



UP ROPE!

NEWS OF THE WASHINGTON ROCKCLIMBERS

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Washington 9, D. C.

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Published Twice Monthly
Price Five Cents

Vol. 4, No. 17

May 30, 1948

SOME TIPS FOR THE APPRENTICE MOUNTAINEER

by Andrew J. Kauffman

Like numerous other Americans many readers of UP ROPE have made plans to visit North American Alpine regions during the coming summer months. Some of these persons have had no previous mountain experience, although their rock-climbing technique and ability is of unquestioned competence. In North America, unfortunately, guides are often unavailable and other trained climbers are frequently reluctant--often for selfish motives--to act as leaders for a group of beginners.

I have consequently tried to set down a few semi-fool-proof rules, which, if scrupulously followed by the apprentice mountaineer, will probably keep him out of serious difficulty. That these rules should be meticulously observed by any newcomer to the mountains is borne out by the elementary postulate of Alpinism, that no inexperienced persons should travel in high mountain terrain without a qualified companion, unless they have no other alternative. A host of evil forces conspires against the rock-climber, no matter how able, who ventures for the first time into the mountains and fails to seek out a trained companion.

The key problem for the rock-climber who is a newcomer to the mountains is to be found in the fact that he is a tactician and not a strategist. He is competent to overcome certain specific obstacles which will confront him on his way up the mountain: he may even experience less difficulty in overcoming them than many a well-trained guide. But in the course of his ascent he tends to give disproportionate importance to the technical aspects of the climbing problem with which he is faced, and to neglect other considerations which are of equal if not greater significance. He does not realize, like the guide or expert amateur, that what he is trying to do represents more than a rockclimbing problem, and that, unless he exercises care, he is likely to be stopped if not overwhelmed

by some force which he could not anticipate and with which he knows not how to cope. In an effort to find a solution, he often loses sight of his objective. Not infrequently he forfeits his life.

The guide or the trained mountaineer looks upon Alpinism as a strategic problem. He selects his objective: safe travel in mountain territory; more specifically, the successful and safe ascent and descent of a peak or series of peaks. He does not, like many rock-climbers, seek the hardest and most spectacular route to the summit. Instead he studies the mountain with great care and picks a way which he feels will lead safely to the top and back without straining the ability and force of his party. Circumstances permitting, he may choose a more difficult path. But, under such circumstances, he will look the entire route over from a distance in an effort to discover the speediest, safest and easiest way whereby the route may be climbed. Before setting out he will also take into consideration a whole series of other elements; the strength of his party, the reliability of his equipment, the distance to be covered and the elevation to be gained, the weather, the time element, the condition of ice and snow and the risks of avalanches. Finally, he will give thought to the course of action which he should follow in event of injury or serious accident.

All these things, including the rock-climbing problem itself, the competent leader will weigh and reason, placing them into the proper tactical relationship and subordinating each to the general strategic problem of getting his group safely up and down the mountain by way of a predetermined route.

The average rock-climber, who cannot obtain a properly trained companion, must, if he is to be successful in the mountains, also weigh all these matters, and endeavor to consider them in the same light as the expert mountaineer. He must remember, however, that, until he has had considerable experience, his judgment will likely prove to be often erroneous, and he must allow margin for error.

Since I assume that my readers are competent rock-climbers and well-versed in the basic aspects of rock-work, I shall not devote space to the technical phases of this branch of mountaineering. It is, to be sure, one of the important phases of this sport, but I feel that the readers of UP ROPE, on the average, know how to take care of themselves on cliffs. Instead I shall turn my attention to the other problems of mountaineering which I mentioned briefly above, and with which the beginner is bound to be confronted if he undertakes any serious ascents. And I shall try to draw up a few rules which may serve to give him the proper sense of proportion in the course of his mountain travels.

In addition to rock-climbing technique, there are six elementary factors which the beginner in the mountains must think about in determining his strategy when planning an excursion.

- a) Strength of the Party;
- b) Route Finding and Reconnaissance;
- c) Weather;
- d) Rock slides (partially subordinate to b);
- e) Time and the Elevation Differential (partially subordinate to b);
- f) Travel on Ice and Snow.

Lastly, there are two other factors to which he must also give some thought: rescue methods on glaciers and a pattern of action to follow in case of serious accident.

