CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

One of the nicest things that we of the Sierra Peak Section have, is our association with our mountaineering brothers, the Socorro Alpino de Mexico.

As you may recall, they were here in July, and now Bob Mason, Marlin Clark and myself, have just returned from a wonderful week of climbing with them.

Before leaving for home, Guillermo Fuentes, President of the Club, and I, discussed the possibility of trying to make annual trips to and from Mexico. Speaking for myself, I have learned many things about mountaineering from them, and I am sure they have learned much from us.

One of the more important things I learned from them, is not to see how fast we can get there, but to hike more slowly, look at the beauty all around us, take a few pictures and even eat as a group, rather than everyone carry their own stoves and eat as individuals. It seems so much closer, more festive, with much more comradeship.

The next time they come to California, try to go on the trips with them, because it will be an experience you will never forget.

In the meantime, I would like to see an annual trip from here to Mexico City on the closest Sunday to October 12th, which is Columbus Day. On that Sunday, the Mexicans climb Mt. Popocatepetl, carrying flags of all nations, with much ceremony. It is a most festive occasion.

I will show you all of this via my pictures at the December meeting.

- Sid Davis -
NEWS AND VIEWS

BANQUET REMINDER

The Sierra Peaks Section Annual Banquet is Thursday, December 7th. It will be the (by now) traditional top sirloin dinner at Rudi's Italian Inn. The social hour begins at 6:30 P.M., dinner at 7:30 P.M. The program, Climbing in the Wrangell Range of Alaska, with slides by members of the expedition, will be presented by John Thornton.

Tickets are $3.25 and are available from Ann Hunt. Make checks payable to "Sierra Peaks Section". If requesting tickets by mail, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Mrs. W. A. Hunt, 2700 Aviation Boulevard, Apt. #18, Redondo Beach, California 90278.

MEMBERSHIP LIST CHANGES

There are already some changes to be made to the membership list which was published just last month! The following is an addition to the list:

Michael and David Cohen,
18342 Delano Street
Reseda, California 91335

The following is a change of address:

Sy Ossofsky,
5934 Abernathy Drive
Los Angeles, California 90045

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Ed Lane has available some BACKPACKER'S SEWING AWLS. For sewing leather, webbing, etc., with nylon cord. Weight one-sixth of an ounce. Curved or straight needle. 50¢ each postpaid. Send to: Ed Lane, Box #393, Big Pine, California 93513.

ANOTHER "COUNTRY" HEARD FROM

As many of you may remember, Neko Colevins left our southern contingent some time ago and moved north. He is trying to get a section started in the Bay Area, so all of you who live in the Bay Area, contact:

Neko D. Colevins
1556 Clay Street, #5
San Francisco, California
Phone: 673-8910
TRIP REPORTS

CHINA LAKE McKinley EXPEDITION - June 27-July 14 . . . . . . . . . . . . Dennis Burge

Four SPS members, Carl Heller, Dennis Burge, Jim Nichols and Russ Huse, were among a group of eight from China Lake and one from Palo Alto who climbed Mt. McKinley this summer. The trip was led by Dr. Heller. The climb was by the almost traditional West Buttress route.

The group reached Talkeetna on June 25 and were flown in to the Kahiltna Glacier by Don Sheldon on the 27th and 28th. The Park Service has a new interpretation of the rules so that no air drops are allowed in the park unless the expedition has official scientific status. Because of this and frequent snowstorms, it took until July 7 to reach the campsite at 14,200'.

On July 8, loads were carried to the top of the West Buttress in occasional moderate snow showers. From July 9th on we had a very fortunate break in the weather; it was clear every day with only light to moderate winds. We went to 17,200' on the 9th, rested on the 10th and reached the summit on the 11th. The weather was quite moderate on the summit, - 30°, 25 mph wind and bright sunshine.

