



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA HIKING CLUB NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER, 1964

ON MOUNTAINEERING SAFETY

Bert Raphael

When I was drafted as UCHC "faculty adviser" last month, I hoped it would be the purely nominal position described to me by the Hiking Club leaders. However, in view of my adventures on Mt. Shasta last weekend, I feel obliged to give some unsolicited advice.

The UCHC Mt. Shasta Thanksgiving trip was one of the most disorganized, poorly planned, downright dangerous mountaineering trips I have seen in my ten years of collegiate outing club activity. The fact that most of the trip's participants, from the trip leader on down, are not aware of the dangers, merely emphasizes the need for my commenting on them.

This article is not intended as personal criticism of Sam Greene, the trip leader; he apparently followed standard UCHC trip organization procedures. It is these procedures, or the lack of them, which deserve the serious attention of the club's leaders--especially with regard to potentially dangerous activities such as winter mountaineering.

Why do I say the Mt. Shasta trip was dangerous? I urge the reader to familiarize himself with the most common causes of mountaineering accidents--say, by reading the accident reports published periodically by the American Alpine Club. Then, in the light of these causes, consider the following circumstances, all of which occurred on the Shasta trip:

1) Several members of the party were alone on the mountain, in near white-out conditions, for periods ranging from 10 minutes to over an hour.

2) When one party member was tired, frightened, and complaining of frozen feet (due to his obviously inadequate boots), the trip leader could not be located. Emergency decisions had to be made by party members, none of whom were familiar with the local topography or weather patterns.

3) A sub-party of five climbers was sent off, in advance of the leader, with general route-finding instructions. When they became lost due to poor visibility, they could not locate the leader. None of the five had a map.

4) When the leader decided that the party should turn back due to adverse weather conditions, he had no idea where on the mountain the rest of his party was.

5) Three members of the UCHC group went off to climb a more difficult route under the leadership of a stranger who asked for some company. The "stranger" happened to be Aaron Schneider, whom I knew to be an experienced mountaineer--but nobody in the Hiking Club seemed to care whether he was or not.

6) The trip sign-up announcement seemed to indicate that stoves were optional equipment--"bring food that can be eaten cold in case the stoves don't work"--and indeed there seemed to be a shortage of well-functioning stoves in the hut. Yet above timberline drinking water is essential and can only be made by melting snow on stoves.

Each of the above situations could have led to serious difficulties, and each of them could have been avoided by proper planning. Trips such as an attempt at climbing Shasta would not only be safer, but they would be more likely to be successful if a few basic rules were instituted and followed: for example, no one should ever be out of visual contact with his party; the minimum party should contain four members, including an experienced leader, and be equipped to be self-sufficient; everyone on the trip should be familiar with the hazards and the special food and equipment requirements of winter climbing, e.g. as outlined in the "Winter Mountaineering Handbook" of the Adirondack Mountain Club, or the Seattle Mountaineers' "Freedom of the Hills", plus additional Western problems such as high altitude and white-outs; etc.

Most groups of young climbers hate rules and regulations, and in fact are proud of their degree of disorganization. However, most such groups succumb to orderly safety regulations--after their first major accident or near-accident. I hope the UCHC has the foresight to institute reasonable safety procedures without such drastic motivation.

GENERAL MEETING

Joel Hildebrand, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry and longtime mountaineer, skier, and Sierra Club member will be the speaker at the next General Meeting of the Hiking Club, on Wednesday, December 16, 7:30 PM, in room 310 Hearst Mining Building. He will talk about the early days of the Sierra Club and his outdoor experience over the past 80 years.

There will also be a discussion of general safety techniques for winter mountaineering, as well as the equipment necessary for that activity.

Don't forget!

CONSERVATION AND THE HIKING CLUB

Mike Loughman

Conservation nowadays means simply nature preservation. The people who earlier much used the word in another context have since quite properly adopted two new slogans: multiple-use and sustained yield.

Conservation in its present context is a sticky topic: both very complex and loaded emotionally. But, being Hiking Club members, presumably we are at least sympathetic to some of the objectives of conservationists. There are places we would have remain in their natural condition.

Almost any piece of land we might value in its natural state somebody else will value in some other condition. Yosemite, Kings Canyon, even the East Bay Regional Parks owe their natural condition neither to chance nor to consensus. People fought over them and still are. Curry Company would like a massive ski resort at Tuolumne Meadows. Los Angeles would like a hydroelectric plant at Tehipite Valley. And plenty of developers covet the crest of the Berkeley Hills. Nor are these entirely selfish commercial interests. They draw substantial and broad support.

