



# Newsletter

Newsletter of the Wilderness Training Committee

A photograph of a person, identified as Patty Rambert, climbing a large, light-colored rock formation. She is wearing a green jacket, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and a backpack. The rock face is textured and has some yellow lichen or moss on it. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# Baggin' it!

*This is Orange County WTC Leader Patty Rambert scaling another peak in her quest to finish the list. Which list? We're not sure – she's working on several. Patty is a peak bagger (bagette?). Are you a peak bagger? Read Patty's take on peak bagging in this issue. Then read takes on baggin' it from three others. Careful, though: any one of them just might be you...*

Vol. 15, No. 1 / Winter 2004 [www.angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc](http://www.angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc)

# Welcome.

Edd Ruskowitz, Editor

**I**f you're reading this, you're probably a WTC student. You've taken the bait, choosing to open up a whole new wonderful world in your life; a world filled with things you've seen before, but haven't really *seen* before. In return for your (extremely) modest course fee you've been promised instruction in conditioning, mountain and desert travel, backpacking, rock

scrambling, map and compass navigation, wilderness safety, backcountry hazards, nutrition, meals, clothing and equipment. And if you've seen the 2004 WTC brochure, you know I copied these topics verbatim. Please note that WTC will *not*, however, take you up that high peak on the cover of the brochure, enticing as it is. What we will do is expose you to the realities of mountain travel so you can understand and appreciate the skills and attributes necessary to climb that or any other peak. Like a Boy Scout you'll learn to be prepared, learn to stay found and learn that we all have far more potential than we think.

This would be a good time to stop and repeat: WTC will *not* take you up that high peak on the cover of the brochure, enticing as it is.

Welcome to WTC.

We know you're very excited about the course, considering you've committed to ten consecutive weekly classes, two single day outings and two weekend forays, not to mention two experience trips in order to graduate. But you might be wondering what this issue's cover story about peak bagging has to do with the course. No, we don't teach peak bagging. Nobody does. Peak bagging is... well, it's a calling, sort of – you either do it or you don't. Just know that as you continue down your path to outdoor enlightenment you'll find out soon enough whether you're a peak bagger, too.

Did I say "too?" I'd never considered myself one of *them*. I'd tell friends I was interested only in climbing and hiking places that expanded my wilderness experience, that my goal was to explore and appreciate each peak's unique beauty and charm, not to complete someone's somewhat arbitrary list ("*List? We don't need no stinkin' list!*"). But then I'd noticed I had climbed almost 40 peaks on the Hundred Peaks Section List (there are more than a hundred on the HPS list, but the "Two-Hundred-and-Seventy-Peaks List" moniker may have been a bit unwieldy). So I began looking for hikes that included climbing two or three or six peaks – in a day! Now I'm up to 60, with the goal of 100 by the end of summer (did I really say that?).

This recent attitudinal shift piqued my curiosity. So I decided to invite a few hardcore peak addicts to contribute their thoughts about peak bagging (*see page 6*). Karen Leverich and Mars Bonfire are HPS devotees while Nile Sorensen spends more time in the

Sierra. Patty Rambert has become an equal opportunity bagger, keeping track of several lists. In the not-too-distant future, your story just may mirror theirs.

But first things first. I want you to explain declination and its relation to true north. Then take out your number two pencil and give me a hundred words on *squiggle factor*.

*Throughout the Wilderness Travel Course you'll learn more about the various Sierra Club climbing sections. They offer an enormous number of outings where you can put your WTC-learned skills to work. You'll make new friends, stay in great shape and go places you never knew existed.*

*How many lists are there? Who knows? The Sierra Peaks Section ([angeles.sierraclub.org/sps](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps)) lists 247 peaks, while the Desert Peaks Section ([angeles.sierraclub.org/dps](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps)) only numbers 98. The Hundred Peaks Section ([angeles.sierraclub.org/hps](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/hps)) counts 276 peaks, although 11 are temporarily suspended for various reasons, mostly fire damage (In addition to the List Finish, HPS bestows awards for completing 100 peaks, 200 peaks, a Snowshoe List, a Pathfinder List, Leading the List and so on; those with way too much time on their hands finish the list several times over). The Lower Peaks Committee ([angeles.sierraclub.org/lpc](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/lpc)) claims 77 peaks while the object of the Highpointers Club ([highpointers.org](http://highpointers.org)) is to stand atop the highest point in each state (hint: Florida, easy; Alaska, hard). A real tough list to finish is that of the Seven Summits, where one merely strives to scramble up the highest peak on each continent.*

