 8:30 p.m.

Statistics: 21.0 miles and about 6,600 feet of elevation gain.

Participants must have experience snow camping and be comfortable on class 3 rock and snow and experienced with ice-ax and crampons. Please send an email with recent experience and conditioning, SC, and two completed medical forms to Leader: Larry Tidball, Co-Leader: LARRY TIDBALL.

**June 23-25** Sat-Mon SPS Sierra Peaks

**Sierra Peaks**

| **MT. Dade (13,600+)** |
| **Sierra Peaks** |
| **Sierra Peaks** |
| **ER Red Slate Mountain (13,163’)** |

Skiing: First trip in the new Sierra yarded to prospective SP’sers and WTC students. Moderate and enjoyable. Sat backpack 9 miles, 1500’ gain to camp at Redwood Meadows at 8600’, Sun climb class. Kern Peak in 8 miles, 3000’ gain round trip, all x-country. Legendary community happy hour Sat and Sun evenings. Monday backcountry out 9 miles, 800’ gain (With ups and downs). Send us, recent conditioning, H’W phones, ride share info to Leader: Patty Kline, Assistants: Joe Wanskum and Gary Schenk.

**April 28-29** Sat-Sun SPS, LPC and DPS

**M/E Sierra Snow Checkoff/Practice**

For M/E candidates wanting to check off leadership ratings or others who wish to practice new techniques. Restricted to SC members with prior basic training with the ice axe. Two copies of the completed medical forms required. Send SC number, climbing resume, SASE or e-mail, to Leader: NILE SORENSON, Co-leader: DOUG MANTLE.

| **MT Baldy (10,640’)** |
| **Snow Climb** |

Strenuous 3900 feet of gain, 8 miles starting on the Ski Hut trail. Restricted to Sierra Club members with ice axe & crampon proficiency. Helmets are required. Two copies of completed medical form required. Group size limited. Send e-mail, resume, climbing resume showing relevant experience, Sierra Club number and contact information to Leader. Tom McDonnell, Co-Leaders: Don Coteley, Ed Cortine.

**April 14** Sat LTCE 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 Mar 31. No registration after this date or at door. Next seminar: Fall 2007. Registrar: STEVE BOTAN.

**March 21** Sat LTCE Deadline for Leadership Training Seminar

Last date for receipt of application and payment by LTC Registrar for enrollment in Apr 14 seminar. Next seminar: Fall 2007. Registrar: STEVE BOTAN.

**January 14** Sun Warrent Pt Navigation

Navigation noodles at Joshua Tree National Park for either checkout or practice to satisfy the Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training or WTCL ride share info, phones, use to Ldr: HARRY FREIMANN. Co-Ldr: PHIL WHEELER.
n 1989, Tina Bowman purchased the Mary Austin House in Independence, California. As she told the seller, "I'll be having a Triple Double List finishing party on 10/07/06; my husband Tom, whom I haven't met yet, and I need a nice place for the party."

She had a number of obsessions to attend to. She has worn a Lists once, decided to make history.

Not that she was obsessed with the task, or rather, shall we say, not in a single day. Tina, who had duly finished each of the three thereafter to have vanished, and it seems was a little hoopla, Bob Emerick seems in 1989, Bob Emerick sought to emulate Cuno's feat, and then some. On his big day, he toppled North Morgan, East Ord, Cuno's stock, which shortly thereafter crashed, and Cuno himself shortly thereafter, well, retired from the peak-bagger game.

In 1989, Bob Emerick sought to emulate Cuno's feat, and then some. On his big day, he toppled North Morgan, East Ord, and then Black No. 4 two times for an SPS, DPS, and two HPS finishes. There was a little hoopla, Bob Emerick seems to have vanished, and it seems that in the United States, only Ron Jones remembered this.

Only once had anyone finished all three Lists more than once, a fact, and certainly not in a single day. Tina, who had duly finished each of the three Lists once, decided to make history.

