

# Rock Rendezvous

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## In this Issue:

This month crept up on me and so I'm not as prepared as I usually am - apologies for not having a Climber of the Month, this month. I do have 2 trips reports though!

I will be better prepared next month though and the deadline for articles for Oct.'s newsletter will be Friday, Sept. 29.

Enjoy!

Linda



## TRIP REPORTS:

# Tahoe with the Rock Rugrats

By Linda Leung



*Madison hangs out with Mom and Natasha*

If you feel your climbing needs some rejuvenation or you need some inspiration from new climbers, try climbing with the Rock Rugrats. Scott and I spent a brilliant weekend in August climbing with Ben Smith, Liana Kirk and their crew of Rock Rugrats, Ben and Liana's 2-year-old daughter Madison, 9-year-old niece Natasha and 13-year-old nephew Jordan. The kids' enthusiasm and endurance all weekend put us "senior rugrats" to shame.

We stayed at Ben and Liana's beautiful cabin in South Lake Tahoe, which is big enough to sleep a handful of grown-ups and their kids. We rose on Saturday morning after a good night's sleep on a nice comfy bed (what, no hard surface and sleeping mat?) and met up with the rest of the gang over breakfast to discuss where we were going to climb that day. We decided to try out a place



where Ben and Liana had hiked a few weeks prior and had seen some crags that looked interesting. After packing up our fresh, home-made sandwiches we took the short drive to the trailhead at Tamarack Crags, off of Blue Lakes Road in Alpine County. The parking lot was pretty empty, so we knew there wouldn't be lines at the climb. In fact, we're not sure that many people actually climb at those crags, so we were excited that the kids might be able to make some first ascents! (Note: Don't hang out in the parking lot for too long unless you like being a pre-lunch snack for mosquitoes!)



*Making her first ascent: Natasha prepares for her first climb on real rock as Ben belays*

After a short ramble from the trailhead we hit some crags that Scott and Ben thought would be good for us Rugrats to climb. So off they went to set up some climbs while I went over some climbing basics with Natasha and Jordan (Liana and Madison had stayed at the car where Madison slept off the excitement of the morning. They joined us again just in time for lunch.)

Natasha and Jordan had climbed at the gym a handful of times and were keen to try climbing on real rock for the first time. Brother and sister were no strangers to mountain activities, having just got back from a Canada vacation where they went on daily 9-mile hikes!

Up on the rock first was Natasha who had to wear three pairs of socks to fill out her loan rock shoes. Not that having her toes a few inches away from the tip of her shoes stopped her from conquering all the climbs she attempted that day. In fact, I think the only time she didn't finish a climb was on Sunday at the Pie Shop after she had already climbed all the routes that Ben and