*The WTC Newsletter is published quarterly for students and staff of the Wilderness Training Committee and delivered via U.S. Mail and/or distributed at class sites. The WTC Newsletter is also available in **color** online at the WTC website – [angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc) – as a download in PDF format. All questions, copy, letters and photo submissions should be directed to Edd Ruskowitz, WTC Newsletter editor at (714) 771-6710; [hikinedd@yahoo.com](mailto:hikinedd@yahoo.com)*

## WTC Officers

Please see page 5  
for contact information

### WTC

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**KC Reid**  
Registrar

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WTC Info Line 310-967-2029

## Headline Deadlines

**For publication in the Spring 2004 WTC Newsletter:**

**February 2** Last day to submit restricted outings to the Outings Chair.

**February 9** Last day to submit non-restricted outings to Area Outings Coordinators.

**February 16** Last day for Outings Coordinators to submit write-ups to the Outings Chair.

**March 1** Last day for all WTC Newsletter submissions.

# Outings

Students: From dayhikes to backpacks to the gnarly stuff, WTC sponsors all sorts of outings requiring various levels of ability. Check out the descriptions and follow the outing's instructions to participate. Questions? Check with the outing leader or your group leader. Have fun!

## Dayhikes

**January 19 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Meet your WLA/WTC leaders and start getting into shape for class in January. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Trailer Canyon Trailhead: Approx. .5 miles from PCH on Sunset, turn on Palisades Dr. Go to de la Montura (just past traffic light on Palisades). Turn left then a quick right on Michael Lane. Go about .15 mi. Park on trailhead side and be courteous of the neighbors. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. Trail & fire road. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

**January 24 / Sat**

**Wilderness Adventures, WTC**

**0 / The Peaks of Boney Mountain**

Big Dome, Boney Peak, and 4 other spectacular summits await us on this tour of highest points in the Santa Monica Mountains. Easy paced 11 mi, 2300' gain hike along the Mishe Mokwa & Backbone Trails. Meet 8 am at the Mishe Mokwa trailhead. Bring 2 qts water, lunch, boots, and a sense of adventure. For ride share/pre-hike info send sase or email to Ldr: Bill Valentine. Co-Ldr: Lynn Heath.

**January 25 / Sun**

**WTC, Hundred Peaks**

**1 / Mt Pacifico (7124')**

Moderately paced hike to this beautiful sylvan peak. 12 mi rt, 2200' gain. Short off trail piece to complete loop. Meet 7 am La Canada rideshare pt. Bring 2 liters water, 10 essentials. Ldrs: Don Croley, George Wysup.

**January 25 / Sun**

**WTC**

**0 / Mt Zion**

Easy paced 10 mi, 1800' gain. Meet at Chantry Flats upper parking lot at 8 am. Bring 2 liters water, 10 essentials. If the road is closed we will meet at park at the end of Mountain Trail Ave in Sierra Madre and go to Orchard Camp via the Mount Wilson trail. Ldr: Susan Richmond. Asst: Bill Jackson.

**January 26 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Hike with your WLA/WTC leaders and get into shape for class. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Westridge: 6 mi from PCH and Sunset or 2.3 from I-405 turn onto Mandeville Cyn Rd. Turn left on Westridge (0.2 mi). Go all the way to the end. Be courteous of the neighbors. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. Trail & fire road. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

**February 1 / Sun**

**WTC, Hundred Peaks**

**0 / Mt Markham (5742'), Mt Lowe (5603')**

Strenuous hike to these two historic peaks. 15 mi rt, 4300' gain. Meet 7am at end of Lake St in Altadena. Bring 2-3 liters water, 10 essentials. Ldrs: Don Croley, George Wysup.

**February 2 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Hike with your WLA/WTC leaders and get into shape for class. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Los Leones Trailhead: Approx. 0.3 mi from PCH or 8.0 from I-405 on Sunset, turn on Los Leones (toward mountains). Go all the way to the parking area at the end of Los Leones. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. Trail & fire road. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

**February 9 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Hike with your WLA/WTC leaders and get into shape for class. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Temescal Canyon (Gateway Park) Trailhead: 1.9 mi from PCH on Sunset at Temescal Canyon or 6.4 miles from I-405. Meet at Sunset/Temescal corner entrance. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. On trail. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

**February 15 / Sun**

**WTC, Hundred Peaks**

**0 / Mt Wilson (5710')**

Strenuous hike on Old Mt Wilson Trail from Sierra Madre. 14 mi rt, 4700' gain. From 210 Fwy take Baldwin north to Mira Monte turn rt. Trailhead on left. Meet 7am. Bring 2-3 liters water, 10 essentials. Ldrs: Don Croley, Ray Riley.

