

HIKERS CLIMB PEAKS OVERLOOKING CRYSTAL LAKE



ON THE RIDGE—Three hikers pause on ridge between Mt. Hawkins and Middle Hawkins Peak. Picture was taken

as members of Southern California chapter of Sierra Club undertook a 15-mile hike over peaks above Crystal Lake.

'Times' Men Hobble Along With Hikers

BY GLEN BINFORD

If you happen to think that following—hobbling after, rather—a group of plain citizens on a week-end outing in the mountains would be a simple matter, you definitely do not know the Sierra Club and the urge for uphill walking it kindles.

Photographer Bob Ritchie and I found out the hard way by tagging along on the Southern California chapter's "Sadie Hawkins Day" 15-mile hike over peaks above Crystal Lake ranging from 9146 to 7782 feet in elevation.

At the invitation of Miss Freda Walbrecht, a cheerful, diminutive attorney and enthusiastic climber of almost any mountain, we city dwellers set off with 37 altitude-happy club members from their overnight camping spot near the lake. Up the headwall of San Gabriel Canyon we went at what seemed to be a gallop after abandoning comfortable sleeping bags and shady pines for a hot, steep trail.

Side-Trip Explorers

Paced by tanned, husky Henry Greenwood, leader of the day's climb, the hikers breezed up 2500 feet in two and a half miles to take their first 10-minute "breather" on the divide between Mt. Islip and Little Jimmy's Springs. Bob and I huffed up to the hump just as almost everybody else prepared to move on.

Several club members dropped out at the divide to do some local exploring near the springs, leaving 25 climbers and two already-weary Times representatives to continue the trek. We eyed the comparatively level terrain near by longingly, but girded up our canteens, rucksacks and pride to keep going after noticing Miss Alice L. Bates, a gray-haired lady who admits 60 summers, sauntering up the trail.

Once again moving along the ridge single file with an easy,

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WAY UP—Mrs. Pauline Green signs Mt. Hawkins register at rock cairn as Al Van Papelendam looks on. The 8418-foot peak was part of Sierra Club's one-day climb.



RELAXATION—Sierra Club group rests after lunch atop Mt. Throop, 9146 feet, one of 100 peaks to be scaled.

Times photo

Reporter, Cameraman Hobble With Sierra Club

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loose-jointed gait, the uphill devotees resumed their almost constant stream of conversation about past hikes, especially rugged climbs, peaks remaining to be conquered, interesting trails, and the forthcoming Labor Day ascent of 14,242-foot White Mountain Peak, northeast of Bishop.

Visions of Cool Beer

Once again moving along the ridge single file with a slightly hobbled tread, the photographer and I resumed our conversation about flagons of ice-cold ale, air conditioned theaters, previous easy assignments, and when do we stop again.

Most of the outdoor fans carried rucksacks containing food canteens, first-aid kits, spare socks and cameras—all of which, it would seem, should add to the task of moving one foot after the other along narrow trails. Instead, they all appeared to love it, with people bowed under heavier packs taking a sort of social precedence over the hikers toting a mere 15 or 20 pounds.

Added incentive (for those Sierra Clubbers) in the day's climb was the disclosure that the single hike provided four mountains eligible for scoring in the organization's "100 peak game," in which members are striving to top 100 Southern California peaks above the 5000-foot elevation mark. That's 100 mountains and about 4900 feet too much.

Up to 9146 Feet

High point of the week-end session was the ascent to Mt. Throop's summit — 9146 feet. Willing arms held Bob and me erect to gaze somewhat blearily at a far-flung vista ranging from the checkerboard of Mojave Desert farms to the hills of Santa Catalina Island rising through a blanket of smog extending from the coastal valley to far offshore.

Mojave! A beautiful flatland where a hummock is something to be skirted, not conquered. Catalina! Ocean breezes, clear water to float in, bicycles for transportation.

So we changed our socks in ac-

cordance with Boy Scout Handbook "Instructions for Hikers," ate lunch between gasps, and began the descent from Mt. Throop. Only to reach a divide and start climbing all over again.

This time it was No. 2 peak on the schedule, Mt. Hawkins. We reached its 8418-foot crest by scrabbling across a trailless ridge and up a sharp-pitched hogback. Razorback hogback, that is. With much glee, the hikers crowded around a rock cairn on the peak to sign a register kept there in a metal container. Another peak in the "game" for them; two newly discovered (and sore) muscles for me.

Slog, Slog—Always Up

From there on, the ridges became repetitions but never routine. After a drop down the west side of Mt. Hawkins came the ascent of Middle Hawkins Peak's 8305 feet from a rock-strewn saddle. Then, just for the heck of it and to keep in the spirit of the day, we all had to make a side excursion to "Sadie Hawkins Peak"—a mere hillock of 8047 feet.

At this point Jack Bascom, Navy civilian engineer of 817 Ladera St., Pasadena, and assistant leader of the trip, took over his appointed task of keeping an eye on stragglers by covering the remainder of the hike with us. All that remained was a visit to South Mt. Hawkins, elevation 7782 feet, and the fire lookout tower there.

A walk, really only a walk this time, down the Forest Service road back to Crystal Lake finished the day—and a pair of guys who hope to stay on the level from now on.