

Chock Full o' Nuts

March
2002

The bi-monthly newsletter of Women Climbers Northwest

What Would Miss Dish Say??

Broadening our Perspectives on Climbing...A Cultural Experience

Adair and I returned yesterday from climbing the highest volcano in Central America—Tejamulco, 13,500 plus feet. It was a crazy but an interesting scene.

We spent the night just below the summit—perhaps just 500 feet below the summit. It was, in my opinion, a bit strange to carry all that gear up to just short of the summit of the mountain...why not just do it in a day????

Anyhow, we went with the family who owns the language school we are attending so we had to go with the plan and

resist the temptation of asking too many questions, which is a challenge in itself for me. We went with the flow and the hike up was sooo beautiful and quiet and peaceful except for the occasional m-80 firework booms coming from the summit. This should have been an indicator of what more we would encounter. When we arrived at the camp just 500 feet below the summit, we were agasped at where we would spend the night—it was a classic over-used by humans place to sleep—trashy, human odors AND to top it off, recently the locals had

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Ms. Carabiner 2002



The Annual WCN birthday party and Ms. Carabiner contest was held last Saturday at Colleen Hinton's beautiful waterfront home.

Shown: Clare (Tiger woman) Parfitt, Elaine (Tammy Faye) Powers, Colleen (Buxom Betty) Hinton, Suze and Boo (The hills are alive) Woolf. Elaine Powers (lovely photo, inset) took the proud honor of becoming the newly crowned Ms. Carabiner

About the club: Women Climbers Northwest is a nonprofit organization formed in 1983 to promote climbing and other wilderness activities among women. Our roots are in rock climbing and mountaineering, but women of all outdoor persuasions are welcome. In other words, girls really do want to have fun!

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built a huge hut type thing—it was more like a big barn with a dusty dirt floor.

Our group of Gringas included Adair, myself, and a NOLS instructor whose name is ironically Rachel...(as though I don't have enough friends with the name of Rachel already!!) Our Instant Response to the prospect of sleeping here was to Find Someplace Else! However, we were with this Guatemalan family who felt responsible for our safety. And they insisted we camped here, because otherwise we may get robbed or harmed camping away from the Crowd. The Safety in Numbers Myth. So, we respected our hosts request and subjected ourselves to the Barn.

Most of the Guatemalans were country folks who were up there for a full moon bivy-party—and a new year adventure/ritual. Every Guatemalan man and boy had a machete and for hours we watched a parade of men and boys carrying the nearby forest to their campfire circles. We counted seventeen different fires. Earlier in the afternoon, we just saw branches being harvested then later came the trunks of trees and then the whole trees!! Deforestation in action! It was like a competition of who could down the biggest tree and who had the largest firewood pile...thank the goddess when the darkness fell!

By night fall there were about 60 people inside and outside the barn—all locals except for us—three gringos—and two other gringos. That aspect was interesting to me because most of the Guatemalans were working class people—not middle class—so they had just blankets or towels to sleep in. People were dressed in their everyday cotton clothes. Most women had hiked up in their jelly-type sandals, skirts and and all. Most men were in their cotton shirts and cowboy boots. The getting by with the minimal stuff attitude reminded me alot of Nepal.

The night time temperature was about 28 degrees and we had snow on and off throughout the night. The smoke from all the fires found its way into the barn and the constant movement of people kicked up alot of dust...so between the lack of oxygen at 13,000ft, and the smoke and dust element, we had a small amount of oxygen available and it seemed grim. But we fared just fine except for a bit of a cough by morning.

As you can well imagine, we did not sleep a wink even with Earplugs. All night radios were blaring, in fact there was a bit of a competition with who had the loudest radio...duelling radios...fireworks were blasting...people were partying and laughing and making a racket! I think between the hours of 2 and 4 there was a bit of peace. However, at 4 am everyone got up to hike to the summit and set off more bomb-strength fireworks. This was our cue to get up!

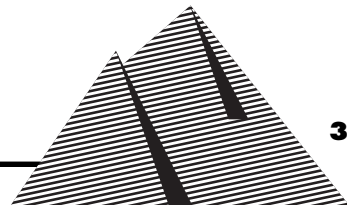
We made our way up to the summit and the views of nearby volcanoes were amazing. Santa Maria and its neighbor were spewing ash from their craters. It was peaceful to the eyes but not the ears, as we continued to dodge fireworks. I was quite amazed at the continuous flow of Guatemalans ascending and descending the mountain....

While it wasn't exactly my hope for this mountain experience, it certainly left me with food for thought and has challenged my theories about who climbs mountains...

Now we are all recovering from sleep deprivation. But of course in hind sight it was fun and worthwhile, especially because we won't have to do it again!

So dears...don't you wish you were there with us!!! I wish you had been!!

—Priscilla McKenney



Women Climbers NW Spring Calendar

The woman listed as the contact for each trip is the facilitator only, and will arrange carpools and/or a meeting place, and also provide you with more information about the trip and skill level required. You are responsible for insuring that you are in good physical condition, and having all of the required skills and equipment for participating in any of these trips.