Not that she was obsessed with the task, or rather, shall we say, she had a number of obsessions to attend to. She has worn a super hero, like Villager to Rabbit, back and over to Rosa in a day (she passed the same HPS group three times, several reported neck injuries). This was a bad summer to be doing some HPS peaks like Cobblestone… she had to don fireman gear, shovel a fire line for several hours, before the opportunity to make a dash to the summit presented, for example. Somehow, though, the deeds done gone, which brings us to the eve of the Big Day to be exact, October 6th, 1:00 p.m., in Independence.

Tina is as exacting of others as she is of herself. So, when husband Tom had only partly mastered medieval Latin in time for the Big Event, he forbade him to join the first two climbs, gave him a list of chores, and said, "I'll be by the house around 4:00 a.m., have these things done or you can't climb the last peak either."

We sped off in Tina's Toyota truck as Tom commenced to re-roofing the Mary Austin House for the party.

Our first objective was Route A for Waucoba, on the DPS List. We drove north and east for about 40 miles on good highway, then Tina carreared over a dozen miles of 4-wheel drive road that she and Tom had scouted earlier. Thus, at 3:00 p.m. we donned backpacks including all our water, and set off.

Then turned back. Tina had forgotten to hoist the dutch oven with the evening casserole meal from the back of the truck. Now fully packed, she locked the truck with the keys still inside.

Tina mentally calculated how long it would take for her to sprint the 3,000 feet of gain on Waucoba's western escarpment in the daylight, to just below the summit rocks. With a brisk wind, it was quite cold; in the five seconds it took us to dump packs and dive into our respective bivies, I estimated the temperature at minus 300F. There I waited, while Tina recorded the last three and a half months of entries in her journal.

At 11:35 p.m. we emerged. Thankfully, it was windless, cloudless, and (not by chance) fully moonlit as we clamored over the trick, and we were on our way again.

We managed the 3,000 feet of gain on Waucoba's eastern escarpment in the daylight, to just below the summit rocks. With a brisk wind, it was quite cold; in the five seconds it took us to dump packs and dive into our respective bivies, I estimated the temperature at minus 300F. There I waited, while Tina recorded the last three and a half months of entries in her journal.

We stopped briefly in Independence where Tom was now 200 lbs. downed bristlecone pine and had dragged it, or was it directly up the northeast side of the summit. Thus, we were able to partake of sunrise on the summit. HPS X 2!

At 5:30 a.m., Tina went cellphone-to-cellphone to awaken Nile and beyond.

We were off in the truck again, south for 75 miles to Pearsonville. We stopped briefly in Independence where Tom was now 200 lbs. downed bristlecone pine and had dragged it, or was it directly up the northeast side of the summit. Thus, we were able to partake of sunrise on the summit. HPS X 2!

From the lake, Nile and I were invested with the lead up Independence Peak, a daunting challenge since we, between us, had only been up it ten times, and not in several months. Amidst a wintry wind and close cloud cover, we scrambled along the Class 3 ridge much farther and more tortuously than any of us remembered having done before. Still, we topped out at 1:00 p.m. Triple Double!

Eventually, the group and more convened at the Independence house for the celebration. At length, Tina took to the podium where after a pause, we heard Tom say, "Let's all just admire the celebration après milestone..." Some peak-bagger history: As we read in his Echo article, "A Day In October" Cuno Ranschauch Echo Editor and horrific punster birthed the idea of a "Triple Finish". In a single day, he recorded access of Mr. Cortonon, New York Butte, and Red Mountain, thereby completing the SPS, DPS, and HPS Lists. There followed universal celebrations, Cuno toured the capitals of Europe, and was feted by the Queen. Recognizing this as the apex, Cuno quit his job and cashed out the Lockheed stock, which shortly thereafter crashed, and Cuno himself shortly thereafter, well, retired from the peak-bagger game.

In 1989, Bob Emerick sought to emulate Cuno’s feat, and then some. On his big day, he toppled North Morgan, East Ord, and then Black No. 4 two times for an SPS, DPS, and two HPS finishes. There was a little hoopla, Bob Emerick seems to have vanished, and it seems that in the United States, only Ron Jones remembered this.