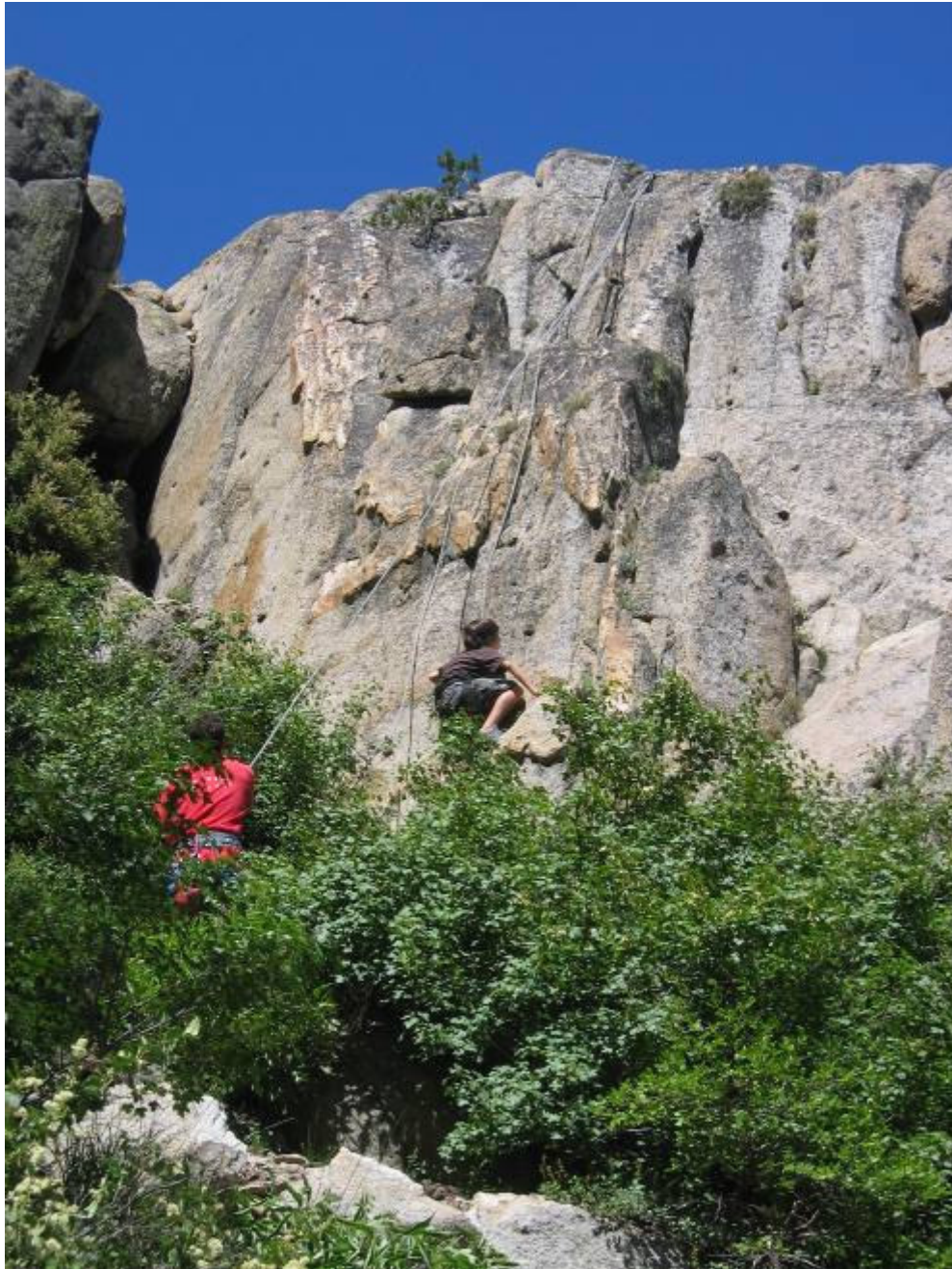






Scott had set up. And that was because her ankle wasn't up for completing the steep slab – though she insisted that she would've finished the climb if her ankle hadn't begun to feel tired. I believed her though it was a climb I couldn't complete and I couldn't say that I had ankle problems.

Not to be outdone by his little sis, Jordan raced up every climb that Natasha completed. Sibling rivalry at its best!



