



Vol. 16, No. 1 / Winter 2005

Newsletter

of the Wilderness Training Committee

Brother John Made Merriam

OC / WTC leader John Cyran leads WTC students to the top of Merriam Peak

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See page 5 for contact info

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The WTC Newsletter is published quarterly for students and staff of the Wilderness Training Committee and delivered via U.S. Mail or distributed at class sites. It's also available in color the WTC website: www.angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc as a download in PDF format. All questions, copy and photo submissions should be directed to Edd Ruskowitz, WTC Newsletter Editor at (714) 564-9130, or emailed to hikinedd@yahoo.com

WTC Info Line 310-967-2029

Welcome.

think we all know deep down the earth will win out in the end. We've seen evidence of ancient civilizations, buried beneath Mother Nature's last word. We've witnessed her untimely reminders, from Mt. St. Helens to the devastating forest fires and hurricanes — to the quick and seemingly effortless wrath of Asia's tsunami. In spite of our desire to control everything within our senses, the earth is always in charge. Dams will break, buildings will fall and nature will reclaim herself.

Of course, it's all relative — we're talking centuries here. You and I have walked into a long, long work in progress and we'll walk out long before it's done.

One might look at old city photos and think, "Wow, it sure looked different in those days." But look in the photo again at the mountains, the trees, the animals and the sky. For those, nothing's changed. In the wilderness you're in a time machine: everything you see is identical to what your ancestors saw.

A lush forest doesn't mind a fire; the trees will come back in 10, 20, maybe 50 years. But we might not. So we form groups like the Sierra Club to try and preserve that which nature will allow for our lifetimes and our children's lifetimes.

The Wilderness Travel Course is a training arm of the Sierra Club. In it you'll learn that by insulating yourself from the elements you're robbing yourself of the oldest relationship man has. Teddy Roosevelt felt deeply enough to establish the National Parks System. Indeed, the Bible begins by saying we're to be stewards of the earth. WTC will teach you the skills to be comfortable and to weather the wilderness. Nature will teach you *why* those skills can change your life for the better . . . and for good.

Welcome to WTC, where your eyes will be opened and your feet will be sore (but in a good way; pay attention to the boot lecture to placate your piggies). A good deal of this course will emphasize help over hinder. You'll learn which clothes will warm you, which boots support you and what food will sustain you. You'll learn to look at a map and see paths where there are no roads, to use a direction finding device that requires no batteries, and to release abilities in yourself that know no bounds.

Of course you'll also learn how to dig a snow cave, friction a slab, divine squiggle and take a split. You'll learn to carry more (*stuff*) while carrying less (*weight*), that canteens went out with the cavalry and that there is such a thing as too much food (see *photo*). You'll learn to layer, edge, plunge-step and kick-step; you'll learn to get high, but that too high may cause drowsiness,

AMS, HAPE or HACE (not a time to be driving or operating heavy machinery). You'll learn why the Atkins diet is not a hiking diet and you'll learn that cotton kills.

But the best, life-changing part of WTC? You'll make new friends (yeah, it's one of our sound bites, but it's true). Bonds and carpools will form, and you'll be one with the world's oldest G-rated recreation: you'll walk the earth. (Side effects include tree hugging, disdain for "private property" signs and a strengthened heart — physically *and* emotionally).

There's a reason all WTC Newsletter cover photos include people. The Wilderness Travel Course is all *about* people. It's the portal through which the vague and the oblivious discover what's always been. It's like walking down a street that, for years, you've only driven.

So, walk on. And stop (smell flowers). And welcome nature with open fleece and

sticky lugs. And know you'll forever look back on WTC as the beginnings of some of the best times of your life.

— Edd Ruskowitz, Editor



Dinner for eight? No, this — along with more food already consumed — is what one student (who shall remain nameless) brought along for a two-day backpack. Hopefully, you'll learn in class this would feed you for a week. Later that day we spotted bears, deer and an assortment of squirrels with food trays and utensils queuing up for a nightcap.

Headline Deadlines

For publication in the Spring 2005 WTC Newsletter:

January 24 Last day to submit restricted outings to the Outings Chair.

January 31 Last day to submit non-restricted outings to Area Outings Coordinators.

February 7 Last day for Outings Coordinators to submit write-ups to the Outings Chair.

February 21 Last day for all WTC Newsletter submissions.

