NORMAN CLYDE

wilsonjones

"Close Ups OF The High Sierra"
by Norman Clyde

"Norman Clyde"
by Robert C. Pavlik

"Walking Up And Down In The World"
by Smoke Blanchard
Chapter 8 Norman Clyde

"Recollections OF Norman Clyde"
by Norman D. Millaron
with Andy Selters

"El Picacho Del Diablo"
by Norman Clyde

"Twenty Five Letters From Norman Clyde"



Old Man of the Sierra

By now he must be close to 80, but he will not admit it. Only his blue eyes tip off his age: occasionally they betray him by watering. But Norman Clyde still has a face that is unlined and a handclasp that can crumple knuckles. Square and solid, he still can carry a 120-lb. pack by the hour with his bent-knee shuffle. And he still knows more than any other man alive about the wilds and wonders of the Sierra Nevada, the giant wall of granite that links Nevada and California with some of the most rugged peaks on the continent.

As one of the nation's most remarkable sportsmen, Norman Clyde is close kin to the West's lonely mountain men of the 19th century, trail blazers who had the curiosity, the courage and the craft to discover what lay beyond the next peak. He works as a guide only long enough to finance his own expeditions, and he can exist for months at a stretch in the Sierra. His towering pack makes him self-sufficient. Not only does it contain such essentials as dehydrated food and a three-quarter ax, but also shoe nails and a cobbler's hammer, material to patch his pants, cameras, prepared breading mix for frying fish, and, to while away the twilight hours, copies of such classics as Cervantes in Spanish and Molière in French. Says a Sierra guide: "We call him the pack that walks like a man."

"A Buzzing Sound." What is more, Clyde is a self-trained naturalist who contributes scientific reports to the California Academy of Sciences, a pathfinder who has saved stranded motorists by skiing through blizzards with food strapped to his broad back. He is so accurate with a slingshot that he rarely has to resort to his .22-cal. pistol to kill small game. He scoffs at the idea of riding an animal up a mountain: "I can carry a damn mule faster than he can carry me."

Clyde's record as a climber is monumental: he has topped 36 peaks in 36 days, made at least 200 first ascents, and allows with pebble-scuffing modesty that he has scaled the 14,495-ft. Mount Whitney "about 50 times, anyway." Sums up a mountaineering colleague: "Clyde has brought down more corpses, found more airplane wrecks, and climbed more peaks than any other man in the Sierra."

When search parties set out after a lost climber, Clyde usually hunts by himself, preferring to rely on his own knowledge of his mountains. In the early '30s, he started after a lost lawyer by guessing that he would have headed for the highest minaret in the area. Coming upon a pile of rocks of the sort climbers erect as trail markers, Clyde found fresh grass underneath. Clyde reasoned that the missing lawyer had recently built the pile, had probably already climbed and descended the highest minaret. "Then I figured he would try the second-highest minaret," recalls Clyde. "But I couldn't find anything there, not even footprints. Then I heard a buzzing sound above me and looked up, and there was a swarm of blueflies. The body was up there on a ledge."

"First Your Hat . . ." Mountain Man Clyde took the long way around getting to be top climber in the Sierra. Son of a Presbyterian minister in Philadelphia, he graduated as a classics scholar from Pennsylvania's Geneva College, but in 1909 he was lured to California by the writings of Naturalist John Muir. Clyde put in a dozen restless years teaching school, then quit and took to the Sierra for good.

Last week, as the Sierra warmed under the June sun, Norman Clyde was getting ready to leave his winter base in a run-down ranch house outside Big Pine, Calif. and head once again for the uplands. Despite his years, he plans to roam the Sierra indefinitely. He accepts the idea that some day he may fall. He has tumbled twice in the past, lacerating a hand each time, and has chilling knowledge of what can happen to a man who makes a mistake in the mountains: "You usually go end over end, faster all the time. First you throw your hat. Then your knapsack. Then your clothing." The prospect does not faze the old man of the Sierra.



William Blanchard

MOUNTAINEER CLYDE
"The pack that walks like a man."

* Haydon, Mortimer, Captain Bea Walter, Brasher, Pat Ward, Truman.

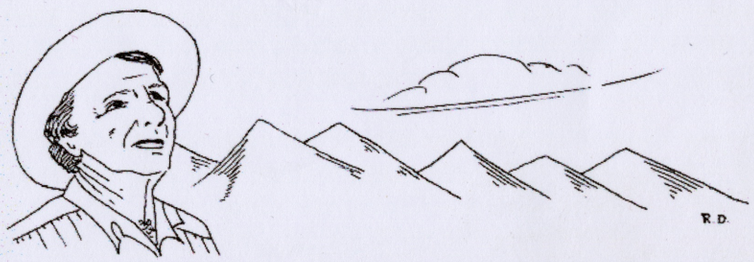
EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM COLLECTION

Norman Clyde - Mountaineer

By Walt Wheelock

NORMAN CLYDE, a name as legendary as that of Fremont or Muir. Norman Clyde, a man to whom the entire High Sierra is as familiar as ones own back yard. Norman Clyde, whose own life is much less known than that of the Greek heroes whose sagas he packs in his rucksack.

And how did this come about? For Norman is a quiet, often taciturn man. He has often failed to leave a record of his achievements, has never been heard to boast of his fabulous ascents. Yet, since he made his first trip to the top of Mt. Whitney, almost a half century ago, climbers have been finding his records on remote summits. A strong team of skilled rockclimbers will conquer a lonely spire, using the most modern of climbing gear and techniques and win through with well co-ordinated teamwork to find on a faded Kodak box the record of a solo climb of three decades ago. Or, at the high point of a distant ridge will be found a small cairn, but no written record. Obviously the work of man, and one mountaineer will turn to his companion with, "Well, it looks like a first ascent, except for Norman Clyde." Later, discussing the route with him, Clyde will Ponder a bit, ask a couple of questions about some difficult pitch encountered on the ascent, then admit he had been there a score of years ago.



Clyde has never been one to bring up these mountaineering achievements; will often sidestep them, or give a facetious answer, such as telling that he is 11350 years old", but never has Clyde been known to make a false statement when talking seriously. And it is easy to tell the difference between his banter and his true accounts of his life and his work. Research uniformly verifies the data and dates that he supplies.

Norman's father, Charles Clyde was born in Antrim County in the north of Ireland in 1854. He migrated to this country at the age of seven. His mother, born Belle (Isabel) Purvis, was a native of Butler, a small city about thirty miles north of Pittsburgh. Charles and Belle were married at Butler and took up residence in Philadelphia, where Norman Asa, the first of nine children, was born the following year, on April 8, 1885. His father was a self-taught clergyman of the Covenanter sect of the Presbyterian faith.

When Norman was three, the family moved to Ohio. Here, his father served at a number of small churches, seldom staying more than a year at any one parsonage. Apparently the independence of thought that was later to dictate Norman's flight to the mountains was honestly inherited. Eventually, the family moved to Glengarry County, near Ottawa. Norman remembers arriving there on the Queen's Jubilee Day (May 24, 1897).

Here Norman lived from the time he was twelve until he was seventeen. Fishing and hunting were available, almost in the Clyde's backyard, and he soon became expert in both. Clyde's father, being self-taught, took care of his son's schooling at home. His father was

an avid student of the classics and the boy was learning to read Latin and Greek almost as early as he did his native tongue.

His father was stricken with pneumonia and passed away at the age of 46. His mother gathered up her flock and returned to western Pennsylvania. Norman enrolled in Geneva College at Beaver Falls, but as he had had no formal schooling, he had several deficiencies to make up at the prep level. Graduating in the classics from Geneva in June, 1909 he immediately started west. He taught at several small rural schools across the country, including Fargo, North Dakota, and Mt. Pleasant, Utah. One summer was spent at the University of Wisconsin, John Muir's alma mater; another on a cattle spread in Utah.

Deciding that he needed more education to progress in the teaching field, he enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in 1911. Summers were spent in the mountains. and in teaching at summer schools. One was at Elko, Nevada, where he spent his spare time climbing in the Humboldt Range.

At the end of two years at the university, Clyde found that he still lacked one course in Romance Drama and his thesis. He balked at the drama course, maintaining that Italian plays should be read in Italian, French dramas in French; neither in English. He could see no sense in struggling with a thesis that nobody would ever read after he received his degree, so he quietly left the university without his master's degree.

During the next dozen years, the details of Clyde's life are rather sketchy, both in and out of the mountains. We learn that he taught in a number of small schools in central and northern California. He remembers teaching near Stockton and spent a year each at Mt. Shasta and Weaverville. From his mountaineering notes, he must have spent some time in Arizona. Sometime during this period he married a young lady from Pasadena. This is one part of his life that Norman refuses to discuss. It is known that they lived together for three years, and that she passed away from tuberculosis. It is apparent that he felt a deep love for his bride, and undoubtedly her passing was a strong factor in shaping his character.

In the field of mountaineering, we have a few more records. He was in Yosemite in 1914, where he first met up with the Sierra Club, joining with them on a trip to Tuolumne. Clyde became a member of the club that year. After leaving the club outing, he travelled south along the backbone of the Sierra with a packtrain run by Charley Robinson, oldtime Sierra packer. The trip ended at Lone Pine, and Clyde made the first of his fifty ascents of Mt. Whitney at this time. Records show twelve ascents of Mt. Shasta, including three in four days. On one of these he set a record that only has been broken once since that time. Another page of his notes lists seven ascents of Weaver Bally in the Trinity country.

We know that Clyde accompanied the Sierra Club on their trip from Yosemite through Evolution Valley in 1920, during which time he made several first ascents. It was on this trip that he carried the first of his famous big packs. Leaving the Valley a couple of days behind the Sierra Club and not knowing for sure whether he could catch up with the club, he took along sufficient food. As he swung by Camp Curry, noticing a platform scale, he weighed the pack at seventy-five pounds. The next night was spent with a survey crew that he had met on the trail. They seemed amazed at the size of the pack (at that time Clyde weighed but 140 pounds) and kept commenting about it. In the morning, one of the crew

suggested that Norman might have trouble finding the packtrain and suggested that he take along a few extra cans of food that they had. Another offered a couple of other items. As later companions were to find out, Norman never turns down free supplies, and the group kept offering him more, telling of the dangers of being caught in the wilderness without food. After they had loaded him down with an additional twenty pounds, he was allowed to go his way. It was not until the next day that Clyde realized it had all been a gag to see how much he could carry, but it is still a question as to which side came out ahead with the gag.

In the fall of 1924, Clyde was appointed principal of the high school at Independence in Owens Valley. Situated at the foot of Mt. Williamson, probably the most magnificent of all of the 14,000-footers, it was within easy driving distance of most of the approaches to the High Sierra. Every weekend, he would lock up his school and dash off for the peaks. The record for 1925 shows that he logged 48 climbs, of which exactly half were first ascents. Only on six of the total number did he have a climbing companion. The following year, the number of ascents was boosted to sixty, that is sixty that have been recorded. Norman was exploring the range at a rate that far surpassed the records of Brewer, Clarence King or John Muir.

However a number of the townspeople were not so impressed by this record. Certainly Clyde was an excellent instructor and he controlled the wild youths of this mountain valley like they had never been controlled before. But a school teacher, especially a principal, was supposed to be an important man in the social and cultural life of the community. On Sunday, he should be attending one of the local churches. On Friday night, if there were a school social function, the principal was an honored, if captive, guest. Many of the neighbors were openly stating that Independence High needed a principal that would act as a principal should, rather than a crazy mountain climber.

Then came Halloween of 1927. Rumor had it that the boys were going to play many a prank on the school facilities and it seemed that these were not to be harmless pranks. Norman stationed himself nearby, armed with a .38-cal revolver. As a carload of youths drove onto the school grounds, he challenged them. They refused to stop, so he fired a warning shot. Apparently the rowdies believed that Clyde could be bluffed and kept on. He fired a second shot, which ricocheted fragments of lead onto the car. The hoodlums left and soon were telling the story all over the town, taking the whole thing as a huge joke.

Not so their parents - they waited upon the sheriff and demanded a warrant for attempted murder. The sheriff turned down this request, saying that if Clyde had attempted murder, it would have been murder, as he was the best pistol shot in the county. Next a request was made for a complaint charging illegal use of firearms. After a few days, Clyde resigned; all charges were dropped and Independence had traded its most colorful principal for a teacher that would act as a teacher should act.

No longer tied to regular employment, he plunged into a fulltime study of the High Sierra. Within the next year a large number of articles poured from his pen, including the well-known series "Close Ups" of our High Sierra that appeared in Touring Topics (now Westways) in the spring and summer of 1928.

Summers were spent in climbing in the back country. At times Clyde would guide parties to the summits of difficult peaks, and it made no difference if the climbers were a USGS party attempting to place a bench mark on an "unscalable" summit or a lady peak-bagger; they made their peaks with Norman Clyde.

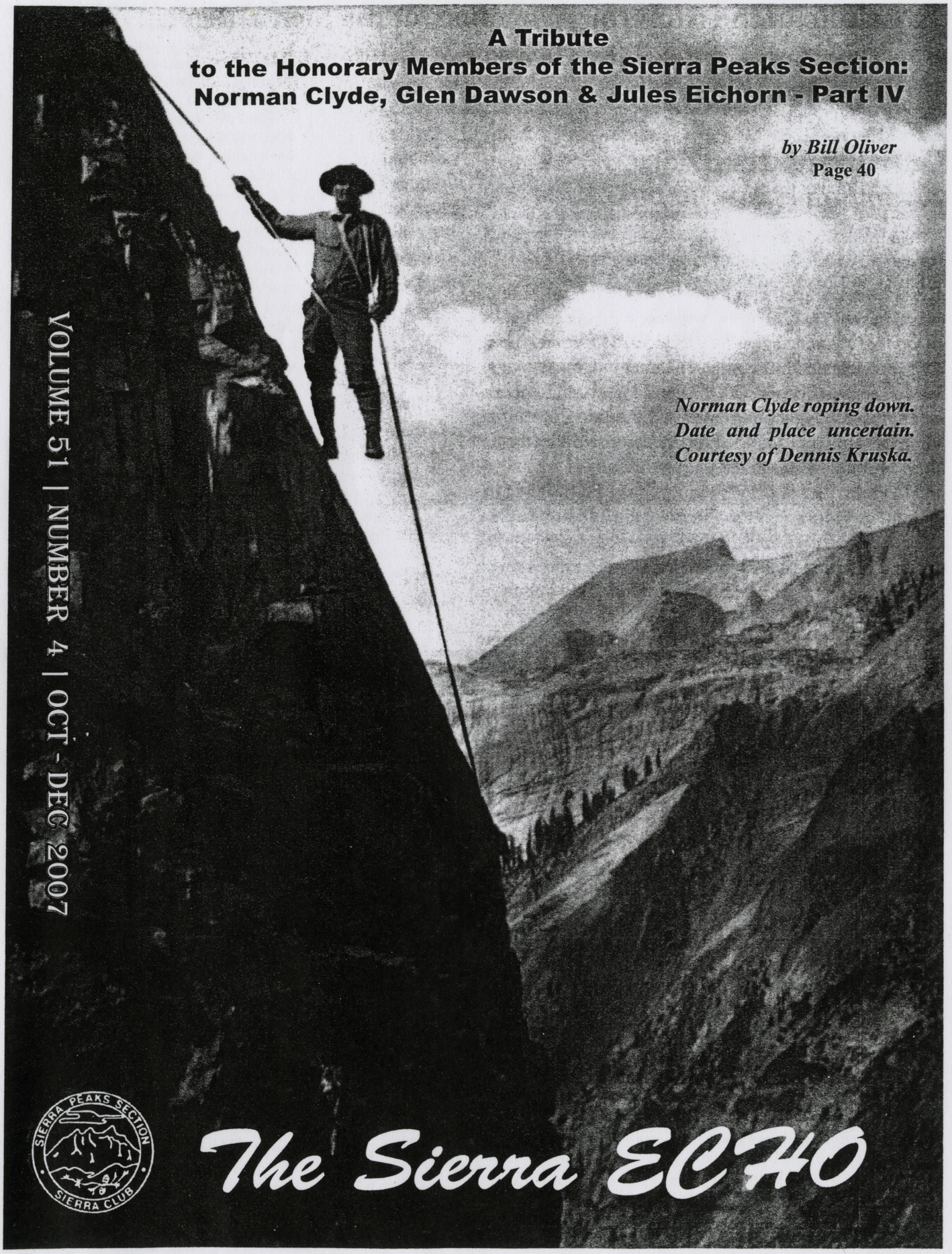
Winters were usually spent serving as a caretaker at a mountain resort. Thus he was able to hole-in at such places as Glacier Point at Yosemite, Giant Forest at Sequoia, Parcher and Andrews camps on Bishop Creek, Glacier Lodge above Big Pine, and at Whitney Portal, Many were the times that Clyde rescued lost or snowbound climbers, or if not called in time, located their bodies. His locating of wrecked planes has been the subject of numerous magazine stories.

In 1939, his alma mater, Geneva College, awarded him a degree of Doctor of Science in appreciation of his mountain writings.

During the past few years, [circa 1966] Clyde has lived at the old Baker Ranch - on Baker Creek, near Big Pine, California. He has a primitive three-room ranch house, using kerosene lanterns and having running water because a stream flows through the spring house. His home and the adjoining arbor are covered with a canopy of grapevines and climbing roses.

At seventy-six, [this was in 1966] Clyde still spends his summers acting as a guide on Sierra Club Base Camp trips and will consent to lead private parties into his beloved Sierra. Much of the gruffness of his earlier years has disappeared, and his clear light blue eyes and pink freshly shaven face give him the appearance of an alpine gnome. He says that he will continue to climb the Sierra until one day he will just forget to come back. But much younger men who have attempted to keep up with Norman are sure that this will be many a year in the future.

Short biography by Walt Wheelock, illustration by Ruth Daly,
From "Close Ups of the High Sierra" © 1966



A Tribute to the Honorary Members of the Sierra Peaks Section: Norman Clyde, Glen Dawson & Jules Eichorn - Part IV

by Bill Oliver

Page 40

Norman Clyde roping down. Date and place uncertain. Courtesy of Dennis Kruska.

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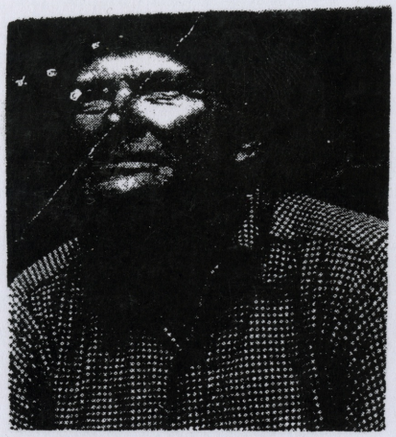
SIERRA CLUB

The Sierra ECHO



NORMAN CLYDE LAST OF THE MOUNTAIN MEN

ONE FREEZING SPRING morning a few years ago, an old man began the ascent of a jagged, snow-covered peak in the High Sierra. At noon he rested on the mountain's south side to avoid the gnawing wind. Then he plodded on by snowshoe to the summit, where he shivered for fully 20 minutes, meticulously sweeping the north face of Birch Mountain with his powerful binoculars. Suddenly, as he scanned the foot, his eyes caught a gleam of metal and, barely protruding from the snow, the unmistakable outline of a star. He recognized it instantly as the object of his search: the tail section of a US Flying Fortress, missing all winter in the snowbound back country.

For three decades and more, Norman Clyde has lived in the High Sierra and solved its mysteries. He knows it better, in all likelihood, than any other man alive. By spirit a survivor of the strange breed of mountain men who once explored the Western wilderness, Clyde lives as he wants to live, climbing granite crags, shooting game for food, fishing ice-covered lakes and skiing for weeks at a time through the snowbound back country. He is a lone sentinel from the past, defending his mountains against man's encroachment. "When people start coming into the high country," he once said, "I'm like the animals: I want to go farther in."

He is past 70, a big and powerful figure of a man—windburned face, white straggly hair and a Battle of the Marne hat he always wears. He has been likened to John Muir, the great writer and naturalist of the High Sierra, because he, like Muir, has slept on the Sierra's pine needles, wandered its trails, studied its geology and its wild life. When he appears, out of nowhere, beside a blazing campfire on a summer's night, he is welcomed with a warmth and a sense of wonder that might have greeted Muir half a century ago.

Champ. He has climbed more peaks than any other man, made more first ascents than any other climber. He has spent whole winters—with the mercury as low as 20 below—in a tent. He has found the broken bodies of climbers and the torn wreckage of planes swallowed up by the granite wilderness. It was he who found the body of Walter Starr, the famous young climber, after 11 days of search. Inevitably, Clyde's exploits have become legendary. "Why, Norman Clyde climbed Temple Crag thirty times in thirty days—just to show he could do it," they say of him, though he hotly denies it. "You're the only legend I ever caught up with," a man told him last year on the trail to Lake Reflection.

He was once a schoolteacher, but he left teaching behind, and the cities, because he had more in common with mountains. He is shy with strangers, often at a loss for words. When he loses his temper, as he often does, his whole face goes white with rage. He has few friends, no family, no life insurance, scarcely any income, few clothes and no home of his own. But an acquaintance speaks of him with undisguised envy. "I think Norman's nearer right in this crazy civilization than all the rest of us."

When deer hunting was declared legal one fall in Big Pine Canyon, Clyde shot at the tame deer with rock salt to scare them away. He shoots porcupines because they damage the pine trees. He hates bait fishermen. "Damned bait-dunkers!" he snaps. One year he caught a trout a day for two months—to prove they'd bite on flies in the dead of winter. No one complained that Clyde hadn't made his experiment during fishing season. "Old Norman's probably scared as many illegal hunters out of the back country as I have," the game warden once said.

For 20 winters—until the latest one, when he worked on a ranch nearby—Clyde has lived on Big Pine Creek in a two-room cabin overflowing with books (in seven languages), cameras, boots and the tools of the mountains. "There were trails running from his bed to his desk, and from the desk to the stove," an old-timer says. "Everything else was covered with junk." By March, when the drumming of the grouse could be heard in the cottonwoods nearby, he moved his bedroom to a meadow beside the creek, and by May he was off to the back country on skis.

In summer, unless he's off climbing in the Rockies, he makes his headquarters at the "Palace Hotel," a rocky camping site with a picture-window view of the Palisade Glacier. All through the mountains he has caches of food, supplies and—most likely—a ragged volume of Goethe or Schiller. "I generally take foreign-language books to the high country," he says, "because I read them more slowly, and the weight's lighter." But the hundred-pound knapsacks he carries over 12,000-foot passes would cause many a city man to fall flat.

Repartee. The Owens Valley people, whom he despises, call him "the pack that walks like a man"; he, in turn, speaks scornfully of the "go-light knapsackers." Unlike Muir, who often carried only tea and bread crumbs into the back country, and huddled all night in a blanket beside a flickering campfire, Clyde goes well equipped: with mummy bag, air mattress, a Hudson Bay cruiser ax, fishing gear, an extra pair of boots and several cameras. Why does he take so much? "Well, so I can sort it out when I get there and see what I want." But food he doesn't worry about. He lives off the country. Last summer he set out for the Dusy Lakes with one day's supply of food and didn't come back for 10 weeks.

What money he needs, he receives from guiding fees, from writing an occasional article on the Sierra, and from an old age pension. Much of his writing is carved out of granite, compact and impersonal. But now and again it rises, like Muir's, to the Sierra's rugged grandeur. "It was

just such an eyrie as delights the heart of the mountaineer," he wrote of his ascent of 14,000-foot Mount Russell and the overwhelming discovery that he was the first man ever to climb it. "The view was superb. . . . As I sat on the rocky summit in the warm sunshine, the radiant white clouds that lazily passed overhead gradually became denser and assumed a darker hue. Clouds were gathering in threatening masses around the Kaweahs and the Great Western Divide. . . . Mindful of previous unpleasant encounters with electric storms on mountaintops, I considered it time to seek lower elevations."

Clyde's anger can whip up as suddenly as a Sierra thundershower. Once, when a friend borrowed his ax and dulled it carelessly, Clyde rose from his sleeping bag in silent fury, packed his gear and left the party. Another time he returned to Big Pine Canyon sputtering that someone had made off with his favorite spoon—"the only one I had that would fit my mouth!" Better known is his bitter dispute with a wealthy Santa Barbaran whom he had guided up the North Palisade. On the way down, the man suggested they camp beside a pile of wood far above timberline. "No," Clyde replied, "I lugged that firewood up here for an emergency—and this isn't one." The man was startled. "I'm paying you. We'll stay here." "I'm your guide," Clyde said firmly. "We'll go down." So they camped separately.

"If only Clyde were as great a man as his heart and lungs are," an acquaintance observes. Says another: "When he looks at mountains, he's almost saintly; when he deals with people, he's just a grouch." But Robert Clunie, the Sierra artist, defends Clyde stanchly. "I've analyzed Norman's beefs against humanity, and I've found he's always basically right. He has no patience with men's frailties in the mountains. He's a perfectionist, a dreamer. He's a great mountaineer."

Guts. He has saved many lives in the high country. When his hiking companion slipped over a cliff, Clyde —with the rope stabbing at his waist —managed to anchor himself to the rocks until the man had climbed to safety. "I determined to hang on," Clyde said later, "even if the rope should tear me in two."

Clyde is a dogged searcher, proud of his feats and hungry to solve the high country's mysteries. His discovery of the Flying Fortress was by no means an accident. For six months he had gathered clues on the plane's disappearance. "I heard a thousand stories. It was like hunting in a barrel of chaff for two grains of wheat," he says, paraphrasing a line from *Merchant of Venice*. When he heard that an Owens Valley engineer had seen the plane pass over "Pimple Peak," Clyde hiked down to the same spot. From that position, Birch Mountain loomed behind Pimple Peak. "Looks like those fellows tried to knock the top off old Birch," Clyde said to himself. Four months later, when he spotted the bomber's tail section, he knew his calculation had been correct.

"Norman has graveyards all over the Sierra," a friend says. How can he find human bodies that are hopelessly lost in the mountains? "It's like the story of Bess the cow," Clyde says with a twinkle. "She was missing, and all the men in the village went out to find her. But it was the halfwitted boy who led her back to town. 'How did you do it?' they asked him. 'Easy,' says he. 'I asked myself where *I'd* go if *I* was Bess. So I went there and found her.'" In his rescue work Clyde has two great weapons: he knows the mountains, and he knows the ways of climbers.

When word went out—more than 20 years ago — that young Walter Starr, the climber who compiled the widely used *Guide to the John Muir Trail,* was missing in the Sierra, Clyde joined the rescue party. Starr had been climbing alone; nobody knew what peaks he had attempted. They found his car at Agnew Meadow, then his camp site at Lake Ediza. They climbed Mount Banner, then Ritter, then the Minarets, the spectacular granite spires behind Mammoth Lakes.

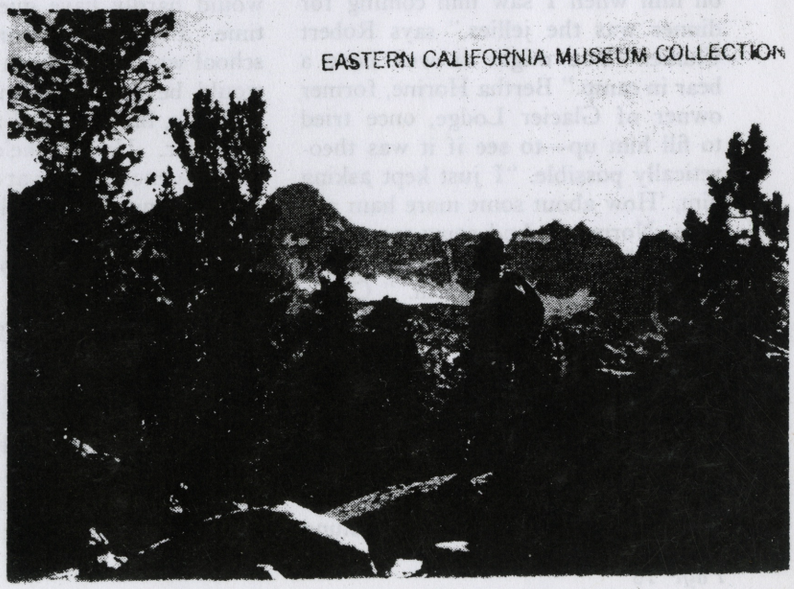
Here and there they found a few clues: a grassy spot where a climber had recently rested; a piece of handkerchief; a cigarette stub. Once Clyde knocked over a "duck"—a stonepile left by a climber to mark his trail—and found the grass green underneath. The duck was fresh! But on top Clyde checked the cairn where climbers sign their names, and he found no trace of Starr.

After four days the party gave up in despair. "I can't understand it," wrote Glen Dawson, one of the searchers. "Lines of ducks lead to near the top of two major summits of the Minarets, but no signatures [are] on top . . . It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack. I urged Mr. Starr [Walter's father] to let Clyde stay on, and I hope the mystery may some day be solved."

Solo. Clyde went on alone. He skirted the face of the Minarets, searched the lake at Minaret Pass. He climbed Clyde's Minaret (which had been named for him six years earlier), then zigzagged downward, checking the glacier *bergschrund*. He concluded that Starr had climbed there, even though he hadn't signed the cairn, and had gone on.

If Starr had climbed this, the highest of the Minarets, Clyde asked himself, where would *he* have gone next? Most likely to Michael's, the second highest.

On the sixth morning of his search alone, Clyde climbed to Michael's summit and swept the nearby peaks with his binoculars. Slowly he de-



EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM COLLECTION

Rugged as the Sierra peaks themselves, Norman Clyde surveys the mountain country that is his adopted home.

scended, scanning the northwest face. At the notch he found nothing. Then, almost intuitively, he took off his knapsack and crept outward along a narrow ledge. And then, in one terrible but exhilarating moment of discovery, he gazed across a 50-foot-wide chasm at the body of Walter Starr. Four days later he returned, with Starr's father and four others, to bury the body on the ledge where it had fallen.

Clyde's doggedness is born of great physical endurance. When a companion was injured by an avalanche near the summit of the North Palisade, Clyde hiked all night for help. Next day he was back with a ranger, carefully easing the injured man down the mountain; it took from sunset to midnight to get him down 250 feet. The whole operation lasted more than three days, during which Clyde made three exhausting trips to the Palisade's 14,000-foot summit. "Hardest chore I ever had," he admits. "When it was all over, I roped down a cliff and made a fire. I slept all day, and when I woke up my feet were as red as a boiled lobster."

Clyde himself has been mighty lucky. "I try to leave a margin of safety," he says, "and I'm not much of a stunt climber." He has no use for the "hardware" of the gymnastic climbers, for he is a mountaineering purist. But once his crampon slipped off his foot, and he dropped 200 feet, receiving only a twisted ankle. And one Christmas Eve, trapped by darkness on the face of Temple Crag, he groped downward to a ledge 300 feet from the bottom.

Only his appetite can match his endurance. "The only thing I ever hid on him when I saw him coming for dinner was the jellies," says Robert Clunie. "You might as well have a bear in camp." Bertha Horine, former owner of Glacier Lodge, once tried to fill him up—to see if it was theoretically possible. "I just kept asking him, 'How about some more ham and eggs, Norman? And some more hotcakes?' Finally it got my goat. I said, 'All right, Norman, you win.'" Clunie was more successful. After a dinner of a dozen trout and a gallon of mulligan stew, Clyde loosened his belt and dropped to the ground. "Bob," he admitted, "I guess I had too much to eat."

Easy. On the trail, he walks with slow, steady steps, revolver slung loosely from his hips. "I wear it in case I see a mountain lion," he says. "Be a pity not to accommodate him. I've actually seen only one in all my climbing, but I've probably been watched by a thousand of them." Pointing to bootprints in the trail, he says: "That's Vermani there. That's the Vibram." Every brand of boot sole leaves a different mark. To the ground: "There's a coyote trademark." To the Palisade Glacier: "I guess I've done more skiing on this side of the crest than anyone else."

When asked if he ever married, Clyde snaps, "My own private concern." How old is he? "Oh, somewhere around three hundred," he estimates. He is about 73. "Last year a preacher was up here, and when I saw he was pumping me for my life story, I told him I was descended from a bunch of pirates!"

Clyde himself was the son of a clergyman. He was born in Philadelphia, reared in the East, and as a boy he loved to canoe and ramble. He studied English and the classics at Pennsylvania's Geneva College, from which he later received an honorary doctor of science degree. Drawn partly by Muir's writings, Clyde reached California about 1912 and studied to become a teacher. Even then he was more mountain man than educator. When he arrived in Florence, (Ariz.) at the beginning of a school year, he carried a Colt at his side. "They must have thought I was a damned funny-looking schoolteacher," he admits.

The R's. For two years he was high school principal in the little town of Independence, (Calif.) at the foot of the High Sierra—although, as many townspeople still recall, one would hardly have guessed it at the time. Friday afternoons, as soon as school was out, or even before, Clyde would be off to the mountains with his pack, his trout rod and his climbing gear. Usually he'd be back by Monday morning, or at most by Tuesday. Despite all this, he might have lived in Independence a long time—if it hadn't been for one Halloween almost 30 years ago.

Halloween is a lively night in the Owens Valley, where the sons of ranchers and cowboys grow up strong and big. When a carload of them drove up to the high school that night in 1928, intent on planting a few stink bombs and soaping a few windows, they were thunderstruck to find Mr. Clyde sitting on the front porch—defending his schoolhouse with a shotgun.

"I don't want any tomfoolery," he shouted. "Get out of here, or I'm going to shoot." To show them he meant business, he fired in the air.

For a moment they were startled. Then somebody let out a war whoop, and they laughed at old Clyde, waving his shotgun in the moonlight. They hooted at him, they taunted him and he fired again—this time straight at the car. Terrified, they scattered like buckshot.

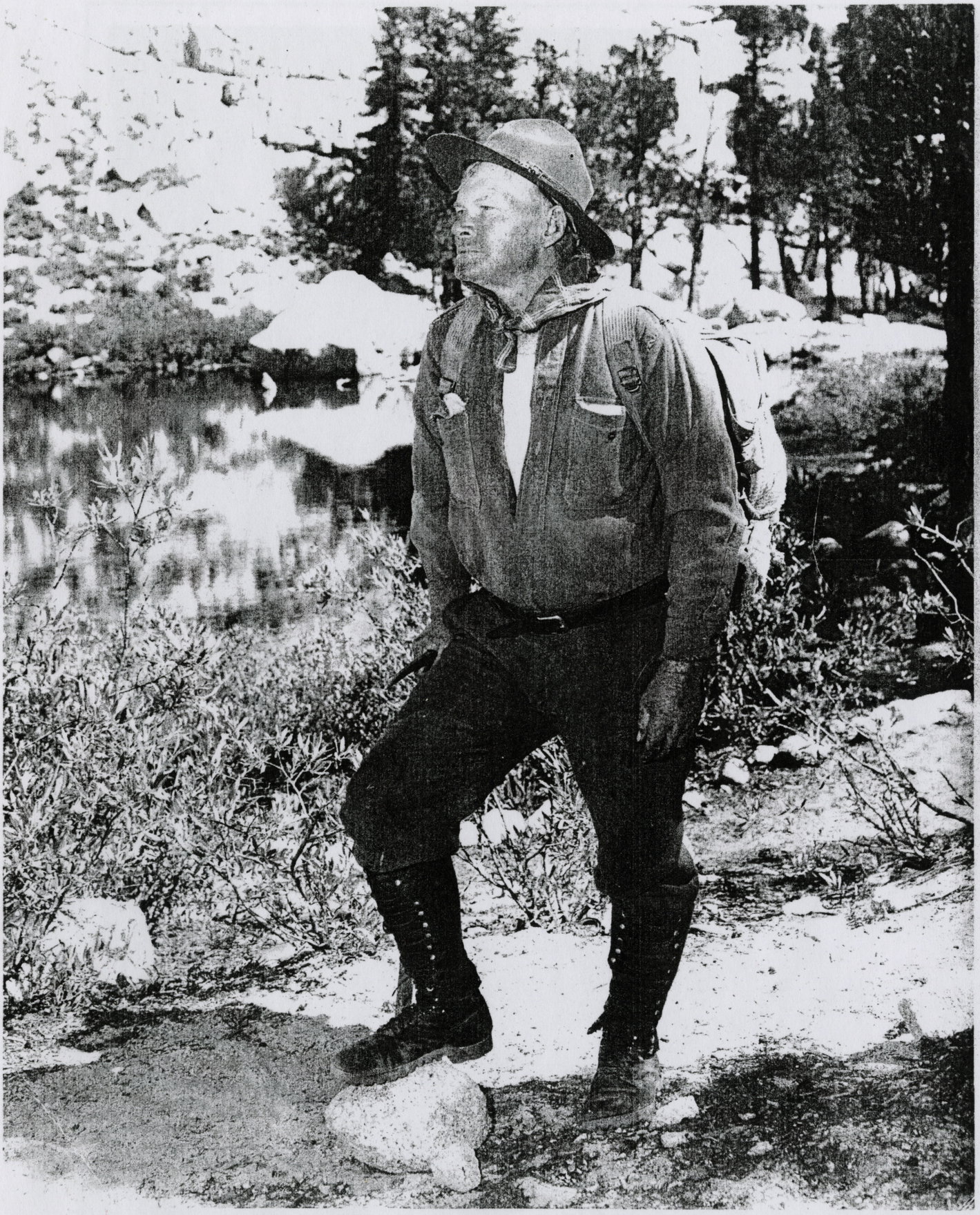
To this day, some people insist that the car's owner was a member of the school board. In any case, the board gave Clyde a speedy ultimatum: Resign or face prosecution. He left town the same day.

