



NEWS OF THE WASHINGTON ROCKCLIMBERS

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SOME IMPRESSIONS OF SUNDAY ROCKCLIMBING TRIPS

by Helen Scoredos

The somewhat drowsy-faced rockclimbers, dressed in well-worn jeans and shirts, interspersed with a few bright-eyed youngsters, sitting at the corner table at the Hot Shoppe struggling to force down an extra cup of coffee or eagerly watching the kitchen door hoping that their bacon n' eggs will arrive in time to make the 8:30 deadline.... The stares and comments that the well-heeled and well-dressed Sunday breakfasters turn in the direction of the climbers as they straggle out.... The obvious relief of the old-timers, remembering four-mile hikes to Carderock, as they survey several cars "almost empty".... The gayety of the youngsters as they pile into the jeep three-deep.... The breathless arrival of the cars and the quick survey to see if this person or that has arrived.... The startled glances of the newcomers when they see the crop of year-olds for the first time.... The pitying glances cast by the few parents who accompany their half-grown brood at the fond parents and enthusiasts who must drag along their babies....

The cluster of climbers around some climb known to be more difficult than usual....The way your tongue clings to your dry mouth, your heart pounds, your knees tremble and how the pit of your stomach has that empty feeling as you feel for the one substantial "nubbin" that will put you in....The feeling of chagrin as you come off an "easy" climb and find yourself dangling undignifiedly in the rope....the cautious admonition to your belayer to "hold tight" as you try to negotiate a doubtful section of the climb....How your eyes feel when your last hold slips from between your fingers....the silence that is so thick you can cut it as you maneuver through a ticklish or "key" part of the climb....the shouted instructions from below to lower your arms when resting, to flatten your feet or that there's a good hand-hold or foot-hold to the right or left of you....your surprise at the distance between the hand-holds and foot-holds of the "easy" climb you saw attempted by someone else....The feeling of relief when suddenly the top looms in sight and there's your belayer big as life....The weight of anxiety as you belay your first climber and the ever-present fear of "will I be able to hold him?"....The eagerness with which visitors to the group tackle some climb they have read about....The watchful waiting of the local climbers....Don going by with his eager students in tow....The looks of awe as Chris makes some climb holding himself by a finger....The self-consciousness of the beginner as he rejoins the group after making a spectacular climb of a really difficult pitch....The swell sportsmanship the male climbers show the women climbers....The looks of novices when they first see an aerial traverse used....The terrific punishment some of the climbers take in attempting a climb....

The bored glances of the climbers at the amateur photographer intent on getting some genuine "local color"....The absent-minded fashion that the climbers eat their lunch as they eagerly converse....The horror the reluctant newcomer views the "dangerous" activities of the "mad" climbers after they have been dragged out to the scene by some enthusiastic climber....The somewhat horrified glances of the well-dressed, neatly goosed Sunday strollers cast as the now grimy, sweaty, climbers who carry their coil of rope as a badge of honor.

THE NEWSPAPERS TAKE A DIM VIEW

Recently the papers seem to be filled with accounts of accidents and mishaps that occur with startling regularity when tourists meet the mountains head-on. Within the past week four stories have come to my attention bearing on this and deserving of some consideration.

The first story was of an accident on the east face of Long's Peak where a climber was injured in a fall. He was saved from death by his safety rope, a fact the papers seemed to think bordered on the miraculous. We have been trained to think in opposite terms and we would have been genuinely disturbed and dejected if his rope or belayer had failed.

The second story was of a Chicago climber who fell to his death on one of the western peaks. No details were given in the story I read.

The third story was datelined "Chamonix, France, July 25th, (AP)":
"Two men and two young women died today in an Alpine mountain climb.

"The four were members of a party of 17 mountain climbers who went up the south face of Aiguille du Moine (Bonk's Needle) near here yesterday. A snow storm made the descent difficult and some members of the party were not able

to reach the half-way hut by nightfall.

"The four decided to camp on the peak for the night.

"One of the girls died of cold and exposure early today. The other three apparently then decided to continue the descent in the darkness. Their frozen bodies were found this afternoon.

"On Nantillions Glacier a few miles away a group of Parisians slid down its face. Two of them were hospitalized - one with a punctured lung and the other with fractures of both legs."