**February 16 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Hike with your WLA/WTC leaders and get into shape for class. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Trailer Canyon Trailhead: Approx. .5 miles from PCH on Sunset, turn on Palisades Dr. Go to de la Montura (just past traffic light on Palisades). Turn left then a quick right on Michael Lane. Go about .15 mi. Park on trailhead side and be courteous of the neighbors. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. Trail & fire road. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

**February 23 / Mon**

**WTC**

**0 / Conditioning Hikes**

Hike with your WLA/WTC leaders and get into shape for class. Approx. 5 to 7 mi, 1000 to 1500 ft gain in the Santa Monica Mtns. Westridge: 6 mi from PCH and Sunset or 2.3 from I-405 turn onto Mandeville Cyn Rd. Turn left on Westridge (.2 mi). Go all the way to the end. Be courteous of the neighbors. Likely to have exceptional views of the city below. Ready to hike at 6:45PM. Trail & fire road. Boots or trail shoes and flashlights required. Carry 1–2 quarts water, appropriate extra clothing. Leaders: George Denny, Georgette Rieck, Susan Richmond, Jane Simpson, Lin Wang

# Dayhikes continued from page 3

**March 13 / Sat**

**WTC**

## **I / XC Snowshoe in the San Gabriels**

Enjoy a moderately paced snowshoe hike to one of the local peaks in the Chilao area of the San Gabriels. Anticipate 6-8 mile 1000-1500' gain, depending on forest access and snow conditions. Bring water, lunch, lugsoled boots, winter clothing, snowshoes with trekking poles. Send sase/email with recent conditioning/experience to: Ldr: Gerard Lewis. Asst: George Denny

**March 13 / Sat**

**WTC**

## **O / Trippet Ranch-Eagle Rock Loop**

Moderately paced 7 mi, 1200' gain hike to the most impressive landmark in all of Topanga State Park. Ending with an airy perch overlooking the upper watershed of Santa Ynez Canyon and the ocean beyond. Meet 8:30 am Woodland Hills ride share point, or 9:15 am at trail head (Topanga Cyn Blvd to Entrada Road) driving 1 mile east on Entrada Road. Meet at Trippet Ranch parking lot. Rain or shine. Bring 2 quarts water, snacks, lugs. Ldr: Sharon Evans. Asst:

# Backpacks

**April 3-4 / Sat-Sun**

**WTC, Wilderness Adventures**

## **I / Snow Camping/San Jacinto Pk (10,804'), Cornell Pk (9750')**

Moderately paced and moderately strenuous snow camping and peak climbing trip in the San Jacinto Wilderness. Sat 3 to 4 mi 1500' gain from the Palm Springs Tram, most with full backpack while on snowshoes. Sun 5 to 7 mi of peak climbing, 2000' gain with snowshoes and daypacks, before we pack out 2.5 mi to the tram. Participants should expect to traverse and climb moderately steep snow covered slopes. WTC students given first priority. Send 2 sase, H&W phones, email, recent backpacking/conditioning experience to Ldr: David Coplen. Co-Ldr: Garen Yegparian

**April 17-18 / Sat-Sun**

**Desert Peaks, WTC**

## **I / Mitchell Point (7048'), Edgar Peak (7162')**

Saturday climb Edgar & Mitchell in a loop hike if we can get to the Wind Stair Cave trailhead. Climb Edgar via Gilroy Canyon and return via the southeast ridge of Mitchell. The total round-trip statistics for this loop are about 6 miles with 3,600' of gain. Otherwise we climb Edgar on Saturday from Mitchell Caverns Visitor Center 5 miles, 2,900' gain and Mitchell on Sunday from Bonanza King Mine 5 miles, 3000' gain. Very rugged terrain

but well conditioned beginners with off-trail experience are welcome. There should be time for those who are interested to take a tour of nearby Mitchell Caverns. Potluck Saturday night. Send SASE or email with H & W phones, email, recent conditioning to Ldr: Patty Rambert. Co-Ldr: Virgil Popescu

