



# UP ROPE

NEWS OF THE WASHINGTON ROCKCLIMBERS

## Editors

Helen and Chris Scoredos  
1717 R street, N. W.  
Washington 9, D. C.

Vol. 4, No. 12

## Founders

Jan and Herb Conn  
Published Twice Monthly  
Price Five Cents

March 15, 1948

## -M E E T I N G-

There will be a meeting of the Rockclimbers at the home of Jo and Paul Bradt, 6626 1st Street, N. W., GE 3917, Saturday, March 27, 1948, at 8 P. M.

The French film, "Spelunking" (Caving to us ordinary people), will be shown. This film is about a descent into one of the caves in the French Alps.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MOUNTAINS by John Meenehan

In a way it would seem to be sheer effrontery on my part to write about mountain photography since many climbers have taken a lot more mountain pictures than I have, and have taken good pictures, but the fact remains that little has been written about photography from the climbers viewpoint, and after I finish this article there will be still much to say on the same subject. Everyone can get into this act; I won't pretend to be authoritative.

My remarks will be directed towards extended field trips since one can bring a ton of photo equipment on a local trip without getting a raised eyebrow.

To clear away a lot of the Mumbo-jumbo that surrounds picture taking let me first explain that pictures are seen in the mind of the photographer before ever light touches the film and it is no more necessary to have a high priced camera to take good pictures than it is to have a guide in order to ascend Old Rag. A camera is only an extension of the photographers mind, and should be treated as such. If the actual picture taking technique is not in the subconscious then get a box camera and enjoy the climbing. The picture is what must be concentrated on by the photographer.

The photographer should subordinate his desire to take pictures to the wishes of his group, but somehow good view points seem to coincide with rest spots so beautiful scenery shots should present no particular problem. The more spectacular human interest shots, however, are almost impossible to get because of your duties to the group. To give an example, a picture of a

climber in the saddle below the snout of Schoolhouse Cave would be outstanding, but there is no point from which to take the picture without hazard to yourself or another climber. Such climbing shots, however, are the spice that temper too much sweetness in the scenery shots and they should be striven for like precious gems.

In taking pictures don't be afraid to get in close. A close-up of hands tying a knot sets up the atmosphere for a following sequence of climbing pictures and of course details of camp life are interesting in their own right and are useful for connecting the sequences of different climbs.

Getting just the right viewpoint of a mountain is a combination of luck and persistence in seeking the proper viewpoints. Quite often a few feet to one side or the other makes a tremendous difference in the picture. If at all possible frame the picture with the branches of a tree or put something in the picture to break up an uninteresting foreground. That massive mountain hanging up above you in breathtaking beauty is impossible to show by tilting the camera upwards. Such a move would only foreshorten the mountain and result in disappointment. Pointing the camera down flattens out the mountain. To take such a picture means you must retreat a distance and use a telephoto lens or else climb some viewpoint to where you'll have the proper perspective.

There will always be a difference of opinion among photographers about the relative merits of large cameras versus small cameras, for mountain photography. I myself, hold with the large camera enthusiasts but my opinion would probably change in a hurry if I had to pack that large camera through rough going. The photographer for the Count de Abruzzi expeditions used an 8x10 plate camera and got some of the best mountain photographs ever taken. The fact that he used a corps of porters to transport his supplies may have had something to do with his unprejudiced viewpoint in favor of the large cameras. Probably the best compromise is to take the pictures on 35 mm Kodachrome using a rest of some kind so as to obtain maximum definition. A rest or tripod is desirable because the pulse of a climber can visibly affect the sharpness of a picture. When you reach home Black & White negatives can be made from selected color slides and such pictures can be controlled by filters exactly as though they were an original shot. The pictures containing much snow and rock should be developed only one half to three-fourths of the recommended time as there is already too much contrast in the picture.

An ice axe could have a tripod screw inserted into some part of it so that it could act as a unipod.

The best pictures will almost always be those made while the climber is fresh. Fatigue has killed countless pictures and almost as bad an offender is, "I'll be coming back this way and will take it then."

The ideal treatment of exposed film is to dehydrate it after exposure by putting it in a container with Silica Gel until it can be processed. Color film, in particular, tends to deteriorate in the presence of moisture after exposure.

There is no way to enforce cooperation on the part of non-photographers but if they enjoy the pictures at home they should put up with some of what they feel to be unnecessary fiddling around in the field. By far the best solution is for two or more photographers to team up for picture taking. This will increase the efficiency of both photographers and make their work more enjoyable.

#### DAREDEVILS OF THE ALPS

The March 6 meeting at Leo Dawson's, where the French film "Daredevil's of the Alps" was shown, was well attended.

The response of the group to the film varied from a feeling that the climbing techniques did not compare with ours, to statements that it was one of the finest climbing films ever seen. However, in evaluating the film one must keep in mind that the climbers in this picture earn their living by their skill in climbing and that they climb every day. Another factor is that the film was not intended so much as a technical climbing film but more to attract persons interested in visiting France to visit the Alps.