His home, ever since, has been the High Sierra. In the fall he gathers in his groceries and cuts six cords of wood. On winter nights he reads by kerosene lamplight, with eight-foot snowdrifts outside, just waiting till March, when he can move his sleeping bag outdoors, and till May, when he can head for the back country on skis. His name is firmly planted in the Sierra: in Clyde's Minaret, Clyde's Ledge, Clyde's Spires, Clyde Meadow on Mount Whitney's east face. Someday, perhaps, there will be a Mount Clyde. Such honor has been accorded lesser men.

One winter he spent two days digging out Ol' Belle, a neighbor whose cabin had been buried by an avalanche. When he finally reached her door, he found Belle and her cat warm and safe. Belle has lived in the Canyon almost as many winters as Clyde himself, and one resident, a Johnny-come-lately by Sierra standards, even ventured to suggest that this mountain lady and this mountain man might make a perfect match. "She could do a lot for old Norman," he said. But Clyde—though he never heard this particular suggestion— has always been quick to dash cold creek water on such nonsense. "I didn't come to the mountains," he says, "to listen to a jawing woman."

He will never leave the Sierra. "Things would be so changed," he says, "I'd be kind of like old Rip Van Winkle coming back from the Catskills. Besides, after being in the mountain so long, I think city life would be mighty dull."

—William E. Smith



Norman Clyde @ Mirror Lake late 1950's

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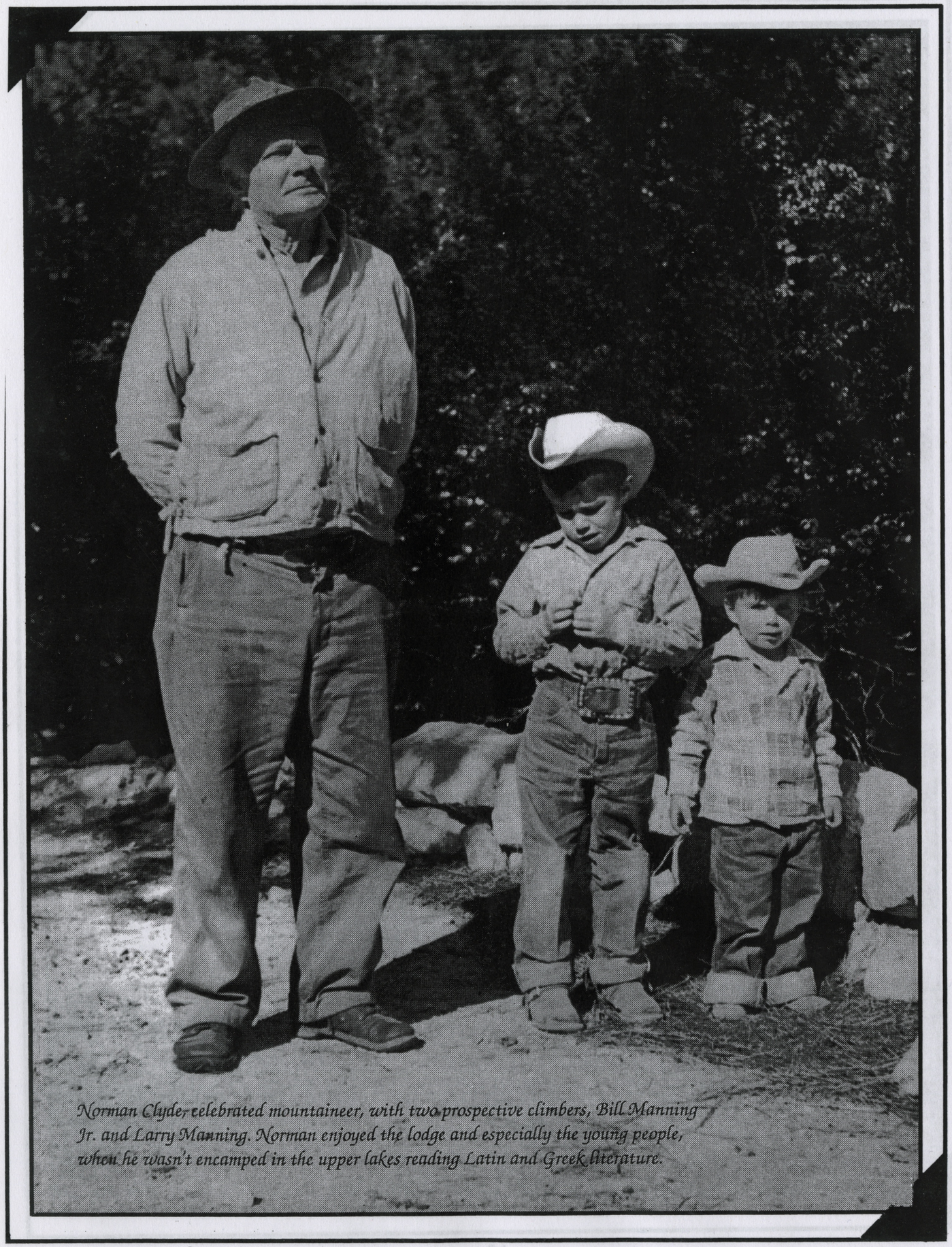


Norman Clyder celebrated mountaineer, with two prospective climbers, Bill Manning Jr. and Larry Manning. Norman enjoyed the lodge and especially the young people, when he wasn't encamped in the upper lakes reading Latin and Greek literature.

The myth of Norman Clyde

10-11-08

By Michael Loughman
Specail to The Inyo Register

Time magazine called him "the pack that walks like a man." He made roughly a hundred first ascents of Sierra summits, including a number of the highest and most difficult. In 1931 he participated in the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney, in a party that included three others of America's most distinguished climbers: Robert L.M. Underhill, Jules Eichorn and Glen Dawson. They largely invented rock climbing in America.

Norman Clyde comes as close as anyone to mythic status among the explorers and climbers in the Sierra highcountry. Although he was not a "loner" he spent most of his days alone, a refugee from a culture that grated on him. He was forever defending his territory.

I first met Clyde on the 1959 Sierra Club Base Camp near Golden Trout Lake in the Humphreys Basin. One of the women in the camp asked me, "Who is that dirty old prospector with the pistol on his hip who just walked into camp?" He was 74 years old, and he was carrying the famous backpack. I soon saw its contents spread out on a granite slab: a number eight cast iron skillet, a cast iron shoe last, a large bag of half-soles and heels, hammer and nails. Norman had a long history as Sierra Club outings cobbler. Then there were the books: Latin, German and French classics in the original languages. He had done graduate work in classical literature at Berkeley.

By 1959 he'd given up climbing– he'd climbed just about everything– for fishing. One day he complained that the skillet wasn't large enough to hold a limit of trout. Another woman camper thought she'd help lighten his pack. So the next year she brought him a shiny new aluminum griddle just right for 10 small trout. It went into the pack along side the skillet. Henceforth, he carried both.

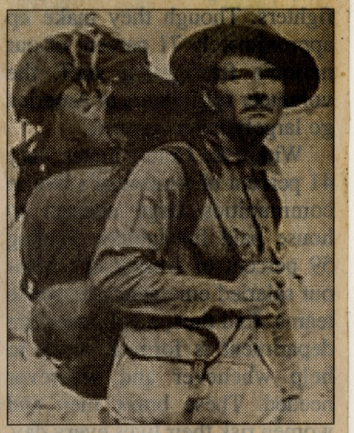
I first heard about Clyde in 1954 while riding from Mono Hot Springs on the Westside to Whitney Portal with Oliver Kehrlein, the founder and leader of the Base Camps. In 1950 a Base Camp party was crossing the front of the rock glacier under Mt. Powell in the Sabrina Basin – where they should never have been. Large rocks slid onto a woman, crushing her leg, and trapping her in a very dangerous and tricky situation. Kehrlein and Clyde rushed to the scene and proceeded to have a serious argument over who was in charge of the extrication. Kehrlein ordered Clyde off the trip (he was a non-paying guest), and he was persona non grata on the Sierra Club outings until his rehabilitation in 1959.

Clyde reportedly said that if he ever saw Kehrlein again, he would shoot him. It was no idle threat. Fortunately Kehrlein had retired from the Base Camps in 1955.

From 1958 through 1961 Art Schober, operating out of the station at North Lake, did the packing for the Sierra Club Base Camps. It was a big job: more than 100 campers for six weeks each summer. Clyde was distinguished guest in camp every year from 1959 through 1966.

While Art supervised the packing – many tons of food and gear – his wife Lou was at home in a house near the old Cardinal Mine. Clyde spent a lot of time in the neighborhood. He was minimally employed during most of his life and always ready to find a free meal, which he did at Base Camp and with the Schobers. He would simply show up for dinner. Lou grew weary of this. One day she left the dishes from breakfast and lunch in the sink. When she saw Clyde coming she got busy at the sink. After Clyde saw the situation and left, the Schobers had their dinner.

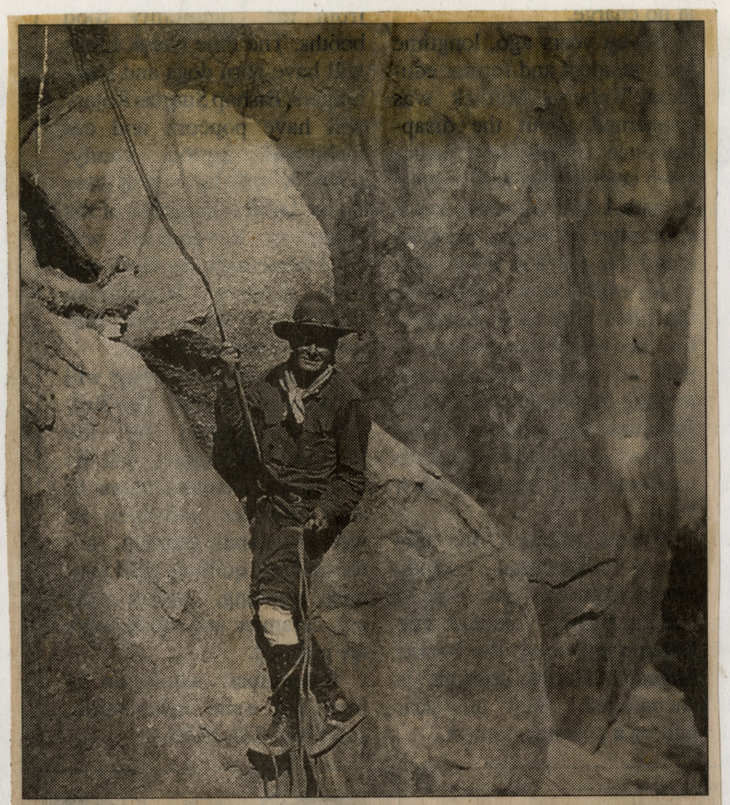
My mother came on the 1959 camp in the Humphreys Basin. She took an interest in Clyde and thought she would like to write about him. She decided that engaging him to guide her up Mt. Whitney would be a good way to get to know him. It was arranged, and following the directions he provided, she arrived at the old "ranch" on Baker Creek where he was staying. There was a locked gate and apparently nobody around. She was standing by the gate puzzled about what to do when she heard a noise in a nearby tree. Clyde climbed down out of the tree. He'd apparently been watching her, and he hadn't hailed her. He had a shotgun, and that scared the daylights out of her.



Norman Clyde with his famous 76-lbs backpack. Photo courtesy www.owensvalleyhistory.com.

She greeted him, opened the trunk of her car, hauled out a picnic basket, and got Norman sitting beside the road with a mouthful of fried chicken. Then she jumped in the car and got out of there. She never saw him or communicated with him again. I've often wished I could have heard Clyde's version of this incident.

The 1964 Base Camp was sited near Hemlock Crossing on the North Fork of the San Joaquin River and I was the leader now, and I'd chosen one of the places I had visited with Galen Rowell on our trip from Devil's Postpile to Yosemite Valley seven years earlier. Most of the campers took about six hours to hike (with only light day packs) from the road to camp. Clyde took two days. He was 79 now and still carrying the famous backpack, which looked larger than ever. We hung it on the camp scales. It weighed 76 pounds.



The collection of photos by pioneering mountaineer Norman Clyde, a resident of Independence, make up a substantial section of the museum's collection of photos of the Eastern Sierra and the early days of climbing in the region. Photo courtesy County of Inyo, Eastern California Museum



Pioneering Eastern Sierra climber Norman Clyde and his famed 80-pound pack

49 years ago — 1942

■ Using spiked shoes to hold himself on the icy snow banks of Birch mountain, Norman Clyde was successful in scaling the steep cliffs to a point 12,700 feet early this week. His climb was rewarded with the discovery of two more bodies of the disastrous plane crash there December 12. The victims were identified by army officials as Col. Charles W. Bundy and Col. George W. Ricker.



Mountaineer Norman Clyde

Legendary mountaineer, mountain guide, writer, photographer, and self-trained naturalist Norman Clyde made more than one hundred and thirty first ascents throughout western North America, many of them in the Sierra Nevada. Clyde graduated with a Classics degree in 1909, and moved to California to attend the University of California Berkeley in 1911, where he continued to study on and off until 1924. He'd started climbing in the Sierra in 1910, and was besotted with the mountians.

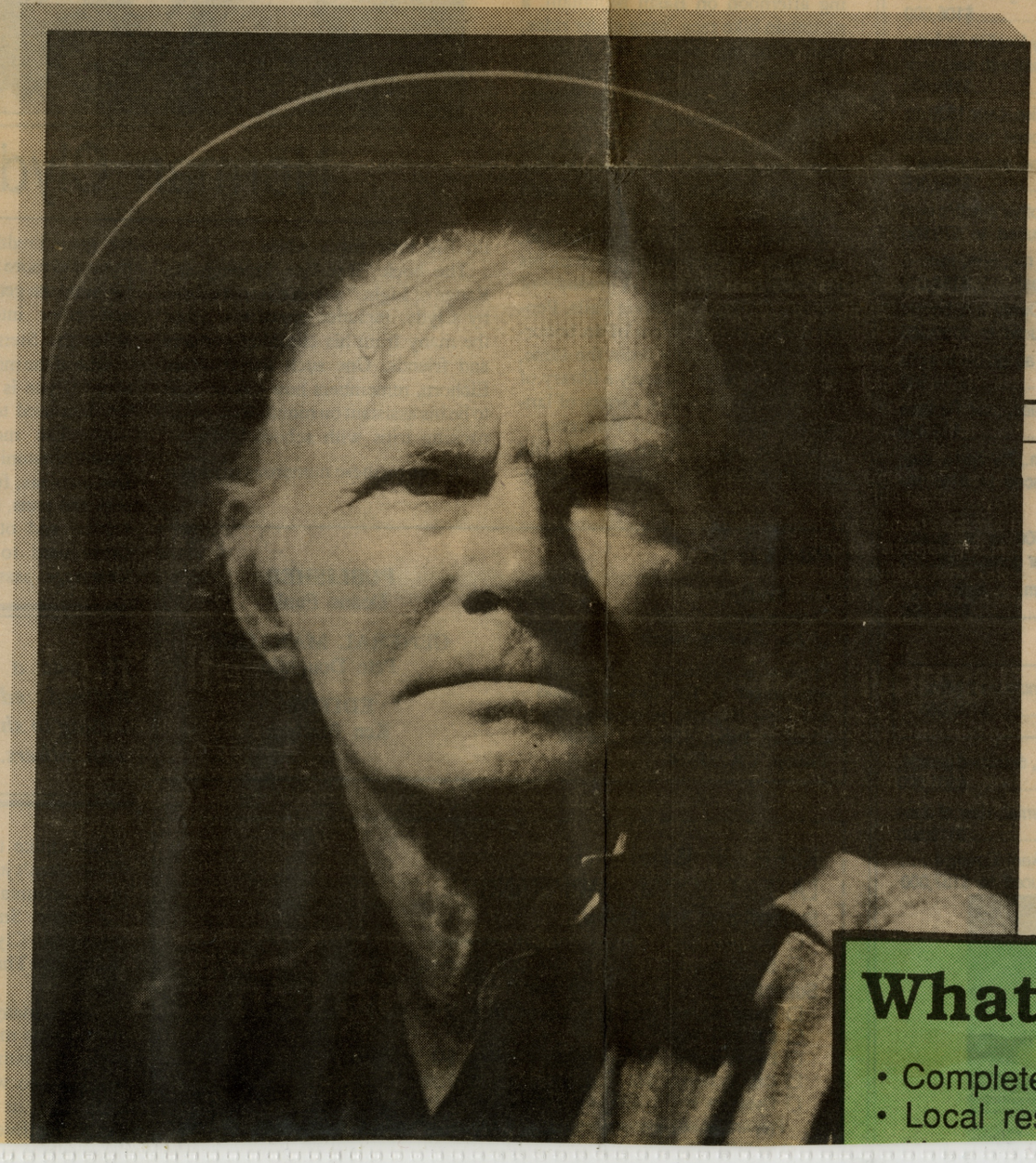
When his young wife died of tuberculosis in 1919 it spurred him to move to the Eastern Sierra, where climbing became his solace and his passion. He was notorious for carrying a pack of towering proportions that earned him the moniker, "the pack that walks like a man". It contained the usual backcountry gear, but also a full cobblers kit, an iron skillet, and at least five cameras.

A list of his climbs would almost fill this phone book and have to include the first or second ascents of almost every peak visible in the range, but the highlights include a speed climbing record on Mount Shasta in 1923, the first ascent of the last unclimbed 14,000+ foot peak in California, and first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney. Clyde Minaret, Clyde's Ledge, Clyde's Meadow along the Mountaineer's Route on Mount Whitney, and Norman Clyde Peak bear his name. To this day no other mountaineer could be said to have done so much in the Sierra Nevada.

Previe

Norman Clyde:
Local Mountaineers Plan A Birthday Party

Story on page 2



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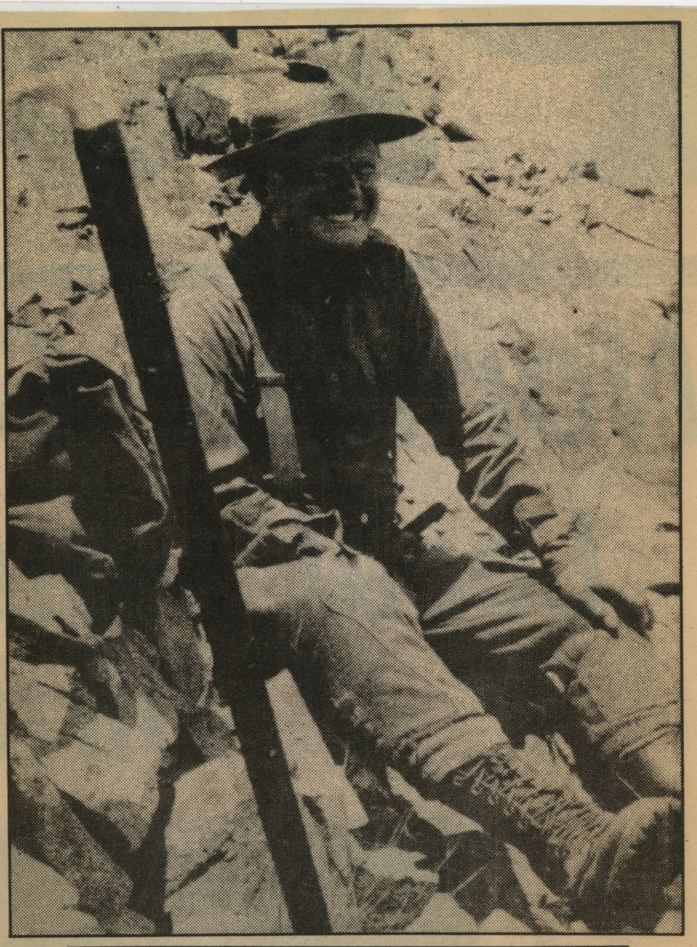
Norman Clyde



by Chris Lombardo

On April 8, 1988 Norman Clyde would have been 103 years in age. He probably would have celebrated by ascending North Palisade, his favorite climb.

Clyde was a climbing pioneer in the Eastern Sierra, although he also climbed extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada. He was one of the few oddballs in his time who treated mountain climbing and backcountry travel as a lifetime passion, a kind of religion.

Maybe it's no coincidence that Clyde shares the same birthday as Buddha, the founder of a religion with many ideals similar to the mountaineering life.

On the weekend of April 8th to the 10th, a handful of local mountaineering enthusiasts in the Bishop area plan to celebrate Clyde's birthday. Although the weekend is being dubbed a sort of "non-event" for this time, the organizers plan on steadily enlarging the celebration each year.

Eventually, "Norman Clyde Days" will be a festival complete with organized outings and attractions, like a skiing afternoon on Basin Mountain, a mountain bike race, hang glider rides, basic climbing lessons, and a multitude of other possibilities, all in honor of Clyde's contribution to the Eastern Sierra mountaineering history.

And Clyde was much more than just a mountain climber. Few people who have heard of him know of the man's makeup and way of life.

He was a man of culture. Refined, educated, and very willing to share his knowledge with others. A graduate of Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and recipient of an honorary degree of Doctor from the same, Clyde was known to carry a library of books in his pack in a variety of languages, from Greek to Portugese.

At one time, Clyde studied Old English at Berkeley, and taught schoolin Big Pine for a while.

The book "Rambles Through the Range of Light," a collection of essays by Clyde, includes anecdotes about the many from his climbing partners and friends. One such friend, Jules Eichorn, remembers how Clyde used to be his assistant on month-long backpacking trips with schoolchildren:

"It was on these numerous trips that the great bredth of the man became more and more apparent. He carried in his mind the geology, botany, wildlife, and other interrelated information about the Sierra."

One of the most widely-known facts about Clyde is the incredible weight the man used to pack into the mountains. The modern, "travel light" crowd is astonished to hear about the five cameras, full-length axe, kitche pots and pans, several pairs of boo kettles, and other paraphenalia that Clyde used to heft over trails like Kearsarge pass.

He was a man of culture. Refined, educated, and very willing to share his knowledge with others.

But unlike the travel light crowd, Clyde wasn't just spending a weekend in the mountains.

Perhaps Smoke Blanchard best explained Clyde's eccentricity in "Rambles Through the Range of Light":

"I think many people find his way of travel in the mountains quite strange, especially with today's gear but, you see, Norman was notjust visiting the mountains or passing through the peaks. He lived here..."



by
Betty
Carter

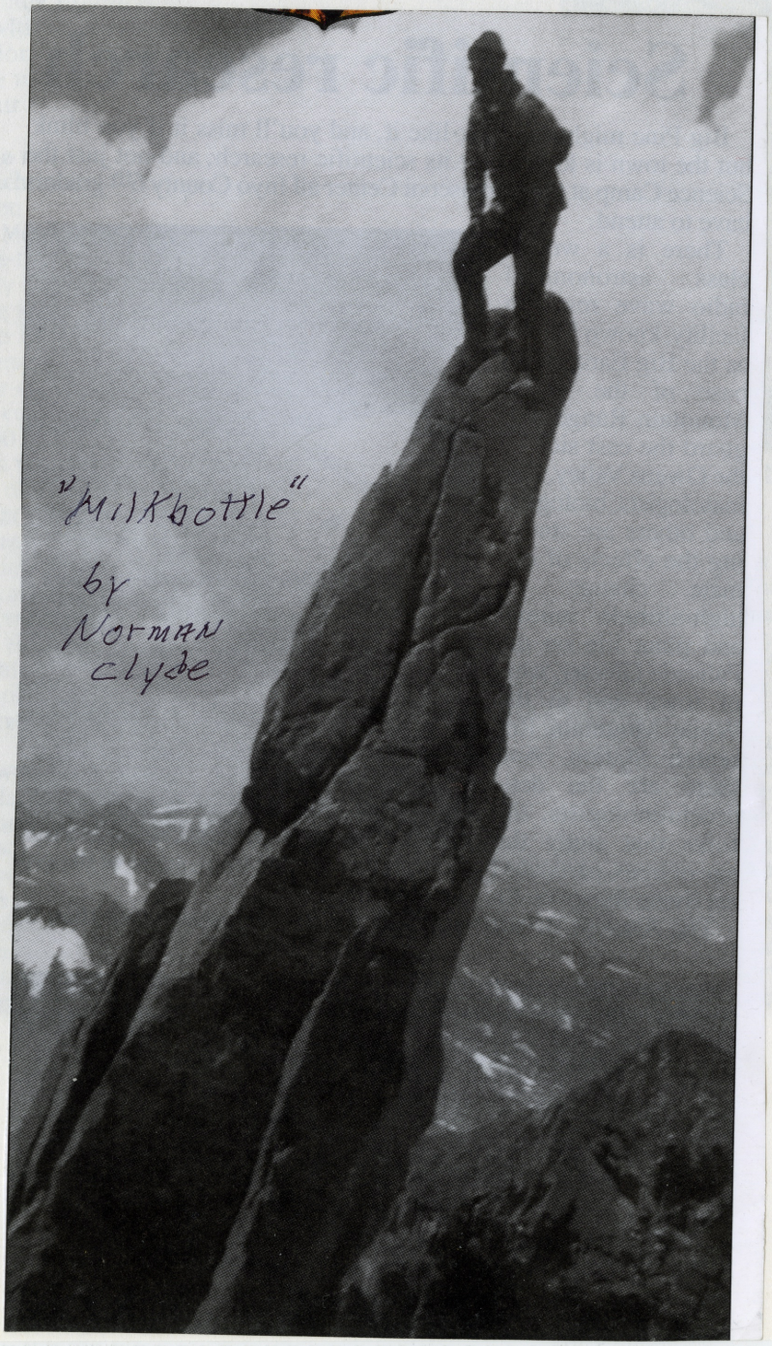
Big Pine
1990



Norman Clyde reportedly climbed nearly every peak in the High Sierra. His experience on the granite cliffs may well have contributed to his admiration for the bighorn. Clyde was 35 years old at the time of this 1920 photo.

Courtesy Eastern California Museum

9-10-2016


"Milkbottle"
by
Norman
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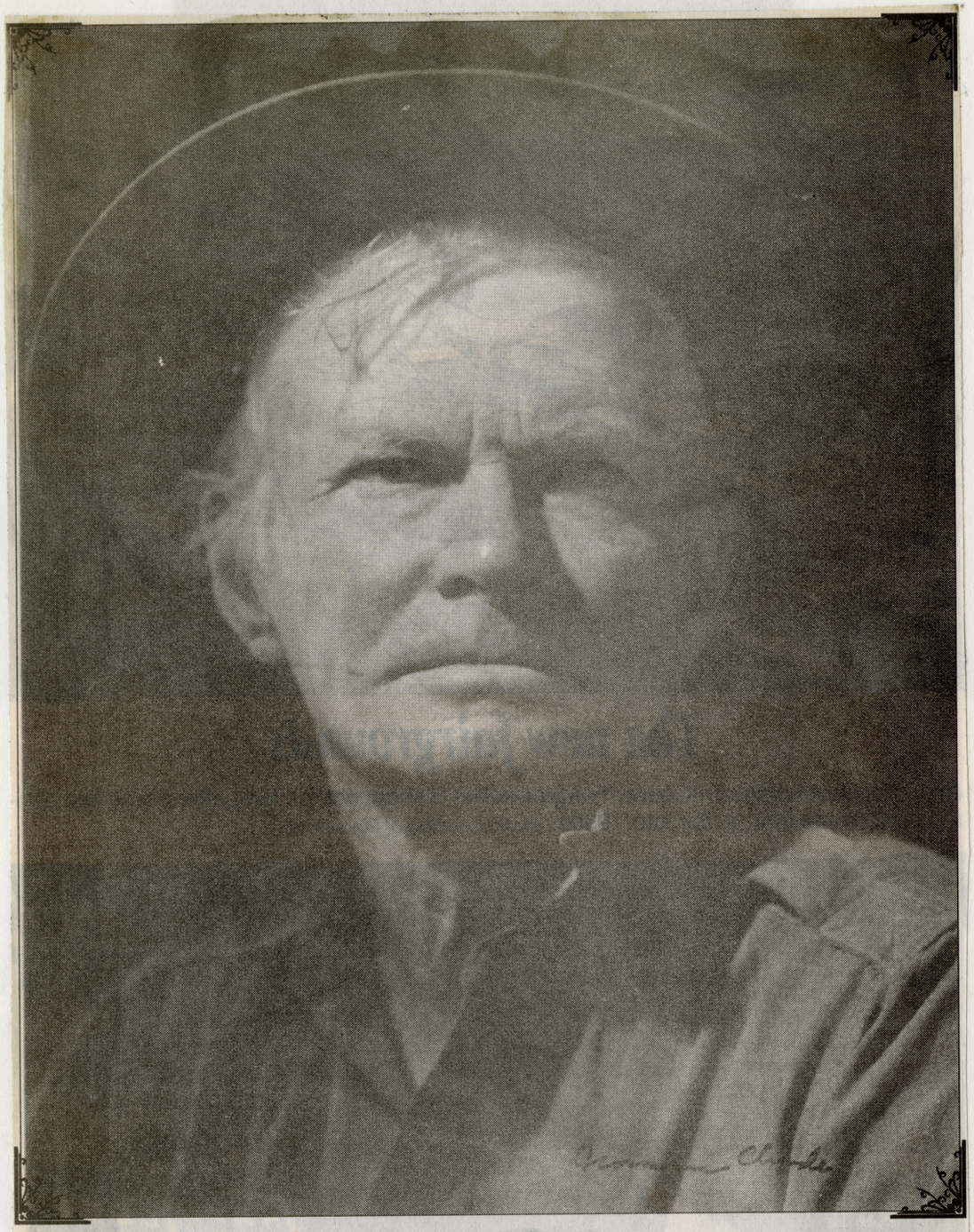
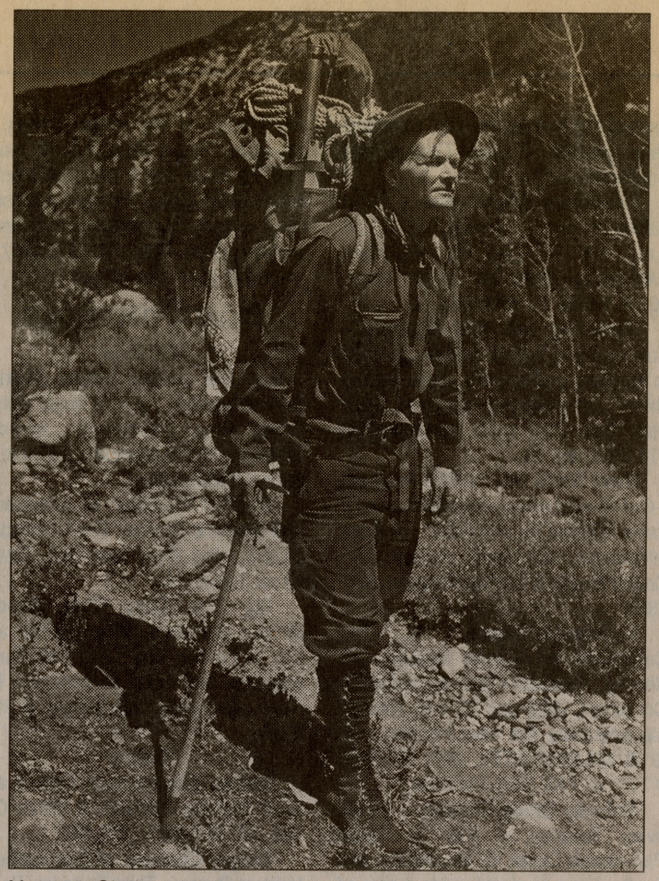


Mountaineer

Legendary Eastern Sierra mountain climber Norman Clyde, who, among other accomplishments, is the namesake of Clyde Glacier west of Big Pine. Photo taken in September, 1950. *Photo courtesy of Laws Railroad Museum*



Norman Clyde and his legendary 50-lb. pack which he humped all over the Sierra Nevada. Photo courtesy County of Inyo Eastern California Museum

2009

Museum to unveil Clyde exhibit

Register Staff

The Grand Opening for the Eastern California Museum photo exhibit, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra," will take place from 2-6 p.m. Saturday, April 18. The exhibit features more than 40 photos, extensive explanatory text, dozens of artifacts and a seven-foot long map highlighting about 100 of Clyde's most significant first ascents in the Sierra Nevada.

Other highlights include numerous photos from the scrapbook of Norman and Winnie Clyde, the wife of the rugged mountaineer who died of "consumption" in 1919. Photos also document Clyde's early climbing days with the Sierra Club, his stints as a climbing and hiking guide, his expertise when it came to mountain rescues and his secondary career as a writer and photographer. Well-known Bishop climber, writer and photographer Andy Selters is co-curator for the exhibit, and researched and wrote the exhibit text.

"Norman Clyde of the High Sierra" will run through the end of 2009 at the Eastern California Museum, located three blocks west of the historic courthouse in Independence. The museum is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, and admission is free. For more information, call 878-0258.