The last story was from Zermatt, dated July 27th:

"Alpine guides today found the bodies of three Oxford undergraduates who fell 3,000 feet while trying to scale the Matterhorn Sunday. It was the first fatal accident on the Alps most famed peak since 1945. The three youths made their try without a guide."

Nearer to home, I am in receipt of a letter from Elliott Amidon telling of the tragic death of Judson Croff on June 19th in Yosemite. The boys were climbing to Awiyah Point near Half Dome. This climb is listed by the Sierra Club as third class. (No rope necessary).

Many of us knew Judson who had climbed with us several times in the past year and a half. We were quite shocked by his death and extend our most sincere sympathy to his family.

Accidents such as these will occur as long as people climb mountains. They will be held to a minimum, however, if we practice the safety rules that should be second nature to us by now. No doubt people will talk of those crazy mountaineers as they blandly pass cars on blind curves and go canoeing without knowing how to swim. The note of hope in the foregoing news stories is that the man who was properly safetied was held in his fall and let the newspapers be surprised. We don't carry those ropes to look picturesque!

Herb and Jan Conn climbed the Devil's Tower in Wyoming on July 4th. No further details are available yet. How about it, Herb? Complete with cartoons?

The Gamboling Lambs of the Rock Climbers had another addition recently when the Clarks proudly announced the arrival of Fitz, Jr.

A party pitcher card from Moraine Lake, British Columbia, tells us that the Karcher-Showacre party have climbed Pope's Peak and Mt. Coulter(?), both over 10,000 and another peak that was snowless.

UPS AND DOWNS

July 18, 1948

Dolores Alley
June Mosburg
Nancy Rogers
Rita McAuliff
Eleanor Tatge

John Meenehan
Earl Mosburg
Ted Schad
Harold Drewes
Murray Blitz

With their innards full of Hot Shoppe breakfast this lovely July morning, ten champing-at-the-bit would-be climbers loaded their gasoline steeds with slithering rope and clanking hardware, lowered the tops of the two convertibles (Ted's Buick and Earl's Jeep--the Buick won the lowering contest, but no bets were lost), and rolled off for Sugarloaf Mountain. While Harold and Earl climbed the Butterfinger Climb, and several adventurous natures tried same and--nuff said, Nancy, Ted, Murray, Dolores, John, and Eleanor climbed the crack at the left end of the north face opposite the Butterfinger, with many notable digressions and variations, and Rita pioneered an extra special route near the same crack. After lunch Earl and Harold proceeded northward to more distant cliffs and the banging of their piton hammer was heard by those who moved in the opposite direction to tackle and conquer the Chimney.

The day was drippily concluded by a swim in a deeply hidden quarry near Dickerson, ferreted out by Earl's jeep after a determined crash through the jungle. Scratched, bit, bruised, muddy, and damp our happy little group then headed for their respective bathtubs, liniment, strong soap, sulfur powder, petrolatum, supper, and beds.
* * *

July 25, 1948.

Joan Price
Dick Gaylord
Eleanor Tatge
Dave Waddington
John Rocket
Harold Drewes
Rita McAuliff

June Mosburg
Earl Mosburg
Joe Roberts
Bill Pepper
Doug Price
John Meenehan
Dolores Alley

A cool, lovely day brought out a vigorous program of Carderock exercises, initiated by the climbing of the Spiderwalk by Earl and Harold. Eleanor, John Rocket, and Dave went to try their muscles on the Easter Egg Climbs, followed shortly by Dolores and Rita. Meanwhile John Meenehan, Bill, and Doug practiced on the Seven Steps (changed by unanimous consent from Meenehan's Staircase), and the Stretch. Harold, Earl, and Joan went over to the Jam Box, where the entire group eventually assembled to try Jan's Chimney, the Jam Box, and the chimney and wall upstream from the Jam Box. After lunch June

Mosburg made a fine lead of the Golden Stairs--a lead interrupted two weeks before when she hurt her arm. Dick, Joan, Harold, Joe, and Eleanor had various amounts of luck on and near the Seven Steps. The murky river put the finishing touches to the day as still gay but more or less weary climbers took to bathing suits and John Meenehan's life raft (or convertible air mattress).

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