We made a leisurely descent and three of us, Carl Heller, Dennis Burge and Ernst Bauer, made a first ascent of Pk. 9,300 (which is to the west of the 7,500' level of the Kahiltna). This peak has been tentatively named Batkin Pk., by request of the Alaska Rescue Group, in honor of Jacques Batkin, who was killed in the vicinity during the 1967 winter ascent. We were then flown out on July 14.

The trip was especially successful in that no one had any illness nor did anyone fall in a crevasse - to say nothing of the six day spell of good weather.

WHITNEY PORTAL LOOP TRIP - August 31-September 5 . . . . . . . . . . . . Bill Schuler

Early Thursday morning, I started out with full pack from Whitney Portal, and lunchtime found me at Consultation Lake. The afternoon was spent climbing Wotan's Throne (12,811') in a thundershower.

After a drizzly night at Consultation Lake, I rose early and backpacked up through the low clouds to Arc Pass. I left my pack, and climbed slopes to the west to McAdie Middle Peak (13,680'+), then down to the saddle and ascended Mt. McAdie (13,800'), Class 3. Back at Arc Pass, I headed east to the Irvine Ridge, and up to the summit of Mt. Irvine (13,790'). I continued south around Mallory's east ridge to the Le Conte Plateau, and then up to Mount Mallory (13,870'). Retracing my steps, I regained the Irvine Ridge, dropped to Arc Pass and my pack, and finally dropping out of the clouds, set up camp at Sky Blue Lake. At dusk it started to rain and it continued through the night.

I had planned on climbing Mt. Pickering and Mt. Newcomb the next day, but the rain cancelled them out. It was pretty miserable, as I was still above timberline.

Around 10:00 A.M. I finally crawled out of my sack, and packed over Crabtree Pass to timberline on Crabtree Creek. It stopped raining about 9:00 P.M., and the fire felt great.
Next morning, I awoke to cloudy skies, but set out anyway for the Hitchcock Ridge. Traveling from west to east, I climbed Peak 13,040', .7 mile NW of Mt. Hitchcock; Peak 13,120', .4 mile NW of Mt. Hitchcock; Mt. Hitchcock (13,188'); Peak 13,120', .1 mile ESE of Mt. Hitchcock; Peak 13,360', .5 mile SW of Discovery Pinnacle; and Discovery Pinnacle (13,777'). Mt. Hitchcock and Discovery Pinnacle were the only peaks containing registers. I started to hail on Discovery Pinnacle, turned to rain on the way down to Upper Crabtree Lake, and poured all the way back to camp. I picked up my pack, hiked down to Crabtree Meadows, and up the Whitney Creek Trail to the 10,860 foot level. It finally stopped raining about 11:00 P.M.

In the morning, I awoke to clear skies, but by the time breakfast was over the clouds were forming along the crest. I hiked due north to a saddle to the left (west) of Mt. Young, then continued up the left ridge to Peak 12,820'. I found a cairn, but no register, so left one, and returned to the saddle. After a short break, I headed up to the summit of Mt. Young (13,187'). Continuing east, I climbed Mt. Hale (13,493'), as a hailstorm broke around me. I now dropped to the south and climbed Peak 12,722' about a mile away. I felt and heard symptoms of lightning so I got off the top in a hurry. I was about 200 feet down when lightning hit the peak. It flipped my ice axe out of my hand and it landed about 20 feet away. There were no signs of a cairn nor register on top, and I didn't leave any, due to the dangerous circumstances. I felt lucky to have made the peak. I continued south and down to the John Muir Trail. It poured on and off till dark. An hour later the sky was clear and I saw the stars for the first time on the trip.

The next morning it was still clear, but expecting the worst, I started out early and backpacked up to Trail Crest. Leaving my pack, I went up the trail to the summit of Mt. Whitney (14,495'). I was the first one on top for that day, and enjoyed the solitude, extraordinary views, and warmth of the sun. The iron cross on top is quite spectacular and a fine tribute to our amigos from Mexico City. On the way back to my pack I climbed the Keeler Needle (14,128'), Day Needle (14,110'), and Third Needle (14,110'). From Trail Crest, I started the long pack out to the car, amazed that the skies were still clear.