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LOST MOUNTAINS

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Lost Mountain finder Norman Clyde, first to ascend Baja's Picacho Del Diablo, 1930s

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BY CATHERINE BILLEY

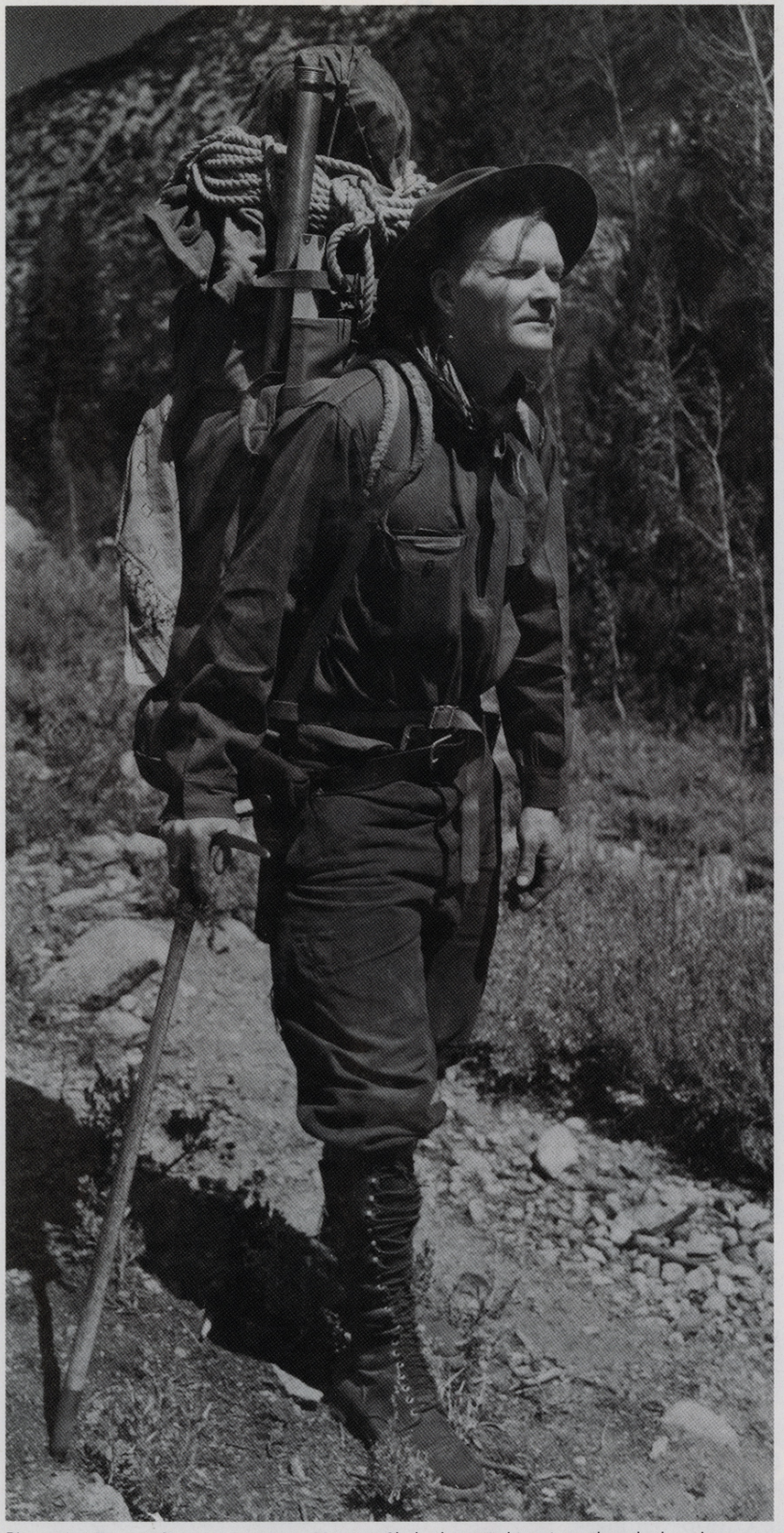


PHOTO COURTESY COUNTY OF INYO, EASTERN SIERRA MUSEUM

Pioneering Eastern Sierra mountaineer Norman Clyde shown in his prime where he loved to be – on the trail, in the mountains, with his famed 80- or 90-pound pack. The pack sustained him through over 100 first ascents in the Sierra and carried everything from classic literature in the original Greek and Latin to iron frying pans.

Norman Clyde:

Every Peak was a First Ascent

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1933 at the Tamarack Lodge in Mammoth Lakes, the man who would eventually have a 13,920 foot Sierra Nevada peak named after him gave a talk, for what was no doubt a mesmerized audience, about the search for Walter "Pete" Starr, Jr.

Starr was a prominent young San Francisco attorney and experienced climber who was killed the prior month while attempting to climb the northwest face of Michael Minaret. Starr had nearly completed his *Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region*, posthumously published by his father.

Though no detailed account exists of that long-ago evening at Tamarack Lodge, there was likely a touch of autumn in the air and a fire burning in the river-rock fireplace as Norman Clyde described the recovery efforts involving the first aerial search in Sierra history and a daunting boots-on-the-ground exploration by a team of mountaineers that, in addition to the experienced Clyde, included the younger Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn who were destined for their own legendary status.

Clyde knew the area well. Born in 1885, he was variously described by the *Los Angeles Times* from 1923 onward as one of the best known mountaineers of the West and a climber of many record-breaking summits. By July of that year, his record of first Sierra peak ascents weighed in at 82 – more than anyone else in Sierra history – then or now. In 1928, he was the first to climb the tallest Minaret that now bears his name.

By all accounts, Clyde was a driven, goal-oriented man whose mountain exploits were matched only by his intellectual



NORMAN CLYDE COLLECTION, COUNTY OF INYO

View of Mt. Whitney from the east side. It's the type of unique perspective that Clyde sought out during his years of climbing some of the most rugged Sierra terrain off the beaten trail.



PHOTO© CATHERINE BILLEY

View of Lake Ediza in August, 2008, from above the outlet stream near where Pete Starr's last camp was found.

achievements. He would not have been one to boast about his part in the recovery effort on that Tamarack Lodge evening, but his audience would surely have known that by 1929, the *Times* had reported him as the only man who had climbed all 14,000-plus peaks in California. He is credited today with more than 1,000 first ascents.

Recently, Phil Pister, 79, a retired Fishery Biologist in Bishop who knew Clyde in the latter half of his life, said that no one will ever beat Clyde's record of first ascents. "He pretty much worked with a blank slate," Pister said. "Every peak he did was a first ascent."

When it came to Starr, Clyde chose to commence a solitary search after Starr's father called off the team. Since Starr had been missing for more than two weeks, and it was obvious by mid-August he was no longer alive, the father was concerned about the risk to the climbers. But Clyde, who was then unemployed in any traditional sense, slowly and methodically evaluated the area, believing it would be a source of closure for the family if at least the remains were found. He systematically climbed in the rugged terrain above the sparkling waters of Lake Ediza, where the missing mountaineer had made his last camp.

After five days, he was alerted by the droning of several flies as he clung to the northwest face of Michael Minaret. He began climbing in a new direction and eventually sighted Starr on a ledge below the summit. "He had obviously fallen, perhaps several hundred feet, to instantaneous death," Clyde wrote in one account. "The quest had been long, arduous, and hazardous, but the mystery of the vanishing of Walter Starr, Jr. was at last solved. The life of the daring young climber had come to a sudden and tragic end."

William Alsup, who wrote *Missing in the Minarets* 60 years after the events took place, imagined the moment more vividly. "It was a poignant first meeting of two Sierra legends: Clyde, peering out from under his broad-brimmed campaign hat, rope coiled about his chest, standing among the ruins of the ancient range as a storm gathered; Starr, the debonair 'club man,' clad in khaki trousers and white undershirt, arms outstretched, lying on his back on a narrow ledge, facing the heavens."

Starr was buried where he fell by Clyde and Eichorn, who returned in a climb with Starr's father on August 30, 1933. It is, at 12,000 feet, the highest known grave not just in the High Sierra but in the lower 48 states.

In a recent interview from Pasadena, Glen Dawson, who is 96 and the only surviving member of the Starr mountaineering search team, remembered driving up to Reds Meadow from Los Angeles in his yellow Model A Ford with a rumble seat, after being asked to assist. He and Eichorn climbed to the top of Michael

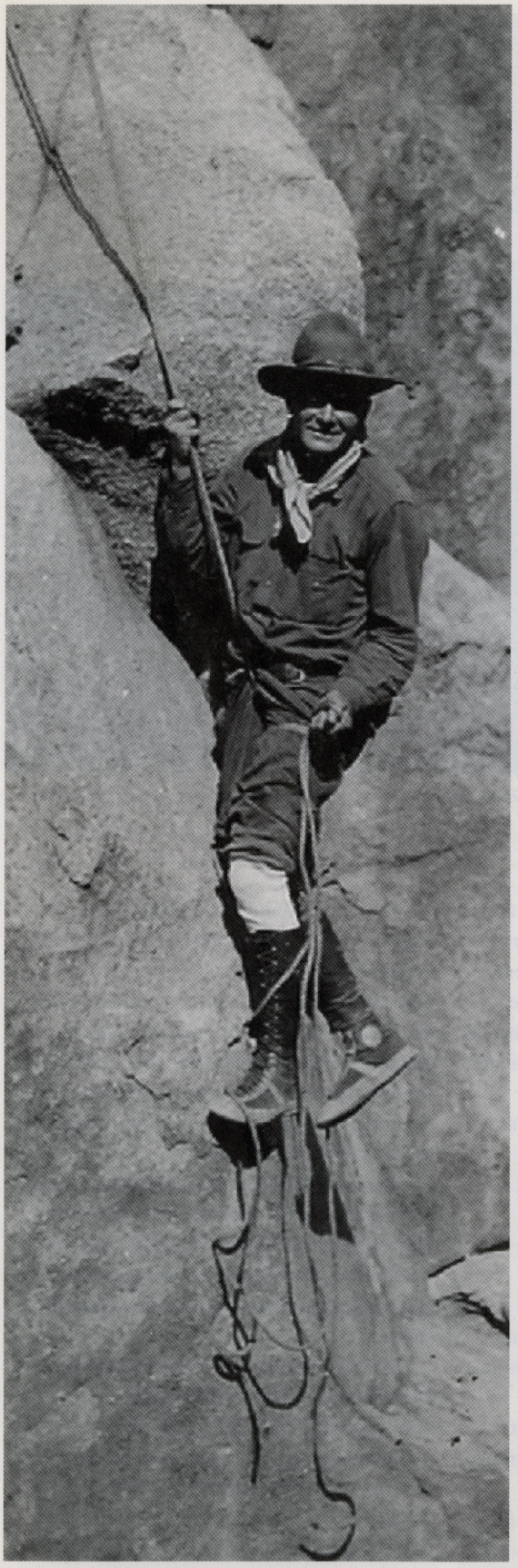
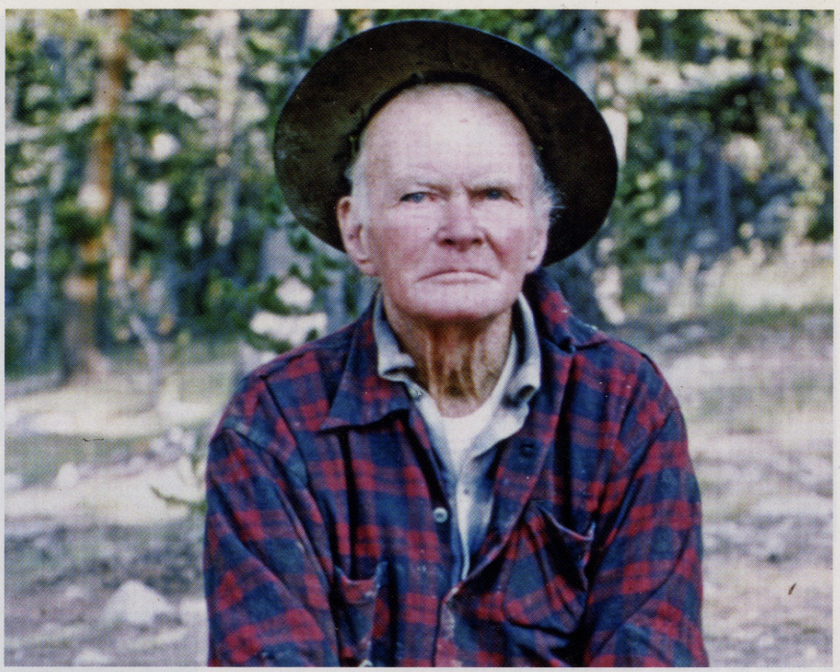


PHOTO COURTESY COUNTY OF INYO, EASTERN SIERRA MUSEUM

Clyde displaying early rope techniques on a technical rock climb in the Eastern Sierra.



PHOTO© PHIL PISTER

Norman Clyde's last known trip in the High Sierra backcountry on August 19, 1970, taken below Mono Pass on the west side near Fourth Recess Lake where the Sierra Club had a camp. "I believe this is the last time that Norman went into the high country," said Phil Pister, who was there as part of a Fish & Game survey trip.

Minaret but did not see Starr from there. "The only remarkable thing about me is that I'm still around," he laughed.

Dawson is credited with adding a new route up Mt. Whitney's East Buttress in 1937 and putting up the Mechanics Route on Tahquitz Rock, as well as the 1931 firsts ascent of the East Face of Whitney on August 16 as part of a climbing team with Clyde, Eichorn and Robert Underhill, who had introduced new roping techniques from his years in Europe. Although Dawson went on a few other climbs with Clyde, who was a friend of his father Ernest, he said, "I preferred to climb with somebody of my own nature than with him. He carried a lot of equipment and he was kind of slow and methodical moving. I ran all over the place." He also mentioned that Clyde's pants were often made more of patches than of the original material.

In his foreword to *Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada: Rambles Through the Range of Light*, Francis P. Farquhar, president of the Sierra Club in 1933 who coordinated the ambitious if futile aerial search for Starr, emphasized Clyde's intellectual achievements. A graduate of Geneva College at Beaver Falls, Penn., he also held an honorary degree of Doctor of Science and was known to carry in his oversize pack books in foreign languages, including Greek and Latin, by the greatest classical authors – one reason why his packs were known to weigh more than 90 pounds. And although he was known to be "cantankerous and irascible" in his middle years, Farquhar emphasized that, "Above all, Clyde was a man of great kindness. Time and again he went out of his way to rescue people in trouble in the mountains."

Eichorn met Clyde as part of a climbing team that sought to find a route up the northwest peak of the North Palisade, which was then unclimbed. "On the Thunderbolt Peak climb," Eichorn recalled in one account, "where all of us almost

Norman Clyde Exhibit

The Eastern California Museum exhibit will review both the well-known and the lesser-known aspects of mountaineer Norman Clyde's life. From his life with wife Winnie and their correspondance, which tells of their love story cut short, to his own stories and essays about his exploits in the Sierra, the exhibit captures the essence of this legendary man whose name lives on in the peaks he climbed and the adventurers he inspired.

Opening Valentine's Day February 14, 2009, the exhibit runs through summer at the Eastern California Museum at 155 N. Grant Street in Independence. For more information go to inyocounty.us/ecmuseum or call 760-878-0258.

lost our lives because of the suddenness of a thunderstorm, Norman proved to be the most remarkable of mountaineers. In weather conditions which included lightning, snow, hail, sleet and rain, plus zero visibility, he got us safely off the peak and down the east face of the crest, where we roped into the bergschrund in total darkness. Then across the heavily crevassed Palisade Glacier to camp, arriving around midnight. This tour de force made me realize how great Norman's mountaineering ability was."

Some might wonder what could drive a man to such consistent and extreme exploits. Few people in Clyde's long life knew that he had been married in June, 1915, to Winifred May Bolster, but he lost her to pulmonary tuberculosis after what were apparently three sweet years. He refused to speak of it once he moved from the sea where they had lived together to the Eastern Sierra, suggesting that his heart had been broken. But in the spectacular backcountry of a mountain range that is still in the process of being born, Clyde began a different kind of lifelong love affair – one that lasted very nearly up until his death at the age of 87. ◆

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Clyde nominated as North Palisade namesake 8-28-2008

(The following letter was originally sent to Senator Dianne Feinstein, with a copy forwarded to The Inyo Register *for publication. –Ed.)*

Our local paper, *The Inyo Register*, reports (At a Glance, Aug. 26, "Rename North Pal") that you have introduced legislation, Senate Bill 3304, which proposes to rename the "North Palisade Glacier" to "Brower Palisade."

I was particularly attracted to the news item for the following reason. Not that Mr. Brower is not deserving of this honor, however, it is my strong feeling that a gentleman should be discussed whom I became acquainted with during the 1940s and is considered a legend by those living in, who have visited or have strong ties to the Owens Valley and the High Sierra. The person I am speaking of is mountaineer Norman Clyde.

Norman spent most of his adult life traversing the backcountry of the Sierra Nevada which included time spent on the North Palisade Glacier.

I enjoyed my visits with him and stories about his adventures and interesting experiences while spending time in many areas of the beautiful Sierra. He may have taught John Muir how to hike. (Please excuse the exaggeration.)

It is my personal opinion that Norman Clyde is as deserving of the honor of having the "North Palisade Glacier" renamed "The Norman Clyde Palisade Glacier" as anyone who might be considered. Following this, I am forwarding a biography of Norman Clyde for your review and reconsideration to so honor him for his life in the Sierra Nevada.

Thank you for your time and hopefully your favorable consideration of my request.

Sincerely/respectfully,

C. (Connie) N. Morris
Bishop

Reflections of Norman Clyde

Renowned Sierra mountain climber's writings are focus of new book on his life

By Jed Reitman
News Staff

Some say that Norman Clyde was the most prolific mountain climber ever to set foot in the Sierra Nevada range. He was one of those unique characters – a man who stood as tall and liberated as the peaks that line the Owens Valley.

Clyde made first-ascents of 100 peaks between the years 1914-1939. He set a speed record for climbing Mount Shasta. He went solo into the Eastern Sierra, time and time again, in search of the unclimbed and untainted.

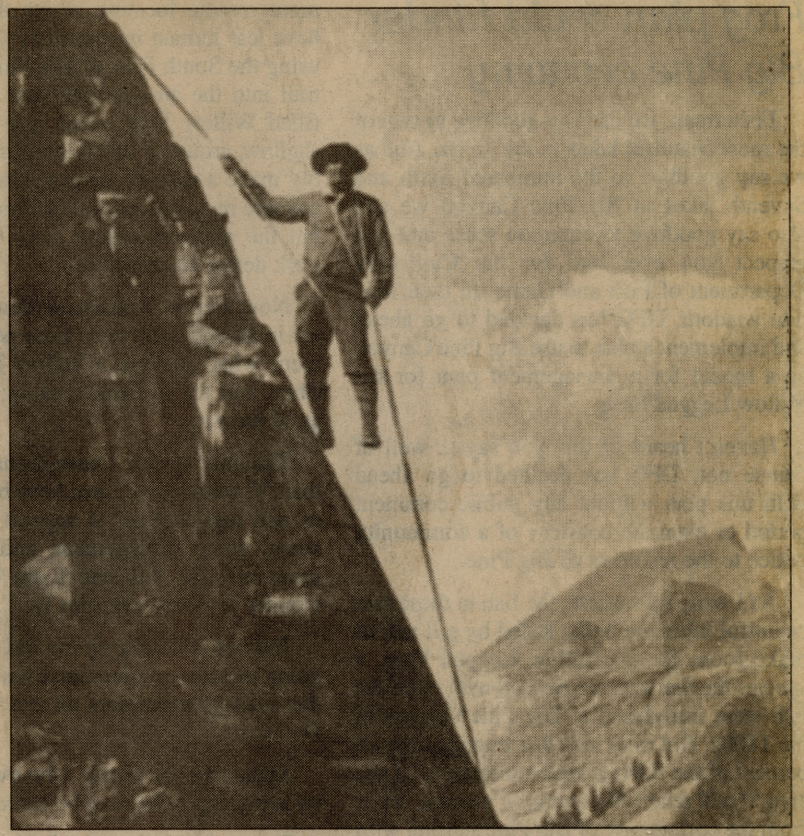
Known for carrying a huge pack, some called him "the pack that walked like a man." He was the principal at Owens Valley High School in Independence until the infamous "Halloween incident" brought him to resignation. He wrote articles and letters about the mountains of the Sierra and about life in the Owens Valley. He spent his last years living on Baker Creek in Big Pine.

In a little-known, award-winning book by author Dennis Kruska, *"Twenty-Five Letters from Norman Clyde – 1923-1964,"* the life of Norman Clyde is illuminated. For years, Clyde's mountaineering accomplishments have been recognized, but few details about the man himself have ever been revealed. The book is based on a cache of correspondence and photographs acquired from the late Chester Versteeg, and insight from Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn – two men who climbed with Clyde. Kruska's scholarship has earned him an "Award of Merit" from the 1999 Western Books Exhibition.

The book is a small edition, fine-press publication. A short biography of Norman Clyde sets the scene for 25 letters written by the man who lived a humble life of teaching, then surrendered to the mountains. Several appendices in the back of the book offer excellent reference to the selected writings of Clyde, a list of Clyde's first ascents in the Sierra Nevada and a chronology of his life. Sketches and photos illustrate the joys and hardships he faced.

Presently, Jules Eichorn is bedridden with illness and age. Kruska said that when Eichorn's wife read him some of Clyde's letters, Eichorn perked up and held onto the book for days. Kruska noted that the profound meaning in mountain climbing can only be recognized by a chosen few. For those whose lives are touched by good tidings of the mountains, Norman Clyde's legacy will forever be inspiring.

Any mountaineer's life produces an abundance of tales. The life of Norman Clyde was no exception. The tale of the infamous "Halloween incident" is particularly entertaining. As principal of the Owens Valley School, Clyde fired several "protective" rounds at a group of rabble-rousing boys looking to vandalize the campus. After a resentful resignation, Clyde succumbed to the high country with a bitter taste of the valley's social flavor. From then on, Clyde devoted himself to the mountains and focused his writings on making a meager living off of his tales of adventure and discovery.



Norman Clyde using a body-rappel somewhere in the High-Sierra. *Photo courtesy Dennis Kruska.*

"Twenty-Five Letters from Norman Clyde – 1923-1964" provides unheard information about Clyde's wife, his early career, his disdain for "ordinary" Owens Valley folks, and insight to his eventual mountain retreat.

The book is on display at the Eastern California Museum, or can be purchased through Dawson's Book Shop (323) 469-2186. Kruska will also be donating a copy to the Inyo County Free Library in Bishop.

'Legendary Climbing Sprees'

Note: Since its installation in 2009, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra" has become one of the most popular permanent exhibits at the Eastern California Museum in Independence. Featuring photos, artifacts and well-researched descriptive text by Guest Curator Andy Selters, an accomplished climber and author, the exhibit traces the complicated life of Clyde and his towering mountaineering and climbing accomplishments and achievements. Selters writes in the introduction to the exhibit, "Almost from his first full summer in the Sierra in 1914 – when he hiked north to south along virtually the entire length of the range – until his death in 1972, Norman Clyde's life was dominated by mountains, overwhelmingly the Sierra Nevada." The story below is from section of Selters' exhibit text, "Legendary Climbing Sprees," which traces Clyde's extraordinary climbing record in the 1920s in the Sierra Nevada, Montana and Canada, and his ill-fated tenure as the school principal in Independence.

– Eastern California Museum

By Andy Selters

In the 1920s Norman Clyde started making summer climbing sprees of endurance and intensity that are hard to imagine even to this day.

From 1920 through 1926 we have a confusing record of him taking summer classes at UCLA, and teaching in both Florence, Arizona and Weaverville, Calif. We know that from Arizona he took excursions to the Sierra, and that from Weaverville he climbed in the Trinity Alps and on Mt. Shasta. In 1923 he repeated the Shasta climb – more than 6,000 feet from camp to summit – in an astounding two hours and 43 minutes. This a day after he'd "scouted the route" all the way to the top. The *Mt. Shasta Herald* article on this feat probably marks the first of many times that Clyde's climbing prowess would make it into the media.

After his Shasta "warm-up," Clyde went to Glacier National Park in Montana, and in 36 days there he climbed 36 peaks, 11 of which had never been climbed before, and one of which, Mt. Wilbur, had such steep rock that it was thought to be unclimbable. The following summer he returned to Glacier Park and summited essentially all the remaining peaks in the region, another 19. When the 1924 school session began, he was at a new assignment, as the school principal in Independence, at the remote eastern foot of the Sierra.

The following summer he took full advantage of his new posting, touring to at least 48 Sierra summits and probably more, about 25-30 of which had never been climbed before. He spent most of the summer alone in the mountains, and wrote to a friend, "I sometimes think I climbed enough peaks this summer to render me a candidate for a padded cell."

The following summer he accelerated that pace, starting with a tear that included the first ascent of 14,086-foot high Mt. Russell, as usual, alone. After this he joined a Sierra Club trip to the Tetons. There, in the space of just six days he found and led the route to an early ascent of the Grand Teton, then he journeyed and climbed alone to the top of remote Mt. Moran, and then he came back to lead another ascent of the Grand Teton. After that he hiked up some peaks in Yellowstone, and then he went on to more peaks in the Absarokas and the Beartooths, and on his way back to California he tarried to climb seven of the main peaks in Idaho's Sawtooth Range. Back home, he climbed in the Sierra every weekend until the winter snows came in, reaching a total of 60 Sierra peaks in the year. It seems that Norman Clyde had developed a strong affinity to topographic height.

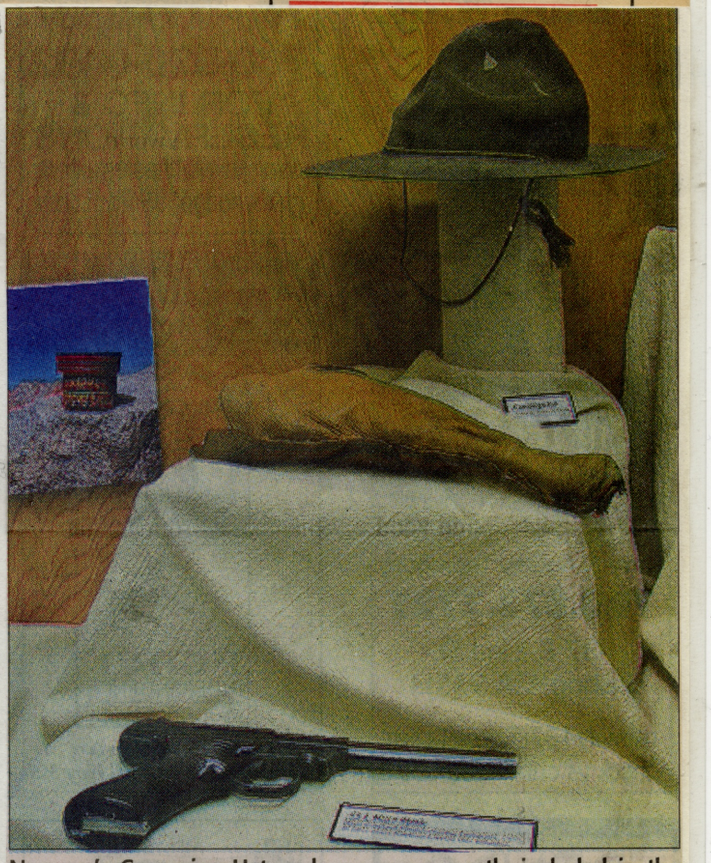
These seasons gave Clyde a legendary reputation among California's small community of mountaineers, most of whom were members of the Sierra Club. In 1927 Clyde led club climbers on new routes in some of the remotest parts of the Sierra. As the next summer season broke he pioneered, alone, the steepest snow-and-ice climb yet in the Sierra, the "U-Notch" couloir to the top of the North Palisade. Then he made the first ascent of the highest Minaret, which would later be named for him. This was in preparation for a club excursion to the Canadian Rockies, then regarded as one of the world's premier climbing destinations. There the club arranged for the services of two of the most skilled Swiss-Canadian guides, brothers Hans and Heinrich Fuhrer.

With Clyde usually heading one of the rope teams, and picking up on the skills of the Swiss masters, the Sierra Club party made a variety of ascents in some of the most intimidating terrain in North America. Most notable was the third ascent of the 5,000-foot southeast face of Mt. Geikie. Then they moved to arguably the continent's grandest alpine peak, Mt. Robson. There even Clyde had difficulty following Hans Fuhrer's lead on steep ice, but he, the Fuhrers, and two other club members (Don Woods and Marion Montgomery, the first woman to summit) became the seventh party to climb Robson. The team descended through the dark and finally reached camp safely after midnight. Clyde must have felt then that he had arrived at an elite level of alpine competence.

Clyde went back to Independence, where he was not fitting in well. Though he'd been hired as a disciplinarian and a scholar, the community was seeing the dark side – an opinionated newcomer who did not attend church or other social affairs, and instead raced off from work to go climb peaks. It was said that he also spent time shooting birds with a BB gun. From Clyde's point of view, the townspeople were provincial, unintelligent and unappreciative of the wonders right in view of Main Street. He also didn't particularly like teaching. Things came to a head that Halloween, when Clyde decided to guard the school from pranksters, who had done a fair bit of mischief the year before. When, as suspected, wine-drinking students drove up to potentially vandalize the building, Clyde scared them off with a bullet through the car. This went down very poorly, especially with parents, and in lieu of filing criminal charges the school board obtained his resignation. With this incident Norman Clyde walked away in disdain from community life and steady employment, and he would never return.

Within a couple of years he would base the rest of his life in the world that could never fail to measure up – in fact where he would always have something to strive for – the Sierra Nevada.

Andy Selters, of Bishop, is a climber, photographer and the author of the acclaimed "Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering" (2002, American Alpine Club Press).



Norman's Campaign Hat and gun are currently included in the Eastern California Museum's Norman Clyde exhibit. 2014

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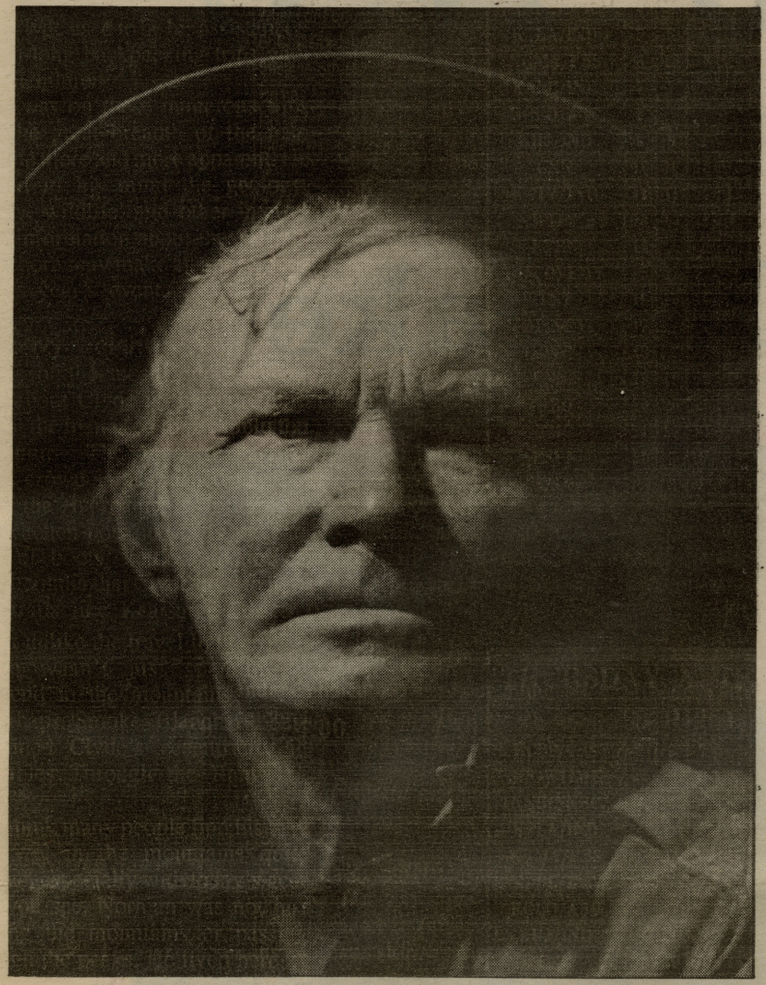

By Chris Lombardo
Special to Seasons

On April 8, Norman Clyde would have been 104 years in age. He probably would have celebrated by ascending North Palisade, his favorite climb.

Clyde was a climbing pioneer in the Eastern Sierra, although he also climbed extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada. He was one of the few oddballs in his time who treated mountain climbing and backcountry travel as a lifetime passion, a kind of religion.

Maybe it's no coincidence that Clyde shares the same birthday as Buddha, the founder of a religion with many ideals similar to the mountaineering life.

It's a party!

On Saturday April 8, at 3 p.m. a handful of local mountaineering enthusiasts in the Bishop area plan to celebrate Clyde's birthday at the Millpond Recreation Area near Bishop. There will be a potluck barbecue, fun games, and an exchange of Norman Clyde stories by the fire at night.

Eventually, "Norman Clyde Days" will be a festival complete with organized outings and attractions, like a skiing afternoon on Basin Mountain, a mountain bike race, hang glider rides, basic climbing lessons, and a multitude of other possibilities, all in honor of Clyde's contribution to the Eastern Sierra mountaineering history.

The event is sponsored by the Palisade School of Mountaineering, Wheeler & Wilson Mountain Sports, Buttermilk Mountain Works, Kinnaloa, Alpen Image and Sierra Productions.

More than a climber

Clyde was much more than just a mountain climber. Few people who have heard of him know of the man's makeup and way of life.

He was a man of culture. Refined, educated, and very willing to share his knowledge with others. A graduate of Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and recipient of an honorary degree of Doctor from the same, Clyde was known to carry a library of books in his pack in a variety of languages, from Greek to Portugese. At one time, Clyde studied Old English at Berkeley, and taught school in Big Pine for a while.

The book "*Rambles Through the Range of Light*," a collection of essays by Clyde, includes anecdotes about the man from his climbing partners and friends. One such friend, Jules Eichorn, remembers how Clyde used to be his assistant on month-long backpacking trips with schoolchildren.

"It was on these numerous trips that the great breadth of the man became more and more apparent. He carried in his mind the geology, botany, wildlife, and other interrelated information about the Sierra."

Eichorn may make an appearance at this year's event.

A 'heavy weight'

One of the most widely-known facts about Clyde is the incredible weight the man used to pack into the mountains. The modern, "travel light" crowd is astonished to hear about the five cameras, full-length axe, kitchen pots and pans, several pairs of boots, kettles, and other paraphernalia that Clyde used to heft over trails like Kearsarge Pass.

But unlike the travel light crowd, Clyde wasn't just spending a weekend in the mountains.

Perhaps Smoke Blanchard best explained Clyde's eccentricity in "Rambles Through the Range of Light":

"I think many people find his way of travel in the mountains quite strange, especially with today's gear but, you see, Norman was not just visiting the mountains or passing through the peaks. He lived here..."

And evidence of that life is found every day by modern climbers. They see the words "first ascent: Norman Clyde" throughout the guidebooks to the Eastern Sierra, from routes on Thunderbolt Peak to Mount Whitney.

So here's to you, Norman, and happy birthday.

For more information on Norman's Birthday Celebration call 873-5037 or 873-7520.

Celebrate

The public is invited to participate in the second annual Norman Clyde Birthday happening at 3 p.m. Saturday, April 8, at the Millpond.

Meet at the large gazebo among the picnic tables for a day of fun games, good times and remembrance as we honor this legendary mountaineer. Almost everyone who knew Norman has a tale to tell, so come swap your story, have some fun and enjoy a potluck barbecue. For more information call 873-5037.

S•E•A•S•O•N•S
The Weekly Entertainment Guide of The Eastern Sierra
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Remembering Norman Clyde



A young, dashing Norman Clyde poses for the camera. Photo by Sierra Club/Eastern California

By Dan Young
Special to The Inyo Register

9-22-2018

During the Great Depression years I lived on E. Line Street three doors east of the present Elks Club. I was a pre-teen at the time. Our family lived there from about 1935 to 1942.

My best friend Lynden (Tex) Holland lived across the street. I had a little green wagon that we played with every day along with a large Alaskan malamute dog that would do a great job of pulling the wagon. My dad got this dog up in Long Valley from a breeder. That dog ate like a horse and was always hungry.

Norman Clyde walked by our house almost every day carrying his large brief case. He never said a word to us. He lived in his large black Packard down on the east side of the canal about ¼ mile north of E. Line Street approximately 40 yards away from the "Hobo Jungle" where about 15 to 25 hobos lived.

One day Norman came by our house carrying a large car battery I presume to be charged uptown. He asked me if he could use the wagon to carry the battery. I said I would have to ask my dad if it was OK. Dad came out of our house and said it was OK if he brought it right back. Tex and I were not too happy with this. The day went by and no wagon.

The next morning, still no wagon. So my dad said get in the pickup and show me where he lives. Sure enough there was my little wagon next to the car with Norman in the back seat. Dad lambasted Norman for not returning it. Norman didn't say a word. Tex and I were happy to have it back.

I don't think Norman had much liking for little kids because they would leave roller skates and playthings on the sidewalks. He would kick them into the street and never say a word.

Jump ahead a few years. I had just graduated from BUHS (1947) and was working for the U.S. Geological Survey on a triangulation crew. We were making new topo maps of the Sierras. The old maps had been made around 1905 and very inaccurate in certain areas.

We started in the White Mountains and progressed over to the Sierras starting at Rock Creek near Tom's Place climbing mountains and triangulating clear down to west of Big Pine.

One night we had a problem with the west side of Mt. Humphries. We were camping near Desolation Lake and my boss wanted our crew to climb the mountain from the west. It looked nearly impossible to me and I told him we should try from the south instead. He didn't agree with me. So up we went! No luck - we couldn't get to the top.

There was no choice. We had to use Mt. Humphreys for a triangulation point. Later our Big Boss hired Norman Clyde to show us how to get to the top of the mountain.

We met Clyde to the west of North Lake along with our horses and mules. We went over all of our maps. He was also interested in the other mountains we had climbed. I asked him if he was aware of the other mountains we had climbed. He said about 1/5 of them. He had no knowledge of anyone ever climbing them.

