CHAIRMAN'S CORNER: Jerry Keating

One glance at the tentative summer schedule shows a wide variety of trips as well as leaders. The program was formulated by the three-man Schedule Committee with the help of questionnaires submitted to the membership fall and then was amended at the SPS' February meeting.

Great care was taken to see that the SPS was not pricing itself out of the market with too many arduous or technical trips. Outings suitable for beginners or those just want an enjoyable weekend include Siretta Peak via Brush Creek, Alba Peak, Rock Creek and Grass Lake.

Difficult or technical outings include Mt. Darwin, Mt. Bitter-Butter Peak traverse, Mt. Clarence King, Balloon Dome and an exploratory climb of a peak above Silver Lake in the Mineral King area.

Members voted unanimously at the February meeting to change over to the Lemon Grove PlayGround at the start of the summer schedule. The playground's auditorium was offered to the section on the second Wednesday of each month. The playground is located at 4950 Lemon Grove Avenue, just off the Hollywood Freeway between Western and Normandie Avenues. The auditorium is new and has fine acoustics as well as a small stage. It should be excellent for slide programs as well as speakers.

Meeting on Wednesday nights also should be better for most SPSers, as Thursday nights are commonly packed.

Several members have pointed out in recent weeks that the SPS on occasion has overlooked good conservation practice in building unusually large camp fires. One member observed that a considerable amount of wood was wasted in an area already affected by overusage.

As part of a conservation organization, the SPS should refrain from such a practice. Trip leaders should enforce club policy of "using only what is necessary."

Following are two letters, reprinted verbatim, from two members of our section. I urge you to read them both and send in your views and comments:

To the Editor:

Once again I notice reference to a "roast" in an article on Mt. Whitney. Am I not correct in assuming that the translation is "an unusually large and conspicuous fire"? As in past letters on this subject I wonder if such a description is consistent with Sierra Club principles of conservation in most of the areas that our Sections visit very large fires mean that the storehouse of the future (for plants in the form of decomposition and man in terms of fuel) are expended more than the need warrants.

I trust that you will not treat this as petty carping but feel that all sections of the S.C. must be overly diligent in their publications and in all matters of conservation, conscientious.

Trudie Hunt (unofficially)

P.S. In my current position I can not be unaware that the membership makes it's feelings known, not in recognition of the numberless hours contributed voluntarily but in criticism of details which they personally feel important. So please accept this letter not as a criticism of past performance but as a suggestion in terms of the ideal.
Another letter follows:

I like to voice a protest against the repeated reference and glorification of "----- Roast" in SPS publications, like the "Sierra Echo". Personally I have observed when on SPS scheduled trips tremendous fires being built using logs and wasting considerable amount of firewood, often in areas which already suffer from overusage.

Examples: A tremendous fire was built at Twin Lakes trail campsite in Sequoia National Park during SPS scheduled trip to Mt. Silliman. Strong personal protest by the writer: and I was not the only one to protest; were more than ignored.

During other SPS trip a fire of such proportions was built that people in Owens Valley became alarmed. What a way to publicize our Sierra Club! I believe the behavior of this kind is not in accordance with good conservation practices and therefore is in conflict with Sierra Club principles. To the best of my knowledge no attempt by SPS officers to curb such activities has ever been made. I wonder why? I urge you as SPS Chairman to take necessary remedial action.

Harry Maltz

EDITOR'S NOTE

In my opinion I feel that true Sierra Clubbers would agree in essence with the views expressed in the preceding two letters. However, I feel some qualifications should be mentioned. Under no circumstances is it necessary to have a fire larger than prudence dictates. The following factors do have a bearing on the size of a fire that is constructed;

1. The size of the party (in numbers, of course)
2. General area visited. By this is meant whether large numbers of people wander thru the area and camp.
3. Elevation in respect to amount of firewood available. At timberline the fuel supply is meagre and a fire here should be minimal.
4. Remoteness: It may be that an area visited has not been traversed or climber for 5-10 years. Should a party of 5-6 climbers see a large amount of wood around, I see no need to restrict their fire to a minimum, but also not to a ridiculous maximum.

Nature has balanced organic life (trees and shrubs in this instance) all over the earth, and particularly at timberline, the decomposition of organic material may serve as a bed for future trees or shrubs. Ashes from a fire also has value for supporting such life, so the consumption of firewood does not completely devitalize or sterilize an area.

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PICACHO DEL DIABLO

(Bill Thomas)

Over Thanksgiving, 1959 Bill Thomas, Don Hamilton, Dick Sheffield, Chuck Moore, Charles Bell and two others climbed Picacho Del Diablo in Baja. Straightforward route up Diablo Canyon, 3 & 4th class to top-- fine weather but late return to camp each night. Did it in 3 days. Saw forest fires on San Pedro Martir plateau. View of Gulf and Pacific. Peak especially recommended to SPSEers as being their meat.
(Ed. note: This peak should be called Cerro De la Encantada (Peak of Enchantment) as this is the official Mexican name for it).