During the six days, I hiked about sixty-five miles, climbed nineteen peaks, and backpacked over three passes. All peaks were Class 2 except Mt. McAdie. This was a very enjoyable and rewarding trip, despite the weather, and I will remember it for a long, long time.
TEHIPITE DOME, October 9 ................................. Jerry Keating

Having been thwarted on the Fourth of July weekend by a rampaging Crown Creek, Rich Gnagy, Barbara Lilley and I returned to Wishon Dam October 7 to climb Tehipite Dome (7,708').

From the new gravel roadhead three miles beyond the dam (see Sierra Echo for July, 1967), we backpacked the 12 miles of trail to Crown Creek in less than five hours. To our satisfaction, the 60-foot-wide watercourse had dropped three feet, making it easy to hop across rocks to a campsite (7,000') on the opposite shore.

After lunch, we hiked to the Dome in about 1 3/4 hours, using the rope on a brief but exposed pitch on the summit backbone. While A CLIMBER'S GUIDE recommends leaving the Tunemah trail at 7,500', we found that the 7,700' level affords a climber a better shot at the Dome and makes it easier to avoid some of the deep ravines enroute.

On Sunday, with the weather continuing sunny and mild, Rich detoured in order to bag Spanish Mtn. (10,051') but nevertheless joined the others at the car before 3:30 P.M.

If climbed the first afternoon, Tehipite Dome would make an ideal two-day scheduled trip. It would be necessary, however, to climb the peak after Crown Creek subsides but before the days become too short. The trip also should be limited to those who can maintain a brisk backpacking pace and negotiate the third-class summit pitch without difficulty. The Dome was led by the SPS in 1965 on a three-day weekend.

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REMITTANCE: Must be sent to the SPS Treasurer (1967 - Ted Maier, 3233 Federal Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90066).

On Friday, October 13th at 4:45 P.M., Bob Mason, Marlin Clark and I took off from the International Airport for Mexico City.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by about 30 members of the Socorro Alpino de Mexico. They immediately put our gear on the top of their rescue ambulance (a Dodge carryall), and whisked us off to the home of Guillermo Fuentes, President of the Socorro Alpino, where we had a bite to eat. We then changed into our climbing clothes, leaving everything else behind, and took off for the roadhead at Mt. Popocatepetl. About half way there (like stopping off at Mojave), we stopped at a restaurant where about 100 or so climbers were eating and once again we indulged, this time with enchiladas, hot sauce and Mexican beer. Then on to the roadhead (12,500'), arriving about 4:00 A.M. We slept in a large building which was quite picturesque and very clean.

It seemed that I had just put my head down, when we heard everyone shouting to get up - 7:30. We had breakfast, shot a few pictures, and started up the mountain. At about 14,500 to 15,000 feet we reached the snow line, and after a short rest, climbed straight up the Glacier to the lip of the volcano, where 15 of us put up our tents. The rest of the group were putting up tents at nine different stations along the way, so that on Sunday, when the 1,000 people who reached the top were on their way up, they could stop for a bite to eat, something to drink, medication or even oxygen if needed.
It might be of interest to note that within 24 hours we went from sea level to 17,000' and were certainly lucky that none of us were affected by the altitude.

Bob, Marlin, George - one of the Mexican climbers, who by the way slept in his clothes with no pad or sleeping bag (Brmmm, cold!). - and I, slept in one of the tents.

The next morning as we looked down, we could see the people climbing up the mountain. It was unbelievable to see so many people wending their way up the Glacier - a truly beautiful sight.

About 12 o'clock the ceremonies started, followed by the flags of 57 different nations in review. I carried the American flag. It certainly was an honor and a thrilling moment.