Before we had our meeting with Clyde, I asked him if he remembered me. He said he didn't think so, but I looked kind of familiar. I said I lived on E. Line St. about 10 years ago and I had a little green wagon and a big Malamute dog and you used my wagon to carry a heavy car battery uptown to get it charged. His expression changed to a slight grin and nodded in agreement but said nothing.

Anyway, after our meeting was over we were loading up our horses and mules. My boss asked him if he wanted to ride a horse. He said an emphatic "No" but you can carry my back pack and my boots if you can. Clyde was wearing moccasins with no socks for the rocky trail ahead. (Wow!)

Old Man of the Mountains

By Harold Gilliam

WHEREVER men gather around blazing campfires in the cold nights of the high country and talk of the history of mountaineering, there are certain names that inevitably come into the conversation — Mallory, Irvine, Mummery, and among Americans John Muir, Clarence King, Norman Clyde.

In terms of pioneering climbs on American peaks, there is never any doubt that the all-time champion was Norman Clyde. There are a good many old-timers in the Sierra Club whose eyes shine with recollections of the great bear of a man who always carried a mountainous pack — often weighing 100 pounds or more—never removing it except to sleep. One wag dubbed him: "The pack that walks like a man."

The tales of Clyde's endurance are Bunyanesque. He held the speed record for racing up 14,000-foot Mount Shasta, climbed Mount Whitney some 50 times over a period of years, often without pausing for breath, and once in Glacier National Park scrambled up the 30 highest peaks in as many days.

Many a mountaineer has struggled up some remote



Sierra crag for what he believed was a first ascent, only to find on the summit, beneath a cairn of rocks, an empty camera film box with the signature "Norman Clyde" and the date scrawled on the cover. Kilroy himself never turned up in more unexpected places.



NORMAN CLYDE

Understandably there was genuine excitement at this summer's Sierra Club Base Camp above Lake Sabrina when into the camp walked a big grizzled man with a giant pack and a thick swatch of white hair showing from beneath the back of his battered campaign hat. This was indeed Norman Clyde, the legend, still living, climbing and telling his tales of adventure in the high country.

His appearance caused a flurry for another reason as well. Camper Barbara Vye was brushing her teeth one night when the bushes parted and she was suddenly confronted with a shadowy figure she thought was a bear. It was the embarrassed Paul Bunyan of the Sierra, who apologized and asked for directions. "I know my way around the mountain pretty well," he said, "but when I get into camp I'm completely lost."

CLYDE had consented to lead Sierra Club hikers into the high country to share with them his lore and techniques. Although he could have had his equipment carried to the base camp by pack animals, as did the rest of the campers, the elderly climber preferred to lug his huge pack on his back to the camp on Baboon creek at 10,600 feet elevation, seven miles and some 1500 feet above the roadhead at Sabrina.

But the pack was a light one, he said — a mere 55 pounds. Most guesses place his age near 80, although he reckons with a grin that he is 350.

Clyde has always been at home in the mountains in winter as in summer. Overtaken by a storm, he burrows into a thicket until the weather clears, then bulldozes his way out.

One time he headed up the precipitous east side of the range and over one of the passes in late October, intending to go out over another pass. But he was caught—without his skis—by the first big storm of the season.

The storm lasted several days, and by the time it was over, all the passes were buried under six feet of soft snow, making the return trip impossible.

There was only one thing to do. He slogged down the western slope of the range some 70 miles into Fresno. The most difficult part of the trip, he said later, was trying to get checks cashed in Fresno to buy food.

WHENEVER someone is lost in the Sierra or whenever a plane crashes on a seemingly inaccessible mountainside, almost inevitably there is a call for the man who knows the range as no one has known it since John Muir.

In 1953 when Clyde's young friend Walter A. Starr Jr., failed to return from a solo climbing expedition in the Minarets, south of Yosemite, parties of the Sierra's best mountaineers combed the area without success. After the other searchers had given up, Norman Clyde persisted.

Searching the steepled Minarets with his field glasses, foot by foot, he finally detected a spot high on a 12,000-foot pinnacle from which a slab of rock had recently peeled off and fallen.

Clyde's surmise turned out to be correct. In a notch hundreds of feet below he found the body of his young friend.

TO many of the Sierra Club campers who listened to Clyde's tales this summer at Baboon creek, the biggest surprise was his splendid command of the language, his felicitous turn of phrase. The secret was in his famous pack. It developed that in that mysterious mountain of gear he customarily carried volumes of classical literature in half a dozen languages. This summer he was re-reading Goethe's Faust in German.

Under questioning he confessed that he had worked for his Masters Degree in the classics at the University of California more than half a century ago. Then, because of his disinclination to write a thesis, he deserted the groves of academe for the forests of the Sierra, sometimes returning to civilization long enough to earn a grubstake by teaching.

For a time he was a school principal in the Owens Valley town of Independence but lost the job when he fired a gun over the heads of some students perpetrating a destructive Halloween prank.

Under the lodgepole pines of glacial-carved granite basins and along the high trails this summer he has talked not only of Palisade Glacier and Kearsarge Pass, of aretes and cols and couloirs, but of Virgil, Homer, Emerson, Boccaccio, Dante—all of whom he reads in the original. His eyes were on the summit peaks—both of landscape and literature.

The campers recognized an extraordinary phenomenon—an American prototype, a man of the wilderness in the mold of Daniel Boone, Jim Bridger, Kit Carson and Jedediah Smith, yet a man as much at home in the world of literature as many a university professor.

Perhaps Norman Clyde's real prototype is not the wilderness scout but Henry David Thoreau, the learned Yankee individualist who would have no truck with social conformity but stubbornly went his own way in his cabin at Walden Pond. Clyde's Walden is the entire Sierra, and his cabin is carried on his back.

Although Clyde has often climbed with parties of mountaineers—always as the iron man of the group—most fellow climbers agree that he is hardly an organization man. He is happiest when climbing alone, setting his own pace, looking for new heights to conquer.

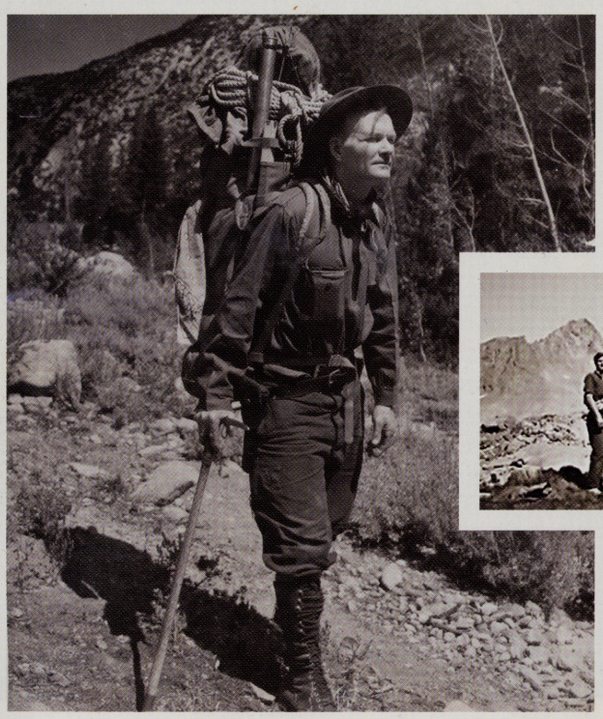
In the years since World War II, a new generation of climbers has come to the fore. By the use of coordinated teamwork and specialized equipment — ropes, pitons, expansion bolts —and mathematical calculations, they have been able to



scale perpendicular cliffs, such as those of Half Dome and El Capitan, where even Clyde, using only his native endowment, could not go.

Yet there is little doubt that long after the expansion-bolt climbers have ascended the last "inaccessible" pinnacle, the legend of Norman Clyde will continue to be related with awe around mountain campfires for generations to come.

2013







LEFT TO RIGHT:
Norman Clyde (Courtesy of Eastern California Museum). Preparing for the climb to entomb Starr's remains are Eichorn, Ranger Mace, Clyde, Al Norris and Douglas Robinson (Courtesy William Alsup), Pete Starr (Courtesy William Alsup).

HISTORY FOCUS:

Norman Clyde and Pete Starr – Two Sierra Legends, By Catherine Billey

In the fall of 1933, Norman Clyde, the man who would eventually have a 13,920 foot peak in the Sierra Nevada named after him, gave a talk at Tamarack Lodge in Mammoth about the search for a missing mountaineer, Walter "Pete" Starr, Jr. A prominent young San Francisco attorney and experienced mountain climber, Starr was killed that August while attempting to climb the northwest face of Michael Minaret in what is now the Ansel Adams Wilderness. He had nearly completed his "Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region," posthumously published by his father.

Though no detailed account exists of that long-ago evening at Tamarack, there was likely a fire burning in the river-rock fireplace as Clyde described the recovery efforts involving a first aerial search in Sierra history and a daunting boots-on-the-ground exploration by a team of mountaineers that included a very young Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn – both destined for their own legendary status – in addition to the experienced Clyde.

Dawson, the only surviving member of the Starr mountaineering search team, turned 100 in June, 2012. A serious Sierra



Ediza Lake. (Catherine Billey)

Nevada mountaineer since 1929, he remembered being asked to assist with the search and driving up to Reds Meadow from Los Angeles in his yellow Model A Ford with a rumble seat. He and Eichorn climbed to the top of Michael Minaret but did not see Starr. Dawson had previously climbed with Clyde as part of a team making the first ascent of the East Face of Whitney in August, 1931, and recalled that Clyde's pants were often made more of patches than the original material. Although he went on a few other climbs with Clyde, he said "I preferred to climb with somebody of my own nature than with him. He carried a lot of equipment and he was kind of slow and methodical moving."

That methodical approach served Clyde in eventually locating Starr. Clyde chose to continue searching on his own after the mountaineering team was called off due to safety concerns. It was obvious after the two-week search that Starr was no longer alive, but Clyde believed it would be a source of closure for the family if at least his remains were found. For five days, he systematically climbed in the rugged terrain above the sparkling waters of Lake Ediza, where Starr had made his last camp. Clinging to the northwest face of Michael Minaret, a droning of flies alerted Clyde to climb in a new direction and he soon sighted Starr on a ledge below the summit. "He had obviously fallen, perhaps several hundred feet, to instantaneous death," Clyde wrote. "The life of the daring young climber had come to a sudden and tragic end."

William Alsup, who wrote "Missing in the Minarets," imagined the moment more vividly. "It was a poignant first meeting of two Sierra legends: Clyde, peering out from under his broad-brimmed campaign hat, rope coiled about his chest, standing among the ruins of the ancient range as a storm gathered; Starr, the debonair 'club man,' clad in khaki trousers and white undershirt, arms outstretched, lying on his back on a narrow ledge, facing the heavens."

Starr was buried where he fell. It is, at 12,000 feet, the highest known grave not just in the High Sierra, but in the lower 48 states.

In his forward to "Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada: Rambles Through the Range of Light," Francis P. Farquhar, who coordinated the aerial search for Starr and was president of the Sierra Club in 1933, wrote that Clyde's extraordinary mountaineering ability was matched only by his intellectual depth, and though he was known to be cantankerous in his middle years, he was above all a man of great kindness. "Time and again he went out of his way to rescue people in trouble in the mountains," Farquhar wrote.

Born in 1885, he is credited today with more than 1,000 first ascents. The Los Angeles Times described Clyde from 1923 onward as one of the best known mountaineers of the West. He was the first to climb the tallest Minaret that now bears his name, and by 1929, the Times reported him as the only man who had climbed all 14,000-plus peaks in California. He was known to carry a 90-pound pack that carried everything from classic literature in the original Greek and Latin to iron frying pans. Phil Pister, a retired Fishery Biologist in Bishop, well-known locally in his own right, knew Clyde in the latter half of his life and said no one will ever beat his record. "Every peak he did was a first ascent," Pister said in a 2008 interview.

Some might wonder what could drive a man to such extreme exploits. Few people in Clyde's long life knew that he had been married in 1915, but lost his bride to pulmonary tuberculosis after what were apparently three sweet years. He refused to speak of it once he moved from the sea to the Eastern Sierra, suggesting that his heart had been broken. But in the spectacular Sierra backcountry, Clyde began a different kind of love affair – one that lasted up until his death at the age of 87.

MOUNTAIN MAN

2009

Museum explores the legendary life of an unheralded climber.

John Muir, Clarence King, Royal Robbins. The history of Sierra Nevada mountaineering and rock climbing is filled with legendary names and legendary feats.

But when stories get passed around a campfire on cold nights at high elevations, one name towers above them all: Norman Clyde.



MAREK **WARSZAWSKI**

Simply put, anyone who stands atop a Sierra peak is following in Clyde's footsteps, whether they realize it or not.

In a mountaineering career that spanned several decades, Clyde is credited with roughly 130 first ascents — far more than anyone else — and pioneered just as many new routes on peaks that had already been climbed.

But because Clyde was a recluse, had a gruff demeanor and didn't trumpet his own accomplishments, much less is known about him than other mountaineers of his stature. Nearly 40 years after his death, he remains a bit of a mystery.

That's where the Eastern California Museum, located in Independence, helps fill in the blanks. The museum's newest exhibit, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra," opens Saturday and will be on display throughout the year.

"Norman Clyde was without question the most prolific climber in Sierra history," said Andy Selters, a Bishop-based climber, author and photographer who curated the exhibit.

"He climbed everything. It's fair to say that he climbed every significant peak in the Sierra, and some that aren't so significant."

The museum's display includes more than 50 photographs, numerous personal belongings, including his trademark campaign hat and ice axe, and a 7-foot-long satellite image of the High Sierra marked with 100 of Clyde's first ascents.

Just as notable as the number of peaks Clyde climbed is the manner in which he climbed them.

Clyde's customary 90-pound backpacks, stuffed with cast-iron skillets, canned food, fishing reels and hardcover volumes of classic literature, written in Greek and Latin, are as legendary as his climbs.

We're not talking about backpacks with fitted internal frames, foam-padded hip belts and load compression straps. The kind of pack Clyde lugged around was basically a wooden board with a duffel bag lashed to it.

He became known as "the pack that walks like a man."

"He was like a traveling Winnebago," Selters said.

Clyde spent his first summer in the Sierra in 1914 — the same year Muir died. Following his wife's death in 1919 of tuberculosis, Clyde threw himself into mountaineering. To get nearer to the peaks he loved, he became principal of Owens Valley School in Independence.

In 1925 alone, Clyde recorded 48 climbs, 22 of which were first ascents. But while he felt at home in the mountains, he didn't fare as well in general society. On Halloween night 1928, Clyde fired a shot from his Colt .45 into the car of a local teenager who Clyde had reason to believe was on his way to vandalize the school. Under pressure, he resigned as principal and never again held a full-time job.

Included in the exhibit are articles from the local newspaper and minutes of the school board meeting that followed the shooting incident.

"They didn't file charges against him as long as he quit," Selters said. "He had a temper. That's pretty clear."

Clyde typically spent his summers at a high-elevation base camp in order to be closer to the peaks he loved. In winter, he found work as a caretaker of summer lodges and explored the snow-covered wilderness on skis.

Although Clyde was well known during his lifetime, he refused to capitalize on his fame by writing personal accounts of his climbs that surely would've sold well. Instead, his published works are focused entirely on mountains, their individual characteristics and the views afforded from their summits.

"It was very intentional," Selters said. "He did not want to write his story into the mountains, and it's not entirely clear why. I guess he felt the mountains were the story, and his personal recollections shouldn't detract from that."

Photographs of Clyde taken in his 70s show him with a straight back and crystal clear eyes. Even some of the surliness of his younger years is said to have faded.

When Clyde died in 1972 at age 87, just two years beyond his last climb, friends quietly scattered his ashes across the summit of an unnamed peak that Clyde used to gaze upon from his ranch outside Big Pine.

Later, it was christened Norman Clyde Peak. A fitting tribute for a man who dedicated his life to mountains as few have or ever will.

▶ The reporter can be reached at marekw@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6218.



Norman Clyde is pictured skiing in the High Sierra. He learned ski techniques from UCLA ski club founder Walter Mosauer in 1934

NORMAN CLYDE

BY ANDY SELTERS

2009

For Sierra mountaineers, the name Norman Clyde inspires respect as tall as the peaks. Many know that he pioneered more Sierra ascents than anyone will ever come close to. But who was he and what really is his legacy? We might pause to ask, because Norman Clyde probably knew the High Sierra more intimately than anyone else in history.

A disciplined intellectual with a degree in classic literature, Clyde started on a track to become an academic. But his post-graduate classes at U.C. Berkeley were taught using English translations, and he quit. "The idiots!" he probably cussed as he tossed away his textbooks. This was one of many impatient moments when tenacity to principles would set Clyde storming off to go it alone. From Berkeley he went straight to Yosemite and his first Sierra summer, an odyssey all the way south to his first of several dozen ascents of Mt. Whitney, and then a crossing out to civilization at Visalia.

After this sojourn he met and married a nurse named Winnie Bolster. Tragically, she caught tuberculosis and died just three-and-a-half years later. Norman parted from the Bolster family and completely sealed off this chapter of his life. He never told even his closest partners he'd been married, not until his 70s.

A year-and-a-half after Winnie died Clyde took to the mountains obsessively. He toured mostly solo, but in 1920 he became the lead climber on the Sierra Club's annual High Trip. Throughout 1923-24 he attracted national newspapers by climbing *all* the peaks of Montana's Glacier National Park. Then he landed a job as schoolmaster in Independence. Few educated men would have wanted that remote posting, but the great eastern scarp



On the summit of Mt. Whitney, Glen Dawson, Robert Underhill, Jules Eichorn and Norman Clyde sit from left to right. The foursome had just completed the first ascent of the peak's east face, one of the landmark climbs in North American history photo by Francis Farquhar

of the Sierra was ideal for Clyde. However, the townspeople distrusted the cantankerous newcomer who didn't attend church and spent his free days up in the mountains.

From his new base his climbing forays are still hard to imagine. In 1925, 1926 and 1927 he summited, respectively, at least 48, 60 and 57 peaks. In 1928 he went with a Sierra Club team to the Canadian Rockies, and helped lead some of the most demanding ascents of the era. That autumn came the event that would send him into the Sierra for the rest of his life.

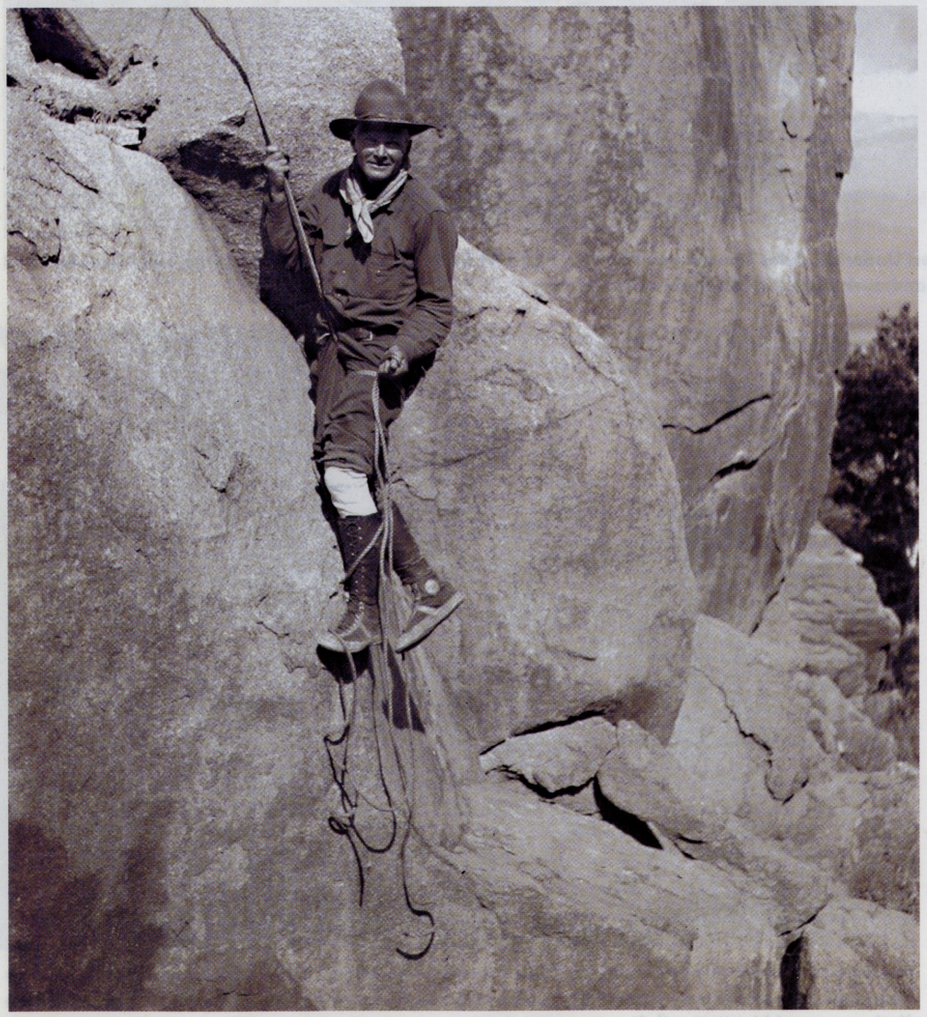
On Halloween night, Clyde stood guard at the school, for kids had vandalized it the year before. When pranksters showed up again, Clyde sent a bullet through their car. This was too much, and in lieu of filing criminal charges the school board obtained his



The Sierra Club built this hut to support hikers through the longest above-treeline section of the John Muir Trail. This photo was most likely taken at the hut's inauguration, in 1933. At right, Norman Clyde poses with a Sierra Club group at Muir Pass



Norman Clyde stands (right) with two other unidentified climbers, probably on the summit of Mt. Whitney



Posing for a photographer, Norman Clyde rests on a rappel somewhere above the Owens Valley

resignation. Norman marched away in disdain from community life and steady employment, never to return.

Within a couple of years, he started living in the Sierra full time. His summers became non-stop excursions. With all imaginable necessities and more bundled onto his pack frame, he tottered up trails to the peaks, lakes (necessity made him an expert fisherman), meadows and forests. Also, the Sierra Club started paying him to help guide their High Trips. In winter he exchanged caretaker services for rent at newly built road-end lodges, notably up Big Pine and Bishop creeks.

Knowing he'd become the Sierra's foremost expert, he also started selling magazine articles on attributes of the range. The Automobile Club's *Touring Topics* became his best market. He wrote as a connoisseur of peaks—their character, surroundings and the quality of their climbing. He also wrote naturalist pieces including, "Mountain Sheep of the Sierra," and "Canyons of the Southern Sierras." He had no peers as the best climber in the West, but he lived hand-to-mouth.

Hungry or not, his appetite for Sierra climbing continued. Through the 1930s and into the 1940s, Clyde was either in the lead or climbing alone on most of the eras difficult climbs: Mt. Whitney's east face, the Palisades, the vaunted Devils Crags … his roll of new ascents went on and on. He also became the one to call on in a growing number of accidents. In one of the Sierra's most famous stories, in 1933, Clyde sleuthed and persevered to find the body of Peter Starr, who had fallen to his death in the Minarets. Starr's parents rewarded Clyde, keeping him a few more steps from starvation.

As Clyde's reputation grew, his followers, editors and readers begged him to explain himself, but he refused to *hop up* his articles with any hint of boast or autobiography. If there's one thing consistent through all of Clyde's life, it was to give all the elements of the Sierra their utmost dignity. To this end, his voice in print and in person was always that of a detached observer. John Muir and his

writings inspired him, but while Muir penned uplifting passages such as "Had I been born aloft on wings my deliverance could not have been more complete," Clyde wrote dryly that "One is pleased also by the appearance of a scattering of alpine hemlocks." After reading many pages of this sort of plain text, we have to conclude that for Clyde the appreciation of the mountains should be untainted—period.

All was well, more or less, until on the 1942 High Trip his temper flared again. As he readied to lead a large group up Matterhorn Peak, he requested that one clumsy, would-be climber stay in camp. The trip leaders denied Clyde's request, and sure enough, the man fell and was seriously injured. According to trip leader Dick Leonard, Clyde abandoned him and continued with the group to the top. That night Leonard and David Brower fired Clyde, and that was his last High Trip.

But no one could take away the Sierra as Clyde's inspiration and refuge, and he continued climbing, guiding, rescuing, mentoring and carrying huge packs around the range until he was 85, two years before his death from cancer in 1972.

In the 1960s a national publisher paid an advance for Clyde to write a book, but when he learned that they might insert biographical material, he refused to deliver the manuscript. Months before his death some of those essays were published in a now-rare book titled *Norman Clyde of the Sierra Nevada*.

Keeping the mountains in high regard was one of two things that Norman Clyde never compromised. The other was literature. Even as his body had to struggle to reach any of the panoramic campsites he called "hotels," he still carried in thick volumes of Homer, Horace and Goethe, always in the original languages.

Norman Clyde set his incredible backbone to be an iconoclast to the core for the higher works of nature and mankind. And when an *LA Times* reporter asked him to characterize his life, he deigned a simplification, "I sort of went off on a tangent from civilization, and never got back." SH



The Sierra Club High Trips brought several hundred people into the Eastern Sierra backcountry for weeks at a time. The trips helped popularize camping and hiking, and also spurred development of the packing industry. Pioneering climber Norman Clyde, bottom right, was a fixture on the High Trips.



Norman Clyde, center, on top of Mt. Shasta, probably after his speed ascent of the peak in 1923.

Clyde book re-released with Clevenger cover

Reprint of 'Close Ups of the High Sierra' now available

Register Staff 1-24-2015

Spotted Dog Press in Bishop has released its long-awaited reprint of Norman Clyde's classic book, "Close Ups of the High Sierra," a collection of stories on the famous mountaineers climbs from the early days of Eastern Sierra backcountry exploration.

In 1914, when Clyde made the first ascent of Electra Peak, according to the book's blurbs, getting to the Sierra Nevada's east side was almost as challenging as climbing the mountains. Paved roads were few to nonexistent.

"Hiking boots were leather-soled work boots hammered with nails for better traction on rock and snow. Rubber-soled basketball shoes doubled as climbing shoes," the cover states. "By today's standards, the equipment was primitive and access difficult, but these challenges posed no obstacle to Norman Clyde, who made more than 1,000 first ascents in the Sierra Nevada, far surpassing those of his predecessors, John Muir, Clarence King and William Brewer, combined."

The book, then, is Clyde's stories of those early days.

"Seventeen years ago, we published our first copy of 'Close Ups of the High Sierra.' This 2015 printing features Vern Clevenger's cover photo of Temple Crag, one of Clyde's favorite haunts, and ivory paper for easy reading," said publisher Wynne Benti.



Norman Clyde, sporting his now-legendary 80-lb. pack, is credited with more than 1,000 first ascents of peaks in the Sierra Nevada when equipment for mountaineering was primitive at best.

Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

At 176 pages, the book retails for $15.95.

For more information, visit www.spotteddogpress.com or call (760) 872-1524.

NORMAN CLYDE

Miracle of the Fishes

Norman used to say that people "told stories on him" that he did not appreciate. Our family has been treasuring a story on him, and keeping it to ourselves for quite a few years. We have held back because it is a fish story and it is true that fish stories around the campfire get a lot of winks and nudges. We have held back, too, because we never found out how Norman managed to pull it off, but he did. It was Norman's big trout feast.

After Sierra Club Base Camp in 1964, Norman agreed to lead a group of four climbers on some of the interesting rock faces in the Palisades. The kids and I were not anxious to go back down to Los Angeles just yet and decided to tag along. The weather was still good, the aspens just beginning to turn and the marmots and pikas busy with bringing in their last harvest before the winter. The streams were low; the run-off from the glaciers that clung to the base of the Palisades coursed in dwindling cascades down the boulders to be lost in the scree.

The packer had thrown off our duffle bags and a generous store of leftover dry food at one of his regular campsites at the upper end of Dusy Basin, convenient to the north end of the Palisades. It would do to finish out the season, with the bed sites worn level; the stone base for the Coleman stove good enough for a few more weeks and an easy path down to the creek.

He was letting us use his big old umbrella tent there for food storage. We soon found that it came with a resident chipmunk that had established certain rights after a summer of unchallenged residency. Norman expressed his displeasure almost immediately. It was one noisy and arrogant varmint. He would climb on a big granite boulder while we were having coffee in the morning and scold and jerk his tail around and generally give us the ultimatum of producing some food for him or clearing out of his area. He was so cute.

However, Norman had seen him trying to invade the pancake mix and there was a hole in the sugar sack that

looked like his work. The next thing we knew Norman had brought down his pack and opened the top compartment. Steve and Tom, at 15 and 13, guessed immediately that Norman meant business and that we were going to see some action. Probably it was me that was yelling, "Don't hurt him, please, don't hurt him." Norman sorted carefully through his weaponry and came up with a store-bought slingshot and a sack of lemon drops. He made himself comfortable on a rock a good 18-20 feet from the varmint, fitted a lemon drop to the sling, pulled back full force and let go. The lemon drop hit just below the chipmunk, shattered, throwing off sugary spikes, the varmint cleared almost a foot of clean air and disappeared without another word. The camp was full of yelling and happiness. 'Ole Norman got him good!

After four or five more days of good weather and day hikes, Norman declared at breakfast that he would not mind having a mess of trout. He helped the boys get their gear together, mending lures with a pair of needle-nose pliers he pulled out of his pack and finding the right oil for a reel that had been put up wet. He even splinted the tip of Tom's rod that had been sheared off in climbing. Then he disappeared.

The boys went down to the stream to cast repeatedly. Not a strike. They moved along from shadow into sunshine and back again to shadow and overhanging rocks. Nothing. Not even a quick swirl that might have been a trout glinted in the clear water. It was full noon now, and the day was hot.



Mark Bright, 1998

They kept looking for Norman to amble over the crest. He was not in sight. Their hunger began to overcome their fantasies of returning to camp with a string of fish. They had to give it up. They pulled out the Ry-Crisp and kipper snacks. And came up to camp for a nap.

Suddenly Norman was back, sitting on his usual 'park bench,' a low granite ledge topped with a thick mat of pine duff. His hat was on the back of his head, his face was flushed to a shining pinkness and his blue eyes were as

mischievous as a youngster's. Tom and Steve reported the fishing was not any good and Norman, on their behalf, blamed the weather. The overcast had cleared too early. They are never going to bite when they can see you moving around on the bank or catch your shadow.

Norman did not want to talk fishing any more. He disappeared into the tent. He emerged holding a bottle with a few inches of olive oil. "You're out of cornmeal too," he said, and I agreed. "People might be stopping by later on", he said and looked away down the trail.

He went off then, scavenging slowly like a bear through the deserted Dusy Basin campsites. First, he brought back a fire-blackened piece of sheet metal that he polished with sand in the creek. Then he brought two boxes with a little cornmeal in each, some vegetable oil and a fair sized bacon rind. He sat down on his bench, tipped his hat over his eyes and effectively removed himself from the world.

I filled a couple of billy cans with water from the creek and got the Coleman stove going, to be ready for whatever Norman was really up to. A cup of tea would be all right, even if the afternoon still blazed hot.

A pair of hikers showed up, asking for Norman. I gave them some tea and we all sat watching three people with heavy packs turn off the John Muir trail. A couple of fishermen by now had appeared on the switchbacks coming down from the pass. It seemed to me it was time for Norman to take a hand in the party but he disappeared.

We waited for Norman, not talking much. One of the fishermen produced a small, flat bottle of Jack Daniels. Out of boredom, we all had a drink although the afternoon was still too hot and we felt more sleepy than awake. Suddenly, with a wild animal's sense of presence and timing, Norman swung briskly into the circle. He carried a big old enamel washbasin full of trout, cleaned and ready for frying.

We were reverently silent for a moment, looking at assuredly the most beautiful mess of trout any of us had ever seen. Not a fish was less than 10 inches, most were foot-long beauties, goldens, rainbows, catching the sunlight, and all

cleaned and ready for the pan. We were in the presence of a miracle.

Norman held court on his ledge rock 'park bench' while I got the kids running for the sand-scrubbed sheet metal and the bacon rind and started dredging the trout with corn meal. I could hear Norman "filling their ears," giving evasive answers as to where and how he found these lunkers and was he using a fly or lures and what kind of gear and what time of day.

The first trout off the fire went to the young lady hiker and the second went to Norman, although he said he would wait and fussed about it quite a bit. However, after that, the trout were going on and off the fire so rapidly we could not keep track of the protocol. People started slowing down on their seconds. Jack Daniels went around again in the breather. Nobody noticed that it was sundown and past and beyond time to set up campsites.

With my kids, the climbers, the guests, and myself he invited off the trail, Norman fed fourteen people that night. In addition, he had a fish or two for himself. None of us will ever forget. It was a beautiful time.

With the last trout on the fire, I was thinking back a year or so when Norman had been talking at the campfire. He had mentioned that sometimes trout would be stranded in one of the pools of a run-off creek late in the season and easily flipped out onto the bank by a bear (or a devoted fisherman like Norman?). There was nothing to match a well-cast fly, a well-set hook and a quickly landed big one but for good eating might a hand-harvested big one be equally worth the landing? And quicker?

It did not seem the right time to ask.

Patricia Adler-Ingram. *Friend of Norman Cyde.*

Printed in an Edition of 200. Van Dijck typeface.

INYO INDEPENDENT

VOL. LIX—No. 32 INDEPENDENCE, INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 3, 1928

SPEEDING BULLET ENDS BOY FROLIC ON HALLOWE'EN

Hollowe'en closed in Independence with a near-tragedy when a bullet from a revolver fired by Norman Clyde, principal of the high school, struck an automobile driven by Bill Fisk and occupied by a group of high school boys. The bullet entered the rear of the car from the side and plowed its way through the cushion of the rear seat passing within a few inches of the students riding there. The shooting took place about mid-night when several cars loaded with young men, mostly students, said to have been engaged in a Hallowe'en frolic, approached the building. According to young Fisk, the shooting came without warning. He says that the cars, four in number, passed the school building when a shot was fired. They proceeded around the block and were passing the building for the second time when a second shot came, the bullet striking the car. A few seconds later, according to Fisk, a third shot was fired. He says that there was no intention of harming the building or the principal.

Mr. Clyde has declined to make a formal statement but his version of the affairs is said to be as follows: He went to the school, because he thought that it was his duty to protect the property. He had his gun with him but had no intention of using it. Early in the evening, he states, he warned two cars away from the grounds. About midnight a number of cars aproached and started to enter the school grounds. He fired two shots into the air as a warning, but the cars, six in all, acording to Mr. Clyde, kept coming. He then fired at the wheel of one of the cars but the bullet glanced and hit the side of the car. He says that last year at Hallowe'en considerable damage was done to the school walks, lawn, hedges etc.

Much indignation is being expressed over the affair. At a meeting of the school trustees and patrons of the school held, yesterday, the question of preferring criminal charges against the principal was freely discussed but action was postponed until Monday. District Attorney Hession is in Los Angeles today but the evidence in the case was carefully considered by him before his departure. Mr. Clyde has retained Jess G. Sutliff to represent him.

In the car with young Fisk were Billy Bastian, Vern Bastian, Julian Zucco, Omie Mairs, Jim Loundagin and Bob Vinsant Jr.

Regular Meeting of the Owens Valley Union High School Board.
November 5, 1928.

Members present:
John Dixon, president
Mabel Hession
Carl Walters
Katharine Krater, Clerk.

Visitors present:
Jess Hession, attorney for the Board
Mabel Wilder
Norman Clyde
James Wilder
L. H. Stull (to replace Mr. Robinson on Board)
Mrs. L. H. Stull.

Meeting called to order by the president. It was announced that Mr. Stull had been appointed by Mrs. Leete to take the place of Mr. Robinson, of Manzanar, but since he had not taken the oath of office he could not vote.

Mr. Hession addressed the Board on the subjects of the events of Hallowe'en night, October 31. He said that a carload of high school boys, driving about the school building presumably bent on mischief, had been fired upon by Mr. Clyde who had gone to the building to warn off invaders. The bullet had passed through the body of the car and narrowly missed some of the occupants. Mr. Hession said that since he was assured Mr. Clyde had not intended to fire into the car he should not be charged with a felony, but a misdomeanor, and that if Mr. Clyde was willing to sign a formal resignation which he had prepared, and surrender his contract, the charges would be dropped, and no action taken.