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TRIP REPORT

Mt. Brewer, South Guard & Mt. Jordan
JULY 22–26, 2006
by ALEX AMIES

On the summit of South Guard
Left to right: Sue Livingston, Alexander Smirnoff, Ed Nogueria, Bill Livingston
Photo by Alex Amies

We began the trip on Friday July 21 from Onion Valley. It was a late start because we had to pick up the permit in person from the ranger’s station in Lone Pine.

From Onion Valley we packed in up over Kearse Pass and west down to the Bubbs Creek Trail. We followed this to where it met the East Lake Creek Trail. Crossing Bubbs Creek was difficult because the water was very high. We found a place upstream of the junction between the creeks where the trail crossed. However, it involved quite a bit of cross country travel and hacking through vegetation before we found trail again. We arrived at our first camp at East Lake just before dark. It was a long day and set the fast pace for the rest of the trip.

On Saturday July 22 the plan was to climb North Guard and then do Brewer on the way back. However, the notch that needed to be followed up to the ridge between Brewer and North Guard was filled with snow and we did not have crampons. We decided to do Brewer via the class 2 East Ridge, which we managed successfully. After summitting Brewer we did not have the energy to go on to North Guard. After a thunderstorm west down to the Bubbs Creek Trail. We followed this to where it met the East Lake Creek Trail. Crossing Bubbs Creek was difficult because the water was very high. We found a place upstream of the junction between the creeks where the trail crossed. However, it involved quite a bit of cross country travel and hacking through vegetation before we found trail again. We arrived at our first camp at East Lake just before dark. It was a long day and set the fast pace for the rest of the trip.

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On Sunday July 23 we moved camp to Lake Reflection and spent our second night camped at East Lake.

On Tuesday July 25 we planned to do Mount Jordan. Sue and Bill Livingston had come down with colds and we going to sit this day out. However, when the time came to start out they couldn’t resist coming along. We traveled west from our camp to Lake South America to the east side of Mount Jordan in only a couple of hours over easy ground. We climbed up the class 2 east slope to the crest where Ron Hudson took over as our E leader. Ron’s strategy for the fourth class summit block reduced the problem to a top rope exercise using an adjacent pinnacle for a top rope anchor for the lead.

On Wednesday July 26 we did a marathon hike out: 18 miles, 4300’ gain, and 7100’ loss. From Lake South America we couldn’t resist coming along. We traveled west from our camp to Lake South America to the east side of Mount Jordan in only a couple of hours over easy ground. We climbed up the class 2 east slope to the crest where Ron Hudson took over as our E leader. Ron’s strategy for the fourth class summit block reduced the problem to a top rope exercise using an adjacent pinnacle for a top rope anchor for the lead.

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The flame danced for a few moments, keeping well below a pine branch. A ranger had pretended not to hear when we’d described the intended high point of our dinner plans.

Ed and Priscilla Cotonea volleyed with their own entrée: chicken fajitas with peppers and onions in toasted tortillas. Our wine offerings were small but good, a boxed Sangria provided by Par and a BV Coastal Merlot, tastefully served in a Platypus with a vintage label.

Last year’s Gourmet Backpack dinner ended with Godiva ice cream and Kahlua. Ed and Priscilla were determined to top that this year. Ed juggled vanilla ice cream up the hill in a bag of melting ice, it was soft-serve consistence by dinner. Priscilla made a small but potentially important culinary discovery. If life or the grocery store gives you green bananas, put them in a bear canister for a day and they’ll be perfectly ripe by dinner. They halved the bananas end-to-end and sautéed them in a mixture of brown sugar and margarine. After several minutes, when the bananas had softened, Ed added the rum, flambéed the sauce and cooked for perhaps a minute longer. They served the bananas and sauce over the ice cream.