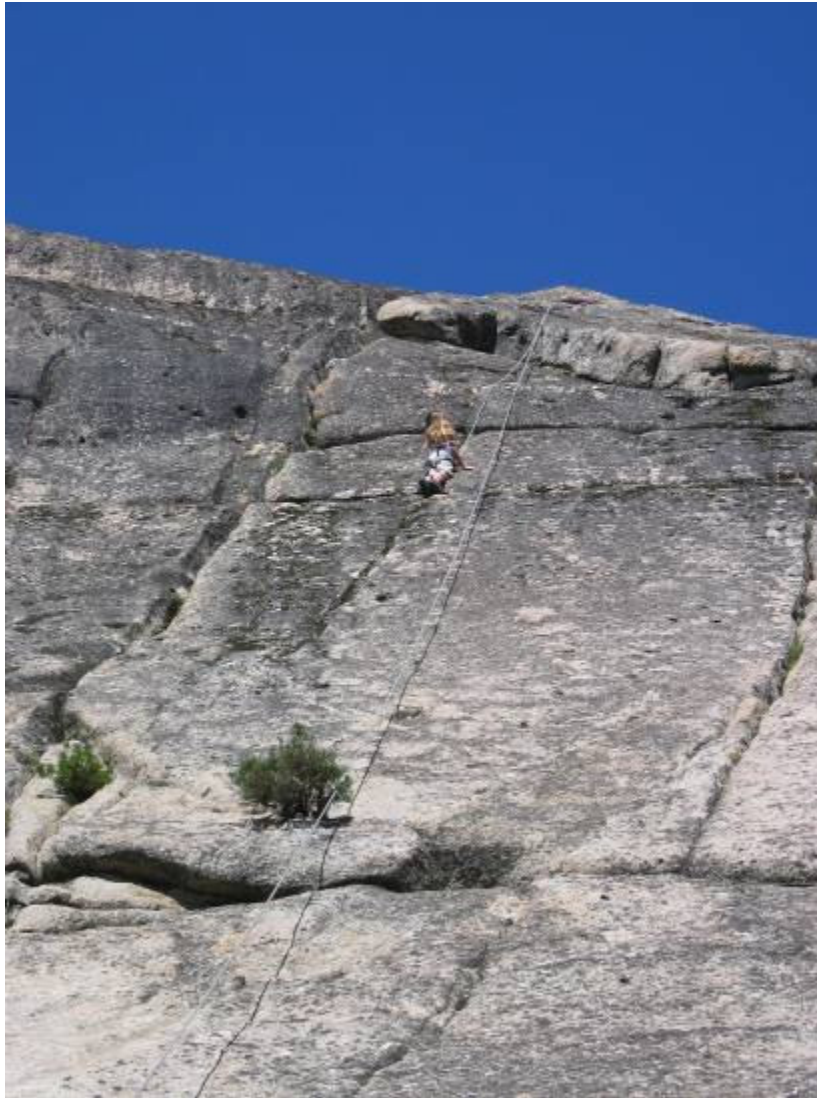
*Scott belays as Jordan makes his first moves*





The crags were an ideal location for kids to climb, particularly if you have small kids, as the hike in is pretty easy and flat, and the climbs are not too far from the parking lot.

The next day was a gloriously sunny morning spent on the rocks at Pie Shop, an area that's close to Ben and Liana's cabin. This location requires a little scramble to some good climbs and views of the roads out of Tahoe (you can climb while keeping an eye on the state of the traffic to decide when would be a good time to head home).



*Natasha: Just a few more steps to go!*

After another morning of some good climbing, it was soon time to head back to the cabin to freshen up before the drive home. Being able to have a nice hot shower after a day's climbing and not feeling icky on the drive back home was a very nice feeling!

Thanks to Ben, Liana and the Rock Rugrats for a fabulous weekend in Tahoe. The Rock Rugrats have two more trips organized this season; check out the dates in the Upcoming Trips page, grab your kids (or your neighbor's kids) and have some fun!



# Weekend warriors get Slab Happy on Pywiack but see dark omens on Matthes Crest

By Sam McGeehan, Aug. 30, 2006

This weekend's mini-adventure took me back up to Tuolumne Meadows with Scott Johnston. We had been discussing what to climb all week over emails, I wanted to do a long multi-pitch but Scott was worried about the forecast calling for thundershowers. We drove up to our club campground, found some space on the ground and rolled out our sleeping pads n' bags. In the middle of the night raindrops on our noses woke us up, we each pulled the tarp from below and threw it over our bags (down doesn't work well when wet. The rain let off after just a few minutes but this was not a good omen for the weekend.