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NEW MEMBERS

(Bill Sanders)

Two new members have joined the SPS so far in 1960. By Ossofsky listed nine emblem peaks on his application. By claims that he climbs peaks to keep in shape for the ski season. (See personal notes further on in Echo). Charles House has climbed two of the six peaks he listed three times.
PERSONAL NOTES

The following breakworthy item was supplied by Pat Gentry:

On Feb. 6th while skiing at Mammoth Mtn. with Sy Ossofsky & Barbara Lilley, Bud Bingham had the misfortune to seriously fracture both leg bones (tibia and fibula) of his right leg just above the ankle. Not to be outdone, the following week on Feb. 13th, Sy Ossofsky also suffered a fracture (spiral type) of his right tibia (see above what it is) also above the ankle.

Both of these casualties were transported on the respective days, to Los Angeles via the Barbara Lilley Ambulance Service. Also, on Feb. 13th (note the date) Jo Ann Jones (wife of Vern) broke her leg at Mammoth.

(Who says Mountain Climbing is dangerous)

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WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES!

(This is the second of a fine series of articles supplied from the files of Orville and Pat Gentry, who promise to write several more)

With the snow climbing season soon here, it may be well to read and remember the accident described below taken from the 1958 annual report of the Safety Committee of the American Alpine Club. Would you have avoided these mistakes? Would you have been the statistic?

COLORADO, CAPITAL PEAK — On July 25, 1957, John W. Heckert, a student at M.I.T., Mileen Ginter and Richard A. Slusser left the Colorado Mountain Club's camp at Snowmass Lake to explore a possible route to Pierre Basin and Capitol Peak. They left at 4:40 A.M., all carried ice axes, and they had one 120-foot rope. They reached the pass into Pierre Basin by 7:30, and since they were making good time, they decided to attempt the peak. The weather was overcast but not stormy.

They approached the east ridge of Capitol Peak from the south. Three gullies were seen to lead to this ridge, the most easterly looking the easiest; they climbed this gully and followed the ridge to the summit. The ridge was very narrow, rough, and wet from light sleet which had begun to fall, and it took an hour and a half to traverse the ridge, a distance of well under a mile. They reached the summit soon after 1:00 p.m.

Returning, they soon came to the westernmost of the three gullies they had seen from below. Rather than retrace their steps over the wet knife-edge, they decided to explore the first 300 feet, which was a narrow couloir with rock walls and no snow. Below this, the gully broadened out and a snow slope began which seemed to provide a glissade route down to the basin. Slusser called to the others to join him, which they did, belaying as they came. At the bottom of the narrow section they removed the rope. Heckert immediately prepared to glissade the snow without waiting for the others. Ginter was coiling the rope and did not see him start; Slusser was kicking steps in the top of the snow tongue and removing the guard from his ice axe when he saw Heckert start in a sitting glissade. He immediately picked up speed and rolled into a prone self-arrest position. Slusser saw the point of his axe bite into the hard snow, but it did not check his speed. Bouncing over bumps in the snow, Heckert flew through the air, hit a large boulder some 100 feet below his starting point, bounced off, and disappeared from sight. His body landed in a small crevasse 30 feet lower down. He was evidently killed instantly when his head struck the boulder. It took
Ginter and Slusser a full hour, kicking steps all the way down, to reach him.

It was now evident that the snow slope down which the party had slid was convex and even steeper than had appeared at the top, because the fall line led away from the center line of the gully to the side where the large boulder was. This could now be seen from above owing to the convexity of the snow and the flat light. (The sun had gone out, but the gully was in shadow).

Evacuation of the body took two days and was completed with the help of the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group.

Source: Written and oral statements by Glenn Ginter and Richard Slusser, summarized by Harold Walton. See also Appalachia 11: 304, 1257.

Analysis: (By Harold Walton, safety chairman, Colorado Mountain Club.) The party was strong but lacked experience and proper leadership. Slusser and Ginter had Colorado Mountain Club Class 3 ratings, but had done little technical rock climbing and little or no snow and ice work. Kepkay, an Appalachian Mountain Club member, had signed on as leader of the party, but his experience was also very limited. He had climbed chair massif the previous day and no doubt overestimated his ability and judgement.

It is a pity so many climbers have to learn the hard way that snow can be treacherous. No experienced mountaineer would ever gllise a snow slope without having ascended it first or at least testing the snow and making very sure he knew where he was going.

The choice of a row and unknown route for the descent could be questioned, but it was understandable under the circumstances and need not have involved any danger had the party continued down the gully with as much caution as they had used initially.