Mr. Clyde addressed the Board, saying that he had gone to the building with the intention of protecting the school property from such vandalism as had been committed there last year. The boys had persistently defied him when asked to withdraw, and he had fired into the air to scare them away. Finally they became so impudent that he fired nearer the car, but not intending to injure the occupants. The bullet struck the framework of the car, and glanced up through the body, whereupon the boys becamed frightened and left the vicinity.

Mr. Dixon said it was understood that Mr. Clyde had no intention of harming the boys, but under the circumstances and due to the feeling in the community, felt it best for Mr. Clyde to sever his connections with the school.

Mr. Clyde then signed the resignation which Mr. Hession had prepared, and it was moved and carried that this resignation be accepted, to take effect immediately.

The Clerk was instructed to issue a warrant for Mr. Clyde covering the balance of teaching days since his last warrant was issued.

Moved and carried that Mrs. Wilder be appointed principal for the balance of the school year, with the same salary Mr. Clyde has been receiving, and that a young man be hired to teach the necessary subjects.

Meeting adjourned.

Nathaniel Watts, Clerk.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1928 NUMBER 45

PRINCIPAL RESIGNED..

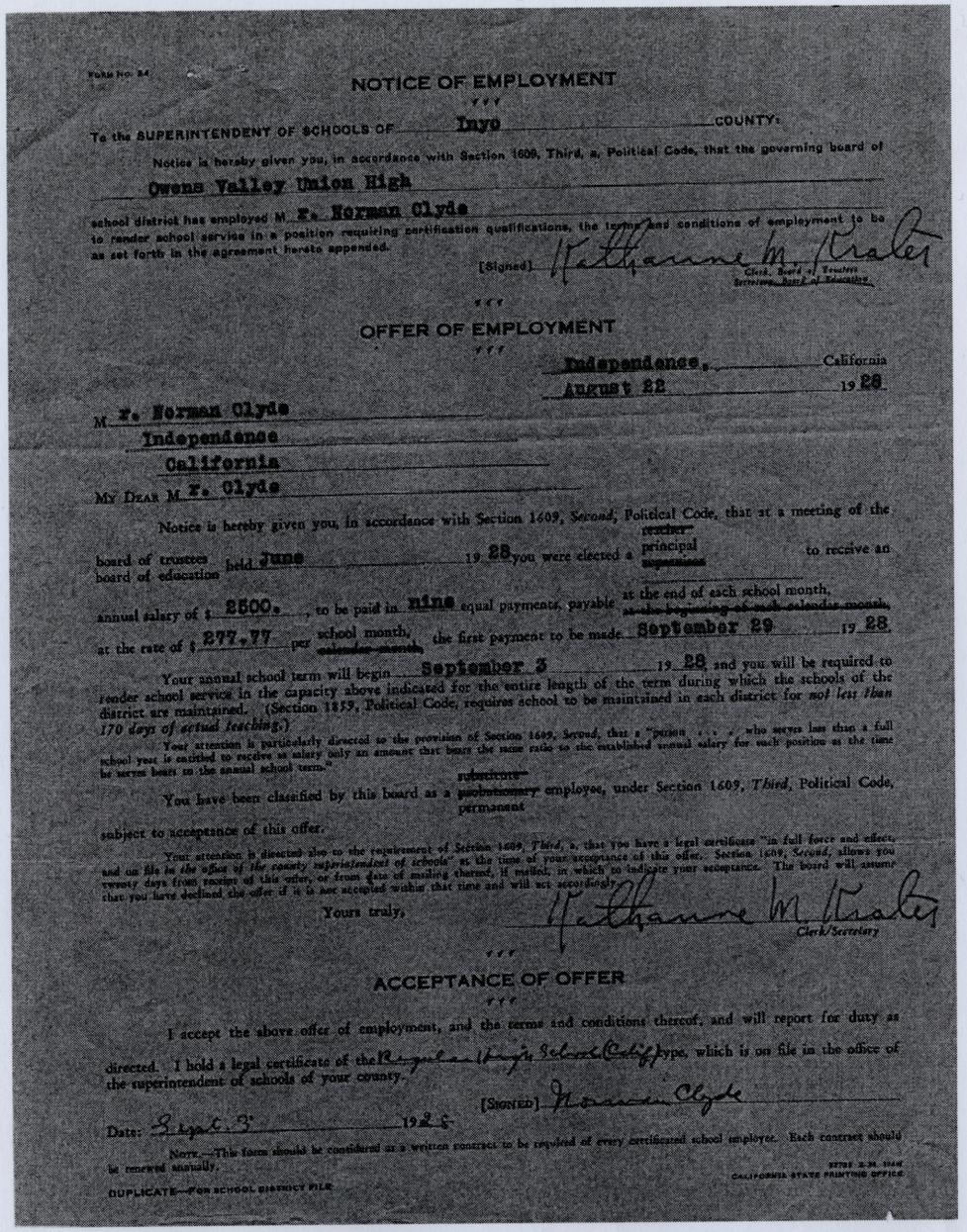
Norman Clyde, noted mountain climber and recently principal of the high school at Independence, presented his resignation Monday evening to the high school district trustees, for acceptance "at their pleasure." Their pleasure happened to be for immediate acceptance, and a warrant was drawn paying Clyde in full to that time.

A turmoil, culminating in the resignation, arose because of a Halloween affair. Clyde, according to reports reaching us, fired three shots when several cars, in which were young men, principally students, approached the school building. One of the bullets passed through the side and seat of a car, within a few inches of the boys riding there. Clyde claims to have warned cars away from the building early in the evening. The boys say they had no intention of damage to either the building or the principal, and that when fired on they were only driving past the building.

Indignation over such use of weapons promised to lead to Clyde's arrest on -- criminal charges. He was given until Monday to decide on his course, and that evening put in the resignation, which will end the difficulty.

2014.10.1 Document, employment record

Eastern California Museum



Form No. 84

NOTICE OF EMPLOYMENT

To the SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS OF Inyo COUNTY:

Notice is hereby given you, in accordance with Section 1609, Third, a, Political Code, that the governing board of Owens Valley Union High school district has employed M r. Norman Clyde to render school service in a position requiring certification qualifications, the terms and conditions of employment to be as set forth in the agreement hereto appended.

[Signed] Katharine M. Krater
Clerk, Board of Trustees
Secretary, Board of Education

OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

Independence, California
August 22 1928

M r. Norman Clyde
Independence
California

My Dear M r. Clyde

Notice is hereby given you, in accordance with Section 1609, Second, Political Code, that at a meeting of the board of trustees / board of education held June 1928 you were elected a ~~teacher~~ / principal / ~~supervisor~~ to receive an annual salary of $ 2500. , to be paid in nine equal payments, payable ~~at the beginning of each calendar month,~~ at the end of each school month, at the rate of $ 277.77 per ~~calendar month~~ school month, the first payment to be made September 29 1928.

Your annual school term will begin September 3 1928 and you will be required to render school service in the capacity above indicated for the entire length of the term during which the schools of the district are maintained. (Section 1859, Political Code, requires school to be maintained in each district for *not less than 170 days of actual teaching.*)

Your attention is particularly directed to the provision of Section 1609, Second, that a "person . . . , who serves less than a full school year is entitled to receive as salary only an amount that bears the same ratio to the established annual salary for each position as the time he serves bears to the annual school term."

You have been classified by this board as a ~~probationary~~ / ~~substitute~~ / permanent employee, under Section 1609, *Third*, Political Code, subject to acceptance of this offer.

Your attention is directed also to the requirement of Section 1609, *Third*, a, that you have a legal certificate "in full force and effect, and on file in *the office of the county superintendent of schools*" at the time of your acceptance of this offer. Section 1609, *Second*, allows you twenty days from receipt of this offer, or from date of mailing thereof, if mailed, in which to indicate your acceptance. The board will assume that you have declined the offer if it is not accepted within that time and will act accordingly.

Yours truly,

Katharine M. Krater
Clerk/Secretary

ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER

I accept the above offer of employment, and the terms and conditions thereof, and will report for duty as directed. I hold a legal certificate of the Regular High School Calif type, which is on file in the office of the superintendent of schools of your county.

[SIGNED] Norman Clyde

Date: Sept. 3 1928

NOTE.—This form should be considered as a written contract to be required of every certificated school employee. Each contract should be renewed annually.

DUPLICATE—FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT FILE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA STATE PRINTING OFFICE

Description

Document: Notice of Employment, Inyo County Superintendent of Schools, Owens Valley Union High, employee Mr. Norman Clyde. Offer of employment, Independence, California, August 22, 1928; annual salary $2,500, nine equal payments, at rate of $277.77; school term begins September 3, 1928; signed by Clerk Secretary Katharine M. Krater (sp?); signed by Norman Clyde, on September 3, 1928; pink, carbon.

Norman Clyde's favorite story

Local shares tale of Norman Clyde encounter

3-14-2009

By Don Lauria
Special to the Register

It was August in the late '50s. My brother-in-law, Bob, and I were hiking up the north fork of Big Pine Creek on my second backpacking trip - ever. We came upon a strange procession descending the trail. A group of eight military men, Marines as I recall, in fatigue uniforms were bearing a litter with a black plastic bag – a bag we realized probably contained a human body.

One of the litter bearers with three stripes on his sleeve asked as we approached, "You guys going as far as Third Lake?" We replied in the affirmative and he asked if we would be willing to share some of our food with a guide that was camped there. Sure we would! He then explained that, yes, indeed, they were carrying a body – a person who had been missing for a week and had just been found the day before by the guide camped at Third Lake. The deceased had been discovered in a couloir near the base of Temple Crag. The sergeant threw in a little aside that sort of caught our attention – the guide found the body by listening for the buzzing of flies.

As Bob and I approached our proposed campsite at Third Lake an old man wearing a funny hat - an old campaign hat – came bounding out to the trail. "Would you fellas be willing to share some food with me?" he asked. Realizing this must be the sergeant's "guide," we said we'd be happy to. He explained that he was expecting an air drop that afternoon, but if it didn't happen he would be hard pressed for food. We reassured him and he disappeared back to his campsite.

We set up our camp just above him, just off the trail, next to Third Lake. We had camped in this same spot the prior year on our first Sierra backpack trip. We liked the site because it was next to a rock outcrop that jutted out into the lake allowing one to sit on its top, thirty feet above the lake's surface, and stare directly across at Temple Crag's north face.

Late that afternoon, we heard the drone of an airplane ascending the canyon. A single-engine Cessna appeared in front of Temple Crag. We figured this must be the old guide's airdrop coming up. We stood on top of the rock outcrop and watched as the plane circled in front of Temple Crag and then, quite abruptly, turned and headed straight toward us. The pilot had descended to about 100 feet off the lake's surface and as he reached our perch, he cut the engine, opened his door and yelled at us, restarted the engine and banked around - headed back to the other end of the lake. I didn't quite get it all, but Bob figured he had yelled, "Did they get the body out?"

Okay, they did, but how the hell do we tell the pilot? He headed back straight at us again. This time he cut the engine, opened the door and flipped a piece of paper out.

Now, get this. It was an 8 ½ by 11 sheet folded in fourths and it fluttered down directly into Bob's hands. Again, the plane restarted and retreated to the end of the lake. The note read, "If they got the body out, hold hands, if they didn't, wave." As the plane approached us on its third pass we were holding hands and the pilot waggled his wings indicating he understood. Now what?

Here he came again. This time quite a bit higher off the lake and he kicked out a small red parachute with a pack dangling from its shrouds. Down it came directly into the top of the highest pine tree in sight, right next to the trail. As we stood staring up at it, our brains still a little rattled from all the aerobatics, when up the trail at an accelerated pace came the old guide. "Hey, that's my food! One of you young fellas want to scramble up there and get it?"

Bob was already checking out the lower branches and immediately started up. He cut the shrouds and the pack dropped to the trail. "That pilot was Bob Symons, a superb bush pilot, thanks boys," the old guide yelled over his shoulder as he hustled back down to his camp. I stood staring up at the chute, still draped over the top of the tree, and decided that it would be a great souvenir. So up I went. After a long struggle, I managed to untangle the shrouds and returned to the ground with my red nylon/silk trophy and enough pine sap to last Mickey Mantle two seasons.

We didn't see the old guide again that day and he was gone the following morning before we had our campfire lit. Remember those days, when you could have a campfire at Third Lake?

In 1963, after having been introduced to mountaineering and having read everything I could on the subject, I realized "the old guide" was the legendary Norman Clyde.

Thirty years later, having moved to Bishop, I attended the first annual Norman Clyde birthday gathering at Bishop's Millpond Park. These were potluck affairs to honor the memory of Norman Clyde. At this first meeting, of the only three we held, the custom developed for those with fond memories to stand up before the crowd and relate their favorite Norman Clyde stories.

It was at this first gathering that I told my airdrop story – my favorite and my only Norman Clyde story – and after the telling, a young man walked up to me and asked if I knew the name of that bush pilot – I hadn't mentioned his name in this first telling. I told him, yes, it was Bob Symons. He blurted out, "I thought so. He was my grandfather!"

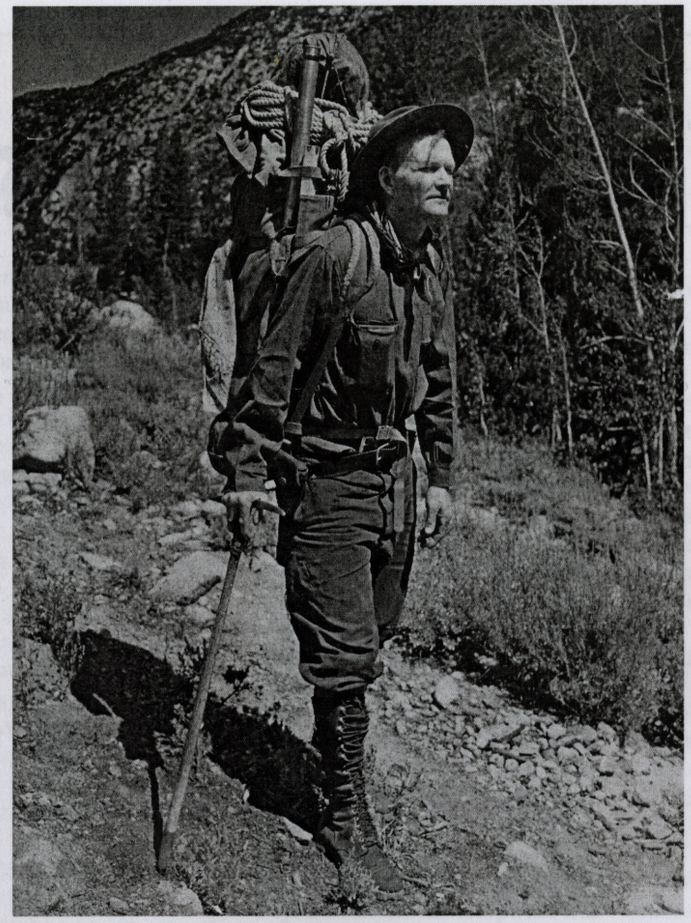
I told my favorite story again the following year at the second Norman Clyde birthday gathering, and again, as I finished, I was approached – this time by a fellow high school teacher. He said, "You know I used to invite Norman over for dinner about once a year in his later years when he was barely existing at Baker Creek. He really appreciated those dinners and he loved to tell stories. In fact, the one you just told was his favorite! He would chuckle throughout especially when telling about the tree climbing. He was 73 years old when that took place. He couldn't have climbed that tree to save his soul. Thank God for the boys."

At the third gathering, and regretfully, the last, I stood up when my turn came and announced, "I'm not going to tell *my* favorite Norman Clyde story this year. I'm going to tell *Norman Clyde's* favorite Norman Clyde story." I then proceeded to tell the airdrop story again.

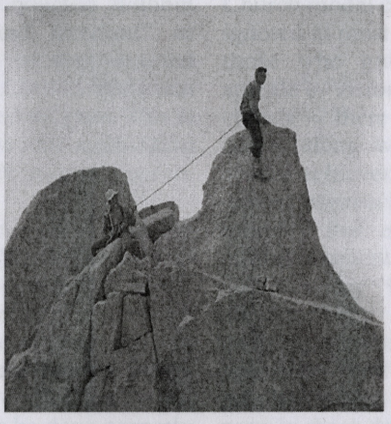
Years later, another colleague at the high school asked if I would help his wife with a computer installation. I taught computer science at Bishop Union High School and was often asked to help people with computer problems. I agreed and when I entered their apartment I was astonished by the plethora of airplane photos that papered the walls. I asked if she was a pilot. "No, but my father was," she answered, "He was a well known bush pilot around here."

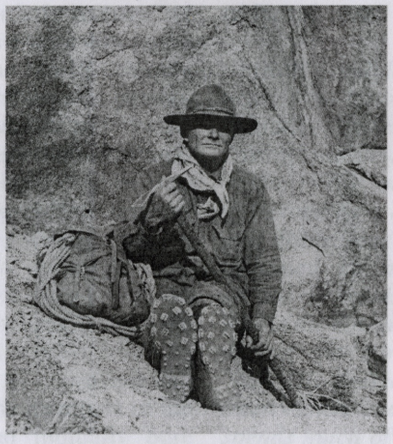
"His name wasn't Bob Symons was it?" I asked in disbelief. "As a matter of fact, yes it was," she answered. That initiated an immediate retelling of the 1958 airdrop. She was not at all surprised by his cutting the engine and yelling at us. She said when she was about 9 years old she used to fly with him and he would often use that tactic to communicate with the ground. She said it used to scare the hell out of her. Bob Symons was killed in a glider accident only a few years after he dropped that pack for Norman.

I visit that Third Lake campsite very time I hike Big Pine Canyon and tell the story to anyone willing to listen.



Norman Clyde Of the High Sierra





A photo exhibit of one man's legendary life in the mountains

Guest Curator:
Andy Selters

Currently in previews (still tinkering around a bit)
Grand Opening April 18, 2009
The Eastern California Museum, in Independence
Located three blocks west of the historic courthouse, call 760-878-0258

Lonely Grave in the Sierra:
Norman Clyde

[Skip]

One summer day in the late 1990s, Dom and I were climbing an unnamed peak near Kearsarge Pass in Eastern Sierra. Dom, I guess, had checked his collection of topo maps, and had decided that this particular peak would be a great goal for a day hike. But as we finally approached the top, something that couldn't be seen on a topo map became apparent. A short class-3 pitch lay between us and the summit. We were so close, and yet so far away! At that time we didn't have any experience with class-3 scrambling. We considered our options, and then courageously continued up. We were rewarded in more than one way: The excitement about the successful climb, the beautiful view from the top, and … a rusty old cigar box hidden under the summit rocks. And in the box, a small notebook, with the following comment on the first page:

First ascent [followed by a date, which I no longer remember; *H.G.*]
Norman Clyde
I name thee Snow Crown Peak.

Very few other signatures followed Clyde's note, probably no more than one or two every few years. This summit apparently was not a particularly popular destination. We were surprised that the peak was **not** named the way Clyde had wanted. Perhaps he didn't tell anybody his wish? USGS maps mark the peak only by its elevation, but for us, this was Snow Crown Peak from now on.

I had seen Clyde Minaret near Mammoth Lakes many times earlier, and knew it must have been named for some legendary old Sierra explorer, but I really didn't pay much attention to the Sierra history at that time. Suddenly, this person from the legends became real and present. It didn't matter to us if this really was Clyde's handwriting, or more likely just a copy of his earlier original note.* The mere fact that we were here at the top that Clyde had once considered a worthwhile goal elated us. For a moment we forgot that we still had to do our class-3 descent on the way back. In the next few years I learned a lot about Clyde. Unexpectedly, he came back into the focus, this time via the Rettenbacher story.



Norman Clyde, probably during his student years at Geneva College. From *Geneva*

Norman Asa Clyde, the eldest child in Charles and Sarah Clyde's family, was born in Philadelphia, in 1885. His father, Charles, who probably didn't get much formal education in his youth, but was eager to learn, began taking private lessons in classical literature and theology in about 1879. His mentor and teacher was David Steele. Charles became ordained to the office of the ministry in Steele's Reformed Presbytery (RP) congregation in 1883. In the year in which Norman was born, his father got involved in a bitter conflict with his mentor.* After Steele's death in 1887, Charles Clyde became an itinerant minister with no settled congregation, preaching in various places in Pennsylvania and across the midwest. Charles took care of his eldest son's early schooling, and Norman learned to read Latin and Greek at a young age.* In 1897, Charles, his wife, and seven children, moved to Lochiel Township, Glengarry County, Ontario, where Charles began serving in the local branch of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCNA). They settled, took Canadian citizenship, and Norman and other children began attending the regular public school. Two more children were born in Lochiel. Contrary to the frequently repeated statement

Magazine (Fall/Winter 2000), reproduced with permission.

that Charles Clyde had died in 1900, the entire family, including the father, was still there on March 31, 1901, during that year's Canada Census.* However, that autumn Charles fell ill from pneumonia and died on December 7, 1901. The family then moved back to Pennsylvania, where Norman enrolled in Geneva College at Beaver Falls, and graduated in classics in 1909. I recently wrote to the school to see if they had any information about Clyde. Mrs. **Kae** Kirkwood, Archival Librarian at the College, did some research and found that Norman was first mentioned in school's records for 1906/07 school year. (However, the records from 1905/06 are lost or misplaced, and he might have actually enrolled a year earlier). Mrs. Kirkwood also unearthed the following gem: During his student years, Clyde was one of the **editors** of the school newspaper *The Cabinet*, and served for several years as assistant local editor, exchange editor, and Adelphic Literary Society editor! (The latest function may suggest that he was also a member of the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity on campus). No wonder that he later turned into a prolific writer. Clyde is registered in the University of Wisconsin 1910-1911 Catalogue as a graduate student in Letter and Science for the summer session of 1910 (p. 642). He is also listed in the UC Berkeley Catalogue of Officers and Students for 1911-12 ("Clyde Norman, Beaver Falls, Pa., A. B. Geneva College 1909, graduate student in Social Sciences, [address] 2529 Dwight way, Berkeley, [phone] Bkly 4474"), and in the UC Berkeley register of students in the summer session of 1912.

His name was first made known to general public when several major newspapers picked up the *Associated Press* wire report about Clyde's record setting climb of Mt. Shasta in July 1923. Apparently, Clyde climbed from Horse Camp to the summit in "three hours and seventeen minutes", thus "breaking a record that had stood for forty years". One of the papers that brought this information was *Los Angeles Times*. This newspaper kept its readers well informed about Clyde throughout the rest of his life. I found more than forty *Los Angeles Times* articles that had mentioned Clyde and his mountaineering related experiences between 1923 and 1963. But long before the Shasta record of 1923, which launched his public career, Clyde's name was mentioned in an article that had nothing to do with climbing or mountains. In a Sunday issue of *Los Angeles Times* from June of 1915, we can find a brief description of his **wedding**. In a simple ceremony, in a small house on West Mountain Street in Pasadena, Winifred Bolster became his wife! (Winifred died in 1919).

The complete list of Clyde-related articles can be found in Appendix B. Although Clyde was a major figure in the history of the Sierra Nevada, his comprehensive biography yet remains to be written and published. If you want to learn something about Clyde, you have to rely on one of several shorter texts about his life, scattered in various (often hard to find!) books.* I have tried a different approach here. What follows is a view that an avid reader of *Los Angeles Times* might have gotten of Norman Clyde, over the course of forty years.

Two months after the Shasta "record", *Los Angeles Times* of September 16, 1923, brought an "exclusive dispatch" with the subtitle "Thirty-six Mountains Scaled by Man on Vacation". The article introduced Clyde as "36 years of age, a small-town schoolmaster of Weaverville, California,* ..., and a member of the Sierra (a mountaineer) Club of San Francisco". Actually, Clyde was 38 years old at that time. Throughout his life, Clyde's habit was to mislead the reporters about his true age. The accomplishment that the article refers to was Clyde's climb to 36 peaks in as many consecutive days, including eleven first ascents, during the summer of 1923 in Glacier National Park, Montana. Not too bad for a "man on vacation"! In the following years, several other of Clyde's climbing successes were described in various *Los Angeles Times* articles. For example, his ascent in 1928 of Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, was declared to be "one of the most difficult climbs in the world".*

However, one major event in Clyde's life from that era would remain undisclosed to the readers of *Los Angeles Times* for the next 36 years. Only in the 1960s, the reading public would find out that Clyde, in spite of his mountaineering achievements, had been fired from his teaching job in 1928. At that time, Clyde was a

high school teacher and principal in Independence, Owens Valley, California. Here is a brief description of the event that led to Clyde's dismissal, taken from an article in the Sunday issue of *Los Angeles Times* of September 22, 1963: "His teaching career ended suddenly on Halloween in 1924 [the event happened in 1928, not in 1924. Clyde was first hired in Independence during the summer of 1925; *H.G.*] Clyde fired a revolver into the air, according to his recollection, to turn some young pranksters from school property. Although no one was hurt he was discharged from his job. From then on his home was the Sierra wilderness".*

One consequence of this event was that Clyde could now fully pursue his passion for mountains, free of the confinements and social obligations related to his teaching job. But it also meant that he would from now on have to rely on his writing, lecturing, and guiding abilities to earn enough for his food, shelter, and equipment. This would probably explain how Clyde's name ended up in the advertisement section of *Los Angeles Times* and other local papers in the spring of 1929. In a paid ad, the popular Switzer resort in Upper Arroyo Seco, Angeles National Forest,* was inviting the public to a lecture by "noted mountaineer and writer" Norman Clyde. For the visitor for whom mountain tales were not the most favorite pass time, a soprano and a pianist would be at hand to provide additional entertainment, hinted the ad. Several other lectures and courses by Clyde were mentioned in *Los Angeles Times* during the early and mid 1930s, and many more probably didn't make it to the newspaper. Clyde was also submitting his photos of mountain scenes to newspapers and periodicals. One such identifiable "filler" photo appeared in *Los Angeles Times* in April of 1935, but there could also have been a few more unsigned ones. Each little honorarium was a big help to this man who no longer had a steady job. Guiding tourists was another way for him to earn income. Clyde was, for example, presented to the readers of *Los Angeles Times* as a fishing expert (which he really was), who could lead parties of sportsmen and fishermen to remote Sierra lakes with abundant supplies of fish.



Angeles National Forest Resorts

ROBERT'S CAMP
4½ miles from Sierra Madre in big Santa Anita Canyon
Under new management, sleeping and light housekeeping cabins. Restaurant, dance hall, gen'l store. Guests have privilege of visiting mine. Reas. rates. For reservations: Phone Times or Sierra Madre 213—3 bells.

MOUNT WILSON
THE MOUNT WILSON HOTEL AND BUNGALOWS, but 21½ miles from Los Angeles, is open all year 'round. Lodging $2.00 and up. See 70 items by their Hosts. World's largest Observatory open daily. Free illustrated Astronomical Lectures, Friday nights, and phases to look through telescope. Wide auto road open to all automobiles. Daily stage leaves L. A. and Pasadena. See Times and all other Information Bureaus or phone Sterling 9331F2. A. G. CHILDS, Mgr.

"Where Good Fellows Meet"
FIRST WATER CAMP
Big Santa Anita Canyon
RESTAURANT DANCING CABINS
Phone Sierra Madre 213—2 bells or Times Information Bureau for reservations. A. D. CHOATE, Prop., P. O. Sierra Madre, Cal.

NORMAN CLYDE at SWITZER-LAND
Noted mountaineer and writer, also Pearl Lemmon, Soprano
Suzanne Joyce-Spear, Pianist
Saturday evening, May 11. Stages from Pasadena and wonderful trail trip. Call Information Bureaus or Pasadena, Sterling 9331F2.

ELEVEN OAKS CAMP
In San Antonio Canyon—On Mt. Baldy—50 miles from L. A.
Housekeeping cabins; store; dining room; dance floor; swimming; fishing; riding; hiking. Rates $1.25 and $1.50 day, per person. Open all year. See Times or Mrs. Frances Nesch, Prop., P.O. Camp Baldy, Cal. Ph. Upland 5-F-3

Norman Clyde gives talk at Switzer's Resort, in Upper Arroyo Seco (Angeles National Forest) on May 11, 1929. The ad appeared in *Los Angeles Times* and other local papers.

All those secondary functions did not keep Clyde from his main activity: climbing unconquered peaks and finding new, ever more challenging routes to mountain tops. In 1929, a *Los Angeles Times* article said that Clyde was "the only man who has climbed **all of the California mountain peaks over 14,000 feet high**", but the article didn't elaborate on when this feat was completed. On August 16, 1931, Norman Clyde, Glen Dawson, Jules Eichorn, and Robert Underhill, were the first to make an ascent to the top of Mt. Whitney via the East Face route. *Los Angeles Times* was a little late in reporting this spectacular climb. It only informed the readers about it in 1937, but better late than never. In spite of such occasional tardiness in reporting by the paper, its readers could still get the idea that Norman Clyde was an exceptional mountaineer. For example, in an article from 1932, Clyde was called "one of the best known mountaineers of the West", and two years later, in 1934, he was described as a "veteran of more than 600 mountain ascents".

The more Clyde's climbing skills and unparallel familiarity with the mountains became known, the more frequently was he called upon to search for missing persons in the High Sierra. Sometimes his help would be sought by the family of a climber or hiker who didn't return at a scheduled time. In other cases he was

summoned to a rescue mission by forest service officials, or just happened to be near an accident scene and willingly helped in the rescue efforts. *Los Angeles Times* reported six search and rescue/recovery missions between 1929 and 1950, in which Clyde had played a role (see Appendix B), but that was probably just the tip of the iceberg. For example, Clyde's participation in the Rettenbacher search was not mentioned in *Los Angeles Times*, and there were probably many other occasions when Clyde's help in mountain searches had simply not been registered in the newspaper. One story that attracted a lot of attention in the early 1930s was the disappearance of a young boy, Howard Lamel, on Mt. Whitney. One day in July of 1930, Howard had left the Mt. Whitney trail to explore the mountain on his own, and never showed up at the meeting place where his father and brother had waited. In the following days, **airplanes** and more than 100 forest rangers and volunteers participated in the search for the lost boy.* Norman Clyde joined the search at the request of the boy's father. Clyde and Robert Evans eventually found the boy's body high on the cliffs on the east side of the mountain. Three years later, another young man didn't show up for a meeting with his father in a mountain lodge. The missing man's name was Walter Starr, Jr.

The compelling story of Starr's disappearance is well presented in William Alsup's book *Missing in the Minarets*. Several articles in *Los Angeles Times* were devoted to the Starr case, and in three of them Clyde was mentioned. Readers learned that he was the one who had discovered the body after an eight-day search, then helped with the burial. Clyde apparently stayed in Mammoth Lakes after the burial, and, according to the newspaper, talked about his search in an evening lecture at Tamarack Lodge in early September of 1933.

By 1934, Norman Clyde's career had reached its peak. In January of that year, Lowell Brodgart published a long article about "These Strange Peak-Grabbers" in the *Los Angeles Times*' Sunday Magazine.* Clyde is mentioned several times in that report. It was Brodgart who, without hesitation, named Clyde "the best known mountaineer of the West". Several months later, Ed Ainsworth called Clyde's first ascents of ten of the Devils Crags (with Dave Brower and Hervey Voge), "the most remarkable mountaineering feats ever accomplished in the United States".

On Monday, July 23, 1934, the Rettenbachers were getting ready for their trip to the Sierra, and probably couldn't wait for the working week to end. Their first destination was to be Tuolumne Meadows, in Yosemite. On that same Monday, some eighty miles to the south of Yosemite, a USGS surveyor, Jim Murphy, had disappeared on Outlook Peak. A search began. Jim was a federal worker, and two Army bombers were used in the search together with ground crews, but no trace of the missing man could be found. According to *Los Angeles Times* of Thursday, July 26, Norman Clyde and his climbing partner from Mt. Whitney's East Face and El Picacho del Diablo, Glen Dawson, had been asked to come down from **Tuolumne Meadows** to assist in the search. From a followup article in the newspaper we learn that Murphy's body had been found by members of his own Survey party the next day. There is a possibility that Clyde and Dawson were immediately informed about the tragic ending of the search, and didn't have to leave Yosemite after all. A day or two later, Anna and Conrad Rettenbacher arrived at Tuolumne Meadows. Did their path cross with Clyde's? If Clyde was still there, were the Rettenbachers aware of his presence? No doubt, they had heard of the legendary climber, and perhaps would have hoped to meet him one day.*

A week later, the Rettenbachers themselves became the subjects of a massive search. *Los Angeles Times* printed two wire service reports about the Rettenbacher case, but Clyde was not mentioned in them. Unknown to *Los Angeles Times* readers, Clyde's and the Rettenbachers' stories had briefly overlaped that summer. For Clyde, it was a sad event quite similar to many others that he had witnessed. For the couple, it was the end of the road.

ATRIBUTES USED TO DESCRIBE NORMAN CLYDE IN *LOS ANGELES TIMES*, 1923-1963

Less than eight months after the Rettenbacher accident, Norman Clyde found himself in great peril. This dark episode from his life began early in 1935, when Clyde and his friend and occasional

1923	• school teacher of Weaverville • small-town schoolmaster • member of the Sierra Club
1926	• country school teacher
1927	• Norman Clyde of Independence
1929	• noted mountaineer and writer • the only man who has climbed all 14,000+ peaks in California • member of the American Alpine Club
1930	• veteran mountaineer • experienced mountain climber
1932	• one of the best known mountaineers of the West • one of America's foremost mountain climbers
1933	• Norman Clyde of Bishop • experienced mountaineer • former superintendent of schools at Independence • Inyo county school teacher • mountaineer of the Sierra Club
1934	• an author, and a climber of many record-breaking feats • the best known mountaineer of the West • expert Sierra Club mountaineer
1935	• veteran mountain climber • widely known for his exploratory trips on high peaks
1937	• Norman Clyde of Lone Pine
1940	• famous mountain climber
1942	• veteran Sierra Club mountaineer
1948	• mountaineer Norman Clyde
1950	• one of the oldest and most skillful of the guides in that area
1963	• legendary High Sierra figure

climbing partner William Dulley were wintering at Andrews Camp in the High Sierra. Nothing unusual for Norman Clyde. Since he didn't have a permanent dwelling at that time, when fishermen and hikers left with the first snows, Clyde would frequently spend winters as a paid caretaker at vacant mountain resorts. Andrews Camp on Bishop Creek was one such a place.*

It is known that the snow cover was well above normal during the winter of 1934/35,* but Dulley and Clyde didn't mind: Both were fond of skiing.* During the stay in Andrews Camp they had already made several mountain tops together. On Saturday, April 6, they decided to take food, sleeping bags and heavy bed blankets and do another skiing trip over the Sierra crest, from the east to the west side. The weather forecast, Clyde would recall later, was favorable. (How/where did he get the forecast? A battery operated radio? But he was right, and that weekend's forecast was one of the great blunders in the history of the Weather Service*). The depth of the snow, according to Clyde, varied from five to thirty feet. About half way up Piute Pass the wind had swung to the southwest bringing heavy clouds and a fresh fall of snow. At about 4 p.m. they reached the pass at 11,428 feet (3,480 meters), then went down the other side, about a mile below, where they spent the night in a makeshift camp. The next day it was snowing heavily and they remained there. On Monday morning, **August 8**, the storm was still raging and nearly three feet of new snow had fallen. They scrapped their plans for further exploration of this region, and decided to return. Although Clyde had suggested waiting another day, Dulley thought they could negotiate the ten miles back to Andrews Camp without running undue risks. They started the trip back at 9 o'clock in the morning.

What happened next is described in an article in *Los Angeles Times* from June 5, 1935. The climb on skis to Piute Pass through the fresh soft snow was exhausting, but they made it. It was only downhill from there. However, the wind was heavy and snow was falling again. About half a mile below the pass Clyde had to wait because Dulley had fallen behind. When he finally caught up, he didn't complain or show indications that anything was wrong. About a mile further, Dulley was out of sight again. Clyde waited for him at Piute Lake. This time Dulley said he had had two falls on this section of the trail. They continued together, but as they struck a field with very soft snow, Dulley veered from Clyde's trail. Clyde made it to Loch Leven Lake, but by now the wind had doubled in velocity.