## Pywiack Dome

The next morning was clear and bright, the granite domes were bright in the morning sunshine; this was more like the Sierra weather that we all love. We headed over to Pywiack Dome for some slab climbing on the dike route 5.9R. Turns out Scott and I hiked up the first pitch, this upset our call for who was going to get the run out crux pitch. Scott cruised the 5.9 crux and then found the wayward bolt so that he wouldn't have the 60' run out, only like thirty feet now kiddies. So Scott ended up with all of the best pitches on this route and all I got to do was one 5.7 pitch (only 3 bolts on that pitch but hey you're dike hiking) and a 5.4 hike. He said I could have all the best pitches on the next route, I had no idea what I singed on for as I grumbled, "Bet your ass,

I get the good leads" through my Dagwood sandwich filled mouth.

## Aqua Knobby

I had no idea that Scott had chosen Aqua Knobby 5.8R for our next trip up Pywiack Dome and since the spicy part was too be mine I was nervous. Aqua Knobby, if you haven't already been up this classic, goes up a nice near vertical water streak with good feet for your liebacking pleasure, you step over a roof and clip the a bolt then run it out for the diagonal crack. The only problem is that there are no more bolts and the feet get thinner on this slab, oh and a fall here probably means some messed up feet since you'll toss over the roof and onto the slab below. I haven't climbed anything that vertical in a long time since this is only my second weekend outside in six months so liebacking and placing gear had my full attention.

The slab part went well for me; I have this good/bad way of completely forgetting what gear I'm climbing above because I'm so focused on the rock in front of me. When I was moving the climbing felt really good but when I would stop to put in gear I would look at my feet and feel like I was standing on tiny knobs holding on by my finger tips, oh wait that was reality and I was overdosing.

After finishing up that climb by linking the rest we headed over to Tenaya Lake for a





nice refreshing dip. The water was actually a lot warmer than usual, this meant it was just cold instead of shockingly cold and it was a great end to the day.

Since the weather was held up well on Saturday we decided to go for it and try to do the entire length of Matthis Crest on Sunday, that would be 500' of vertical and a mile of traversing. Scott had done the first two thirds before but had to bail off early and wanted to finish it all.

### **Those yahoos!**

This meant waking up at 5:00 and two and half hours of hiking into the backcountry. We thought we were the first party on the route until we spotted some climbers coming up the talus slope behind us, "What the? Where did they come from, hurry up" were my thoughts, Scott as usual didn't say much. When we got to the base there were already two parties on the first pitch so we wasted no time and roped up. Turns out all of these yahoos had slept at the nice little lake at the base of the climb, slept in and still beat us to the base. Backcountry camping permit now that's the way to go for this climb but you would miss chatting with the R.R. members at camp.

Since the first few pitches are easy and there are 45 pitches of traversing to follow that we didn't have to think too hard about simul-climbing. Simul-Climbing is a bit more intense than belayed climbing since you don't have an anchor, only the gear placed between the two of you and if either falls you'll drag the other person across knobby the rock so it was nice to be doing this with a partner that I trust. Towards the end of the first three pitches I was climbing so fast it felt like I was running to keep up with Scott, I was breathing hard and figured he must have made it to easy ground since he was moving so fast. I didn't want to be the slow person in our party of two, especially since I wasn't the one placing gear so I climbed as fast as I possibly could. I came up over a

ridge and turns out Scott was sitting at a belay and has just been pulling in the slack! I thought I was trying to keep up with his fast feet and it was just his fast belaying skills!

At this point we noticed that there was rain falling a couple of miles away and an exposed ridge wearing a lot of metal gear is not the place you want to be if weather rolls in so it looked like Scott was going to be right after all and maybe we should have opted for a shorter climb closer to the road. We started moving quickly and made it to the Notch that marks the retreat point between the North and South summits where he had bailed and many parties do too.