All of these outings are non-technical climbs. For the ski trips, there will probably be a group of people skiing, and a group hiking and/or snowshoeing. Avalanche beacons and shovels will probably be necessary on Mt. Shuksan, but not for the Camp Muir and Mt. St. Helens trips.

Weekend of March 22-25th Weekend in Central Oregon.

Come to the sunny Oregon high desert and spend the weekend in Mary Yocom's home in the small town of Redmond. A plethora of activities await us there, including downhill and cross country skiing at Mt. Bachelor, a wide variety of hiking and mountain biking opportunities with views of the desert country and the Sisters, as well as rock climbing at Smith Rocks. The drive is long, so some people will be staying 3-4 days. We can arrange car pool options when we know how many people are going.

Contact: Mary Yocom
Phone: 541-548-2930
email: MYocom6689@aol.com

Mt. St. Helens climb/ski Sunday, April 28th

We will drive down on Saturday afternoon the 27th, camp nearby then do the climb early Sunday morning.

Contact Clare Parfitt
Phone 633-4734
email clarep@drizzle.com

Camp Muir hike/ski Sunday, May 19th

We will be car camping somewhere in the park the night before and climbing on Sunday. Some people may go for luxury and spend the night at Paradise Lodge.

Contact: Barb Buys
Phone: 255-7053
Email: BuysSFE@earthlink.net

Mt. Shuksan climb/ski Sunday, June 9th

This is a moderate glacier climb. Up high there are fabulous views of Mt. Baker and the North Cascades. With the heavy snow year we've had, the glacier should be uncrevassed at this date. Again, we will be driving there on Saturday afternoon, camping at the trailhead, doing the climb on Sunday.

Contact: Nancy Kim
Phone: 725-3162
Email: scribanancy@aol.com

Join WCN!

Join the email list:

If you would like to keep in touch with other women to plan trips, or just to discuss a particular issue, join the WCN e-mail listserve.

To subscribe to the list, send a message to: majordomo@scn.org Keep the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type: subscribe womenclimb END.

Join the mailing list:

To get on the newsletter mailing list, send \$20 along with your name and address to:
Sonja Bring
2219 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121



Newsletter Submissions

The newsletter comes out bi-monthly, at the end the following months: September, November, January, March, May, July.

Please send text and photos by the 10th of these months, in order to be included in the next issue.

Email submissions to clarep@drizzle.com

Photos, slides and artwork are also appreciated. They can be sent to 4911 Fremont Ave N #204, Seattle, 98103. Art will be returned by mail.

Classified Ads

Rates for service ads are 10 cents/word for members and 20 cents/word for non-members. Member's equipment ads and notices by WCNers looking for climbing partners—or ski buddies—are free. No graphics. Payment must accompany ad or it will not appear, as we have no billing mechanism.

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Gear Gal Greet's You

Welcome to *Gear Gal*, a monthly, or semi-monthly, or sometimes-when-inspiration-strikes-her column on the stuff we use outside that contributes (or doesn't) to our great outdoor adventures.

Now, Gear Gal knows that you can just about completely outfit yourself for under \$50 or at least under \$100—if you shop diligently at Value Village or Goodwill (the one at the South Center Mall in Seattle is a gem.) In fact, some people (who are not on the budget end of the economic scale themselves) buy used gear and bring it with them for their adventures in poor countries. When finished with it, they give it to a local person, guide, or porter who will appreciate it. (This also serves to make room in their luggage to bring back all those native handicrafts.)

There are also catalog, online, and retail stores that sell outdoor gear relatively cheaply—Sierra Trading Post, Camp More, REI-Outlet.com, REI Garage sales, Columbia Sportswear outlet in Bend OR, to name a few. Another option is to shop for good deals at used gear stores such as Second Ascent in Ballard, or on used gear bulletin boards such as the one at Marmot in Bellevue, REI, or other outdoor stores. It helps to know something about

the gear, which is part of the reason for this column.

Gear Gal also agrees with her neighbor who recently opined, "Thirty years ago we used to bicycle tour on our three-speed Schwinn's with packs on our backs and wear surplus wool clothing. We survived. No one needs all this fancy, new, expensive gear." She is absolutely right. It is completely possible to travel that way. In fact, John Muir used to head out for months in the mountains with no more than a wool blanket, some flour, sugar, and tea. Consider what the Shackleton expedition endured with relatively primitive outfitting.

The key word here is "endured." Whether it is enjoyable to travel that way is a completely different question. We can respect our predecessor's toughness while adventuring in the relative safety and comfort of modern products. There are very few of us who would voluntarily revert to the scratchy, smells-like-a-wet-dog-when-damp, slow-drying, heavy, wool clothing of yesteryear, or other ancient gear, for that matter.

Gear Gal shall carry on with the task of sharing her Wit and Wisdom about the stuff that can make one as safe and comfortable as possible while out in the woods. As Gear Gal has learned from several lady field geologists, "Any fool can rough it!"