"One could not see more than fifty feet and the force of the blizzard was such that at times I had to prop myself on my ski poles to prevent being blown over", explained Clyde later to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter. Clyde continued slowly, calling his partner frequently, but Dulley was nowhere in sight. Clyde was still several miles from the relative safety of Lake Sabrina road. The blizzard seemed to increase in intensity. It was impossible to go back and search for Dulley. "I figured", said Clyde to the reporter, "that Dulley, if in trouble could throw away his heavy pack and follow me without it or crawl into his sleeping bag and remain there until help should come on the following day". By that time, Clyde was in big trouble himself: Cold and wet, exhausted, and no longer feeling his fingers and toes. At seven in the evening he stumbled into a miner's

cabin near Lake Sabrina, where he spent the night.

The next morning was clear and cold. Clyde went back alone over the trail. At the lower end of Loch Leven Lake he found Dulley's body.* An autopsy later disclosed a stroke caused by "high altitude, plus cold and exhaustion". Frost bites on Clyde's hands didn't last long, but his frozen toes wouldn't heal. Two months later the situation got so bad that Clyde had to travel to Los Angeles and seek medical treatment in a hospital. He was met there by the newspaper reporter who then retold the story in the article entitled ***Blizzard Tragedy Told by Frozen Survivor***. However, there was one thing that Clyde didn't tell the reporter. I have had this newspaper clip in my posession for quite a while, but only when preparing this Web page did I realize what was missing in the article. The day of the tragedy on Piute Pass trail, April 8, 1935, was Norman Clyde's **fiftieth birthday**!

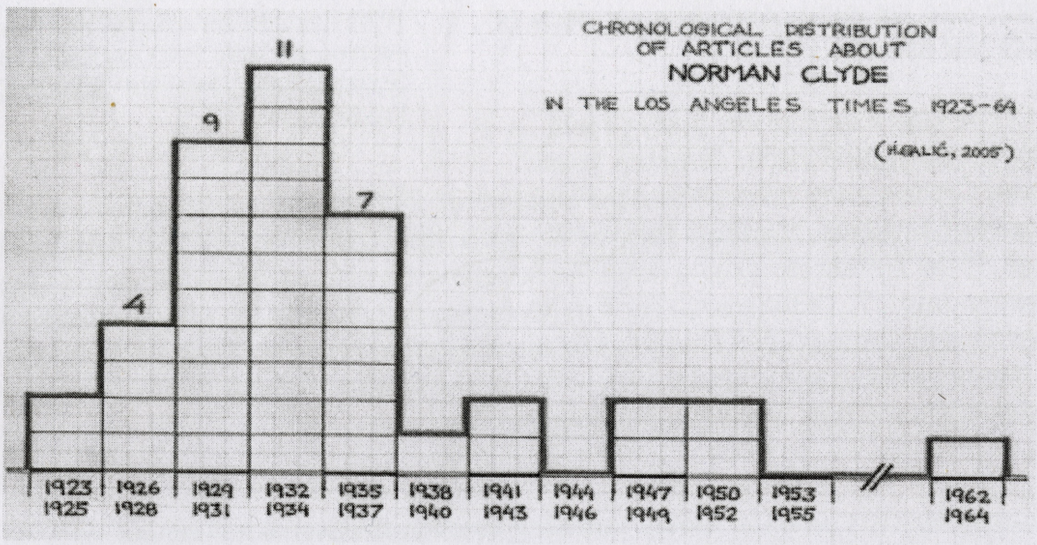


Clyde leading Virginia Adams up the east face of Mt. Whitney, June 1937. Photo by Dexter Richards, Jr. From the collection of Dennis G. Kruska (posted with permission).

A lingering question remains: Would they both have died had Clyde stayed with his distressed friend? Would they both have survived? You decide.*

From other sources, we know that a month later, Clyde was in the mountains again, and well enough to make eight more first Sierra ascents during that summer.* Several years later, in September of 1937, *Los Angeles Times* reports of another Clyde climbing success. This time it was his ascent of Kinnerly Peak, the "highest unscaled peak in Glacier National Park". Clyde was with three other Sierra Club mountaineers, Ed Hall, Richard K. Hill, and Braeme Gigos.

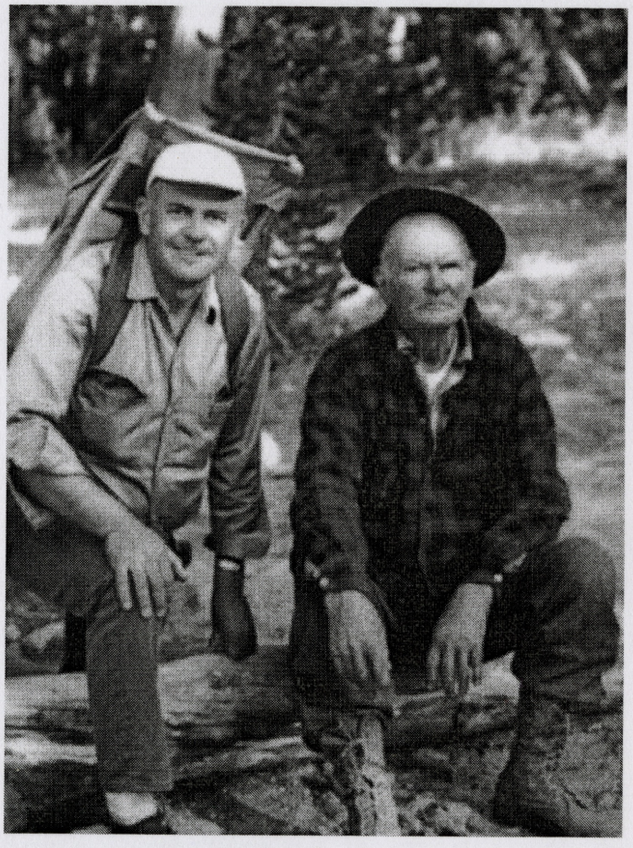
In 1939, Norman Clyde's *alma mater*, Geneva College, awarded him the degree of Doctor of Sciences in appreciation of his mountain writings. This got reported to the readers of *Los Angeles Times* by Ed Ainsworth in his daily column "Along El Camino Real". In the war years, and during the early post-war years, Clyde was mentioned a few more times in the newspaper. In 1942, he found the wreckage of a crashed Army bomber on the south side of Birch Lake. A photo-report from 1948 shows him guiding a group of tourists up the Palisade Glacier. In 1950, Clyde was mentioned in yet another search mission, for two missing boys, Christopher Reynolds and Stephen Wasserman, who disappeared on Mt. Whitney.



Chronological distribution of articles about Norman Clyde's climbing days, published in *Los Angeles Times* between 1923 and 1964.

The last article about Clyde during his lifetime was published in the Sunday edition of *Los Angeles Times* on September 22, 1963. This is a warmly written account of Clyde's fifty years of rambling the High Sierra, with a nice picture showing him at a Bear Creek camp, enjoying his morning coffee. It was clear from the article that Clyde continued to act as a guide to private parties on mountain hiking trips well into his seventies. I couldn't get permission from *Los Angeles Times* to reproduce the article or the picture, nor could I get the name of the reporter who wrote the article, but it was somebody who deeply respected Clyde and his mountaineering feats.

In the last decades of his life, Norman Clyde settled in a simple ranch cabin near Big Pine, and lived there of a small county pension. He died two days before Christmas of 1972.* He was 87 years old. I have been searching for his obituary in *Los Angeles Times* and other major California newspapers, but couldn't find anything. Was an obituary published? Perhaps not.* The world had changed significantly since the days when Clyde first stepped into the Sierra mountains. At the time of Clyde's death, the heroes of the day were reaching for far higher goals: America has landed a man on the Moon just a few years earlier. Compared to such spectacular successes, the life (and death) of an old High Sierra climber and explorer might not have looked important enough to new generation of newspaper editors.



Norman Clyde with Phil Pister in the summer of

Among the documents found upon Clyde's death, some material was apparently related to the Rettenbacher accident. This is now cataloged as "**The Vanishing of the Rickenbackers**", in the collection "Norman Clyde Papers, [ca. 1928-1945]", BANC MSS 79/33 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. It would be interesting to see if this folder contains more than just a newspaper clip* from the *Examiner*, mentioned in William

Alsup's book. (Note also yet another spelling variation of Anna and Conrad's last name!)

1970. From the collection of Phil Pister (posted with permission). Read Phil's interesting recollection of Norman Clyde. Check also Norman Clyde Resources page.

It is known that Clyde kept a day-to-day diary ('Field Notebook') during his most productive climbing years. William Alsup used Clyde's diary entries from the summer of 1933 to reconstruct some events related to the Starr search. According to Alsup, the Field Notebook was in the possession of Clyde scholars David Bohn and Mary Millman. If the Notebook also covered the summer of 1934, we would be able to reconstruct Clyde's steps between July 27, 1934 (search for Jim Murphy), and August 15, 1934 (when he joined the Rettenbacher search), and perhaps even find Clyde's more detailed account of the Rettenbacher accident. Unfortunately, I was not able to get in touch with either of the two scholars. It would be wonderful to have this valuable resource about Clyde available publicly one day.

When asked to sum up his fifty years of lonely rambling through the Sierra mountains, without many of the basic commodities that most of us consider necessary to carry on with our lives, Norman Clyde said to the *Los Angeles Times* reporter in September 1963:

I sort of went off on a tangent from civilization
and never got back.

I doubt if there was any bitterness or regret in his voice.

NEXT: What happened on Banner Peak?

If you have any comment about this part of the Rettenbacher story, please drop me a line at **harv.galic@gmail.com**

✾ indicates that more information is available in the footnotes section.



A young Norman Clyde in the 1920s, when he undertook legendary climbing sprees in the Eastern Sierra. He eventually recorded more than 100 first ascents and numerous other "firsts," including winter ascents and new routes.

The Gentle Side of Norman Clyde

by Lisa Carson

My mother first met Norman Clyde in 1946, while climbing in the Sierras with her father and Norman. She was only 10 years old, yet Norman made a unique impression on her with his tall, gruff, mountain man physique. He led the trail and took care of the Sierra Club hikers. Time went by without much contact, as he was in California and she remained in Ohio with her father.



Christie (left) and Lisa (right) with Norman.

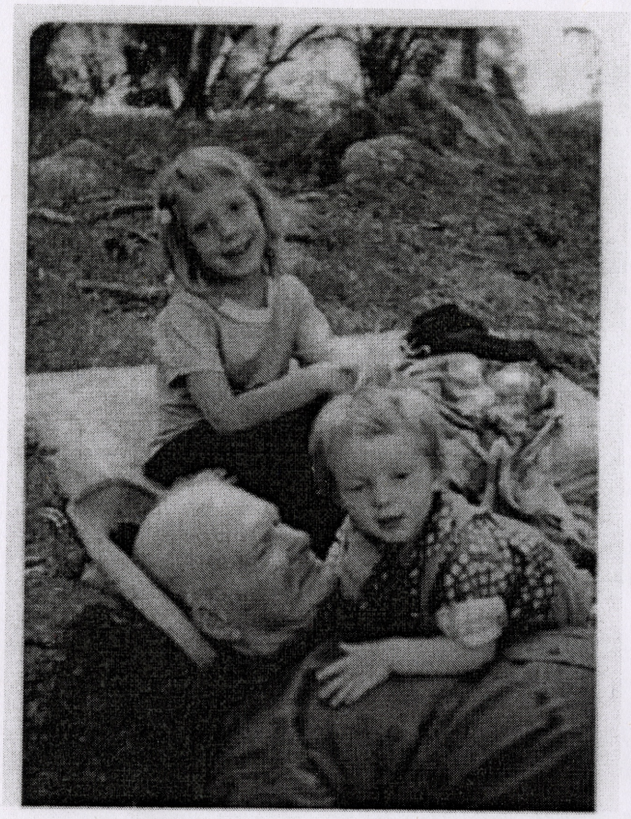
Sixteen years later, the relationship was rekindled. Now the young girl was a woman with five children and a husband who loved to hike. My parents, Bob and Elaine Parker, quickly contacted Norman Clyde upon their moving to the Owens Valley. Norman, quite an introvert and isolated man, quickly embraced this new family. He first arrived at our little trailer, where my father was determined to camp out for a year, shortly after my birth in 1962. He would visit us once a week for a hot meal, tracking us down via the lady at the post office. Our camp sights varied from Taboose Creek to Big Pine Canyon. After we moved to a tract home in 1963, he would always show up with firewood. While most guests might bring flowers, it was very fitting that our gift was logs.



Sharing a meal with the Parkers.

My earliest memories of Norman Clyde were rather distinct and embarrassing. I must have been around three or four years old. My sister and I would routinely use Norman as a climbing apparatus. He would sit in the big, overstuffed chair and allow us to bounce on his robust belly and climb up on his broad shoulders. I remember the strong, musty smell of leather and pine that greeted me as I would climb up over his roughly textured shirt. The awkward part came when I decided to try out my artistic skills. My parents were busy preparing dinner one night, unaware of their youngest child's activities. With an ink pen in hand, I climbed up on the back rest behind Norman, took off his old leather hat, and began to create a masterpiece in my own mind. Some might describe it as scribbling, but that's just semantics. My canvas was Norman Clyde's bald head. This seemed like the perfect place to design as I had a stationary object, who was very

tolerant, not uttering a word in protest, and who seemed to enjoy the pen-on-scalp massage. Everything was fine until my climbing partner sister, just one year older, tattled to my parents. I was sent to my room feeling very betrayed by sister Cris. She got to scrub away my art work with a wet towel, while seated on the shoulder throne. I am sure Norman considered this experience one of the more unique family dinners. Years later as an adult, I tried to vindicate myself by drawing a portrait of Norman, which now hangs in my dining room.



Norman Clyde with Angela (left) and Lisa (right) Parker.



Jules Eichorn has a look around from North Palisade in this photo taken by Norman Clyde. Photo courtesy County of Inyo Eastern

Norman was quiet and calm when he wanted to be, but could transform into a strong, protective "grandfather" when the situation called for it. On one beautiful, sunny afternoon at his Baker Creek Ranch, we were enjoying a picnic lunch. We were relaxing and climbing on Norman as usual when a bull strayed onto the property. The bull began to snort and act aggressively. Little did the bull know, but he had more than met his match in the frame of a 78-year-old man. Norman Clyde leaped to the challenge like a superhero, grabbing a big log and snorting back at the bull. Apparently the bull concluded that he wanted nothing to do with this crazy looking man, for he quickly ran away.

Norman was patient in many ways as he taught my mother to drive. I must have been four years old and very bored as I had to ride in the back seat of an old grey Rambler, witnessing this frightening yet monotonous task. I remember whining in my captive state, so Norman would feed me caramel candies to keep me happy. He had quite the sweet tooth. One day, my Mother crashed into a curb in front of J.C. Penney's. Norman just kept his cool and said quietly, "You're doing just fine." I needed another caramel.

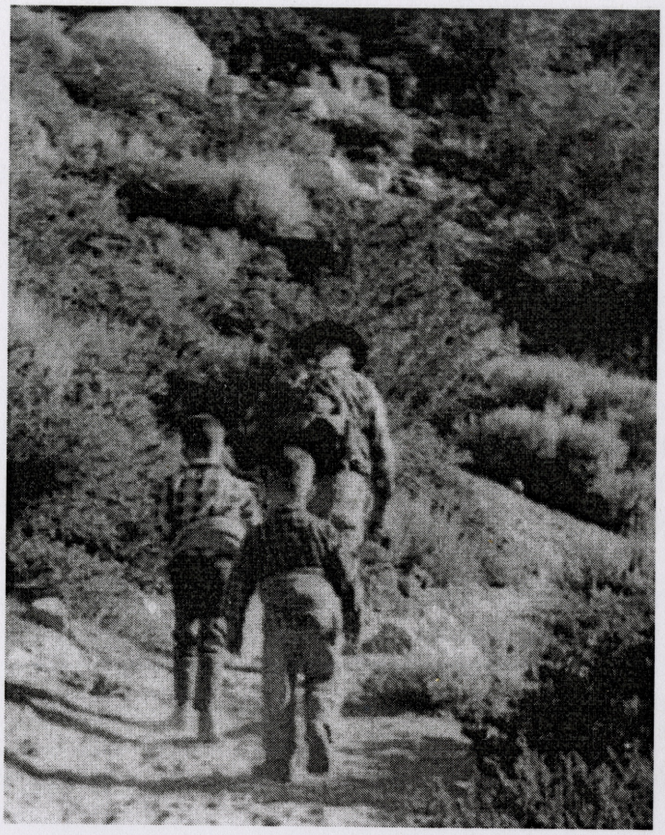
My brother Steve said Norman Clyde was the first one to teach him to shoot a gun at the age of seven or eight. Up at the ranch where Norman lived above Big Pine, he let my brother shoot a 22 caliber pistol. My brother asked him why he had an unsnapped holster with a packed pistol and he said that was for the Bazerooskuses. He spoke a lot of the Ring Tailed Bazerooskus, a critter that lived only in Norman's vivid imagination and the Parker kids' captive eyes. He loved to tell us stories about Side Hilled Gaugers. They were the cows that grazed around the top of a hill, and they could only go in one direction since their legs grew shorter over time. They would fall over and roll down the mountain if they tried to turn around. As gullible children, we hung on every word he spoke. I sometimes still have fears of running into a Bazerooskus.

Our family had to move up North to Chico in 1968, and so the last time I saw Norman, he was in the bed of a nursing home. Fully textured by life, he now lay weakened by time. His face still portrayed the strong character that I remembered, and from his eyes twinkled forth the loving man who bounced me on his knee. I will always cherish this authentic soul, whom so many knew as a gruff, mountain man. I remember Norman Clyde as a gentle giant, who not only put up with a little girl's misguided creativity, but also one who

knew how to teach, love and protect.



Denny Kruska's slideshow on the life and accomplishments of Norman Clyde ended with this photo of Phil Pister and a typically less than jovial Norman Clyde.



Norman Clyde, followed by Steve and Mark Parker, on a trail.

Roseville, California, August 23, 2008

More photos from Lisa Carson's photo album.

About the author:

Lisa Carson graduated from Calif. State University, Chico, with a B.A. in Social Science and went on to get her teaching credential in 1985. After serving in the Peace Corps, she has worked with mostly At-Risk Teens. Lisa became a New Thought minister, in 2004. She works with both teens and adults as a workshop facilitator. Lisa can be reached at ***lisa4life@surewest.net***

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Skandar Reid carved a bench in honor of Norman Clyde, which now sits at the intersection of Warren Street and Academy Avenue in Bishop.

Lonely Grave in the Sierra:

Appendix B: Articles About Norman Clyde in *Los Angeles Times*

[comments by H.G. are in square brackets]

EARLY YEARS

◆ **June 20, 1915**, p. III6

Out-of-Town Society - Pasadena

Among dozens of wedding announcements on that page, a short paragraph in the lower part of the most right column reads: "In the presence of relatives and a few intimate friends the wedding of Miss Winifred M. Bolster, daughter of Mrs. Margaret Bolster of No. 88 West Mountain street [in Pasadena], and Prof. Norman A. Clyde took place Tuesday [June 15, 1915] evening. For the ceremony the home was beautifully decorated with yellow and white blossoms. Rev. E. H. Fretz officiated."

[I am greatly indebted to Dennis Kruska, for providing the date of Clyde's marriage. Without that information, I would never have found this wedding note. The Santa Cruz County Directory, published in June 1916, lists Norman Clyde, teacher, and his wife Winifred M., residing in Boulder Creek, a small, isolated mountain community between Santa Cruz and San Jose. According to Dennis Kruska's book *Twenty-Five Letters from Norman Clyde, 1923-1964*, Winnie died several years later, in 1919, after long illness. To the best of my knowledge and searching abilities, Winifred's obituary was not printed in *Los Angeles Times*].

CLIMBING DAYS

◆ **July 6, 1923**, p. I3

Mount Shasta Trip Breaks Old Record (School-teacher reaches top in three hours and seventeen minutes)

This is an *Associated Press* night-wire report from San Francisco. "Norman Clyde, a school teacher of Weaverville, climbed to the peak of Mt. Shasta … from Horse Camp … last Tuesday, breaking the [speed] record that stood for forty years".

◆ **September 16, 1923**, p. III29

Sets Record in Peak Climbing (Thirty-six mountains scaled by man on vacation—Makes visit to different summit each day—No evidence on eleven of previous explorer)

This was an "exclusive dispatch" from Washington[?!]. The article introduced Clyde as "36 years of age, a small-town schoolmaster of Weaverville, California, …, and a member of the Sierra (a mountaineer) Club of San Francisco". He climbed thirty-six mountain peaks in Glacier National Park, one each consecutive day. "The achievement, it is believed, sets a **world's record**", said the paper. Atop of Mt. Wilbur, Clyde built a pyramid of loose Argylite rocks, seven feet high and six feet at the base. "Through field glasses this mountain monument is visible to tourists from the veranda at Many Glacier Hotel". The article listed the eleven park peaks upon which Clyde failed to find any records of previous visitors. Those were credited as "first ascents" to Clyde. [This "record" was also mentioned in a *New York Times* article of October 21, 1923, p. X16].

◆ **June 27, 1926**, p. 14

Woman out to Conquer Many Peaks (English Mountaineer to Spend Summer Among Glacier Park Heights)

The article reports that Dorothy E. Pilley, an English woman "of high intellectual attainment and world-renowned mountain climber, will devote this summer scaling … peaks in Glacier National Park". The article goes on describing Miss Pilley's previous climbing successes, and concludes with a brief mention of Norman Clyde: "**It is said** she will have to extend herself somewhat if she equals the achievement of Norman Clyde

who climbed a mountain a day thirty-six consecutive days in Glacier Park during the summer of 1923". Norman Clyde is a "California country school teacher 46 years of age (about twice Miss Pilley's age)". [Clyde was actually 41 at that time. In the end, Miss Pilley didn't break Clyde's "record". According to a *Los Angeles Times* article of November 15, 1926, she scaled 25 peaks in nineteen days. Her photo is shown in the article on p. A8].

◆ **June 23, 1927**, p. 9
Peaks Named After Mountain Martyrs (Mt. Irvine and Mt. Mallory Given Titles in Honor of Men who Died Climbing Them)
There is a sentence about Clyde in this brief article: "Both peaks were climbed last summer by Norman Clyde of Independence, Inyo county, and it was at his suggestion that the men who gave their lives in ineffectual attempts be recognized". [Irvine and Mallory of course didn't die climbing Mt. Irvine and Mt. Mallory, as the subtitle would suggest. They died three years earlier on Mt. Everest. Clyde made the first ascents of both peaks in June 1925, not "last summer", as the article stated].

◆ **July 27, 1928**, p. 5
Woman Scales Mt. Robson
A short *Associated Press* report about Marion Montgomery's ascent to Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. She was "accompanied by Norman Clyde, Independence, Cal., and Don Woods, Spokane". All three were members of the Sierra Club. "Following a three-day climb the party reached the summit last night". This is "one of the most difficult climbs in the world", said the article. [See also the next article].

◆ **August 19, 1928**, p. H4
Leaves from some Vacation Photo Albums
One of the "vacation" pictures shows Norman Clyde, and the figure caption says: "The first climbers in four years to scale the 100-foot ice wall that bars access to the summit of Mt. Robson, the highest peak of the Canadian Rockies are shown here". The climbers are identified as Hans Fuhrer (guide), Marion Montgomery, Heinie Fuhrer (guide), Don Woods, and Norman Clyde. The photo is credited to Canadian National Railways! [See also the previous article].

◆ **March 19, 1929**, p. A5
Boys Survives Cliff Tumble of 2000 Feet
This is the first of many articles in *Los Angeles Times* that presented Clyde in the role of a search and rescue/recovery expert. Paul Revert, 14 years of age, fell, rolled and slid "approximately 2000 feet down the precipitous side of Lytle Creek Canyon near the summit of Mt. Baldy". He "was carried to Glenn Ranch, two miles distant, on the back of Norman Clyde, who had heard [Revert's companions'] cries for help". The boy suffered from shock, bruises, and a cut on his leg, and was "convalescing from his experience" at home, but otherwise was fine.

◆ **May 5, 1929**, p. F7
Resort and Hotel Notes
There is an announcement in this regular section of the newspaper that "next week-end Norman Clyde, noted mountaineer and writer, will be the speaker of the evening" at Switzer-Land Resort, in the Upper Arroyo Seco. "He is the only man who has climbed all of the California mountain peaks over 14,000 feet high, it is reported". [See also the next item].

◆ **May 10, 1929**, p. 6
The Times Free Information and Resort Bureaus
The entire page displays ads for hotels and resorts. In the left lower corner, there is a boxed ad for Angeles National Forest Resorts. A paragraph in the ad says: "Norman Clyde at Switzer-Land. Noted mountaineer and

writer, also Pearl Lemmon, Soprano [and] Suzanne Joyce-Spear, Pianist. Saturday evening, May 11. Stages from Pasadena and wonderful trail trip". [See also the previous article].

◆ **June 9, 1929**, p. F7
Resort and Hotel Notes
"Norman Clyde, member of the American Alpine Club and the High Sierra Recreation Association, reports that there are scores of lakes in Inyo and Mono counties from which the sportsmen and fishermen can secure the limit". The article then goes on to list the lakes that Clyde recommended. The last sentence in the article possibly indicates that Clyde was also assuming the role of a tourist guide: "Members of the High Sierra Recreation Association and guests are now forming parties to visit some of these locations during the next few days, stated Mr. Clyde".

◆ **February 6, 1930**, p. A9
Lecture Course Arranged
Clyde is now clearly involved in lecture tours, where he talks about his mountain climbing experience. This must have been an additional source of his income, which would become particularly important when he no longer had a steady job. The article says that several lectures had been arranged by the Los Angeles boys' organization, the Trailfinders, and that Norman Clyde would be the speaker on Sunday evening, February the 23rd.

◆ **July 13, 1930**, p. A6
Friends Report on Search for Young Lamel
Howard Lamel, 18-year-old Los Angeles boy, disappeared a week earlier while attempting an ascent "of the barren eastern slope of Mt. Whitney". The article reported that two veteran climbers had joined the searching party: "They are Bob Evans … and **Herman** Clyde, member of the Sierra Club and author of an article which is said to have inspired Howard Lamel to attempt the east ascent". [See also the next two articles].

◆ **July 17, 1930**, p. A1
Young Lamel's Body Found (Rangers Solve Fate of Los Angeles Youth Lost in Attempt to Scale Mt. Whitney)
The article describes the final phase of a mountain search. The body of Howard Lamel was found in a crevice 13,500 feet up the mountainside by Robert Evans and Norman Clyde, veteran mountaineers who had joined the search several days before at the request of the boy's father. "**Airplanes** and more than 100 forest rangers and volunteer searchers had been seeking the lost boy", says the article. "The searchers managed to follow the boy's trail to the 12,000 level on the east side [of Mt. Whitney], where all marks were lost until yesterday, when Evans and Clyde risked the dangerous ascent on that side". [Another article, on p. A18, identifies the airplanes as "Army planes". See also the next article].

◆ **July 18, 1930**, p. A12
Remains of Lamel Awaited (Funeral Plans Deferred Until Arrival of Body from Mt. Whitney)
This is a followup to the previous day's story, with a slightly different description of Clyde's role. "Reports from the searching party whose members recovered the body said that it was first sighted by Otto Martens, national park trail employee, who was viewing the terrain with field glasses. Accompanied by Norman Clyde, experienced mountain climber and member of the Sierra Club, Martens made the descent and brought out the remains". [See also the previous two articles. The Lamel accident and Clyde's role were also mentioned in a *New York Times* article of July 18, 1930, on p. 28].

◆ **September 9, 1930**, p. A7
Record Breaking Trip Completed in One Day
This is an *Associated Press* report about Clyde's one-day trip "from the highest elevation to the lowest in the United States—the 14,501-foot peak of Mt. McKinley [sic!] to the below-sea-level sink of Death Valley".

Clyde made the long descent on September 7, "in seven hours—the first man to accomplish it between dawn and dusk". Clyde apparently hiked from the summit of Mt. Whitney to Whitney Portal (the article says "to Long[!] Pine") in three and a half hours, then "an automobile carried him to [Badwater in] Death Valley, 276 feet below sea level" in the next three and a half hours. [The story of this bizarre "record" was also retold **ten months later** in *Wall Street Journal*, on July 20, 1931, p. 8].

◆ **January 17, 1932**, p. I2
Topping Sierran Peaks
Three photos by Norman Clyde "one of the best known mountaineers of the west", showing some of the Sierra peaks that were topped in 1931. [The peaks were Mt. Winchell, Bear Creek Spire, and North Palisade].

◆ **June 20, 1932**, p. A1
Six Succeed in Peak Climb (Pair Back From Triumph in Lower California—Two Days Required to Scale Unconquered Heights—Local Students on Perilous Mexico trip)
The article described the ascent of "hitherto unscaled peaks" of El Picacho del Diablo, Baja California's highest mountain. The party of six included Norman Clyde, Bestor Robinson, Nathan Clark, Glen Dawson, Richard Jones, and Walter Brem. The last three participants were described in the article as "local college and high-school students". According to the article, Clyde "achieved prominence two years ago when he made the trip from the 14,496-foot peak of Mt. Whitney to the below-see-level floor of Death Valley in one day". [See also the next article. Clyde's two essays on climbing in Baja California are reprinted in *El Picacho del Diablo: The Conquest of Lower California's Highest Peak, 1932 and 1937*, by Norman Clyde, Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, 1975].

◆ **July 10, 1932**, p. F4
Top of Lower California This is a photo report about the ascent of El Picacho del Diablo. "The photographs [by Norman Clyde] reproduced on this page", said the article, "[are] the first, it is believed, ever taken in this region". One of three pictures shows the climbing party at the top of the mountain (La Providencia peak). A short text corrected a statement from an earlier article, and said that this was the **second**, not the first ascent. Regarding the climb, Clyde said: "It is a peak that is hard to get at, all cut up everyewhere. We climbed to within 800 feet of the top the first day, then had to drop down 2,000 feet to get water". [The first ascent was apparently made by Donald McLain, a Los Angeles mapmaker, in 1911. See also the previous article].

◆ **August 14, 1932**, p. 5
Sierra Club Party Has Perilous Climb in Fog
This is an "exclusive" report from Sequoia National Park, where Clyde, "one of America's foremost mountain climbers … told a thrilling story of a recent night battle he and eight other members of the Sierra Club had in climbing icy cliffs when trapped by fog in a little-known area of the higher park country". The article describes a successful climb on Triple Divide Peak, and a perilous return in fog and darkness, until the hungry and exhausted party finally reached a deserted ranger cabin at 2 a.m. " Clyde complemented his companions for their courage, particularly three young women in the party". The party included Thomas Rawls, Lincoln O'Bryan, Julia Mortimer, Alice Carter, Dorothy Baird, **William Dulley**, and Clyde. [More about Dulley below, see two articles from 1935].

◆ **August 27, 1933**, p. 3
Bay City Man's Body Found on Minaret Ledge
A brief *Associated Press* report from Oakland. Walter A. Starr, Sr, was informed that his son's body had been found by Norman Clyde "on a ledge of the Minarets, where it apparently had been carried by a recent avalanche of stone". Clyde is described as an "experienced mountaineer and former superintendent of schools at Independence". [See also the next article].

◆ **August 30, 1933**, p. 6

Starr Will be Buried on Peak Where He Died
This is a brief "exclusive" from Madera, where "coroner Jay today announced that he will place no obstacle in the way of the burial [at Michael Minaret]". The article suggests that the burial would take place at the **top** of the peak: "Father of the peak's victim will accompany Norman Clyde, Inyo county schoolteacher and mountain climber, and Jules Eichorn, another Alpinist, when they take his son's body up the cliff, but because of the difficulties of climbing, he will go only within 1500 feet of the peak, and Clyde and Eichorn will carry the body the remainder of the way to the top, where they will erect a rock cairn over it". [Actually, the body was entombed on the ledge where it was found. See also the previous article].

◆ **September 3, 1933**, p. E2
Resort and Hotel Notes
Brief mention of Clyde's talk about the recent Starr search at a Mammoth Lakes resorts: "On a recent evening in Tamarack Lodge, Twin Lakes, Norman Clyde, mountaineer of the Sierra Club, who discovered the body of Walter Starr, Jr., on one of the Minarets after an eight-day search, gave an account of his experiences while hunting for Starr".

◆ **November 25, 1933**, p. A6
New Girl Goes Up San Jacinto
The brief article states that "Mt. San Jacinto has just been conquered from the desert side by a girl—Julie Mortimer of Claremont—the first of her sex to accomplish the feat, according to Norman Clyde of Bishop, who accompanied her". The article describes the route, then concludes: "[They] made their way over precipices and other obstacles, almost to the top when darkness stopped them. They waited until daylight and continued the climb, reaching the summit early in the morning, Clyde declared".

◆ **January 28, 1934**, pp. H4, H14 & H21
These Strange Peak-Grabbers, by Lowell Brodgart
Long article with sketches and photos, about "people who climb mountains for sport …, and what are the rules of etiquette for this weird and dangerous pastime". Clyde is introduced in the following way: "One of the men, a veteran of more than 600 mountain ascents, kept his companions [all forced to spend the night on a snow-covered narrow ledge in North Palisades] awake by a dissertation on the Pleiades and Orion". Clyde was described by Brodgart as "an author, and a climber of many record-breaking feats, the best known mountaineer of the West".

◆ **July 6, 1934**, p. A8
Along El Camino Real with Ed Ainsworth
In this regular daily column, Ainsworth prints a brief letter by Norman Clyde, "who just arrived from Glacier Lodge" about "the most remarkable mountaineering feats ever accomplished in the United States", the scaling of ten of the twelve major pinnacles of the Devils Crags, from June 23 to June 26. Nine of the ten were first ascents. Dave Brower and Hervey Voge were the other two members of the party.

◆ **July 27, 1934**, p. 9
Two Army Bombing Planes Join Search of High Sierras for Federal Worker (Hunt Headed by Sheriff —Canyons Combed for Lost Man—Outlook Peak Area Scanned for Survey Party Member Gone Since Monday—Light Flashes Reported by Flyer Made by Lamp in Hands of Searcher)
This is a report about an intensive search for Jim Murphy, "United Coast and Geodetic Survey party member, who has been lost somewhere on Outlook Peak since Monday [July 23] night". The last paragraph in the article makes mention of Clyde: "Relief parties were sent to Lookout Mountain this evening to relieve those who have been on duty for the past eighteen hours. Norman Clyde and Glen Dawson, expert Sierra Club mountaineers, **have been asked to come down from Tuolumne Meadows** to assist in the search". [The next day, July 28, *Los Angeles Times* reports on p. 6 that Jim Murphy's body was found by members of his own Survey party, not too far from his truck. He missed his footing and fell over a cliff. The article doesn't explain

if Clyde and Dowson arrived in the area and joined the search, or stayed at Tuolumne Meadows].

◆ **April 17, 1935**, p. 13
Snow Victim Rites Today (Clubman Frozen to Death in Blizzard Near Bishop to be Buried Here)
This article announces funeral services for William C. W. Dulley, who was frozen to death in a blizzard near Piute Pass on April 8. "He had gone with Norman Clyde", says the article, "from Andrews Camp over the pass and attempted to make an ascent of Mt. Humphries. When the blizzard struck, the two men started back toward Bishop. As they neared the snow line **Clyde suddenly found himself alone**. He retraced his steps and discovered his companion lying dead in the snow. The body was recovered on the following day", concludes the report. [The correct name of the mountain is Mt. Humphreys. For an expanded version of events, see the article from June 1935 (below)].

◆ **April 21, 1935**, p. G5
("Sunday Photogravure Section", no title on the page)
Clyde's photo of a fawn in the Sequoia National Park is printed in the lower left corner of the page. [Clyde could have used the small honorarium received for this photo to buy, e.g., a new piece of climbing or fishing equipment].

◆ **June 5, 1935**, pp. A1 & A3
Blizzard Tragedy Told by Frozen Survivor
A dramatic account by an unidentified *Los Angeles Times* reporter relating details of the Sierra tragedy in which William Dulley lost his life in a three-day Sierra blizzard. According to the article, Norman Clyde, described as "veteran mountain climber", with hands and feet frozen, found his way to a miner's cabin near Lake Sabrina. The reporter talked to Clyde when he "came to Los Angeles, limping badly, for medical treatment for his frozen toes", two months after the accident. Clyde's portrait is printed in the article. [See also the article from April 1935 (above)].