On The Cover Approaching Merriam Peak on OC Group 2 Assistant Leader John Cyran's "I" Provisional trip in July, 2004 are OC Group 2 Assistant Leader Melissa Kane and students Matt Bradley, Amika Hebert, Rufus Edwards and Anna Willet.

*“To explore, enjoy,
and protect the wild
places of the earth;
to practice and
promote the
responsible use of
the earth’s ecosystem
and resources;
to educate and
enlist humanity to
protect and restore
the quality of the
natural and human
environment...”*



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Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club,
Wilderness Training Committee

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Outings

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

Liability Waiver Notice To participate in a Sierra Club outing, you will need to sign a liability waiver. To see a copy of this waiver prior to attending the outing, please see www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms

Transportation Notice In the interests of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make voluntary carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

January 8 / Sat Wilderness Adventures, WTC

I / 2nd Annual Frazier Park Area Snowshoe Hike

Break out your snowshoes for winter snow play on moderately paced snowshoe hike on road, trail and cross-country in Frazier Park/Los Padres NF. Last year Tecuyah Mt, this year Tecuyah again or something new. Maximum gain 3000' and less than 10 mi rt. Open to beginning snowshoers who possess mountain hiking experience, as well as to experienced snowshoers. Rain or no-snow postpones. Send email/sase, experience and carpool info to Ldr: Bill Valentine. Co-Leaders: Jane Simpson, Dave Coplen.

January 8 / Sat Hundred Peaks, WTC

I / Quail Mtn (5813')

Join us in this moderately paced 12 mi rt, 3000' gain, to the highest peak in Joshua Tree National Monument. Mostly xc on some steep slopes and some boulder scrambling. We will be visiting Samuelson's Rock on the return. Bring 10 essentials, 3 liters of water minimum, snacks, lunch, lugsoles, clothing layers for possible windy conditions and long pants or gaiters are recommended. Storms may cancel. Send email (preferred) or sase, H&W phones, recent conditioning/hiking experience to Ldr: Wayne Vollaie. Asst: Ron Campbell

January 8-9 / Sat-Sun WTC

M / Mt San Geronio (11,499')

Restricted trip — Sierra Club members with ice axe/crampon experience only. Sat hike in 6 mi, 2500' of gain most likely on snow with snowshoes. Sun alpine start climbing 1 mi, 2000' gain using ice axe and crampons to summit. Descend to camp and pack out. Send email/sase, snow climbing resume, H&W phones, and rideshare info to Ldr: Brad Hinkle. Asst: Tony Pond

January 8-9 / Sat-Sun WTC

I / Warren Pt (5103'), Lang Mine

Joshua Tree NP weekend. Sat hike to historic Lang Mine from Quail Spring picnic area, 820' gain, 5 mi rt all cross-country including crossing Johnny Lang Canyon. Car camp or motel. Sun climb Warren Pt from Black Rock campground via NE ridge, cross-country, 4 mi rt, 1000' gain. Send email or sase with experience, condition, address, H&W phones to Ldr: Chi A. Choi. Asst: Marc Hertz.

January 9 / Sun LTC, WTC

I / Warren Pt Navigation

Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park for either checkout or practice to satisfy either Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To receive homework assignment, send sase, navigation experience/training, any WTC, rideshare info, H&W phones to Ldr: Harry Freimanis. Asst: Bob Bradshaw.

January 22 / Sat

Wilderness Adventures, WTC

I / San Gabriel Mountains Snowshoe Hike

Winter snow play on moderately paced snowshoe hike on road, trail and cross-country in San Gabriel Mountains. Destination to be determined by snow level. Maximum gain 3000' and less than 10 miles rt. Open to beginning snowshoers who possess mountain hiking experience, as well as to experienced snowshoers. Rain or no-snow postpones. Send email/sase, experience and carpool info to Ldr: Dave Coplen. Co-Ldrs: Jane Simpson, Bill Valentine.

January 30 / Sun WTC

O / Josephine Pk (5558')

Join us for this Pre-Conditioning Hike and get in shape before the big one. We will hike to Josephine Peak via Colby Canyon. Moderate paced 8 mi rt, 2100' gain. Meet 8:30 am La Canada rideshare point with minimum 2 quarts of water, lunch, good footwear. Rain cancels. Ldr: Pat Vaughn. Asst: Susan Richmond.