So what do we do if we would promote our own interests? If we have it to spare, we can contribute money to conservation organizations. Usually, we can even direct what it will be spent on. If we have time and taste for involvement, we can work directly in organized educational and political activities. It is not inconceivable that the Hiking Club could select a natural area and spearhead the drive to have it formally protected.

But the simplest and most effective thing we can do as individuals is to impress our thoughts and desires upon our elected representatives and appointed officials. A thoughtful, personal letter to a congressman, governor, even a cabinet member is a powerful device. Every politician, regardless of his own views, is sensitive to those of his constituency. He is literally a captive audience. And our few letters speak for countless people who didn't write.

Letter writing for most of us requires some considerable stimulus. Probably it must come from the hills and canyons. Active conservationists are made when people take personal interest in particular places. Hiking Club trips can contribute majorly to this process, but internal activities alone will accomplish little. We must make our wishes felt in the places where decisions are made.

the SIERRA CLUB

John Fitz

Formed in 1892 by John Muir and others, the Sierra Club has been one of the most active forces in the ever more crucial fight to preserve our wilderness and scenic areas. The sheer increase in population together with industrial expansion and consumption

of natural resources has led us to the situation where all wilderness areas are now fighting for life. Over the years the Sierra Club has fought for and aided in the formation of National Parks and Forests and Wilderness Areas; the inclusion of Yosemite Valley in the National Park, the establishment of Kings Canyon, Glacier, and Grand Canyon National Parks; the inclusion of the Mt. Whitney area in Sequoia National Park; the establishment of Devil's Postpile National Monument; the establishment of the Redwood Parks in California.

One of the most important fights the Sierra Club ever waged was over the formation of Hetch Hetchy reservoir in Yosemite National Park; the Club urged that other water sources not destructive of scenic beauty were available. The Club lost, but the national support which had been aroused led to the formation of the National Parks System, and has prevented until now recurrence of such destructive inroads into National Parks. As of now, the Grand Canyon National Park is seriously threatened.

All Hiking Clubbers with a love and concern for wilderness should consider becoming members of the Sierra Club and joining in its efforts to preserve our fading wilderness, "to explore, enjoy, and protect the natural scene", to educate our people in how to live with Nature, instead of against Nature.

the BIG TREE THAT WOULDN'T FALL

Thomas West
Nature, August, '31

They came, they sawed and sawed, but they did not conquer. The Bigtree still lifted its proud battle-scarred head to the sky in the Sierra Nevada and refused to bow to the will of man. And still it stands firmly upright in the heart of the great grove in Balch Park, California, although it was sawed completely through its base more than forty years ago.

Balch Park, a natural habitat of the Sequoia Gigantea, was presented to Tulare County many years ago by Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Balch of Los Angeles. Its principal attraction is a stand of those wonderful trees representing all ages--the surviving members of a once mighty forest. In 1889 a crew of woodsmen came to the site of Balch Park to get lumber. They selected, among others, one of the smaller members of a family of patriarchs which measured but twelve feet in diameter and towered only two hundred feet high. The top had been broken off, probably by lightning, when--no one knows, but possibly when the Romans were making history. With much labor and patience the woodsmen put in a good undercut and then with the aid of wedges sawed entirely through the trunk, but the tree refused to be conquered and still maintained its upright position of defiance. Heavier wedges were then resorted to and finally powder, in those days the last word in destructive force, but without success, for the tree resisted all efforts to bring it to earth.

Many theories have been advanced as to the reason for this

phenomenon, but none of them are conclusive. An explanation may be that the undercut, due to the length of the falling saws used, is slightly concave and the tree, being very symmetrical, nestled into the slight depression on an even balance. The tree is affected little by the storms and winds of winter as it stands in a well sheltered nook. No part of it is in contact with other trees or any other object to help retain its balance. It stands squarely on its own stump.