On the descent, wouldn't you know, my sleeping-bag came loose and down, and down, and down, and down, she went. If you will remember, that is what happened to my other bag on the Darwin trip - so you can see that this bag had not even been broken in yet! However, I found it, and naturally, rather then come back up, I traversed around the mountain, finally rejoining other climbers, and then on down to the cars.

On the following Tuesday, after getting all our supplies at the Supermarket, Peter, Zenon, Bob, Marlin and I left for Orizaba at about 11:00 A.M. We stopped for lunch at Puebla, and continued to a little village where we transferred to a 4-wheel drive truck. Two and a half hours later we reached the hut at about 11:00 P.M., approximately 14,000 feet - but not without mishap.

On the way up, as we wound and bounced up the winding dirt road toward the hut, I was at one time thrown against Bob, and unfortunately, cracked one of his ribs.

The next morning we started to climb at 7:20 and the weather was absolutely sensational, but at about 11:00 A.M. we were in a complete white-out, at approximately 16,500'. All we could do was to sit and wait. At 1:30 P.M. we followed our foot prints back to the hut.

The next morning, Thursday, at 6 o'clock, the truck arrived to take us back to our car and we returned to Mexico City with a stopover for lunch at Puebla, and one flat tire.

On Friday night at about 11:00 P.M., we were driven to the roadhead of Iztaccihuatl, and around 1:00 A.M., Zenon, Bob, Marlin and I started up the mountain. Bob soon found that he could not breathe very well, as every time he took a deep breath, his cracked rib hurt him. We finally reached a hut at about 14,500', which was at the snow line, at 5:00 A.M. We got Bob and ourselves into our bags, but at 6:15 - an hour and 15 minutes later - we got up and by 8 o'clock were on our way - saying goodbye to Bob, as the pain was too great for him to try to make the peak.

Once again the weather was beautiful, and once again we had a white-out, but this time it was within an hour from the peak, and we were able to make it. It was now 11:30.
(TRIP REPORTS, Continued)

(MT. POPOCATEPETL, MT. ORIZABA, MT. IZTACCHUATL - Continued)

We took pictures and started down, having a bite of lunch on the way, and arrived back at the hut at 2 o'clock. By the time we had packed up and climbed down the rest of the way, it was 4:30. We were then met by three of the Mexican climbers, one with a guitar, and were serenaded all the way back to Mexico City.

The next morning the boys drove us to the Airport, and with many embraces and good wishes, we said 'adios' and flew back to Los Angeles.

PK. 13,120+ (FIRST ASCENT), AND PEAKS ALONG THE WHEELER CREST, October 28-29. Andy Smatko

On the weekend of October 28-29, Frank Yates, Elizabeth Cuadra, Tom Ross, Ellen Siegal, Bill Schuler and I backpacked from Rock Creek Lake, elevation 9,682' to a pleasant campsite at about 11,000' about a mile down canyon from Tamarack Lakes. The low scudding clouds and high winds at the start of the backpack make us wonder what we were attempting in the Sierra this late in the season. However, as the hours went by the skies cleared and a sparkling Autumnal day presented itself for the rest of the day, although gusty winds still raked us occasionally.