I propose to discuss these matters as they would apply to novices in the mountains who do not have the benefit of experienced companions, and not as they should necessarily be applied by the trained mountaineer.

Strength of Party

The first point to make is that no novice should, under any circumstances, undertake a mountain ascent alone nor should he wander beyond calling distance of his companions, even on easy terrain. The accident above Lake Tahoe last August may largely have been caused by disregard for this fundamental principle. I assume, therefore, that the novice will seek out companions, preferably two or three.

His main consideration in planning any climb must be these very companions. Before engaging in any ascent which involves the slightest difficulty, he should join them on one or two lengthy hikes to test their strength and endurance. He must not forget that his party, like a ship convoy, will move only as fast and as far as its slowest member. He should plan an excursion which will not exhaust his weakest companion. And he should not attempt an ascent which any of his companions may be unable of accomplishing, no matter how confident he may personally feel. Should he not be as strong as his companions, he should insist upon remaining in camp so that he will not become a burden to them. If, after the trail has been left, one member of the party genuinely feels that he cannot go on to the summit and return home without seriously impeding the group's progress, the ascent, if it has been undertaken by a party of less than four persons, should be cancelled forthwith and the men should return to camp. To leave an inexperienced person behind, or expect him to return to camp alone in a state of weariness, while the rest of the party climbs the mountain, is courting disaster. In a party of four or more persons, it is sometimes proper to split the group, but under such circumstances the strongest or at least the second strongest member must volunteer to accompany the weakest back to camp.

Remember that while a man may have the right to take what chances he pleases with his life, it is not his privilege to jeopardize the lives of others. In risking his own neck, he may involve persons unknown to him in hazardous rescue operations, which these other persons consider it a duty to carry out. Many an able professional guide has died in an attempt to save a foolhardy mountaineer.

Route Finding and Reconnaissance

No novice should ever attempt to make a first ascent of a peak or route without skilled companions during his first season's mountaineering. The case of Farmer on Kangchenjunga (who also violated a lot of other sound principles) is typical. Instead, the beginner should attempt to climb only over a known route. Furthermore, he should not travel in wild and unsettled territory where help is not easily obtainable irrespective of temptations to do otherwise.

His first step is to select a peak which is neither beyond his strength nor that of his companions. He should exercise restraint in his selection. He can make this selection by consulting the guidebook on the region he is visiting, by personally inspecting the terrain, and by asking the advice of local authorities--if available--who have made the climb. His best source of information rests with local climbers, because available American guide-books, while extensive

do not usually provide adequate descriptions of particular climbs, and because his own judgment is likely to be faulty.

Whether or not he can obtain local information, he and his companions should then study the proposed route by looking it over from a good vantage point, and a general plan should be formed. He should consider the types of problems he will encounter and how he will solve them. He should also estimate the amount of time it will take his party to overcome each obstacle and make the ascent. He should make liberal allowance for the time element and plan on an early start. He must consider what equipment will be necessary to overcome the various obstacles.

Having selected a peak and a route, he must pick the easiest, speediest and safest way up that peak in the manner selected. Many rock-climbers, after picking an easy route, frequently choose the hardest way up that route and later find themselves unaccountably delayed and sometimes benighted short of the summit. The easiest way is, of course, the one where belays and the rope are least frequently used. It is not necessarily the most direct way. It is also almost invariably the speediest.

The climber must remember that many of the problems he will run into cannot be solved in exactly the manner he has planned. But the tactical, individual problems which he meets must never be permitted to alter his general strategic pattern for the climb, unless they represent a force which can only be overcome by endangering the party. In such an event the ascent must be abandoned.

Reconnaissance for the return trip is as important as reconnaissance for the climb. If the descent is to be made by the same route as the ascent, the leader should turn around frequently and look behind him to familiarize himself with the appearance of the terrain on the way down. At all doubtful points, he should mark the route with a small but prominent cairn.

Lastly, before setting out, he should inform the local people of his intentions and he should try to stick rigorously to his plan. Thus, if he fails to return by a given hour, a rescue party can be formed which will know approximately where to look for him.