**April 24-25 / Sat-Sun**

**WTC, Wilderness Adventures**

## **I / Carey's Castle Mystery Backpack in Joshua Tree National Park**

Carey's Castle is a lost miner's cabin in the remote Eagle Wilderness of southern Joshua Tree NP. Search through rivers of wildflowers for artifacts of gold rush days. Sat relaxed 4 mi xc backpack with 1300' gain to castle. Sun explore an isolated and seldom visited part of JTNP and hike out. Send H&W phones, email, rideshare info, recent conditioning / experience to leader via email for trip and gear information. Ldr: Harold Vance. Asst: Susan Richmond

**June 25-27 / Fri-Sun**

**WTC, Wilderness Adventures**

I: Blue Lake (10,000'): Fri enjoy an easy paced backpack from Lake Sabrina to camp at beautiful Blue Lake, 4.5 mi, 1,300' gain. Explore and practice navigation with happy hour. Sat xc to Sunset Lake (11,464') via Baboon Lakes, 6 mi, 1,200' gain. Sun pack out. Send sase/email, H&W phones, experience/conditioning to Ldr: Susan Richmond. Asst: Jane Simpson

# Gnarly Stuff (advanced)

**March 14 / Sun**

**Sierra Peaks, WTC**

## **M / Mt Baldy (10064) Snow Climb**

Strenuous 3900' gain, 8 miles. Restricted to Sierra Club members with ice axe & crampon proficiency. Group size limited. Call leaders for reservation & verification of qualifications. Ldr: Don Croley. Co-Ldr: Will McWhinney.

**May 1-2 / Sat-Sun**

**Sierra Peaks, WTC**

## **M / Diamond Pk (13,127')**

Snow climb using ice ax and crampons. Sat backpack up Baxter Pass trail (near Independence); 4000' gain, 6 mi to camp. Sun climb Diamond (2000' gain), and pack out. Black Mtn (13,291') may also be ascended if time allows. Restricted to SC members. Send SC#, climbing resume with relevant experience and current conditioning, 2 sase or 1 sase and email, home address, H&W phones to Ldr: Ron Hudson. Co-Ldr: Patty Rambert

**May 22-23 / Sat-Sun**

**Hundred Peaks, WTC**

## **I / Big Three: McKinley Mtn (6200'), San Rafael Mtn (6593'), Santa Cruz Pk (5570')**

Strenuous backpack, 33 mi rt, 8600' gain to the "Big Three" in Santa Barbara County. Sat pack to McKinley Spring, 8 mi rt, 2500' gain, then day-hike first two peaks for 6 mi rt, 1500' gain. Sun climb Santa Cruz, 11 mi rt, 3700' gain, some very brushy portions, then pack out. This trip is recommended for strong participants. Send sase/esase, experience/conditioning to Ldr: Virgil Popescu. Co-Ldrs: Patty Rambert, Tom Hill.

**June 25-27 / Fri-Sun**

**Sierra Peaks, WTC**

## **M / Mt Ritter (13,143') Snow Climb**

Strenuous 17 mi rt 5000' gain. Fri pack into Lake Ediza. Sat climb peak via the SW glacier route. Sun pack out. Restricted to SC members with ice axe and crampon proficiency. Group size limited. For reservation, verification of qualifications, call Ldr: Don Croley. Co-Ldr: Tom McDonnell.

# Outings Leader/Staff Directory

Please see the Outings Leader/Staff Directory on page 5 of the WTC Newsletter print version for SASE and contact information



**Calm between the storms.** Orange County Assistant Melissa Kane takes advantage of a rare sunny spell to dry out during a rain-plagued, week-long SPS Mt. Goddard backpack.

## Training Opportunities

**January 31 / Sat**

**LTC/SPS/DPS**

**M/E (Restricted) / Local Baldy Snow Practice**

We will review all aspects of snow climbing, rope travel on snow, use of the ice axe and snow anchors. For aspiring M & E candidates, and for others who want to practice or brush up on new techniques. Restricted to Sierra Club members with prior experience with the ice axe. Lack of snow may cancel. Send Sierra Club #, climbing resume, one sase and email address, home & work phones to Leader: Nile Sorenson Assistant: Doug Mantle

**February 7 / Sat**

**LTC/SPS/DPS**

**M/E (Restricted) / Local Baldy Snow Practice**

We will review all aspects of snow climbing, rope travel on snow, use of the ice axe and snow anchors. For aspiring M & E candidates, and for others who want to practice or brush up on new techniques. Restricted to Sierra Club members with prior experience with the ice axe. Lack of snow may cancel. Send Sierra Club #, climbing resume, one sase and email address, home & work phones to Leader: Nile Sorenson Assistant: Tina Bowman