Scott asked me what I wanted to do, I thought about it for a split second and said keep climbing, the last third is has the best climbing on the ridge or so we had heard. Since Scott is the more experience mountaineer I deferred to his judgment; he's the one who's read the book on clouds and weather formations and he felt we should wait a few minutes and see what develops before committing ourselves to the rest of the route. This sounded like an excellent idea to me because I felt like it was time for lunch, well second breakfast I guess since it was only 9:30. =)

### **A close call**

We hemmed and hawed for thirty minutes as we watched the clouds grow angry and dark in front of us. The thing was it wasn't coming towards us; it was forming up and storming in front of us about a mile off. We watched the storm move towards the meadows and knew it was soaking some of our friends but we were dry and safe so we decided to press on.

The next section was truly the best part of the climb, it involved some technical down climbing, reportedly 5.8 but it was well worth it because this section is the best climbing on the route. There is one part





where you're climbing across this wave of granite and holding onto the top of the cresting wave, I couldn't resist so I leaned further and further over the edge to see just how overhung this section was, talk about spooky exposure! I was at least ten feet out from the ridge proper with nothing but air below and granite slabs a long way down. Wow what a rush, I was giddy and giggly when I was looking over that edge. I told Scott he had to check it out for himself and I wish my camera battery wasn't dead because the image of Scott peering over the crest of the wave was so incredible (for some incredible pictures of Matthes Crest, head over to Supertopo.com).

Truly amazing climbing on a knife edge, you better make sure you don't get vertigo before climbing this one since there are a lot

of times when you walk along an edge no wider than your shoes and there's hundreds of feet of air on each side. Scott decided that this was one of the best climbs he's done in Tuolumne, it topped Crescent Arch but fell just behind 3rd Pillar of Dana. I would have to agree that this is one of the most unique climbs that I've done EVER.

We cruised through the alpine meadows and skied down the snow gullies back to the car by two o'clock, just in time for another dip in Tenaya Lake, what an awesome weekend. There was talk of doing Cathedral Peak on the way back to the car but we decided we had done enough climbing for the day so we turned the mighty Honda west and headed for tacos in Oakdale, Taqeria El Agave Baby!



## *UPCOMING TRIPS:*

Here are the trip dates for campsites that RR has booked until the end of the year. As usual, you'll be able to sign up on the Website for trips about a month before the trip date.

Happy trails!

<i>DATES</i>	<i>TRIP VENUE</i>
<b>9/1-9/3</b>	T-Meadows
<b>9/8-9/9</b>	Valley
<b>9/14-9/16</b>	T-Meadows group







<b>9/22-9/24</b>	T-Meadows and Upper Pines
<b>9/29-10/1</b> <b>* 9/29-10/1</b>	Upper Pines <b>* Calaveras Dome with Rock Rugsrats</b>
<b>10/6-10/8</b>	Upper Pines
<b>10/13-10/15</b> <b>* 10/13-10/15</b>	Upper Pines <b>* Lower Pines with Rock Rugsrats (Rock Rugsrats has 2 adjacent sites at Lower Pines)</b>
<b><u>11/22-11/26</u></b>	<b><u>THE 2006 ROCK RENDEZVOUS JOSHUA TREE BASH (2 sites at Indian Cove, Weds thru Sunday!)</u></b>

## *UPCOMING MEETING:*

**DATE:** Tuesday, Sept, 12

**TIME:** 7 p.m.

**WHERE:** Ricardo's abode  
214 Shrader Street, San Francisco

**Slideshow:** Could be you. We're looking for a slideshow – if you're interested, please email Scott -- [kinetic043@yahoo.com](mailto:kinetic043@yahoo.com)

### **Warning/Disclaimer**

*San Francisco Rock Rendezvous is not a teaching organization and does not endorse or insure rock climbing. Trips advertised in the newsletter are private and are only listed to allow for the co-ordination of car pooling and camping. Each participant on a trip is solely responsible for his or her safety during the entire trip, including the transportation to and from the climbing area and site, and any necessary insurance.*