Many people visit the tree during the summer, but each and every one may justly be a little nervous when within its shadows because "some time it will fall and why not now?" Old timers who have known and watched it for many years say it will stand for ages unless molested and their guess is as good as any as to when it will lay itself to rest on the bosom of Mother Earth whence it sprang centuries ago.

the NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION John Fitz

This Association dedicated to the protection and enlargement of the National Park System was founded in 1919 by Stephen Mather, Sierra Club member and first Director of the National Park System. It has worked for the establishment of National Seashores and Riverways, such as exist at Cape Cod, Padre Island, Point Reyes, and proposed for the Ozarks. It has worked for the establishment of the Northern Cascades Park in Washington, Prairie Park in Kansas, and the newly created Canyonlands National Park in Utah. It has fought to maintain the tradition against hunting in the Parks and to maintain the national wildlife refuge system. It is one of the groups working now to prevent the damage to Grand Canyon by the proposed gigantic power and irrigation dams; it has gone into court to require the Secretary of the Interior to protect Rainbow Bridge National Monument from the becursed Glen Canyon Reservoir. It too should be considered by the Hiking Club members who wish to be informed on the issues confronting the conservationists and to join in their fight.

IF YOU WISH TO WRITE

Bob Baron

Here are the names and addresses of our Senators and Representatives in Congress. In parentheses are indicated party and the counties which the Congressmen represent.

When Congress is in session mail may be addressed to the individual Senator at Senate Office Bldg., Wash. 25, D. C.; and to the individual Representative at House Office Bldg., Wash. 25, D. C.

SENATORS:

Thomas Kuchel (R), 315 S. Claudina, Anaheim, California
Pierre Salinger (Home addresses not known. Morphy replaces George Morphy Salinger sometime in January, 1965.)

REPRESENTATIVES:

1st Dist. Don Clausen (R Marin) 337 H St. Crescent City, Calif
5th " Phillip Burton (D San Francisco) 350 McAllister, SF.
6th " William S. Mailliard (R San Francisco) Fed. Bldg. SF
7th " Jeffery Cohelan (D Alameda) 1345 Arch St. Berkeley
8th " George Miller (D Alameda) 1424 Benton St. Alameda
9th " Don Edwards (D Alameda, Santa Clara) 40 N First St,
San Jose
11th " J. Arthur Younger (R San Mateo) 3448 Edison St.,
San Mateo
14th " John F. Baldwin, Jr. (R Contra Costa) 1010 Ulfonian
Way, Martinez

ANOTHER EDITORIAL

John Fitz

Hiking Club has not been sufficiently concerned with the issues of conservation. The tragedy of Glen Canyon is aptly described by the title of Eliot Porter's photographic documentary, The Place No One Knew. Our wilderness and natural areas are shrinking as power and mining, grazing and logging, and other powerful wealthy interests invade and destroy. These men do not apparently realize that "in wildness is the preservation of the world." The strength coming from solitude and nature's grandeur can no longer be sought in our country, as freeways, power transmission lines, irrigations projects cut into our irreplaceable undeveloped areas, wrecking the landscape, driving wildlife to extinction, and contaminating the waterways, the atmosphere, and the surface of the earth.

What can Hiking Clubbers? One suggestion is supporting by membership the various conservation organizations, some of which are described briefly in this issue, and others will be in future issues. Mike Loughman has written an editorial pointing out the need and value of writing letters on pertinent matters to the State and National legislators. The Conservation Committee of the Hiking Club will again become active, and bring speakers on conservation to campus, and seek to inform the campus public of the need for conservation legislation and action. The Bear Track will begin to devote itself to discussion of conservation legislation and conservation groups, as we feel that this is one of the most threatening issues before our society.

The glory of a flowered meadow, the silence of the High Sierra; the grandeur of Nature's cliffs and canyons; the fragile beauty of wild birds and animals; these are priceless possessions, and bring poignantly into focus the clash between man's square-cornered, metallic and glassy, wasteful and destructive artificial civilization, and the ecologically integrated, unexcelledly beautiful in detail, magnificent beyond man's power to duplicate, natural world which only patient Nature could create, and which man can only destroy.



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December, 1964

BALLOT BALLOT BALLOT

Nine persons will be elected from the following candidates and will serve until June, 1965. They will choose officers from among themselves.

Vote for nine people and return your ballots to Room C, Eshleman, by December 9, 1964.

PRIS CHAPMAN _____

PAUL GERHARD _____

LOUISE LEVI _____

MIKE LOUGHMAN _____

JON STORER _____

LANG RUSSEL _____

FRANK SACHERER _____

LYN TAYLOR _____

AL WALTERS _____

JOE DUNN _____

TIM TAYLOR _____

TONY QAMAR _____

ROGER ULRICH _____

MIKE BYXBE _____

JOHN FITZ _____

DICK NELSON _____

Tear off or cut out the ballot portion so that your name on the back side doesn't show.