**March 14 / Sat**

**LTC/SPS/DPS**

**E/M (Restricted) / Stoney Point Rock Workshop/Checkoff**

This intermediate and advanced workshop is based on the rock requirements for M & E leadership. Checkoffs for M & E rock must be prearranged. Restricted trip. Send SASE or e-mail, SC#, climbing resume, \$15.00 deposit (refunded when you show) Leader: Ron Hudson Assistant(s): Patty Rambert

**April 2-4 / Fri-Sun**

**LTC, Harwood, WTC**

**O / Wilderness First Aid Short Course (WFAC)**

Runs from Fri evening to Sun evening. Proof of CPR within previous 2 years required. Course fee of \$160 members/\$170 non-members includes lodging and meals. Send sase, SC member #, proof of CPR, and check made out to WFAC to WFAC, PO Box 3414, Fullerton, CA 92834. For course info call Leader: Steve Schuster

**April 17-18 / Sat-Sun**

**LTC/WTC**

**I / Indian Cove Navigation**

Navigation Noodles to satisfy Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice. Sunday for checkout. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, any WTC, sase to Leader: Harry Freimanis Assistant: Bob Bradshaw.

**June 11-13 / Fri-Sun**

**LTC, Harwood, WTC**

**O / Wilderness First Aid Course (WFAC)**

Runs from 8:00 a.m. Fri morning to 5:30 p.m. Sun evening. Proof of CPR within previous 2 years required. Course fee of \$160 members/\$170 non-members includes lodging and meals. Send sase, SC member #, proof of CPR, and check made out to WFAC to WFAC, PO Box 3414, Fullerton, CA 92834. For course info call Leader: Steve Schuster

# Baggin' It

## Four takes on peak bagging

### Karen Leverich

*Karen has recently finished the HPS list for the 2nd time, and is starting to nibble away at the DPS list. She's served as Chair of the Hundred Peaks Section, and is the current Outings Chair. Since ascending Antimony in April of 2001, she's climbed 868 peaks. She's also an "I" rated leader, and is working on leading all the peaks on the HPS list.*

**April 4, 2003. The weather forecast is for a fairly nice day,** but with a winter storm due to whistle in come evening. My husband Wolf and I have an appointment with a mountain: we're intending to climb Big Iron with Mars Bonfire and Sandy Burnside. 14 miles and 7200' of gain. I'm a pretty slow hiker, and even with an early start, there's no way we'll finish up before dark.

Cancel because of the weather forecast? Or at least pick a more sensible destination? Not a chance. We're peakbaggers.

Did we get caught in the weather? Yup. The storm came in early, while we were still on the summit, and we ended up hiking down through a snowstorm (which was actually nice) into a rain storm at the lower elevations (not at all nice). But we got our peak, so were happy.

How the madness began: My descent (ascent?) into peakbagging was sudden but straightforward. I love to hike: being outside; the fresh air; views faraway of mountains, valleys, the ocean; views close up of trees, wildflowers, birds, deer, the occasional bighorn sheep, bear, bobcat; the breeze stirring the branches; the birdsong in the distance; the absence of traffic noise. Different weather, different light, the happy surprise of rounding the bend in a trail to see something never before seen... If you're a hiker, you know what I mean.

But after doing the same trail 80 dozen times over several months, an ennui of sorts set in. So when, just for a change, I climbed Antimony Peak near my house (I can see it from my living room window), I was a prime candidate for the peakbagging infection. Hmmm, there's a beat up red can here. And odd: a notebook in the can, with signatures. Going back to 1967! Too cool! And this little scrap of paper, with an Internet address: *hundredpeaks.org*.

When I got home, I checked out the website. It forwarded me to the Sierra Club, where I found a list, not of 100 peaks, but of 270+.

OK, another character failing: I'm a collector. As a child, I collected rocks. Later comic books, then books. And Depression era glassware. Even ancestors (it's called genealogy). Most of this stuff needs to be stored and dusted, which is a problem unless you like storing and dusting things. (I sure don't!) But ancestors and peaks, you can track in your computer or in a notebook. I was well and thoroughly hooked. I "needed" not only Antimony, but every last one of those other peaks, too.