February 6 / Sun WTC

O / 6th Annual Pre-Conditioning Hike

New students practice for the real deal the following week or old-timers just reminisce what it was like as a student on this 9 mi, 2000' gain car-shuttle hike in the Verdugo Mountains. Meet 7:00 am at the western most of two Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy trailheads on La Tuna Canyon Road, 3.2 mi East of Sunland Blvd. or 1.3 mi West of the I-210 overpass/exit. Parking is tight, carpool if possible. Exit at Beaudry in Glendale. Co-Ldrs: Garen Yegparian, Will McWhinney.

March 12 / Sat Sierra Peaks, WTC

M / Mt Baldy (10,064')

Strenuous snow climb with 3900' gain, 8 mi. 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: Tom McDonnell

March 14 / Mon WTC

O / Echo Mtn at Night

An invigorating, moderate climb of 1400 ft, 5 mi rt to the "White City" ruins, enhanced by spectacular views of the city. Bring flashlight/headlight, wind gear, water. Bring "summit snack" to share and toast my provisional "O" rating hike! Meet at 6pm for 6:15pm departure at the end of Lake Ave (exit 210 Fwy, head north), park on street. Ldr: Gena Nason. Asst: Georgette Rieck.

March 19 / Sat Wilderness Adventures, WTC

I / Wonderland of Rocks Traverse

Moderately strenuous 10 mi, 2000' gain loop in Joshua Tree National Park. We will scramble up lots of class 2 rock through Rattlesnake Canyon and pause at Willow Hole. Optional car camp Fri and Sat nights. Send email/2 sase, recent conditioning/hiking experience, H&W phones, rideshare info, and interest in car camp to Ldr: Daniel Kinzek. Asst: Jason Lynch.

April 9-10 / Sat-Sun OCSS, WTC

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

Snow camping and peak climbing trip in the San Jacinto Wilderness. 4 mi, 1500' gain the first day from the Palm Springs Tram, most with full backpack while on snowshoes. 7 mi of peak climbing, 2000' gain with snowshoes and daypacks the second day, before we pack out 2.5 mi to the tram. Participants should expect to traverse and climb snow covered slopes. Send sase/email (preferred), H&W phones, recent conditioning/hiking experience to Ldr: Lisa Buckley. Asst: Ron Campbell.

April 16-17 / Sat-Sun**WTC****M / Mt Gould (13,005')**

Restricted trip – Sierra Club members with ice axe/crampon experience only. Sat hike in 2.5 mi, 2000' of gain from Onion Valley to Golden Trout Lake. Sun alpine start 1 mi, 2000' gain using ice axe and crampons. Class 3 summit block. Descend to camp and pack out. Send email/sase, snow climbing resume, H&W phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Brad Hinkle. Asst: Tony Pond

April 16-17 / Sat-Sun**LTC, WTC****I / Indian Cove Navigation**

Navigation Noodles to satisfy Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Sat for practice, skills refresh, altimeter, campfire. Sun for checkout. To receive homework assignment, send navigation experience/training, any WTC, rideshare info, H&W phones, sase to Ldr: Harry Freimanis. Asst: Bob Bradshaw.

April 23-24 / Sat-Sun**WTC****I / Carey's Castle**

A Joshua Tree National Park mystery whose location is a long-held secret. Sat moderate 4 mi xc backpack with some boulder hopping to castle. Sun hike out. Carey's Castle constructed within the outcropping of granite boulders is a miner's cabin in the JTNP Eagle Wilderness. View pictographs & petroglyphs, wildflowers, blossoming cacti and smoke trees. Send email/sase, H&W phones, rideshare info, recent conditioning/ experience to Ldr: Pat Vaughn. Asst: Susan Richmond

Outing Classifications Each of our listed trips is rated by an outings classification. The Angeles Chapter Safety Committee has established these classifications for outings in order to give participants an idea of the different levels and areas of skill needed for the trip. These classifications do not relate to strenuousness.

C - Conducted For events under external control of a non-sierra Club entity (e.g., ranger, concessionaire). In these cases, the Sierra Club has little responsibility beyond administrative matters.

O - Ordinary Applies to uncomplicated outings such as hikes on trails or equivalent.

I - Intermediate Includes outings involving off-trail travel that require navigational skills.

M - Moderate Applies to Outings that involve Class 3 rock climbing or snow travel requiring the use of an ice axe.

E - Extreme Applies to Outings that involve Class 4 rock climbing or snow travel requiring the use of crampons.