There are many examples of good reconnaissance, route finding and strategic planning in the annals of mountaineering. Outstanding among these are the 1929 Kangchenjunga Expedition, the 1936 Nanda Devi Expedition and the 1938 K-2 expedition. The last of these provides perhaps also the best illustration. Before venturing upwards K-2, the Houston party first carefully inspected its flanks from every possible angle. Finally, after rejecting other routes for various reasons the Abruzzi ridge was chosen. A strategic pattern of attack was devised and scrupulously followed. When provisions ran out and it was no longer consistent to observe the pattern established, the party though within striking distance of the top, did not allow its emotions to get the better of its reason, and decided to retreat. The men preferred to alter their entire plan when their margin of safety became too slim.

(To Be Continued in the June 15 issue)

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PARTIAL LIST OF SUMMER OUTINGS

by Ted Schad

For detailed information on any of these trips call Ted Schad, DU 6000, Ext. 607. Most of these outings are open to members of other mountaineering clubs.

Colorado Mountain Club July 31 through August 8, 35th Annual Summer Outing in the Gore Range of North-central Colorado. "...some of the wildest, most inaccessible, most rugged mountain mass in Colorado." Cost \$60.00 from Denver. Attendance limited to 50.

Iowa Mountaineers August 9 through 20 Ninth Annual Outing--Wind River Range of Wyoming. Cost from Iowa City \$110. From Burris, Wyoming \$75., including packing to base camp which will be located at the foot of Gannett Glacier at about 10,000 feet. Shelter will be provided at two high camps, to which climbers will pack their own food and bedding. This is one of the most spectacular alpine regions in the United States, with immense glaciers, jagged pinnacles, and high peaks. Some of the group plan to climb Devils Tower immediately following an outing.

Mazamas July 25 through August 8, 1948 Fifty-fifth Annual Mazama Outing--Chelan Mountain, Park Creek Pass, in central Washington. Cost not to exceed \$50.00 from Portland, Oregon for the full two weeks.

Sierra Club The Sierra Club has scheduled five major outings, to suit the varying tastes of its members. These include moving trips--Burro, knapsack, and Saddle, and the Base and High Camps at one site. It is not known whether these trips are open to members of other clubs.

Mountaineers, Inc. July 12-23, 1948. Forty-second Summer Outing. Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite National Park, California. Cost \$75.00 including transportation from Seattle, Washington or \$45.00 for camp costs only.

Trail Riders of the Wilderness 1948 Expeditions. For those whose feet are more tender than other portions of their anatomy (are there any among our readers?). The American Forestry Association conducts pack train trips into inaccessible wilderness areas in the west. Costs range upward from about \$150. for 10 day trips.

Colorado Mountain Club. Just off the press Colorado Mountain Club's Schedule of Outings for the summer of 1948. This little green booklet gives general information on trips, as well as listing complete summer schedules of hikes, climbs, back packing trips, and miscellaneous activities for the Boulder, Fort Collins, Huerfaro (Walsenburg), and Denver groups. Trips are rated in difficulty from Class I through Class 4. Class I trips are easy walks, Class 2 trips "are not rest trips", Class 3 include strenuous climbs involving work at high altitudes and special techniques, and Class 4 trips are technical climbs. Technical climbs are not scheduled. Of interest to rock climbers would be the scheduled ascents of Pyramid (14,000 ft.) on July 24 & 25, Little Matterhorn (11,500 ft.) on August 7 & 8, and the Crestones (Crestone Peak 14,291 ft. and Crestone Needle, 14,191) scheduled for the Labor Day weekend, September 4 to 6.

Bramani Lovers. Holubar Mountaineering Equipment, of 1215 Grandview Avenue, Boulder, Colorado, advertises that they will put Bramani soles (and heels) on your own boots for \$5.25 plus shipping costs and seven cents Colorado tax. This looks like a good chance for people whose feet are not square to enjoy Bramani soles. How about someone trying them out?

Mugelnoos For May reports Sunday climbing sessions with over sixty climbers present. Guess Washington isn't the only place where the sport is booming these fine spring days.

Richard Leonard was recently elected Secretary and Francis Farquhar is the newly elected president of the Sierra Club, succeeding Bestor Robinson. Incidentally, Bestor was in Washington last week, in his capacity as member of the Interior Department Advisory Committee, which advises the Secretary of the Interior on conservation matters. A tight schedule prevented him from climbing with us.

* * *

Mr. Gambs writes us from R.F.D. 1, McLean, Virginia that in the Vol. 4, No. 13 issue of Up Rope in the listing of articles written by members we listed: Gambs, Gustave, CLIMBS IN THE PYRENEES AND THE DOLLIFUS ALPS, The Canadian Alpine Journal, 1924, p. 51-53.