The wonderful thing about working through a list, be it the HPS list, the DPS list, every hike in Robinson's books, the high point of every county

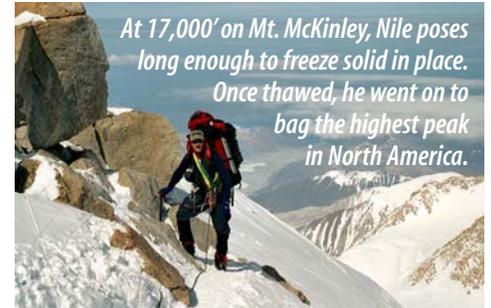


*Karen and friends celebrate her second HPS List finish on Crafts Peak near Big Bear. The caterer failed to show, though.*

see *Karen Leverich* page 8

*Nile Sorenson is an accomplished mountaineer with a lengthy climbing resumé. In addition to dozens of Sierra peaks — several via class IV and class V routes — he has led assaults on Mt. Ranier, Mt. McKinley and Argentina's Aconcagua. Nile is an "E" rated leader and WTC instructor in Orange County.*

**I don't remember when I first heard the term peak bagger.** I don't know if anyone has called me one of these, at least to my face anyway. But, as I think about it, I probably must admit without trying to let the word get out too much that — I am one. I am not sure when it first happened, or when I first realized that "I am one of these." It may have started by growing up near Yosemite. Climbing, camping, hiking, and nosing around the backcountry get into your blood without one even knowing it.



*At 17,000' on Mt. McKinley, Nile poses long enough to freeze solid in place. Once thawed, he went on to bag the highest peak in North America.*

Last year after giving a presentation to a Sierra club group about climbing Mt. McKinley in Alaska, a person asked me a familiar question. I have heard it many times. The hour-long presentation documented 3 weeks of enduring cold, hunger, altitudes sickness, wind, weather, snowstorms, and human casualties of frostbite with possible loss of digits. The culmination was the conquering of the 20,000-plus foot summit.

### Nile Sorenson

Here is the question I was asked: Why do you subject yourself to weeks of hardship and risk to stand just for a few brief moments on the summit?

There is a problem answering this question and it fits into the whole concept of "peak bagging." When a person asks this question they really do not have a way to understand any answer you can give them. There is no single answer that can satisfy them, nor you. The answer lies in a multiplicity of human emotions and desires.

There are climbing sections in the Angeles Chapter that have their "lists;" Desert Peaks, Sierra Peaks, Hundred Peaks and so on. I rhythmically review these lists sometimes weekly looking at the names of the peaks. Some people are motivated by the lists. This is great if that is your desire. Others use peak lists as a guide to obtain information about trips they would like to take. Occasionally, a list will include a peak that can be "tagged" by stepping out of your 4 wheel drive SUV and stepping onto the ground. Somehow, for me, this just doesn't fit my concept. I use lists as guidelines to enable me to do what I like to do. May I suggest a few ingredients that give me fulfillment in this art and fun of "peak bagging."

One of those ingredients is the enjoyment of nature. Hiking along in the forest or the desert, I like to see the sights — from the smallest animals (no bugs please) to the relationship of the environment with the entire flora and fauna. Standing on a peak brings the earth into focus. One cannot stand on a summit and look out across the landscape without a feeling of grandeur in the creation about us. To "take it in" is a moment in time for me.

see *Nile Sorenson* page 8

# Mars Bonfire

*Mars Bonfire was here. A modern day Kilroy, Mars has scrawled his signature in every peak register on the HPS list. According to the HPS website, Mars has finished the 276 peak list not once, not twice, but **seven times**; he's currently working on his eighth list finish — a logical destiny for the guitarist who years ago penned Steppenwolf's, "Born to be Wild."*

**The acts of walking, running, and climbing are among the most natural and beneficial actions a human being can take.**

Not only did our ancestors use their own energy to move about and accomplish their daily routines for hundreds of thousands of years before first other animals and then mechanical devices were employed to aid human movement, our prehuman relatives used their own energy to get about and do what must be done for millions of years. Every cell in our bodies evolved in the context of expending energy to move the greater organism from place to place and do the things necessary to survival, and the human body responds wonderfully well — physically, mentally, and beyond — the simple acts of walking, running, and climbing. We could do these activities as separate, stylized, out of context exercises at air-conditioned gyms on designed machines and engineered surfaces with some benefit. Yet nothing is so holistically satisfying and so

positively beneficial as the real thing: walking, running and climbing in the wild. And that is exactly what peak bagging captures.