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

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* Brown, 3276 Calle Nicasia, Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91301
* Gaedeke, Roger, 16719 Haley St., Granada Hills, Calif. 91340
* Gail, Charles N., 6345 N. Verdugo Rd., Glendale 3, CA 91219
* Johnson, Larry R., 302 W. Palm Ave., El Cajon, CA 92021
* Koster, Bob 838 C Raynard Ave., Ina, Calif.
* Mcgoldrick, Jim 1115 Vista Monica, La Canada
* Mullan, Charles & Mary Ann 6122 Mauer Dr., Camarillo, Calif.
* Orser, Bob 26th Ave. St., Berkeley, Calif.
* Owings, Lee 3358 Troy Drive, L. A. 28r, BO 2-4146
* Raudenbush, Mike 1/2222 Tabor St., Sepulveda, Calif. 91340
* Wade, Dr. Robert 1009 Madison St., Laguna Beach, CA 92652
* Tepp, Robert E., 1627 3rd Ave., San Francisco 22

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NEW MEMBERS

House, Charles, 972 Amanda Lane, La Habra, Calif
Pennington, Philip R., 2655 Shasta Rd., Berkeley 5, CA 5-7436
* Jacobs, Sy 4800 Loma Coliseum St., L.A. 5
Resignation of Mary Ann (Eide) Miller as treasurer caused a shuffling of Sierra Peaks Section officers, but it strengthened the possibility that a similar group would be formed in Northern California.

Mrs. Miller resigned in order to move to the Sacramento area with her husband, Chick, SPS chairman in 1958. The Millers plan to see if interest warrants a section in the northern part of the state. Seventeen SPSers now reside north of the Tehachapi Mountains.

Lothar Kolbig assumed the Management Committee post vacated by Mrs. Miller. George Shinno shifted from alternate officer to treasurer, and Lothar took over as alternate officer.

Secretary Bill Sanders reported at the January 7th meeting that the newest member was Philip Pennington of Berkeley. Active membership now 159.

Traffic Jam at Pill Hill

Popocatepetl, Ixtaccuitl, and Orizaba were again trod upon by Sierra Clubbers and others this past Christmas season.

Bob Cooley, Bob Happle, Bobin Ives, Graham Stephenson, George and Nick Modjeska flew to Mexico City where they were met by Bob Bear. The weather was excellent and climbing was enjoyed by all. Popo was renamed Pill Hill, in recognition of this principal item of our diet. 'Tiger' Cooley made all three summits.

We met climbers from all parts of the U.S.A.; -- New Mexico, Colorado, Pennsylvania and San Jose, Calif as well as a number of Mexican groups. Mexican climbers in general are poorly outfitted but very tough, happy and charming and like all mountain people, fine fellows. They did however refuse to aid us in our unsuccessful search for hallucination mushrooms.

Chrisforo Jiminez, our packer on Orizaba to the Cave of Death, claims 166 ascents to the summit of Orizaba. It's reported that for a modest fee he will pig-a-back you up.

It took as much pull for plane and rent-car reservations as to get up the mountains. Make your reservations in July.

an outstanding New Year's eve, complete with Mexican embraces was a highlight at a swank Mexico City night club.

Four climbers flew back on Jan. 2. Bob Bear toured back and Cooley and George stayed on till the 11th to enjoy Mexico.

--George W. Modjeska
CLIMBING GUADALUPE PEAK (4500') by John Robinson

The weekend of Jan. 23-24 found Fred Jensen, Andy Smatko, Shirley Smith, "Jungle Jim", and John Robinson in Mexico to climb Guadalupe Peak, a new addition to the DPS qualifying list. No trouble was encountered driving in as the dirt road is passable and well marked. Saturday afternoon we took a dip in the spring-fed pool of warm water at camp.

Early Sunday morning, after being awakened by a minor earthquake, we began the 4000 ft. ascent. Some difficulty was encountered when we climbed the wrong ridge and got into some time consuming, cactus-infested third class. 3 hours after leaving camp we reached the gentle plateau behind the peak and looked forward to an easy ascent of the summit rocks.

The massive, broken granite summit ridge, jutting out north of the main plateau (see map), proved to be a real problem. After much up and down third class exploring we finally reached the next-to-last summit block. The northernmost block, about the same elevation as the one we were on, was only 50 feet beyond. Separating us from it was a 20 foot deep vertical-walled gash with no way across without a rope. Not having one, we had to content ourselves with the southern summit, which consensus of our group believed was a few inches lower.

Our descent was by the easternmost ridge down to camp, a much better route to the plateau than the one we used going up.

Those climbing this interesting peak are advised to take two ropes along, two canteens of water, and a camera. Also consult your astrologist to make sure no earthquake is due.
“I still think we should’ve waited for a guide”