T - Technical Applies to outings that involve specialized technical skills. (e.g., technical rock climbing, scuba diving, ski mountaineering, etc.)

From Patty Kline's Olancho Trip Report, June 24, 1995

Here are 4 tips when seeing a pack train or horses on the trail: **1.** They have the right of way; **2.** Everyone pull off to the same side of the trail; **3.** Don't make sudden movements or wave at the animals; they are very skittish and if they are frightened

could bolt off the trail in a panic. They are usually roped together and would pull off all of the animals they were roped to also. **4.** Leave a wide space between them and you after they pass so as not to startle them. A mule can kick his back feet 6 feet in any direction. Also, hiking too close behind, even 20 feet, can spook horses or mules.

OC Group 2 Assistant Leader Melissa Kane snowshoes her way to Marion Mountain on New Years Day, 2005.

Tahquitz Peak is seen at the top of the bowl below.



Aprés WTC...

It's never too early to talk about life after WTC.

Snow Travel & Ice Axe Training

By Laura Curran

The Wilderness Travel Course provides introduction to Snow Travel techniques, including snow camping, and travel on snow. Advanced peak and glacier climbing require more advanced snow skills and WTC graduates can enroll in Snow Practices to work towards M & E rated trips which cover these areas (*see box on page 5*).

Completion of Snow Travel and Ice Axe Training with a recognized instructor is a prerequisite for Snow Practice. Due to Sierra Club policy and insurance reasons, WTC does not offer ICE AXE training. However, this instruction is available in a convenient manner to WTC graduates through mountain guide services such as Sierra Mountaineering International.

Scene: April 2004

WTC is completed, the classes and trips are done.

We made it through Snow Camp and brought home everyone.

Some OC Group 1 members even swam in the cold lake, I think they're really polar bears (though their fur would be fake).

So we were scanning the WTC Newsletter for Spring Trips, perhaps (warm) desert camping with the pack resting comfortably on the hips.

And, then, what in my In Basket should appear, but an email from Cheryl Gill full of good cheer

Snow Skills Class - Ice Axe And Snow Rescue Training From Sierra Mountaineering Quick as a flash, memories came to mind of glissading and reasons to enroll started snowballing:

- Have the snow gear to cover body and face
- Mammoth is a fun place
- A chance to hang out with WTCers from across the Southland
- Sliding down hills sounds even more fun when you have an ice axe in your hand

Scene: May 2004

So over 40 of us signed up, and stayed at the Sierra Nevada Lodge (ask for the fisherman's rate)

Saturday AM arrived, got our Starbucks and snacks at the Von's so we wouldn't be late

First we got our rental gear, and drove to Tioga Pass
Where the sun was shining and we got ready fast.

We learned lots of skills, like crampons, and anchors and ice axe,
And how to self arrest while sliding upside down head first on our backs.

The instructors were great, patient one and all.
Lee led our group and made sure we can recover from a fall.

As a group we traveled using a rope,
And how to yell "Falling" so of a rescue there is hope.

The next day we learned rescue from a crevasse
So your climbing partners can pull you up by your arms or your ass.

Some others learned avalanche rescue skills,
And to dig where the sound of the beacon is, whether near a tree or on a hill.



And now more on the course, from Instructor and Guide Kurt Wedberg, whose enthusiasm for mountaineering is ever strong,
And from Jennie Thomas, (Orange County Group 1 student par excellence) who will be an expert mountaineer before long.



Kurt Wedberg demonstrates the boot axe belay (scientific name: "boot-scootin' belay")

Kurt Wedberg, Instructor, speaks about the course:

"I enjoy teaching the course, especially the enthusiasm WTC students have for learning about mountaineering. I enjoy working with people and it is fun to see the students having fun.

"It is also great to hear the students' and instructors' stories from their recently completed class. It is also fun seeing members from different areas meet each other and compare notes on WTC. The instructors are all experienced mountaineers who work in the Sierras and around the world.

"We work very hard to provide a good introduction to ice axe and snow travel so students can then continue to meet their goals, where they want to feel more comfortable and safe with snow travel, or to continue mountaineering training for ascents of peaks such as Mt. Rainier."

Course Overview

Course participants will

- Gain the skills to travel in snow
- Gain base foundation to work themselves into glacier travel.
- People can typically do spring and summer snow climbs in the sierra or cascades after taking this course.