When we peak bag, each step we take involves the entire body in analyzing and adjusting to uneven and unpredictable terrain; each time we reach up for a handhold on a scramble a determination of its security has to be made, and the hand and body positioned to maximize its effectiveness as a hold while minimizing the chance of it failing. A realistic estimate of the water necessary for the day has to be made, or the availability of water and the methods for purifying it have to be known; changes in weather have to be noticed, interpreted, and adjusted to; the amount of daylight left has to be factored into turnaround decisions or night hiking skills and equipment have to be employed. The energy levels and expectations of the group must be regularly monitored; and unexpected surprises need to be efficiently and sensibly dealt with. And by the end of the day — sometimes a much longer and harder day than we might have initially imagined — the entire body has been totally engaged and worked. It has risen to the challenges, demonstrated intelligence and intuition that extends beyond the mind to every one of its smaller parts. And it has seen us safely to the peak and back.



*This extremely rare image is believed to be the only photo in existence showing Mars sitting and, apparently, not moving.*

We in the greater Los Angeles area are fortunate to have wild places left: from the Sierra to the deserts, to the lesser known but no less rewarding local mountains. They have meaning beyond words and value beyond wealth; meaning and value we gradually feel, then come to know with certainty as we enter them, explore them, climb their peaks and mountains, learn of their plants and animals, develop a loving connection to them and feel their welcoming acceptance of our presence.

The only constant is change. The only certainty is uncertainty. The places we think of as wilderness today will not be the same years hence, and the state and condition we think of as optimally human will not be the same years hence. Yet while these wild places exist as they do — and while we are as we are — never miss a chance to be immersed in them and to be fulfilled by them.

HAPPY PEAK BAGGING!!!!!!

*Patty Rambert is the definitive, equal opportunity peak bagger. She keeps track of Sierra Peaks climbed (113), Desert Peaks (53), HPS (84) and Lower Peaks (12). She's an "M" rated Sierra Club leader, serves on the Sierra Peaks Section Board and is one of WTC Orange County's finest instructors.*

**Let's go hiking! Climbing! Back-packing! O.K., so what's first?**

- 1) Decide on a unique destination
- 2) Plan the date (considering the time of year, length of days and possible weather)
- 3) Invite our friends who have a similar goal in mind.

Sounds like fun — wanna go?

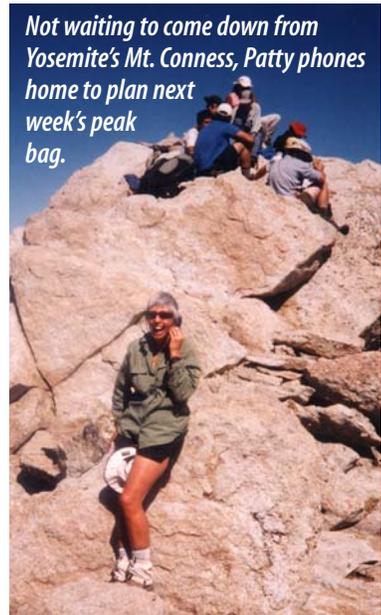
That similar goal is what we're all striving for to make this a successful trip. Generally my primary goal is to summit the peak we plan to bag. To get there, though, we usually have an amazing adventure — new trails, going cross-country through canyons and over ridges, constantly looking for wildlife (deer, big horn sheep, birds, snakes), stream crossings, quick dips in a stream or lake, scenic overlooks (a good excuse for taking a break). Then it's on to base camp to relax and settle in to enjoy the remote area. Good food and friends and early to bed. The next morning it is up very early usually before the sun rises and we are off to the peak. Lots of thought has gone into the planning of how many miles, how much elevation gain and approximately how long it will take to get to the peak and return before dark.

There you have it; a peak bagging trip but with lots of enjoyment along the way. Still sound like fun? OK come along. What I just described was a quick Sierra trip for the weekend climber. Or you could take a long weekend or a seven to ten day backpack. This is the best way to go if you have the time, allowing you to immerse yourself in the area, set up a base camp and get "all the peaks in the area."

So now I will let you in on how this all started for me: I had been a rock climber for ten years, spending most of the winter weekends in Joshua Tree, other times of the year climbing at Red Rocks, Yosemite, and Tuolumne. I got to see different areas but still went back to the same places again and again.

I wanted to see and do different things so I took WTC (Wilderness Travel Course) to give me a solid base to jump off from. That first winter and spring after WTC I went on Desert Peak (DPS) trips, mostly day hikes with a car camp. The goal for one or two days was to get a peak on the DPS list. Then the spring snow climbing season started and I went on SPS (Sierra Peaks Section) trips. We hiked in on snowshoes, set up camp, summited a peak the next day and hiked out. Then summer came and the Sierra was my playground. Great trips short and long; fun times and fun people. To keep in shape for all this I hiked with HPS (Hundred Peaks Section) and the Lower Peaks Committee on day hikes in the local mountains on weekdays and weekends.