At 6:30 the next morning, five of us set out for Cloudripper. Gary, who had spent three rain-drenched days the previous summer contemplating this climb, predicted it would take an hour to get from camp to the base of the peak. He was right. Not liking the look of the steep, 1,000-ft. slope ahead, I led the group to the right, toward talus. This brought us to the saddle at 9 a.m.

Ed and I had decided the previous day on an early turnaround time to ensure we made it back to the Glacier Lodge Store and its ice cream cooler before closing time at 6 p.m. We gamely set up the ridge toward the summit. But 9:45 a.m., our agreed turnaround time, found us 800 feet below the summit.

With which group, the answer was obvious. At 5 p.m. I was licking a strawberry fruit bar.

TRIP REPORT

Near sunset at Sixth Lake, Ed Cotonea poured a few glubs of Captain Morgan’s Spiced Rum into the sauté pan, swirled it and lit the rum with a match. The flames danced for a few moments, keeping well below a pine branch. A ranger had pretended not to hear when we’d described the intended high point of our dinner plans.

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Sicily, Italy
by Burton “The Breath of Hades” Falk

So what do you really know about Mt. Etna, Sicily’s 10,991’ high point? If you’re like me – before I recently climbed it, that is – it’s likely I mostly drew from crossword puzzles, where it was usually described as a European Erupter or a Sicilian Spouter. I also recall seeing occasional CNN/Headline News footage showing the volcano in action, usually at night, usually in the process of destroying some sort of mountain resort.

As for Sicily, oh, sure, I’d seen “The Godfather,” and knew that the Mafia had entrenched on the island. I was also aware that many Europeans, northern Italians included, considered Sicilians to be backward and lacking in sophistication. Indeed, the island had never had much of a priority on my list of places I wanted to visit. But isn’t it funny how grandchildren can change your perspective on just about anything!

The point is that during the summer of 2004, my wife Jo and I took our two oldest grandkids, Hayley and Nathan (14 and 12 at the time), to Japan, where, while making the grand tour, we also bagged Mt. Fuji. Having enjoyed that trip so much we hoped to do something similar during the summer of 2005, however we were keeping count) coastal settlements, in which basic skills such as the cultivation of crops had been learned, during which lava flowed all the way down to the sea. In 1669, during which lava flowed all the way down to the sea. In 1669, and invasion routes, grew increasingly complex. Indeed, not only did settlers begin arriving from Iberia, Anatolia, mainland Italy (called the Sicilians from Calabria, for whom the island was named), and Phoenicia, but also, in 700-650 BC, from various city-states in Greece, the latter of whom established the important Hellenic cities of Syracuse and Agrigento. The Roman conquest control of the island circa 200 BC, but because the Sicilians had sided with Carthage against Rome in the first (264 BC -241 BC) and the second (218-211 BC) Punic Wars, the invaders treated the invaded badly. In 410 AD, the Vandals displaced the Romans; in 555 AD, the Byzantines pushed out the Vandals; in the mid 800s, the Saracens (a combined army of Arabs, Berbers and Spanish Muslims, who, although Islamic, practiced religious tolerance) arrived on the scene, and in 1040 the Normans invaded Sicily. If all that seems complicated, the island’s history gets even murkier beginning in the Middle Ages, when a seemingly endless line of European kingdoms lay claim to the title of Sicily.

Today, after more than two thousand years of control by others, the Sicilian psyche seems to have been permanently affected. Indeed, there are those who believe that the islanders, though now citizens of a united Italy, consider themselves to be living through yet another occupation. This feeling of subjugation may also explain, at least in part, why the home grown Mafia has become such an integral part of Sicilian life.

On a positive note, thanks to the various invaders, Sicily’s cuisine has become a melting pot of fascinating foods and flavors. For instance, there’s a definite Arab influence in the Sicilians’ use of oil and spices; a Greek bent in their regards toward olive oil and vine; the Romans contributed wheat thus pasta; and the Spanish can take credit for the wide variety of tasty fish preparations that the islanders now employ.