Techniques Taught

Snow travel

- Walking up and down snow slopes efficiently and safely

Ice axe techniques

- How to hold and carry one
- How to self arrest from several different falling scenarios

Cramponing

- Different types of crampons
- Techniques for walking efficiently with them

Rope travel

- Traveling roped to other people for steep snow and glaciers
- How to clip in and out of running belays

Belay skills

- Belaying a partner using a hip belay, boot axe belay
- Using friction devices in conjunction with a climbing harness.

Snow anchors

How to equalize individual anchors into an anchor system for rappelling, belaying, setting up tents, running belays, and rescue scenarios.

Anchors & belays covered, include:

- Snow pickets
- Ice screws
- Flukes
- Bollards
- Belays: hip belay, boot axe belay, belaying using a friction device

Crevasse rescue

- Set up of crevasse rescue systems for use in glacier travel

Avalanche Rescue

- Avoiding avalanches
- Using avalanche beacons and transceivers individually and in teams

Continuing "Snow"ducation

Skills and classes that would be good to take after this course include a level 1 avalanche course so you have some basis for deciding the risk level for entering snow slopes, and a mountaineering seminar to learn skills for multi-day trips in the snow and for bigger mountains.

Jennie Thomas speaks about her experience in the ice axe class.

Kurt Wedberg's two day Snow Skills class is the perfect jumping off point for students who want to learn more about snow travel than is taught in WTC. The skills taught -- ice axe use, cramponing, roped travel, and snow anchors -- felt like a natural next step in my progression as a climber after completing WTC. In fact, Kurt's class merely stoked my enthusiasm for these new found skills, prompting me afterward to attend a Sierra Club sponsored snow practice, further cementing the lessons learned from Kurt and his staff at Sierra Mountaineering International of Bishop, California (SMI).

Friday AM we learned crampon skills, starting early while the snow was still firm. The lessons taught by Kurt were clear and thorough, followed by small group drills to solidify each skill. Even though the class was quite large, specific attention was paid to each student to ensure all understood the skills, which were reinforced in small group practice.

Next came an introduction to snow anchors, a completely new topic to me. In this short lesson, I built my first bollard and worked with pickets. After learning the basics, we built and tested anchor systems in small groups. We learned and practiced how to self arrest from a fall with an ice axe from four possible positions: head first, on the back. We ended the day by learning how to travel on a rope team.

During this packed first day, I was exposed to many skills completely new to me. The skills were taught in an accessible way, challenging the more experienced people while still allowing beginners to keep up.

The second day focused on crevasse rescue where we learned how to put together a system of pulleys using a rope to pull a fallen climber out of a crevasse.

The skills learned during these two days were a starting point for developing my technical snow skills. I now have the ability to learn from more experienced climbers and to understand the considerations leaders and participants must take into account when traveling on snow. It will require more experience on snow climbs before I am completely confident with all of these techniques. But I'm convinced this course was essential in building my overall skills.

I subsequently used the lessons learned in Kurt's course on a snow climb of Independence Peak in the Sierra, and have plans to participate on many more snow climbs in the future. I highly recommend this course for anyone interested in learning crampon and ice axe skills for the first time as an inexpensive way to gain experience and learn about your interest in pursuing snow climbing as part of your outdoor activities.

Kurt Wedberg has been a professional mountain guide since 1986 and has 47 major expeditions on his resume including a successful ascent of Mt. Everest in 1995. He has led expeditions to peaks in Africa, Alaska, the Alps, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Russia, and the Himalayas. Kurt has guided on Mt. Rainier since 1991 where he is a senior guide with Lou Whittaker's Rainier Mountaineering Inc. and currently has 104 ascents of this peak.

Jennie Thomas is a WTC Orange County 2004 Group 1 graduate, a Orange County Group 1 Assistant Leader (Go 2004 OC Group 1).

Laura Curran completed WTC in 2004, with Orange County Group 1. (Thanks Tom, Nile, Cheryl, Gary, Kurt, and Ed.)



As you can see, the course is extremely popular with WTC students and instructors alike. Pictured here is everyone at the class waiting patiently for a turn on Santa's lap.



So, what were you doing New Year's Day, 2005?

While most people were glued to the tube, this energetic, Kent Schwitkis-led group coldfooted its way à la snowshoe on a 10 mile trip up 10,320' Marion Mountain near San Jacinto Peak.

Kent's assistant Sherry Ross, pulling up the rear, instructed everyone to walk quickly as Godzilla may thaw out at any moment (upper right).