◆ **November 17, 1935**, p. A5
Mountain Climber to Tell of Escape
A one-paragraph note at the bottom of the page: "Narrow escapes as a mountain climber will be described by Norman Clyde of Bishop in an address Thursday night [November 25] at a dinner-meeting of the Hollywood Academy of Medicine. Clyde is widely known for his exploratory trips on high peaks." [It would be interesting to learn which narrow escapes Clyde described, but the note doesn't elaborate].

◆ **May 23, 1936**, p. A3
Mt. Whitney Scaler Here
The article announced that Clyde, "nationally known mountain climber", H. A. Macrae, commercial secretary of the British Embassy in Tokyo, and Mrs. Macrae, returned to Los Angeles "after two weeks spent climbing Mt. Whitney and other snowclad peaks". Clyde, "who spent the winter on Bishop Creek", said that the "snow was heavy, and wind strong". Mrs. Macrae, reported the article, "won the distinction of being the first woman to make the [Mt. Whitney] ascent in May". [H. A. Macrae stands for Herbert Alexander Macrae, born 1886, a career diplomat. He published a book about the Japanese economy in 1948, but I don't know if he had also left memoirs about his climbing deeds].

◆ **June 13, 1937**, p. H5
Roping Up Mt. Whitney, Top of the United States
This is a whole page photo report of a Mt. Whitney ascent via the East Face. The following participants were identified in figure captions: Virginia Adams [Mrs. Ansel Adams!], Marjory Farquhar, Jules Eichorn, and Norman Clyde. Photos were taken by Dexter Richards, Jr, and John Poindexter, who presumably also were members of the climbing party. A note in the report mentions that "the first ascent by this route was made in August, 1931, by Norman Clyde, Glen Dawson, and Jules Eichorn, of the Sierra Club of Southern California,

and Robert L. M. Underhill of the Appalachian Club. It has been climbed about six times since".

◆ **September 12, 1937**, p. G2
Sierra Club Men Scale Highest Peak in Glacier Park
A short note about a "recent" first ascent of Kinnerly Peak, "highest unscaled peak in Glacier National Park". Four members of the Sierra Club, Norman Clyde ("[of] Lone Pine"), Ed Hall, Richard K. Hill [Cahill!], and Braeme Gigos, "set out … from a camp at Hole-in-the-Wall at 4 a.m., climbed Agassiz Glacier to the gap between Kinnerly and Kintla peaks and then up the ridge to the summit".

◆ **January 3, 1940**, p. 8
Along El Camino Real with Ed Ainsworth
A paragraph titled "Climber" in this regular daily column, tells readers that Clyde, a "famous mountain climber" is now known as ***Dr. Clyde***, since "he got a degree of LL.D. from an eastern university for his writings on the Sierra". Ainsworth concludes: "[Clyde] used to be a grammar school principal. Has climbed every major peak in the Sierra Nevada, is the only man to have scaled the North Palisade in winter. Had rather outclimb a mountain goat than teach any little brat to read…". [The degree was of Doctor of Sciences, not LL.D, and was awarded to Clyde by his *alma mater* Geneva College in 1939].

◆ **May 8, 1942**, pp. 1 & 10
Father finds Lost Bomber (Snows Giving Up Bodies of Gen. Dargue and Eight Other Army Men)
This is a front page article about Clyde's discovery of an Army transport plane that had disappeared in the Sierra five months earlier, on December 12, 1941, just a few days after the Pearl Harbor attack. The article gives credit for finding the wreck to George B. Burns, the father of the plane's co-pilot, Homer C. Burns. "The elder Burns, after vainly searching for the plane bearing his son last winter, started out last Saturday from Big Pine … to investigate a report the missing plane had been heard circling over the Moonlight Mine. On Sunday they combed the area … but found nothing". "I can never rest or have a moment's peace until I [find Homer's body]", the father is quoted. Then, on Monday morning "Norman Clyde, veteran Sierra Club mountaineer, climbed Kidd Mountain and glimpsed … the wreckage on the south side of Birch Lake". [See also the next article. *New York Times* also reports the discovery of the plane on p. 14 of its May 8 issue, in a "special" from Los Angeles. This is really an abridged version of the *Los Angeles Times* article, and uses the same phrasing in describing Clyde's role in the search].

◆ **May 10, 1942**, p. 13
Miners Will Hunt Bodies (Hardened men called to remove wreckage of crashed bomber)
The article describes attempts to recover the bodies of the eight people that were on board the Army plane, and restates that the wreck of the plane "was finally discovered last Monday by Norman Clyde, 60-year-old Sierra Club mountaineer who ascended Kidd Mountain, 13,500 feet, and spotted the wreckage with his binoculars". [*Nota bene:* Clyde was 57 at that time].

◆ **August 24, 1948**, p. 3
Want to Climb a Glacier? Southland Has One in Back Yard
A photo report by R. O. Ritchie [*Los Angeles Times*], on climbing Palisade Glacier. Clyde is identified as "Mountaineer Norman Clyde" on one of the pictures, and could also be seen (but is not identified) on several other pictures. [See also the next entry].

◆ **August 24, 1948**, p. A2
Here's Icy Thrill in Own *Back Yard*
The same issue of the newspaper has a separate article on p. A2, giving a detailed description of a group led by Clyde on an ascent up the Palisade Glacier. Written by Glen Binford. Clyde is "a spare, deeply tanned mountaineer, [who] admits to 60 years". [Clyde is 63 at that time. For a related report, see also the previous entry].

◆ **August 13, 1950**, p. 1
Lookout Reports Mt. Whitney Bodies
Two high school seniors, Christopher Reynolds and Stephen Wasserman, disappeared on Mt. Whitney, and a massive search was mounted. Norman Clyde, "one of the oldest and most skillful of the guides in that area" was asked by Neal Rahm, superintendent of the Inyo National Forest, to help in the search. "Clyde, employed as a guide for a mountain-climbing party leaving Bishop, agreed to leave the party in the emergency and join in the quest for the two youths". [A *New York Times* article of August 13 has an "exclusive" on the search on p. 67. The article describes Clyde as "a 65-year-old guide and **prospector** (sic!) of the Mount Whitney area and one of the few people ever to scale the cliff face attempted by the two boys". It took several more days to locate and retrieve bodies of the two boys. Clyde's participation in the search was not mentioned in any of the followup articles].

◆ **August 14, 1950**, p. 7
Scaled in 1931 - Whitney East Face Tough, Say Climbers
This was a commentary related to the ongoing search for Reynolds and Wasserman, and described a reaction of a "seasoned member of the Sierra Club" to the boys' attempt to scale Mt. Whitney's east face. The unnamed member said: "Switzerland's famed Matterhorn is but a mole-hill in comparison to [the east face] climb". The article then lists the first three successful climbs on that route. "It was first conquered in August, 1931, by ... Jules Eichorn, Glen Dawson, Norman Clyde and Robert L. M. Underhill". The second ascent, according to the article, happened on July 4, 1934, when "Dawson and Ted Waller negotiated [the east face] by themselves". A month later, on August 17, 1934, "the feat was accomplished by Eichorn and Mrs. Marjorie Bridge Farquhar, first woman to make [this] ascent."

◆ **September 22, 1963**, p. H7
Grizzled Mountaineer *On Top of the World*
Nicely written article about Norman Clyde, a "legendary High Sierra figure", by an unknown author. The article summarizes Clyde's fifty years of rambling the High Sierra, and sheds some light on how Clyde got discharged from his teaching job. A picture in the article shows Norman Clyde enjoying his morning coffee at the Bear Creek Spire base camp of the Sierra Club, in the Rock Creek region, near Mammoth Lakes.

There was also a brief comment on Norman Clyde in a letter to the editors (West Letters) in 1972:

◆ **September 17, 1972**, p. M14
Brower Recycled
Your informative article on David Brower [printed on August 13] contains one error. Brower has *not* recorded the most first ascents in the Sierras of any living American. That honor surely belongs to Norman Clyde, who knows the Sierras better than even John Muir did. Brower is a sterling mountaineer, but his conservation career simply hasn't left him enough time to keep up with Clyde.
Bruce C. Johnson, Del Mar.

OTHER POSSIBLE CITINGS

Sunday edition of *Los Angeles Times* of January 8, 1939, p. A1, printed an interview with Chester Versteeg, "an authority on history of High Sierra". Chester and Norman Clyde were friends, and Chester was frequently asking Norman to send him photographs of Sierra lakes and peaks, see *Twenty-Five Letters From Norman Clyde, 1923-1964*, by Dennis Kruska, Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, Calif., 1998. Accompanying the interview is a picture showing a mature climber with a Stetson hat, knickers, and characteristic gaiters, on an orthogonal mountain wall. The capture says: "Photo of California mountain climber on his way up", but it doesn't identify the climber. The photo is not clear enough to tell with absolute certainty that the climber was

Clyde, but it is very likely that this was a picture of him.

FALSE POSITIVES

Name "Norman Clyde" was mentioned in several other *Los Angeles Times* articles. It is easy to discard some of those. For example, in 1947, a film noir, "The Locket", was released on the West coast. In the movie, Robert Mitchum played a role of "Norman Clyde", a portrait artist from New York who was eventually driven to suicide by his lover Nancy (played by Loraine Day).

In September 1934, a month after the Rettenbacher accident, a *Los Angeles Times* article of September 17, 1934, on page A5, reported that a police detective went to 820 West Thirty-sixth street to investigate a burglary complaint. "Norman Clyde, of that address, had reported his room had been entered". The detective then learned that a young couple had recently rented a room in the same house. He searched their room "and found some of Clyde's missing articles". It is not very likely that the burglary victim was **our** Norman Clyde. (Note added in August 2005: On the other hand, during the 1930 US Census, only **one** "Norman Clyde" lived in California, and that was Norman Asa Clyde. Other two adults listed under the name "Norman Clyde" in the 1930 Census lived in South Dakota and Washington in 1930. Did one of the two move to California?)

Norman Clyde exhibit set to Open April 18



The Grand Opening for the Eastern California Museum photo exhibit, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra," will take place on Saturday, April 18, from 2-6 p.m. The exhibit features more than 40 photos, extensive explanatory text, dozens of artifacts and a 7-foot long map highlighting about 100 of Clyde's most significant first ascents in the Sierra Nevada.

Other highlights include numerous photos from the scrapbook of Norman and Winnie Clyde, the wife of the rugged mountaineer who died of "consumption" in 1919. Photos also document Clyde's early climbing days with the Sierra Club, his stints as a climbing and hiking guide, his expertise when it came to mountain rescues, and his secondary career as a writer and photographer. Well-known Bishop climber, writer and photographer Andy Selters is co-curator for the exhibit, and researched and wrote the exhibit text.

"Norman Clyde of the High Sierra" will run through the end of 2009 at the Eastern California Museum, located three blocks west of the historic courthouse in Independence. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and admission is free. For more information, call 760-878-0258.

Comprehensive Norman Clyde exhibit

Photos, text and personal objects tell story of man behind the legend

Register Staff 4-16-2009

There's the legend that is Norman Clyde, well-known mountaineer and pioneering backcountry adventurer. And then there's the man behind the legend.

Locals and visitors will have the chance to become acquainted with both when the Eastern California Museum holds the formal opening of its newest exhibit, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra," from 2-6 p.m. on Saturday. Guest curator Andy Selters will present a brief talk during the opening, and refreshments will be served.

The exhibit features more than 50 photos, extensive explanatory text, dozens of artifacts, many of which belonged to Clyde, and a seven-foot long map highlighting about 100 of Clyde's most significant first ascents in the Sierra Nevada (he is credited with roughly 130 first ascents during his mountaineering career of more than three decades).

A number of institutions and individuals contributed to the exhibit, which will run through the end of 2009. The effort to outline the life and exploits of the Eastern Sierra's most celebrated mountaineer drew extensively from the museum's collection of Clyde's photos (more than 200 in all), and personal objects, ranging from his trademark campaign hat, pistol, ice ax and volumes of classic literature, in the original Greek and Latin.

Several individuals from the area allowed the museum to use their personal photos of Clyde. The Sierra Club-Angeles Chapter, contributed vintage photos of Clyde on the club's historic Sierra trips in the 1920s and 1930s. *Westways* magazine went through its archives to provide copies of stories Clyde wrote about life and death in the Sierra for "Touring Topics," as the magazine was originally known.

Other highlights include numerous photos from the scrapbook of Norman and Winnie Clyde, the wife of the rugged mountaineer who died of "consumption" in 1919. These early photos of the man who would become famous for always wearing a crusty campaign hat (that matched his crusty demeanor) and lugging around an 80-pound pack, show a dapper young fellow in a straw boater (foreshadowing?) and suit with his young bride on the beach in Santa Barbara.

Selecting the correct mix of photos to tell the story of Norman Clyde's extraordinary life as a climber, backcountry inhabitant and sometimes irritated and irritating resident of the Owens Valley was almost an overwhelming chore. However, thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Eastern California Museum, the museum was able to retain as guest curator Andy Selters, a fine writer, a climber of note in his own right, a historian of climbing and the Eastern Sierra, and an exacting researcher.

"Being able to have Andy take on such a significant role in the preparation of the exhibit ensured that a large portion of the exhibit, from technical climbing terms to working with old photos to identifying peaks to general research to ferret out fact from many fictions, would be handled with Andy's consummate skill and conscientious," said Museum Director Jon Klusmire

Museum staff worked with the Norman Clyde artifacts in the museum to create a larger, more inclusive display case of his personal belongings to go with the exhibit, Klusmire added, and also helped design the exhibit, obtain photos and coordinate the entire effort.

After his wife's untimely death, Clyde started his amazing career in the mountains, one that he would never tire of or retire from. Bagging 35 peaks in 35 days in Glacier National Park was just the beginning, as the exhibit notes. Clyde went on to learn rope techniques from European guides while climbing in the Canadian Rockies. Back in the Sierra, he went on some extraordinary climbing binges, bagging up to 30 peaks in a summer for several years running. He also became a fixture on many of the Sierra Club's climbing expeditions, starting in the 1920s. Whether it was guiding dozens of newcomers through the mountains, or making technical rock climbs with a small group of skilled, and younger men, Clyde was the man the Sierra Club hikers and climbers turned to.

He was also the man the authorities turned to when a disaster struck, whether that disaster was a downed aircraft or a lost, and most likely, dead climber that needed to be found.

It was on these many outings that Clyde not only became an esteemed and highly respected climber and mountaineer, but also become famous for his 80-pound pack. In it were clothes, food, iron frying pans, a cobblers anvil and books, mostly in Latin or Greek, and just about anything else needed for an extended stay in the backcountry.

While his reputation in the mountains was glittering, he didn't fare as well when on the valley floor. The schoolteacher trained in the classics was fired in 1928 from his job as superintendent of the Owens Valley School for taking a few pistol shots at young men in a car on Halloween night. He was relieved of his duties, and never sought another job again, preferring to rough it the rest of his days, either in his basic cabin on Baker Creek or in the Sierra.

Behind the gruff exterior and physical toughness, however, was another side. A writer. A photographer. A man who wrote articles about the Eastern Sierra and his experiences there for a general audience, and whose photos captured the grandeur and serenity he found in the high Sierra.

The exhibit attempts to present and expand upon those prominent facets of this complex man's life.

"Norman Clyde of the High Sierra" will run through the end of 2009 at the Eastern California Museum, located three blocks west of the historic courthouse in Independence on U.S. 395 as it cuts through the heart of the Eastern Sierra. The museum is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, and admission is free. For more information, call 878-0258, or visit www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum.



Hidden Lake offers a stunning reflection of the Sierra in this photo taken by legendary mountaineer Norman Clyde. Photo courtesy County of Inyo Eastern California Museum

Local exhibit honors life of famed Norman Clyde

Eastern California Museum exhibit shows the different sides of the "Pack with legs"

4-25-2009

By Catherine Billey
Mammoth Times Staff Writer

Today, most backpackers endeavor to carry as little and as lightly as possible.

Not 20th century mountaineer Norman Clyde, who was dubbed "the pack that walked like a man," by the late David Brower.

A snippet in a new exhibit about Clyde at the Eastern California Museum describes how "compatriots would sit slack-jawed to see Clyde pull out revolvers, multiple cameras, spare boots, a 20-pound anvil, spare nails for repairing those boots, and books, always books," from his famed 90-pound pack.

The late mountaineer, known for more first ascents in the Sierra Nevada than any other individual along with numerous rescue and recovery efforts, can again be seen in the Sierra Nevada, this time brought to life in an exhibit that opened April 18 at the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

About 40 people gathered for the grand opening on a day warm with the hint of spring as refreshments were served on the patio, including a chocolate cake appropriately shaped like a mountain by Friends of the Museum board member Sharon Avey.

Co-curator Andy Selters, well-known climber, writer and photographer based in Crowley Lake, brought Clyde to life with a speech and his insightful essays that accompany the exhibit.

"Norman Clyde was endowed with the paradoxes of a full life. He was a disciplined intellectual who had the look and some of the manners of a tramp," Selters wrote. "When we look across California's alpine wonderland of meadows, lakes, and peaks, we know that there's one man who explored, camped, rambled, and climbed more than anyone else – Norman Clyde"

Selters described Clyde as a "mythical hero" in the sense that Joseph Campbell used the word, but one who did not fit easily into civilization.

"He had a tendency to repeatedly alienate himself from every town he went into," Selters said.

As just one example, Clyde "bailed out" of a graduate program at U.C. Berkeley because, in his view, the program wasn't rigorous enough in its approach to the romance languages, which he loved.

More than 50 photos, detailed explanatory text, dozens of artifactsand a 7-foot-long map highlighting roughly 100 of Clyde's notable first ascents in the Sierra Nevada are the focal points of the exhibit.

Robert Cates of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club donated archival images originally donated by mountaineer Glen Dawson – now in his 90s, who made the first ascent of the east face of Mt. Whitney as a teenager with Jules Eichorn, Robert Underhill, and Clyde in 1931.

In juxtaposition with Selters' essays, the photos truly bring Clyde "the man beneath the images" to life for people who may be learning about him for the first time.

Even those familiar with Clyde may not know that he was once briefly, tragically, married to Winnie Clyde, who died of consumption in 1919 after just three years of what was reportedly a happy marriage.

Photos from the couple's scrapbook are also part of the exhibit.

Other photos from the Eastern California Museum document Clyde's nascent climbing days with the Sierra Club (before he was fired as a guide), his work as a climbing and hiking guide, facility with complicated mountain rescues, and his avocation as a writer and photographer.

There is a nice, sweet inclusion in the exhibit of "the gentle side of Norman Clyde" by Lisa Carson, who knew him when she was a child in the 1970s.

"I will always cherish this authentic soul, whom so many knew as a gruff mountain man," she wrote in an essay that hangs on the wall along with a photo of the little girl climbing over the cheerfully yielding old man in the final years of his life.

"I remember Norman Clyde as a gentle giant who not only put up with a little girl's misguided creativity, but also one who knew how to teach, love and protect," Carson wrote.

Clyde is also known for an unfortunate gun-shooting incident in the 1920s while working as an elementary school principal in Independence. Museum director Jon Klusmire agreed that Clyde definitely had a temper.

"He didn't suffer fools gladly in the mountains or anywhere else."

The exhibit, Norman Clyde of the High Sierra runs through the end of the year.

The Eastern California Museum is located at 155 N. Grant Street, Independence, (760) 878-0258, www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum.



Norman Clyde was known as a bit of a hot head but also had a kinder, gentler side as the exhibit shows. Photo submitted

Norman Clyde Exhibit Opens At Eastern California Museum

2009

The Eastern California Museum recently unveiled its newest exhibit, "Norman Clyde of the High Sierra." Guest curator Andy Selters was on hand to share some interesting insights that Selters gathered during his research on Clyde, the Sierra's most prominent pioneering mountaineer.

The exhibit features more than 50 photos, extensive explanatory text, dozens of artifacts, many of which belonged to Clyde, and a 7-foot long map highlighting about 100 of Clyde's most significant first ascents in the Sierra Nevada (he is credited with roughly 130 first ascents during his mountaineering career of more than three decades).

A number of institutions and individuals contributed to the exhibit, which will run through the end of 2009. The effort to outline the life and exploits of the Eastern Sierra's most celebrated mountaineer drew extensively from the Museum's collection of Clyde's photos (more than 200 in all), and personal objects, ranging from his trademark campaign hat, pistol, ice ax and volumes of classic literature, in the original Greek and Latin. Several individuals from the area allowed the museum to use their personal photos of Clyde. The Sierra Club-Angeles Chapter, contributed vintage photos of Clyde on the Club's historic Sierra trips in the 1920s and 1930s. Westways magazine, went through its archives to provide copies of stories Clyde wrote about life and death in the Sierra for "Touring Topics," as the magazine was originally known.

Other highlights include numerous photos from the scrapbook of Norman and Winnie Clyde, the wife of the rugged mountaineer who died of "consumption" in 1919. These early photos of the man who would become famous for always wearing a crusty campaign hat (that matched his crusty demeanor) and lugging around an 80-pound pack, show a dapper young fellow in a straw boater and suit with his young bride on the beach in Santa Barbara.

After his wife's untimely death, Clyde started his amazing career in the mountains, one that he would never tire of or retire from. Bagging 35 peaks in 35 days in Glacier National Park was just the beginning, as the exhibit notes. Clyde went on to learn rope technique from European guides while climbing in the Canadian Rockies. Back in the Sierra, he went on some extraordinary climbing binges, bagging up to 30 peaks in a summer for several years running. He also became a fixture on many of the Sierra Club's climbing expeditions, starting in the 1920s. Whether it was guiding dozens of newcomers through the mountains, or making technical rock climbs with a small group of skilled, and younger men, Clyde was the man the Sierra Club hikers and climbers turned to.

He was also the man the authorities turned to when a disaster struck, whether that disaster was a downed aircraft or a lost, and most likely, dead climber that needed to be found.

It was on these many outings that Clyde not only became an esteemed and highly respected climber and mountaineer, but also become famous for his 80-pound pack. In it were clothes, food, iron frying pans, several pistols, extra boots, a cobblers anvil and books, mostly in Latin or Greek, and just about anything else needed for an extended stay in the backcountry.

While his reputation in the mountains was glittering, he didn't fare as well when on the valley floor. The schoolteacher trained in the classics was fired in 1928 from his job as superintendent of the Owens Valley School for sending a pistol round though the car driven by several young men in a car on Halloween night. Clyde said he was merely protecting school property. He was relieved of his duties, and never sought another job again, preferring to rough it the rest of his days, either in his basic cabin on Baker Creek or in the Sierra.

Behind the gruff exterior and physical toughness, however, was another side. A writer. A photographer. A man who wrote articles about the Eastern Sierra and his experiences there for a general audience, and whose photos captured the grandeur and serenity he found in the high Sierra.

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Selecting the correct mix of photos to tell the story of Norman Clyde's extraordinary life as a climber, backcountry inhabitant, and sometimes irritated and irritating resident of the Owens Valley was almost an overwhelming chore. However, thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Eastern California Museum, the Museum was able to retain as guest curator Andy Selters, a fine writer and photographer, a climber of note in his own right, a historian of climbing and the Eastern Sierra, and an exacting researcher. He is the author of the acclaimed "Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering" (2002, American Alpine Club Press).

"Being able to have Andy take on such a significant role in the preparation of the exhibit ensured that a large portion of the exhibit, from technical climbing terms to working with old photos to identifying peaks to general research to ferret out fact from many fictions, would be handled with Andy's consummate skill and conscientious," said Museum Director Jon Klusmire.

Museum staff worked with the Norman Clyde artifacts in the Museum to create a larger, more inclusive display case of his personal belongings to go with the exhibit, he added, and also helped design the exhibit, obtain photos and coordinate the entire effort.

"Norman Clyde of the High Sierra" will run through the end of 2009 at the Eastern California Museum.



Glen Dawson, Robert Underhill, Jules Eichorn and Norman Clyde (l-r) after making the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney in 1931. It took the foursome just three hours to accomplish the feat. Photo by Francis Farquar/Norman Clyde Collection

Pioneering Sierra climber to take part in Saturday presentation

Glen Dawson and historian to help tell story of early Sierra peak-bagging

Register Staff 7-7-09

Glen Dawson, the last surviving member of the epic group of climbers who challenged and conquered the Sierra's peaks in the 1920s and 1930s along with Norman Clyde, will be appearing at a presentation about Clyde and those historic climbs and climbers in Independence on Saturday, July 11.

Historian and climber Bill Oliver will be presenting his extensive look at the "Golden Age of Sierra climbing," entitled Norman Clyde – Climbing and Guiding with the Sierra Club. Dawson, who is now 97, will be on hand to share stories about his climbing days with Clyde and respond to questions (because of Dawson's age, his trip to Independence remains planned but subject to change, if he is unable to make the journey from his home in Pasadena.)

Oliver's presentation will begin at 7 p.m. at the Owens Valley School Multi-Purpose Room, 2002 Clay St., in Independence.

It wasn't until Oliver was 40 that he began adventuring in the Sierra Nevada, having just taken a Sierra Club mountaineering course in Los Angeles in 1984, and he soon became quite active with the L.A. Chapter's Sierra Peaks Section. He was SPS chair in 1989 when honorary membership was bestowed on Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn, the honor previously having been given to Norman Clyde in 1960.

Oliver embarked at that time on what would become a six-part series in the SPS newsletter, the Sierra Echo: "A Tribute to the Honorary Members of the Sierra Peaks Section." Based largely on stories from the Sierra Club Bulletin, plus much personal contact with Dawson and Eichorn, the series highlights the exploits of these pioneering mountaineers and rock climbers, as well as the Golden Age of Sierra Club mountaineering in the 1920s and '30s.

Oliver now resides in Colorado where he adventures in the Rockies.

His presentation this Saturday is one of several events the Eastern California Museum is hosting to complement its current exhibit, Norman Clyde of the Eastern Sierra, which features more than 50 photos to Clyde and educational and descriptive text by guest curator Andy Selters, a well-known climber, writer and photographer.

A good portion of the Norman Clyde exhibit is devoted to the decades that Clyde was associated with the Sierra Club. He acted as an experienced climbing mentor to younger climbers such as Dawson, Eichorn and Robert Underhill. Clyde also was a lead of the legendary High Trips organized by the Sierra Club.

The Eastern California Museum is located at 155 N. Grant Street, three blocks west of the historic courthouse in Independence, and is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on weekends and weekdays. Call the museum at 878-0258 for more information, or check the museum Web page at www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum.



Norman Clyde with a 92-pound ▶ pack at Piute Pass, near Bishop, at the beginning of a 46-day Sierra trip in 1952. *Smoke Blanchard.*

Norman Clyde and his 1926 Chevrolet cloth-top, near the Baker Creek Ranch out-buildings, 1956. The jalopy may have been stripped down for sale; it had not looked this sleek and empty since it was new. *Smoke Blanchard.* ▼



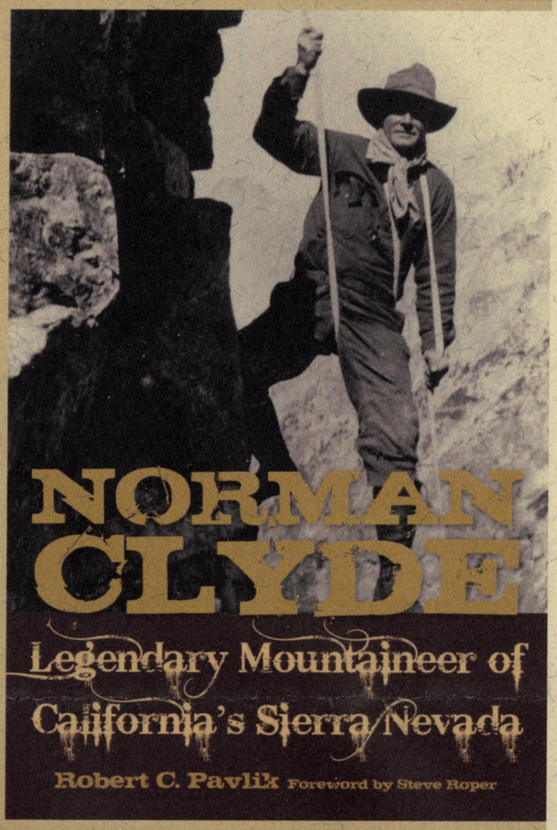
MEET AUTHOR ROBERT PAVLIK

Biographer Robert Pavlik Visits the East Side!

This riveting account is the first complete biography of Norman Clyde, the notorious but beloved Sierra mountaineer.

"The word 'unique' is often used inappropriately, but after you read this book I would wager that you can't think of a better word for this prodigious individual."

-Steve Roper



2009

Saturday, June 6th, 4-5:30 pm

Book Signing at Spellbinder Books

Visit with Robert & get your signed copy of his book!

Light refreshments served.

Sunday, June 7th, at 3pm

Book Signing at Eastern California Museum

Share your Norman Clyde Story, enjoy the exhibit, and get a signed copy of Robert's book!

Light refreshments served.

For more information, visit the Museum web site: www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum; the Bookstore web site: spellbinder.booksense.com; or become a fan of Spellbinder on FaceBook!

Presented to the Eastern Sierra Community by:

EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

HEYDAY Celebrating California's culture and history since 1974

Spellbinder Books & Coffee Est. 1970 Bishop, CA

"Wall Street Journal" 9-10-2009

A Solitary, Singular Life

By Michael J. Ybarra

Independence, Calif.

The centerpiece of an absorbing new exhibit at the Eastern California Museum is a hat. It's a brown felt campaign hat—wide brimmed, well-stained and dented—that belonged to Norman Clyde, a legendary California mountaineer who made John Muir look like a weekend warrior. The hat reposes in a case, along with a huge pair of snowshoes, crude skis, a four-foot-tall ice ax and a .22 pistol—items that were seldom still during the six decades that Clyde hiked, skied and climbed throughout the Sierra Nevada mountains, which rise steeply in a jagged crest to the west of this small town.

Clyde, who died in 1972 at age 87, summited a thousand peaks in his life; he made 130 first ascents in the Sierra—more than anyone else ever did or will. In Glacier National Park in Montana, Clyde climbed 36 mountains in 36 days, at least 11 of which were first ascents. On Mount Shasta he set the speed record twice in three days (2 hours and 43 minutes the second time). But it was the Sierra that Clyde loved and knew better than any man who ever lived. He climbed Mount Whitney, the highest U.S. mountain outside of Alaska, more than 50 times, including making the first ascent of its steep East Face in 1931, a landmark climb that heralded the arrival of alpinism in California.

Norman Clyde: 'The Pack With Legs'

Eastern California Museum
Through March 1

Clyde weighed 140 pounds but routinely shouldered 75-pound packs, sometimes heavier ones. "The pack that walks like a man," Sierra Club grandee David Brower called him. "The Pack With Legs" is the name of the small exhibit dedicated to Clyde at the museum here, which uses artifacts, photos and writings by and about Clyde to re-create the texture of his solitary and singular life.

"Open any of the climbers' guidebooks to the Sierra, and you'll scarcely find a page without at least one peak or route tagged 'first ascent by Norman Clyde,'" exhibit curator Andy Selters writes. "Probably no other mountain range has its lore so entwined for so long with a single individual, and I can fairly ask if anyone has ever dedicated so much studied, vigorous leisure to a given terrain. How is it that a well-educated, fully capable man could commit most of his adult life to roaming mountains?"

That's the question the show attempts to explore. The short answer would seem to be that Clyde roamed mountains because it was the easiest way to get away from other people.

Born in Philadelphia in 1885, Clyde studied the classics in school and went into teaching. In 1911 he moved to California to do graduate work at Berkeley but left before finishing his final class, which he objected to because he was expected to read plays in translation instead of in the original languages. Among the heavy items Clyde pulled out of his prodigious packs in the back country, there were always books in Greek or French or the other languages he read.

The one person Clyde may have been truly close to was his wife, Winifred, whom he married in 1915. The exhibit displays pictures from their honeymoon in Santa Barbara, Calif. The couple stand separately in the surf in long swimsuits. Clyde's arms are folded and he appears bored. Four years later, on Valentine's Day, Winifred died from tuberculosis. Decades later, when Clyde was something of a living legend and often profiled by journalists, he never talked about his marriage.



Photo courtesy Inyo County Eastern California Museum

Norman Clyde, with his famed 75-pound pack.

In 1924 Clyde became the principal of Independence High School, hard on the flank of the eastern Sierra. Every Friday, he locked up the school and disappeared into the hills, returning on Monday to open the doors. Then, on Halloween in 1928, Clyde decided to stand guard at the school against pranksters and fired a shot into a car full of young people. His educational career ended that night.

Clyde devoted the next half century to his beloved mountains. He guided trips for the Sierra Club and wrote articles about his explorations, but mostly he lived frugally in the hills, catching fish, shooting game and, always, finding new peaks to climb or new ways to the sky. "I sort of went off on a tangent from civilization and never got back," he once said.

The show features a black-and-white photo of Clyde blown up to poster size. The mountaineer, wearing his iconic hat, sits stiffly against a cliff; his feet are crossed, sticking out at the viewer, displaying the bottoms of his hobnailed boots. Clyde clutches an ice ax across his chest. The hat shades his eyes, which you can still see are narrow and piercing. The body is rigid, ready to spring into action even at rest. He appears as unyielding as the granite backdrop.

"I didn't know for weeks that he was bald," one acquaintance recalls in Robert C. Pavlik's recent biography, "Norman Clyde." "He wore this army hat and he never took it off. When he did, the top of his head was just as white as milk. The rest of his face was very red."

Clyde even had trouble getting along with other climbers. In 1941 he reluctantly guided an inexperienced man up California's Matterhorn Peak on a Sierra Club trip. The man fell and was seriously injured. Clyde was dismissive of his charge ("Let's go on with the climb") and the Sierra Club fired him.

Yet Clyde was also justly famous for his mountain rescues, often risky and lonely endeavors to find lost hikers or recover bodies from airplane crashes. When a companion was severely injured high on a peak, Clyde, then 58, made an arduous trek for emergency supplies, brought them back to the man and then hiked out to lead a rescue party to the site.

The last pictures in the show are jarringly in color, as if Clyde had outlived the age he was born into and found himself in a strange world where mountains had guidebooks and climbers didn't pack pistols. One image shows Clyde in 1970, the year he made his last back-country trip, at the age of 85, sitting on a box in front of a campfire. The hat, at least, is where it belongs.

Mr. Ybarra is the Journal's extreme sports correspondent.

Fortney was the only dis-





Maureen Cates, shown above left in 1920s vintage hiking attire, and Peter Ireland, shown above right in his "Norman Clyde" outfit, will be two of the four hiking history buffs at the Eastern California Museum's Trail Dust and Duds event to display and share with visitors the early 20th century camping experience. The free event will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22. Photos courtesy Eastern California Museum

Hikers step back in time

Museum event features interactive display of early 20th century camping

Register Staff

The public is invited to a unique event that mixes history, storytelling and camp cooking from 4-7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22, at the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

The program, titled, "Hot Dog! It's Trail Dust and Duds: Early 20th Century Campsite Gear and Garments and a Camp Cookout," will feature four history buffs decked out in authentic hiking and camping gear from the early 1900s.

One of the history buffs will be playing Norman Clyde, perhaps the most famous (or "infamous") of the Eastern Sierra hikers of that era.

Clyde was the epitome of "roughing it."

He rose to fame in the mountaineering world in the 1920s and 1930s by recording more than 100 first ascents in the Sierra, and more than 130 in his climbing career, which spanned four decades. Clyde was instrumental as a guide and leader of the Sierra Club's High Trips, which brought hundreds of people to the Sierra and promoted the region and its natural wonders. Besides being among the first climbers to summit virtually all of the Sierra's significant peaks, Clyde helped introduce and teach basic rope climbing techniques to other Sierra Club climbers. That advance, though crude by today's standards, opened the way for tackling more challenging, technical routes, such as the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney in 1931.

And he did it all under the weight of an 80-lb. backpack.

The type of equipment and gear found in a turn-of-the-century campsite will also be featured at the Aug. 22 program, and guests will be able to enjoy free hot dogs, s'mores and drinks (bring your own chair).