On the afternoon of August 5th, following three busy days spent visiting Pompeii, the Amalfi Coast and climbing Mt. Vesuvius, we nosed our big van into the ferry staging area in Villa Etna’s summit. O f course, this is a climbing journal, I’ll forgo a full-blown description of Taormina, only to comment that the town, cloaked spectacularly to a mountaintop, is exceedingly picturesque; has many upscale restaurants and boutiques, and, on pleasant summer evenings, large crowds — including many strikingly beautiful women — can be found promenading up and down its main street (which is closed to traffic). Taormina also possesses a fine Greek amphitheater, still in use today, which was thoughtfully positioned so that attendees can enjoy the play (or concert, or opera), while gazing at — behind the performers, across the bay — the view of Mt. Etna, breath-taking in its towering majesty.

In addition to being blessed with a spectacular profile, Mt. Etna is also one of the world’s most active volcanoes. Indeed, the area surrounding the peak is littered with volcanic debris that has been spewed forth during hundreds of eruptions, including major events in 475 BC, 1169 AD, 1329 AD and 1381 AD, during which lava flowed all the way down to the sea. In 1669 AD, a 23-day event destroyed a good part of the nearby city of Catania, while more recent eruptions have destroyed a summit observatory (1971), razed a cable car facility and a tourist center (1983), killed two and injured ten (1987), and in 1992 would have engulfed the town of Zafferana had it not been for the Italian Air Force, which dropped concrete blocks in the lava’s path. In 2001 and 2002, additional eruptions damaged the topmost stations of the cable car installation.

The Greeks believed Etna was the forge of the god Vulcan—perhaps the reason why Plato, in 387 BC, sailed in to get a glimpse of the fabled mountain. In 433 BC, Empedocles, an Agrigento-born scientist, decided to test his theory that the gases emanating from Etna’s craters were semi-solid, thus strong enough to support the weight of a human. To prove his hypothesis he threw himself into the crater, and, as you can imagine, that was the end of poor old Empedocles. Undoubtedly though, the mountain’s most significant historical event occurred in the 9th century, when the world’s earliest known gelato was shaved off Etna’s summit.

On the morning of August 6th, our family piled into our commodious van and we set off to bag the legendary erupter. Driving a few clicks south of Taormina on highway A 18, we then turned inland and began to climb the southern slope of Mt. Etna via the town of Zafferana. While ascending the winding road, my daughter-in-law, Nancy, our self-appointed family safety officer, read aloud from an article she had pulled off the internet entitled “Is it Safe to Climb Etna?” The answer, in spite of recent fatalities due to ashplosion, was inconclusive.