But my second climbing season is when the lists came in to play. I needed some personal direction so I computerized my lists and decided to try only to climb peaks I hadn't climbed. Also, I was doing provisional



# Patty Rambert

**see Patty Rambert page 8**



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**Karen Leverich** *continued from page 6*

in California (or if you're looking for a long list, every county in America), is that you end up going places you otherwise would never have visited. The HPS list has taken me all over Southern California, not just to "obvious" high places like Baldy and San Jacinto, but also to treats like Rabbit in Anza-Borrego park, where I saw the sun rise over the Salton Sea, across acres of ocotillos in bloom. I've crawled out of my tent in remote Santa Barbara County to find a surprise storm had covered the world with pristine snow. To get to the places I "need" to go, I've learned new skills (backpacking, snowshoes, navigation, rock climbing, even wilderness first aid.)

It's a bit trite, but the really neat thing about being on top of a mountain is the 360 degree view. You can look around and see all the other places you've been, the mountains you've climbed or will climb. There's an enormous variety in the hikes that get you to the top: some peaks you can simply walk up a fire road (great for doing with friends -- you can chat up a storm on the way), some have trails all the way, but others require more cunning: trails may or may not pass through the area, but how do you make it the last few hundred feet (if you're lucky) or several miles (if you're not)? How to avoid brush, how to avoid rock problems or at least find rock problems within your current skill set. (Yes, besides being a hiker and a collector, I'm also a puzzle solver, and have fun solving the problem of how to get from here to there. Not to mention the often more challenging "back again." It can be easy to find the peak: just go up. But "just go down" probably won't get you to your car, you need more cunning than that!)

But you know, there are even *more* mountains out there! Excuse me, I've got to go fix up my pack. I "need" to go to Joshua Tree . . .

**Nile Sorenson** *continued from page 6*

Another ingredient is the camaraderie of the climbing team. I want others to have the same experience I share. Sometimes, proficiency of map reading, cross country travel or climbing skills is just being acquired or tuned by some team members. This adds to the equation of the experience, when they reach a goal, but also acquire and use a new skill.

Route finding through a difficult drainage without trails and coming to a place you are seeking is a rewarding experience for the intellect. On a micro scale, finding the foot holds and hand holds (the Crux) in a particularly difficult section of a climb is a rewarding endeavor--once the route is finished and looked back on with accomplishment. One gains respect for predecessors who have climbed the same route, or climbed as a *first ascent*, meaning they were the first to do it by this route.

Many climbs involve altitude acclimatization and physical endurance to participate. On any hike or mountain climb, there is a nagging battle being waged within every person. It is between the drive within you to reach the goal and the couch potato weight wanting to always stop and rest or even turn around. When this battle is won, a reflective look back on the accomplishments cannot feel anything but good even though the muscles may be sore, the feet blistered and the head sometimes aching with the shortness of oxygen.

So as you see, there are many facets to the diamond. All give off the light in a different way but together all add to the brilliance of the entire experience.

**Patty Rambert** *continued from page 7*

leads, working on my "I" and "M" leadership ratings (as a leader, I could lead trips with an assistant and go where we want to go).

The third climbing season was when it became very clear that I was now a *Peak Bagger*; my personal goals were even more specific. I wanted to achieve the DPS Emblem and the SPS Emblem in the 2003 climbing season. Also working on two peaks in each area for SPS looking to my Senior Emblem in the future.

Still sound like fun? Here are some of the resources to help you become a successful hiker, climber, backpacker or peak bagger:

- 1) Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter Schedule of Activities. Read it from cover to cover to get details on all the Peak Climbing Sections and how to order the Peak Guides and Lists.
- 2) DPS Peak Guide (maps & directions) and List
- 3) SPS List and archives on website
- 4) HPS List and peak guide are on website
- 5) Lower Peaks Committee List and peak guide
- 6) AAA maps (Eastern Sierra, Death Valley, San Bernardino, Riverside, etc.)
- 7) National Forest Service Maps (Inyo, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, Sierra, etc.)
- 8) Books - *The High Sierra Peaks, Passes, and Trails*, by R.J. Secor; *Exploring the Southern Sierra: East Side and West Side J.* by C. Jenkins and Ruby Johnson Jenkins.