"Dollifus" should be replaced by Dauphiné. Mr. Gambs says: "The climb in the Dauphiné Alps refers to the Meije ft. 13,080, one of the chief summits of the Celvoux Range in the Dauphiné Alps."

"Dauphiné is one of the ancient provinces of France and its capital was Grenoble. Since the territory is mostly mountainous its snowy ranges have always been named Dauphiné Alps." Thanks Gus.

* * *

We extend our sincere sympathy to Eleanor Tatge whose mother died recently.

* * *

Don and Eleanor Jacob's business address is: 4718 Bethesda Avenue, Bethesda, Md., Phone, Oliver 5656.

UPS AND DOWNS

May 16, 1948

Harold Drewes
Betty Kauffman
Andy Kauffman
Earl Mosburg
Pete Peterson
Conrad Faick

June Mosburg
John Reed
Jane Showacre
Arnold Wexler
Mary Nielan
Helen Scoredos
Eric Scoredos

Eleanor Jacobs
Donald Jacobs
Donald Hubbard
Herb Conn
Jan Conn
Chris Scoredos

Eleanor Tatge

The group drove to Great Falls and set up headquarters at Echo Cliffs. Herb make a spectacular climb of a very unusual face, a climb later almost completed by Earl Mosburg. Practice belaying with human guinea-pigs was started and after that the group broke into teams to climb and traverse on Donald Ducks. It started to rain before they got very far, putting a stop to the day's activities. Later most of the group met at Eleanor's for an informal supper and to listen to Jan sing.

* * *

Your editors saw a sneak preview of the movies made of the local climbers on local rocks. It is hoped that work will be completed on the film very soon, so it will be possible for a public showing. We suggest that you see this film.

May 23, 1948

David Waddington
John Reed
Ken Cole
Earl Mosburg
Joan Price
Doug Price
Donald Jacobs
Eleanor Jacobs
Paul Bradt
Eric Scoredos

June Mosburg
John Rockett
W. Welch
Priscille Maury
George Betz
Ann Michiner
Peter Peterson
Arnold Wexler
Andy Kauffman
Chris Scoredos

Ted Schad
Jan Conn
Herb Conn
Harald Drewes
Eleanor Tatge
John Mcnehan
Donald Hubbard
Sterling Hendrick
Betty Kauffman
Helen Scoredos

Rockclimbers turned out in pre-war numbers to enjoy climbing on this perfect spring day. Arriving at Carderock and after making a few of the well-known climbs, it was decided to revisit Herzog's Island. Ferrying the group across the river in Eleanor's rubber boat were Harold Drewes, John Reed, Andy Kauffman and Donald Hubbard.

There were so many teams climbing and making traverses that no doubt your reporters missed out on some of the spectacular climbs of the day. However, that old favorite Chairman's Chimney was tackled and climbed by Sterling, Jan, Herb and Chris. The group was ferried back to Carderock, after a swim in the river, where some of the climbers remained to do more climbing while others returned home.

May 30 1948

Harold Drewes
Donald Hubbard
Betty Kauffman
Roy Roberts
Judson Groff
Elliot Amidon

Billy Alley
Betty Alley
Dolores Alley
Chris Scoredos
Paul Brown

The day's activities began at the Camp Lewis Rocks by lowering the different climbers off the East Face. The return trip was made by climbing an improvised rope ladder up the Face. Following this the climbing on the East Face began and the Face was successfully climbed by Chris after five attempts. Crevasse rescue methods were then practiced by members of the group. Hale and Roy made climbs under the supervision of Donald. The day's activities were terminated by climbs on the Dome and on the rocks nearby.

* * *

We were interested in an article on caves in the Sunday, May 30, edition of the Washington Post, p 8 B.

Entitled, "VPI Solves Pre-historic Puzzle", it describes the discovery of some mysterious writings in a cave on a farm in Giles County, Va.

The cave is described thus: "Pig Hole, proper, is a 160-foot pit on the property of Earl Porterfield. It presumably earned its name from the demise of some nosey porker which pushed its investigations an inch too far."

"The floor of the pit covers half an acre, and from this big room descend passages which were first explored in 1943 by students from near-by Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Several hundred feet down they came upon the markings, deeply graven in the wall. " etc. etc.