Arriving at the 6,270’ Sapienza Refuge well before 10 a.m., we— (continued next page)
discovered that the guided tour for that hour had already been sold out, and so, to kill time until the 11 o’clock tour—the last of the day—we browsed through the half dozen or so cafes and souvenir shops at the popular tourist destination (indeed, several sight-seeing buses pulled into the adjoining parking lot while we were waiting). At 11 a.m., after paying 60 Euros each (50 for kids) for the tour, our group, which had grown to over 12, mounted, boarded cable cars on which we were whisked up to the 8,200’ Funivia Terminal. From there we climbed into small 4WD buses which carried us up a dusty road, snaking through stark volcanic terrain, to a newly constructed guide hut on the south side of the mountain at 9,580’ in elevation. Stepping off the bus, I immediately began to cough, or, more precisely, to hack. In fact, everyone did. Something in the air was irritating our throats, but whatever it was wasn’t obvious because there was no visible smoke and only the faintest of odors. Very curious, indeed. Our guide assembled the group, explained a few safety rules in both Italian and English, and then we started off cross-country, circling clock-wise up the western slope, heading toward the highest crater. Trudging through loose pumice for the first few minutes, we then arrived at a trail which, even though the incline increased, made the hiking easier. As we gained altitude the wind increased, the temperature dropped and soon we were digging in our packs for warmer clothing. Ominous, indeed. As our sanguine, verdant landscape stretched off until it finally disappeared into the mid-summer haze. About 45 minutes into the climb, we spotted a trail running on the ridge toward which we were heading. Gaining the ridge a few minutes later, we discovered that the steam was being emitted from a large fumarole, and that, in fact, it was those very vapors which were making us hack. The smell was sulfurous—not the rotten egg scent of hydrogen sulfide, but rather the sharp, acid odor of burning sulfur. Pausing a few moments while our guide surveyed the scene, we then began climbing again until we reached the very edge of the highest crater. Our guide explained we were fortunate to see this, as earlier that morning it had been deemed too long and dangerous to go so far. Across the smoke-filled crater, a quarter of a mile away, we could make out the outline of Etna’s very highest summit, a tooth-shaped mound, which, because of its steep sides and the fact it was basking in toxic fumes, was not even remotely climbable. Unfortunately, our guide was correct, because when we did reach the spot he had indicated we could breathe easier. It had, however, been a daunting experience, quite more than enough to make me reconsider my belief that there’s no such thing as Satan, hell or fire and brimstone. Indeed, what we had been subjected to was the very breath of Hades. After regaining our collective composure and taking a few final summit photos, we started to descend the steep southern side of the crater. Because the slope consisted of loose cinders, those of us who had experience with that sort of stuff were soon post-holing down in an easy, slow motion. About half way down, however, hearing someone approaching rapidly from behind, I turned around just in time to see a woman from our group come nosing past me. As I watched her tumble on down, she somehow managed to stop rolling head over heels, however, unable to halt, she continued to roll on down like a log. Fortunately, there were no large, hard objects in her path, and so, although she was covered from head to toe in volcanic dust when she finally did come to the bottom of the slope, she sustained only minor cuts and contusions. It occurred to me that an excursion of this nature would be impossible were Etna located in the U.S. In our litigious culture, the guides’ ox, plus everything else they owned, would have been sued off long. We eventually got back to the guide shack, took a short break, and then continued down once more, partially circumambulating a crater formed in a 2002-2003 eruption, an occurrence during which an earlier guide shack was almost completely buried beneath ash and cinders. We reached the top cable car station at little after 4 p.m., rode down, and, about 4:30 p.m., got back to our van—the end of an exciting Mt. Etna adventure. Two days later, in Palermo, Sicily’s capital, Jo and I bid farewell to our family, all of whom had to return to California for jobs, summer camps, etc., before which we are retirees are no longer concerned. Jo and I, however, planned to stay on in Italy for two more weeks, visiting two more islands and climbing two more peaks. Stay tuned for our adventures on Stromboli and Sardinia.