The step back in time, literally, will be held on the grounds of the Eastern California Museum, 155 N. Grant St., two blocks west of the Historic Courthouse in Independence. Admission is free. Call 878-0258 for more information.



Petee Ireland
7-11-2010
Lon Chaney Cabin



NORMAN CLYDE ON BEAR CREEK SPIRE

THREE TRIPS TO THE SUMMIT, ONE PACK ALMOST LOST

BY ANDY SELTERS

At the head of Rock Creek, a twenty-minute drive south of Mammoth, high peaks of the Sierra backbone form one of our area's most admired and toothiest skylines. Among the molars nearly fourteen thousand feet high, there rises a particularly cuspy pyramid: Bear Creek Spire. It's a focus of thousands of photo-snapping tourists and hikers, and it has some of the Sierra's greatest climbing history, because inscribed all over it is the name of Norman Clyde.

Clyde is the Sierra's all-time climbing pioneer. He came to Independence in the 1920s, a heartbroken widower, to teach school and climb peaks. In 1925 he summitted forty-eight of them, and the next season he topped out on sixty. He had a bit of a temper though, and in 1927 he scared away some rowdy students with pistol shots. So ended his teaching career, and so began a nearly full-time life in the mountains, one of the most extensive climbing careers in North American history.

Bear Creek Spire, he wrote, is "perhaps the least known of the finer peaks of the southern Sierra Nevada." This was 1931, before miners made this area more accessible by building the road up Rock Creek.

Clyde decided it was past due for him to go investigate the striking peak he'd seen many times from summits afar. It was October, though, and snow that already coated the high country would make climbing a bit treacherous. Even so, Clyde started out of Pine Creek and hiked to a camp, probably at Bear Lake.

He figured he'd circle the base of the spire to climb the west side, the only route that others had used before. The first climb ever up the peak had been just eight years previous. Hermann Ulrichs, another of North America's great pioneering climbers, had strayed from his Boy Scout troop and made his first climb ever, but that's another story.

When Clyde arrived at Bear Creek Spire he was under the northeast face. From afar, this (and most sides of the peak) look too imposing. But looking up, Clyde could see that there were ledges and blocky buttresses he could probably climb. A cloudy sky and a short autumn day suggested that a faster, more direct route would be an advantage. So up he went, angling right on ramps, up chutes and across ribs. He made it to the summit with just enough daylight left to find his way down the short pitches of Ulrich's original route, and to hustle over a col and back to camp.

Over the winter Clyde decided that that had been a really fine climb, and in the spring he ventured to go back and do it again. The winter had been a heavy one, though, and when he looked up at his route again he saw big, white blankets of snow hanging on the steep face and baking in the sun, all too ready to avalanche.

But to the right he saw a subtle, rocky arête. If he could climb that, he would be on safe, if steeper, ground the whole way. He'd have to negotiate a cliff at the bottom, but after that it looked like he could climb on the blocky, exhilarating prow all the way to the top.

Any avalanches would roar down to the side. At the lower cliff he found a chimney to wriggle up, and then he went left, onto the arête. As he predicted, the climbing was not too difficult, and his nailed boots clinked and scraped as he made his way up the ladder-like rib.

The snowfield he'd started from receded farther and farther beneath his feet, but two-thirds of the way up, steep blocks forced him to veer across the left flank of the spine. It looked like he could reach one of the high ledges he'd climbed a few months before, but it was better to stay off the snow, so when he could, he veered back to the crest of the arête. Now he was near the summit, but when he poked his head onto the crest, a fierce wind blasted him back. The classic spring gale made it unwise to totter up the last of the exposed crest, so he retreated to look for a more sheltered connection to the top of the northeast face.

He followed a ledge that dead-ended at a chimney. The slot looked climbable, but it was narrow, and he'd have to haul his pack behind him. Now, many who have heard about Norman Clyde know that he was not bashful about carrying extra odds and ends, like cast-iron pans, multiple cameras and revolvers and hardback copies of Homer in Greek.

For summit climbs, he trimmed down his loads, but still he climbed with a substantial kit. Here he took off the sack, pulled out the rope, and as he uncoiled the line he heard a scraping noise. He turned to see his pack sliding away. It tumbled off and skidded down snow slopes, and then launched over cliffs and disappeared.

He kept watching for it. "Far below it reappeared, bounding down over another snow slope some five hundred feet in width, and finally coming to rest at the edge of a cliff. 'That's the end of camera, binoculars, etc.,' I thought."

He coiled the rope back over his shoulder, and went on to the top. Ducking back from the driving wind, he descended the northeast arête he'd just climbed, hoping to find a way to traverse over to regain what remained of his gear. However, he couldn't find a reasonable way across, and he returned to camp.

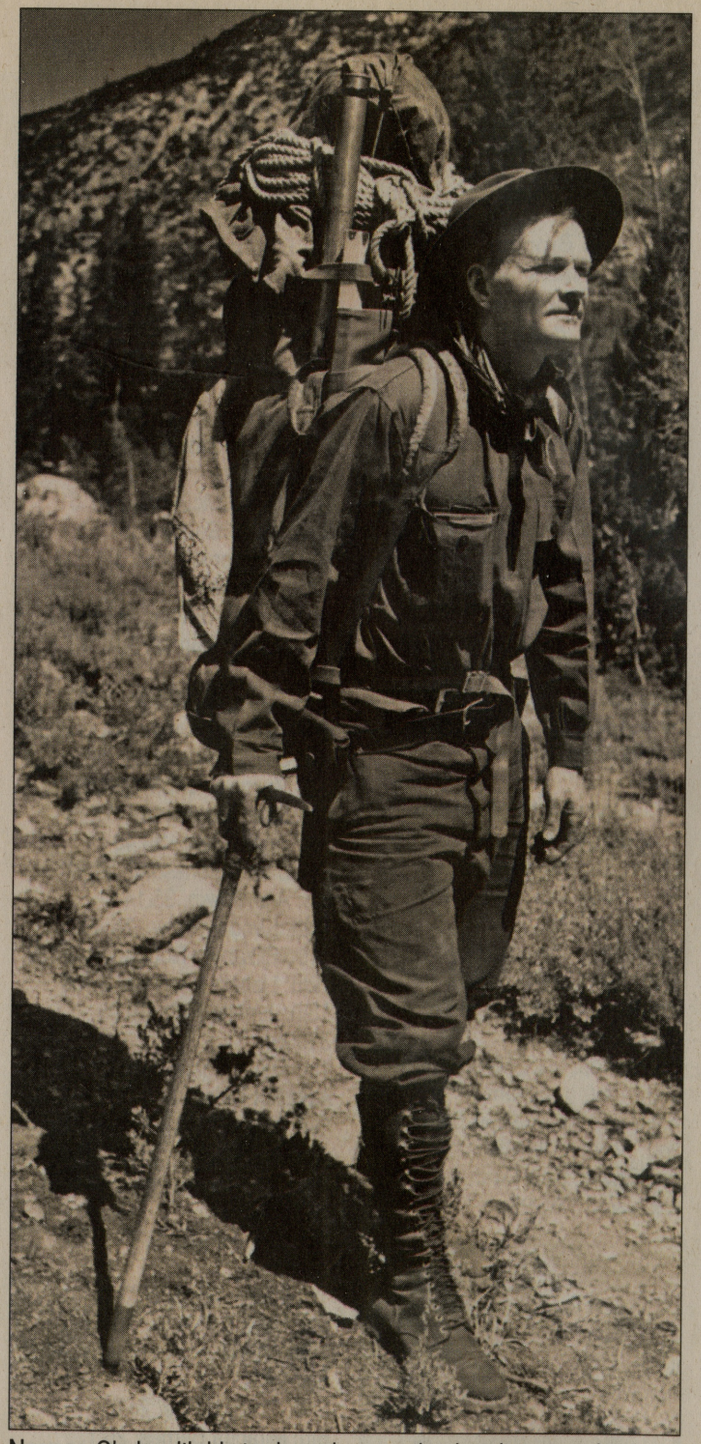
The following day he came back and climbed up the cliff at the start of the northeast arête, and from there he could traverse over to his pack. What had looked like strewn rocks he found to be "various items of my equipment, most of them in a more or less damaged condition....One lens was missing from the binoculars...[but camera] lenses and shutter speed seemed intact, and an automatic pistol, carried for collecting purposes, was apparently none the worse for the thousand-foot combination of drops and glissades.

"Being only about a thousand feet below the summit...I climbed [Bear Creek Spire] for the third time, finding the day much more pleasant than the preceding."

Clyde noticed that the headwall to the east of the northeast arête was also climbable, and he figured that if snow conditions had been safe, he would have completed a third new route.

Andy Selters is a well-known mountaineer, photographer and writer. He is the author of "Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering."

Schedule set for Norman Clyde birthday bash



Norman Clyde with his trademark campaign hat, ice axe, pistol and back-breaking pack. The Eastern California Museum will host an event next Saturday, April 19 celebrating the legendary mountaineer's 129th birthday.

Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

Event includes informal fun walk & backpack challenge, guest speakers, food, cake and displays

Special to The Inyo Register

Bluegrass music, free food and cake, a "Pack With Legs" fun walk, vintage camping and climbing exhibits, and guest speakers will all be part of the first annual Norman Clyde Birthday Bash, scheduled for Saturday, April 19, from 11 a.m. to whenever the band stops playing, at the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

The event honors pioneering mountaineer Norman Clyde, who recorded 100 first ascents in the Sierra in the 1920s and 1930s, and was a fixture in the Sierra Club's High Trips, which introduced hundreds of people to the High Sierra. Clyde lived in Independence and Big Pine when he was not roaming the Sierra for weeks at a time, carrying his legendary 80-pound pack. Clyde would have been 129 years old this year.

The day will start at 11 a.m. with an informal fun walk. Participants are encouraged to carry a pack for the moderate walk along Independence Creek and through town. Those carrying the heaviest packs will be rewarded with a prize.

Local bluegrass band Idle Hands will start entertaining around noon, and free hot dogs and beans will be available, with birthday cake for dessert. Beverages, beer and wine will also be provided. Donations will be appreciated.

Numerous speakers will recall their encounters with Clyde. Giving brief talks will be Andy Selters, Phil Pister and Norm Milleron. Dennis Kruska will present a video interview with Glen Dawson, who climbed with Clyde as a young man and, with Clyde, led the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney in the 1930s.

> *"Clyde recorded 100 first ascents in the Sierra in the 1920s and 1930s, and was a fixture in the Sierra Club's High Trips ... he lived in Independence and Big Pine when he was not roaming the Sierra for weeks at a time, carrying his legendary 80-pound pack."*

There will be displays of vintage camping gear from the 1930s and backpacking gear from the 1940s and 1950s, and displays of vintage climbing gear by SP Parker, Howie Schwartz and Neil Satterfield.

Memorial Norman Clyde T-shirts will be on sale.

The Eastern California Museum is located at 151 N. Grant St. in Independence. For more information, call 760-878-0258, check the museum's Facebook page or www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum.

Birthday bash celebrates Norman Clyde, a Sierra original

4-17-2014



Norman Clyde in the prime of his outdoor life, looking as imposing as the granite peaks of the Sierra which he helped scale in the 1930s, with the help of just a rope, hob-nailed boots, his ice axe and a few other pioneering climbers such as Glen Dawson and Jules Eichorn.

Live music, free food, guest speakers and heavy pack contest planned

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

Norman Clyde remains a larger-than-life figure whose accomplishments as a mountaineer and climber are sometimes overshadowed today by a focus on a small number of personal quirks and amazing accomplishments that have also added to his status as a legendary figure in the history of the Eastern Sierra.

To commemorate and celebrate all aspects of Clyde's legacy, the Eastern California Museum is hosting the first annual Norman Clyde Birthday Bash on Saturday April 19, from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., with a day of bluegrass music by local favorites, Idle Hands, and free food and cake, exhibits and speakers recalling their personal encounters and experiences with Clyde,

Clyde's life resonates with many people today because he was "living the dream" before that hackneyed phrase ever came into being. He spent the bulk of his life roaming the High Sierra as a climber and mountain guide and generally doing what he wanted to do, unencumbered by such trifles as a permanent, full-time job, a wife or family, or the need to socialize or worry about what other people thought of him or his lifestyle.

He was maybe one of the first successful "climbing bums" whose life has served as model for thousands who have followed, quite literally, in his footsteps as they, too, trek into the Sierra backcountry looking either for a challenge posed by rock and granite, or solitude and the beauty of an unspoiled landscape.

Numerous elements of Clyde's life and exploits in the mountains have reached almost mythical proportions. He first gained fame as a climber with speed ascents of Mt. Shasta, and by climbing 36 peaks in 36 days in Glacier National Park. He was married to Winnie Bolster, whose death in 1919 left Clyde a life-long widower. During the 1920s, Clyde went on epic climbing binges, bagging dozens of first ascents at a stretch, which cemented his reputation as a mountaineer. He would eventually record more than 100 first accents in the Sierra. No one else even came close.

In the 1930s, he was a key figure in the Sierra Club's effort to train mountaineers on the use of ropes and other technical climbing techniques. Thus, he added "firsts" on technical climbing routes, including the East Face of Mt. Whitney, to his catalog of achievements. His long association with the Sierra Club was solidified as he became a notable presence during the club's High Trips, which brought hundreds of people to the Sierra every summer.

But the off-mountain legend also was growing. Clyde was a college-educated school teacher of unbending standards, and gained notoriety when, as principal of the Owens Valley School in Independence, he actually shot a car carrying young men he believed were out to vandalize the school.

He resigned and took up the job he would have the rest of his life: writer, photographer, trip leader, speaker, climber and guide, with notable paying stints as a one-man search and rescue team who never failed to reach a plane crash or the body of a fallen climber or lost hiker.

Then there was his pack. It was an 80-pound extravaganza of canvas, wood, straps and rope that contained boots, iron cookware, extra pistols, food, bedding and books in Greek, Latin and German. He became "The Pack With Legs," or "The Pack Who Walked Like a Man."

The museum's birthday bash will begin by paying homage to "The Pack" with a fun walk. Folks are asked to bring a backpack and carry a little weight on the moderate walk along Independence Creek and through town. Prizes, including a replica Norman Clyde campaign hat, will be awarded to those carrying the most weight or with the best costume. The walk will start at the museum, 155 N. Grant St., at 11 a.m., but anyone can complete the loop during the day to earn a handshake and maybe a hat.

Local acoustic, bluegrass band Idle Hands will start playing around noon. Free hot dogs, chips, drinks and birthday cake will be on hand, and donations will be accepted for beer and wine, provided by the Friends of the Eastern California Museum.

Starting at 1:45 p.m., and continuing throughout the afternoon, a number of local speakers will offer brief comments on Norman or talk about their memorable encounters with Clyde.

Speakers include (in no particular order): Author and climber Andy Selters, who wrote the text for the Museum's permanent Norman Clyde exhibit; Phil Pister, retired Department of Fish and Wildlife supervisor; Norm Milleron, a friend of Clyde's who also penned a small book about their friendship; and Don Lauria.

At 2 p.m., the band will take a break so everyone can catch a special presentation. Dennis Kruska will show a video interview with a spry, 102-year-old Glen Dawson, who as a young man in the 1930s, climbed with Clyde and, with Clyde, led the first ascent of the East Face of Mt. Whitney.

Peter Ireland will pitch his vintage, 1930s camp for the day, and talk with people about the gear and other elements that made up a comfy tent camp.

NORMAN CLYDE BIRTHDAY BASH

NORMAN CLYDE
A SIERRA ORIGINAL

Join the party on SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2014

at the EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

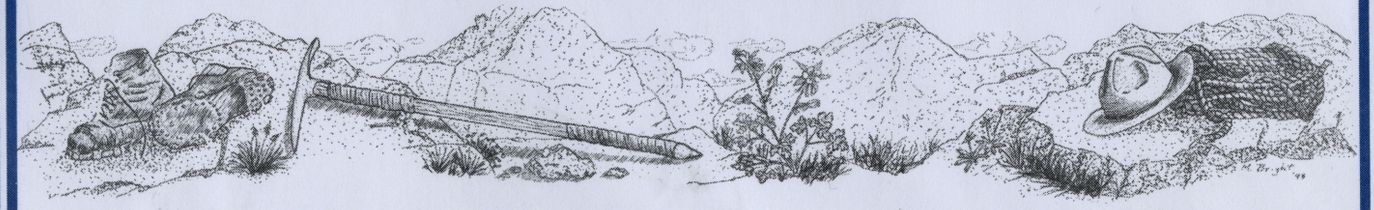
Kick the day off at 11:00 with the "Pack with Legs" Fun Walk (< 1 mile).
Don't forget to pack your anvil—we'll be giving out a prize for the heaviest pack!

Free Food and Drinks: hot dogs, pork & beans, chips, and more!

Vintage Camping and Outdoor Gear Exhibits courtesy of Peter Ireland

Live Music provided all afternoon by Idle Hands

Presentations and talks by Denny Kruska, Phil Pister, and Dan Lauria



For directions or more information call (760) 878-0258.

Happy birthday, Norman Clyde

Birthday bash celebrates Norman Clyde: a Sierra original

4-18-2015

Second annual event includes free BBQ, displays, guest speakers and more

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

Norman Clyde remains a larger-than-life figure whose accomplishments as a mountaineer and climber are sometimes overshadowed today by a focus on a small number of personal quirks and amazing accomplishments that have also added to his status as a legendary figure in the history of the Eastern Sierra.

To commemorate and celebrate all aspects of Clyde's legacy, the Eastern California Museum is hosting the second annual Norman Clyde Birthday Bash on Saturday April 18, with a day of bluegrass music by local favorites, Idle Hands, free food and cake and local speakers discussing Clyde's place in the pantheon of climbers, mountaineers and, yes, grumpy old slackers. Festivities run from from 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Clyde's life resonates with many people today because he was "living the dream" before that hackneyed phrase ever came into being. He spent the bulk of his life roaming the High Sierra as a climber and mountain guide and generally doing what he wanted to do, unencumbered by such trifles as a permanent, full-time job, a wife or family, or the need to socialize or worry about what other people thought of him or his lifestyle.

He was maybe one of the first successful "climbing bums" whose life has served as model for thousands who have followed, quite literally, in his footsteps as they, too, trek into the Sierra backcountry looking either for a challenge posed by rock and granite, or solitude and the beauty of an unspoiled landscape.

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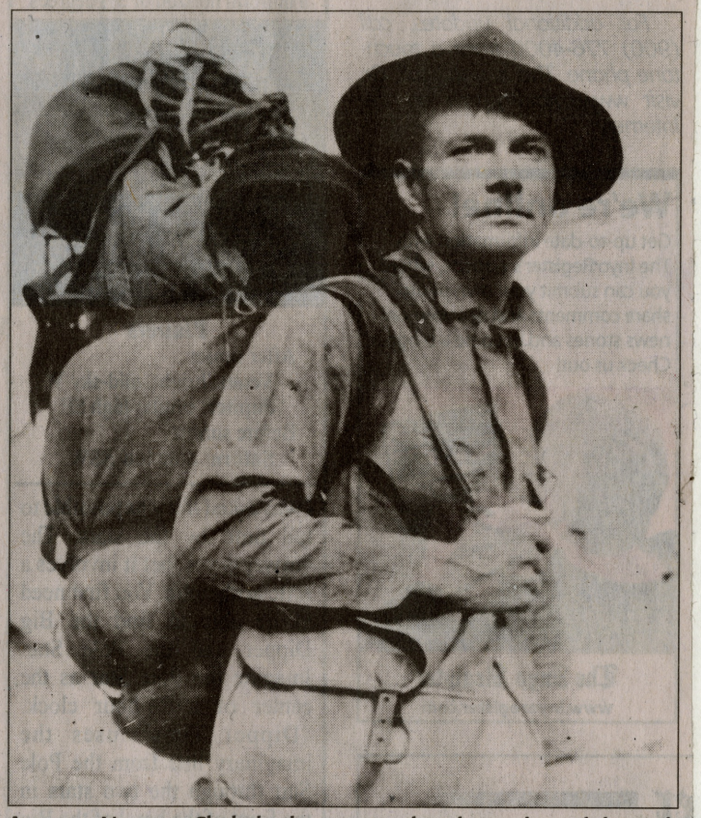

A young Norman Clyde in the 1920s, when he undertook legendary climbing sprees in the Eastern Sierra.

Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

In the 1930s, he was a key figure in the Sierra Club's effort to train mountaineers on the use of ropes and other technical climbing techniques. Thus, he added "firsts" on technical climbing routes, including the East Face of Mt. Whitney, to his catalog of achievements. His long asso-

See PARTY ▶ Page 3

PARTY

Continued from front page

ciation with the Sierra Club was solidified as he became a notable presence during the club's High Trips, which brought hundreds of people to the Sierra every summer.

But the off-mountain legend also was growing. Clyde was a college-educated school teacher of unbending standards, and gained notoriety when, as principal of the Owens Valley School in Independence, he actually shot at a car carrying young men he believed were out to vandalize the school.

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Local acoustic, bluegrass band Idle Hands will start playing around noon. Free hot dogs, chips, drinks and birthday cake will be available, and donations will be accepted for beer and wine, provided by the Friends of the Eastern California Museum.

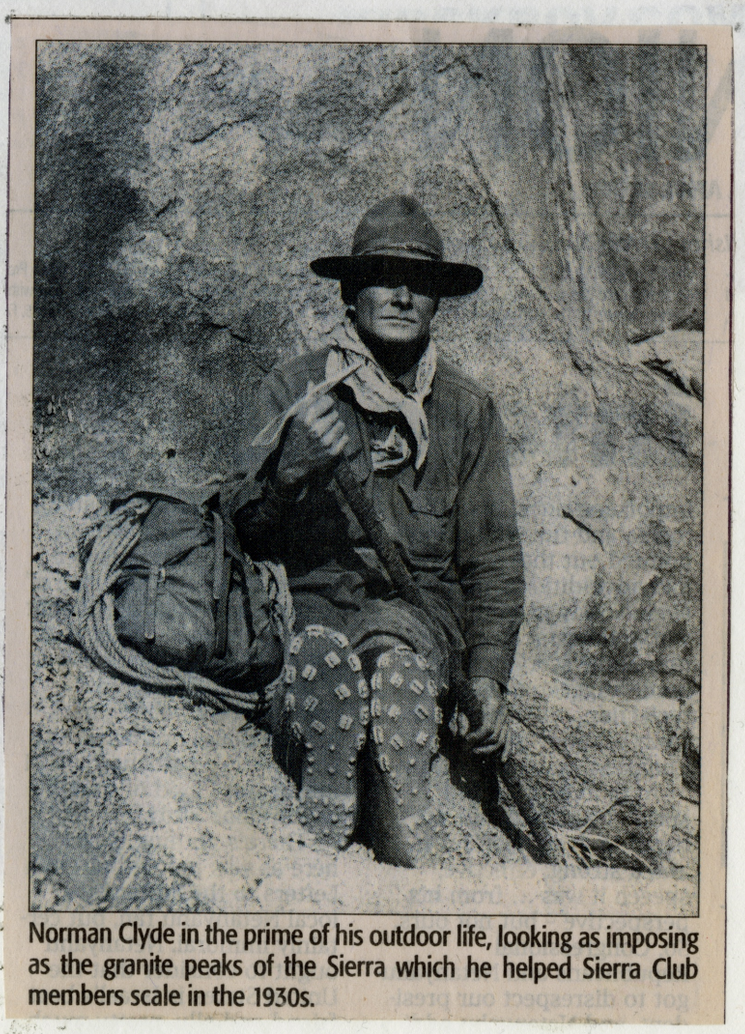
Starting at around 2 p.m. several local speakers will offer their insights into Clyde's extraordinary life and how it impacted the history of climbing, helped introduce the wider public to the Sierra and inspired waves of explorers.

Speakers include (in no particular order): Author and climber Andy Selters, who wrote the text for the museum's permanent Norman Clyde exhibit; Phil Pister, biologist and retired Department of Fish and Wildlife supervisor who had numerous amusing encounters with Clyde; and author and publisher Wynne Benti, owner of Spotted Dog Press, which publishes Clyde's trademark work, "Close Ups of the High Sierra."

Dennis Kruska will offer a more structured presentation with a slide show and talk about some of Clyde's more impressive climbing feats.

Providing some perspective on the advances in climbing gear will be several local climbers and guides, including SP Parker, who will display vintage photos and gear, and Howie Schwartz and Neil Satterfield, who will have vintage gear on display.

For more information, call (760) 878-0258, check the museum's Facebook page or www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum.



Norman Clyde in the prime of his outdoor life, looking as imposing as the granite peaks of the Sierra which he helped Sierra Club members scale in the 1930s.

PEAK BAGGERS PLEASE NOTE

Please do not take or remove this photocopy for any reason or under any circumstance. This copy has been placed here for the enjoyment of all climbers: it is not a register to sign. Photographs of this register are recommended and encouraged.

Anyone desiring a copy of this record is welcome to contact the register committee for one.

DO NOT TAKE THIS COPY

Removal of this copy will deprive others of seeing this unique history.

This photocopy has been made from the original register in the Sierra Club Archives Mountain Summit Registers Files. (U.C. Berkeley, Bancroft Library)



Norman Clyde

1885 - 1972

Sierra Register Committee
P.O. Box #3141
Merced, California
95344 -1141

Robin Ingraham, Jr.
(Register Committee)

Mark Hoffman
(Register Committee)

Keep Norman smiling,
Leave this register on the summit where it was found

SIERRA REGISTER COMMITTEE

Post Office Box 3141 • Merced, Ca. • 95344-1141

Dedicated to the Preservation of Mountaineering History

1988 OFFICIAL REPORT
On activities conducted by the Sierra Register Committee for The Preservation of Historic Summit Registers Sierra Nevada

New aluminum register boxes	EICHORN PINNACLE (Western summit of Cathedral Pk.)
Number of historic registers placed in new containers	Two (Location withheld for preservation purposes)
Registers removed from summits (Either full or weather damaged)	CLYDE MINARET 1955-1982 MT. ROBINSON 1934-88 DEVIL'S CRAG #5 1934-88
Registers obtained from other climbers to take to archives	RODGERS PEAK 1897-1975 MILESTONE MOUNTAIN 1940-1988 EAST VIDETTE 1910-1978 (Plus several others which were not of historic significance to mention)
New registers placed on summits where none was present	ECHO PEAK #4 EICHORN PINNACLE (register box) CLYDE SPIRES (North summit) RAMBAUD PEAK DEVIL'S CRAG #9 DEVIL'S CRAG #8
Upgraded containers	MT ROBINSON PICTURE PEAK HUNGRY PACKER PEAK DEVIL'S CRAG #5
Register photocopies placed	Withholding information at present time

The summer of climbing ended unpredictably early, August 11, 1988. When climbing in the Devil's Crags on a survey of routes and records, Mark Hoffman was killed in a rock slide while descending from Devil's Crag #8. Mark Hoffman was the co-founder of the Sierra Register Committee. The program will be continued in his memory beginning in the summer of 1989. All future register boxes will have In Memory of Mark Hoffman engraved inside the box.

Report prepared by Robin Ingraham, Jr. (Director of S.R.C.)

Robin Ingraham Jr.

SIERRA REGISTER COMMITTEE

Post Office Box 3141 • Merced, Ca. • 95344-1141

Dedicated to the Preservation of Mountaineering History

The Formation of the Sierra Register Committee

Mark Hoffman and I met each other through mutual friends in summer of 1985. Shortly afterward, we became steady climbing partners and began to develop a very special friendship. Out of the climbing experiences and ideas we shared together, grew a unique interest in mountaineering history. During our quest to locate historic summit registers, we ascended Midway Mountain in the Sierra's Great Western Divide in 1987. Upon reaching the summit, we discovered the mountain's original Sierra Club register had been stolen in 1979. Since this register wsa placed by Francis Farquhar, William Colby and Robert Price during the 1912 "High Trip" and subsequently spanned many decades of Sierra Nevada mountaineering, it was obviously one of the Sierra's priceless registers.

When we returned from the Great Western Divide we began a lengthy search for assistance to help recover the register. We were simply shocked to learn the Sierra Club was not interested in pursuing the case due to "a lack of time", but the National Park Officials in Kings Canyon/Sequoia N.P. felt quite different. In the eyes of the National Park Service, stealing historic mountaineering summit registers is a violation of the Antiquities Act and is, therefore, a Federal Offense. However, enforcement of such thefts is obviously a problem in itself.

In November of 1987 our quest for more information uncovered several interrelated problems which threatened the preservation and well being of all historic registers on summits. In brief, acquiring information about the Sierra Club Mountain Summit Register Archives is exceedingly difficult, Sierra Club aluminum registers boxes have been stolen from summits and no one was replacing the rusted tobbacco cans and similar containers which have contained some registers for over fifty years! At this point many of Dave Brower's fragile registers are water damaged beyond viewing, little less signing.

All of these dilemas contribute to the loss of our mountaineering history, but it appears the most severe problem seems to be the grey haze that hovers around the archives. Mark and I realized that many climbers have removed registers from summits, since they were either full or weather damaged, presumably intending to take them to the archives, but were unable to obtain the crucial information. The result has been a grave loss of many historic records.

With the problems outlined, Mark and I began work on the solutions. Before drafting a final program we agreed it would be beneficial to get some expert advice by talking to some of the Sierra's climbing pioneers. Between the months of February and April 1988, we met with Dave Brower, Jules Eichorn, Dick Leonard and Hervey Voge to discuss the problems and solutions at length. In April of 1988, Mark and I established the Sierra Register Committee to carry out a program we call the "SIERRA NEVADA REGISTER PRESERVATION PROGRAM". A short overview is as follows:

1. Bolt down all Sierra Club register boxes to the summits to prevent thefts.
2. Place instructional cards in all historic summit registers. Cards give the location and address of the archives. "PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE REGISTER UNTIL FULL. When this register becomes full or is clearly in peril of loss caused by the weather & elements please mail it to: Manuscripts Dept., University of California at Berkeley - Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Ca., 94720 so it can be preserved in the Sierra Club Archives Mountain Summit Registers. Authors note: These files can be viewed by anyone by requisitioning the archives at the Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley.

3. Replace all deteriorated register containers with P.V.C. containers to increase the life span of historic registers. "Preservation begins at the source - on the summit." Outdated register containers are: tobacco cans, sardine cans, glass jars, etc. (Registers which are not full or weather damaged will be left on the summit. REGISTERS SHOULD NEVER BE REMOVED UNLESS THEY ARE EITHER FULL OR CLEARLY IN PERIL OF LOSS.)
4. Place photocopies of original registers on the summits from which they came. All copies will be placed in their own individual containers (P.V.C.) and have cover sheets attached.
5. Have manufactured three aluminum "SIERRA CLUB" type register boxes a year to place on summit deserving of such.
6. Place new registers when and wherever needed. Upgraded containers will also be left if necessary.

In our first summer at work, we were quite successful. We saved several registers from decomposing into obscurity, upgraded several containers and obtained three historic registers from other climbers to take to the Sierra Club Archives. The registers obtained from outside sources had been removed as long ago as 1975, but remained lost because information concerning the archives is so difficult to obtain. (The instructional cards that are being placed in historic registers should help correct the lack of awareness problem.) By mid summer the fruits of our efforts became obvious. Our reward was satisfaction knowing were accomplishing our goals to preserve mountaineering history. (See the attached report for detailed information for the year 1988.)

Even though we were so successful during our first summer to save the registers, our quest was not without tragedy. On August 11, 1988 Mark Hoffman and I were climbing in the Devil's Crags in a "Survey of Routes and Records". While descending from Crag 8, Mark stepped on a refrigerator-size talus block that slid under his weight. Before he could jump from the rock, a giant rock slide began to develop around him. I watched helplessly as he was carried down the class 2 chute for 150' before he went out of sight over a fifty foot cliff. After I reached him lying on the talus, I wrapped him in all of the clothing we had with us to minimize body heat loss and ran for help. Three and a half hours later, I reached the back country ranger station in LeConte Canyon at 8:00 pm, twelve miles from the trail-head. To my dismay, I found a note taped to the rangers door stating, "RANGER OUT ON PATROL, WILL RETURN IN THE AFTERNOON." In desperation, I entered his cabin in search of a hand radio - there was none. With no choice left, I left the ranger a note and accepted my chore to walk out twelve miles in the dark over Bishop Pass, a 3,200' elevation gain, to get help. I knew the odds were against me reaching the trail-head alive that night as I had no coat, no food and had been up since 4:30 am, but Mark's life was possibly at stake. If I didn't make it, I'd die trying. Luckily, the ranger arrived just before I departed. The following morning we flew a helicopter into the Devil's Crags to rescue Mark. He didn't survive the night.

At first thought, I never wanted to climb again. However, as my pain and torment began to fade with time, I began to realize if I did quit, I would be giving up part of my best friend and the registers would again be in peril of loss. After all, could I sacrifice a program which Mark and I together put our hearts into? Not only did we establish this program on our own, we bought all the materials at our own expense. I realize my only choice is to continue our program; it will now be in memory of Mark Hoffman. Mark's passing has had a more profound affect on me than anything I've ever gone through. I've realized all I can do is accept the way things are and go on. Mark wouldn't want it any other way. He'll never be forgotten.

Anyone with questions, comments; or desiring to aid us in our project, is welcome to contact the SIERRA REGISTER COMMITTEE, c/o ROBIN INGRAHAM, JR. (Director), P.O. BOX #3141, MERCED, CA., 95344-1141

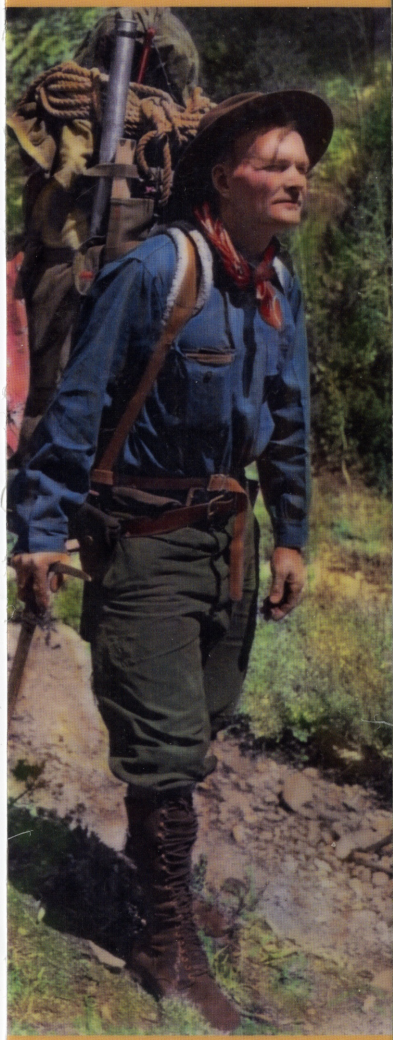
Sincerely,

Robin Ingraham Jr.

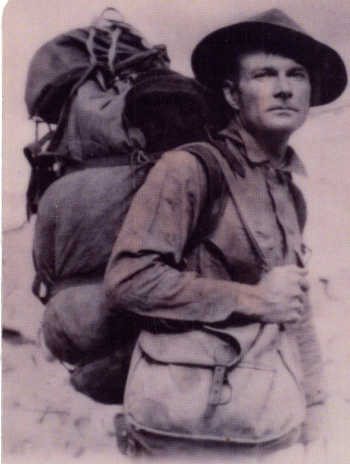
Robin Ingraham, JR.



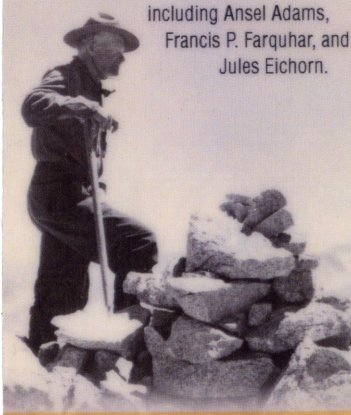
NORMAN CLYDE



The PACK with LEGS



Legendary mountaineer Norman Clyde lived in the Owens Valley but spent most of his time roaming the high Sierra. In the 1920s and '30s he recorded more than 130 first ascents and topped out on every 14,000-foot peak in California (all but one are in the Sierra). He was an indispensable guide on the popular Sierra Club High Trips, and he traversed the backcountry with notables including Ansel Adams, Francis P. Farquhar, and Jules Eichorn.



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