Having reached our campsite so early (shortly after noon) it was decided to attempt Peak 13,120+', 0.9 miles east of Mt. Morgan (13,748'). It was on an attempt of this peak on May 27th of this year that a falling rock crushed one of my fingers, so I had a sort of personal grudge to square with the mountain. We couldn't see the peak from our camp spot but as we ascended by trail the jagged NW-SE crest of our peak hove into view and what we saw did not look encouraging. The ridge SE of the summit was composed of 4 sheer walled gendarmes, one actually overhanging a ''V'' notch. It was obvious that our attempt earlier in the Spring could not have succeeded as we were at that time at the base of the first gendarme at the SE end of the summit ridge. It was just beyond here that the accident occurred. Our only hope lay in trying to turn the NE couloir up to the summit ridge or col lying between our objective and Pk. 13,440+', 0.5 mile to the NW. Hard packed fresh snow lay in the couloir and by a combination of a snow and rock route (class III) the col or notch was reached. The very steep wall on our left with its downwards sloping ledges looked ominous indeed. Frank, who was ahead, had made the correct analysis in traversing on the west side of the peak over 2 ribs and then up a gully to one false summit and then over another small false summit and on to the true summit where he built a cairn. Meanwhile, Bill, Tom, Ellen and I started up the wall at our left but Bill pronounced it as 4th class and exposed and advised checking on the west side. Frank had returned by now and told us the route. At this juncture, because of the lateness of the hour, Tom and Ellen turned back and just Bill and I went on to the summit and left a register. I named the peak "Broken Finger Peak", and there was no evidence of any previous ascent. Frank had built a cairn, so after a brief stay and look around we headed back down the steep couloir and on to camp in the early nightfall. Since one has the prerogative to give a name to a mountain or peak on a first ascent, the designation "Broken Finger Peak" will be sent into the Board of Geographical Names with the story of the first attempt, and giving the reason for the name. Whether the name will be accepted or not, I do not know but for me, it will be remembered as "Broken Finger Peak".

-8-
Early Sunday morning, after a mild 28°F. night, we started back up the trail with Peak 12,968' as our objective. This is the high point of the Wheeler Crest and it has been named by previous parties "Mt. Wheeler". We six broke up into three parties at the foot of the wide couloir coming down from between the twin summits. While Bill, Ellen, Elizabeth and Frank basically went up the WSW couloir, with Frank going up the right fork of it to climb the south summit first, Tom and I headed directly south to gain the plateau SE of Tamarack Lake (166' or so higher). From here we climbed Peak 12,800'+, 0.4 mi. south of Tamarack Lakes. There was no evidence of a previous ascent. The actual high point consisted of a slender monolith balanced on a square block. I climbed up on the steep sloping side of the monolith and touched the top of the pinnacle. We built a cairn at the base of the monolith and left a register in a plastic bag. Again taking the prerogative of a first ascent party we named the peak Mt. Tomdy after our first names. The north and NW faces were sheer. The SE slopes were class II. The S and SW faces were class III to III. The west ridge was broken and minimal class III. We then climbed the south peak of Mt. Wheeler via an easy class III shallow chute on the west face of the peak. This summit had a cairn (built by Frank - ejs) but no register. We then traversed to the true summit where Bill and Ellen and Liz had left a new register. Frank had also made this traverse before us, class II basically, as was the true summit. Frank and Liz had returned to camp, and Bill and Ellen had gone on to climb Pk. 12,541', a mile (as the crow flies) to the NE where a cairn and register were found. This peak was named "the Bumpkin", and it had been climbed 3 times by Chester Versteeg. Curiously, Chester did not on any of his climbs of Pk. 12,541' go on to climb Mt. Wheeler, the high point of the Wheeler Crest. Bill and Ellen descended from Pk. 12,541' via a suitable chute, while Tom and I descended via a chute a short distance down from the summit of Mt. Wheeler and this chute led into the main chute coming up between the two summits. Basically the climb of Mt. Wheeler is class II via our route. The west and NW faces are class V and quite spectacular. The south slopes are easy class II. The view from this nearly 13,000' peak was far reaching and the road up Pine Creek nearly 6,500' below looked like a ribbon. Impressive Mt. Tom loomed mightily to the SSE. The White Mountains, Glass Mtn., and Mt. Ritter and Humphreys were outlined against the azure sky.

Our backpack out was saddened by the knowledge that this was our last Sierra backpack this season but immediately brightened by the prospect of again visiting this rugged area in which small jewel-like lakes nestled in spacious meadows. Indeed, this is a most charming gentle region but rugged peaks are near at hand (or foot).