TRIP REPORT
Spanish Mountain & Tehipite Dome

A Cross Country Approach
OCTOBER 27-28, 2006

BY NILE SORENSON

“On my friend Doug Mantle and I knew the end of the climbing year in the Sierra was slowing but we figured we could squeeze in a couple more peaks. We started hiking at the Crown Valley Trailhead. Our objective was to climb Spanish Mountain the first day, then camp somewhere near the peak. On day 2 we would climb Tehipite dome and come out…A lot of mileage (35) with lots of up and down for this late in the year with the shortened days.At the trail goes east from the trailhead, we stayed to the right toward Statem Meadow. The trail continues toward Spanish Meadow and passes just to the north of Spanish lake. A trail junction is reached between two lakes at 8362 ft. These lakes are located about three quarters of a mile east of Spanish Lake. The southernmost of these two lakes is not a longer lake, but a grayly mardy. At the junction we dropped our packs to climb Spanish Mountain and followed a use trail that starts heading east. It soon turns south and heads up the gully to a saddle just north of Spanish mountain. From here we descended into a broad gully and climbed two more peaks. Stay tuned for our adventures on Spanish Mountain. We returned to the packs at the twin lakes. Our intention was to camp somewhere east of crown creek, so we needed to go to Crown Valley. The map shows a trail heading northeast from Lake 8632 toward the crown valley trail just west of crown creek station. This trail is not maintained and is very difficult to follow due to the downed timber. We had to use a compass to stay on a heading to meet up with the crown valley trail. Back on the Crown Valley trail, we headed east. This is a good trail all the way to Crown Creek which was easy to cross this time of year. After crossing Crown creek, the trail (now called the Blue Canyon Trail) is not maintained and has a lot of downhill climbing and becomes very faint in places. We found several areas to camp on the slopes east of crown creek near the park boundary at 7200 ft. The streams east of crown creek still had a little bit of water even in the end of October. Make sure and set your altimeter to this known elevation. You will need it later. The next day we were up early and headed for Tehipite dome along the trail going east toward Blue Canyon. Recheck your altimeter before you leave camp. Some write ups suggest climbing to 8600 ft. before leaving the Blue Canyon trail for cross-country travel south to the ridge down toward Tehipite dome at 7700 ft. We found an easier method. Here is where your compass and altimeter come in. Leave the trail at 7850 ft. (approximately UTM 410890) and head south going through the saddle just east of peak 7777 and peak 8461. Trace your descent so you will reach the creek at 7650 ft. Never go below 7650 ft. Once you have reached the creek at 7650 ft., gradually ascend as you continue to traverse toward a tiny knoll at UTM 417885 and 7760 ft. From near the knoll, stay at 7700 ft until you reach the ridge which heads south-westward toward the dome. Once on the ridge, follow it south to the dome. Make sure and keep track of the route so you can go back the same way. This is a rather easy traverse, never losing more than 200 ft in elevation. It saves climbing clear up to 8600 on the way in and then back up to 8600 ft on the way out. We even found some game trails with no other hikers. By the way, the climb up the dome is listed as class 3. Yes, it is a class 5 move on a slab, but there is major exposure at this spot. A slip will mean almost certain death, so if you are a little uneasy with exposure take a small rope. Tehipite dome offers a spectacular view of the Middle Fork of the Kings River and the dome (approximate location of your altimeter). Tehipite dome is a huge dome that you never notice until you are on it or beside it. We followed the same route back to the trail traversing through the same creek and back up to 7850 ft. and rejoined the Blue Canyon trail. The next 7 hours took us to the cars just before dark. A great full trip. I would also enjoy day hiking other nearby northern Sierra peaks including, Matterhorn, Whorl, Twin Peaks, and Virginia and perhaps a few others. However, these peaks will require a faster pace to reach in a day. 

Up For A Dayhike to a Northern Sierra Peak?

from Daryn Dodge, SPS Northern California Representative

Because I am within a few hours of most of the northern Sierra peaks on the SPS list (2 most northern sections), I would enjoy dayhiking any of these peaks as a private trip with SPS members that would like a hiking partner for the day. Weekends work best for me and possibly make arrangements on fairly short notice. Just call me up (530-753-1095) to set a day for the climb. Since it may be too late this year to do much peak climbing in the northern Sierra, keep me in mind for next year.

ODDS & ENDS

1. Guides are mandatory for hikes to the top of Etna.
2. Bring your own dust masks; they should be considered essential.
3. Get an early start; the excursion takes longer than you may expect.
The Sierra Echo is published quarterly by the Sierra Peaks Section (SPS) of the Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter; this issue edited by Edd Ruskowitz.

Publication dates are June 15 (Summer), September 15 (Fall), December 15 (Winter) and March 15 (Spring). All text submissions for publication, including trip reports, articles, etc., must be submitted in electronic format (e.g., MS Word, Word Perfect, email). Photos may be submitted as electronic files (jpeg, tiff or Photoshop only, in a resolution high enough for print media) or as prints or slides. If submissions are to be returned to you please include a return envelope with sufficient postage. All submissions should be sent to Sara Danta, 9741 Reseda Blvd., Northridge, CA 91324-2031 or emailed to s_wyrens@yahoo.com Phone: (818) 349-6019.

Deadline for all submissions is three (3) weeks prior to the publication date.

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