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GERRY AND THE FLY-WEIGHT PACK

For several years Washington climbers have corresponded with Gerry Cunningham of Ward, Colorado, concerning mountaineering equipment. With a great deal of pleasure they and many members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club gathered in the Board Room of the District Building to hear Gerry's illustrated lecture on a week's backpacking trip in the Colorado mountains not far from his workshop in Ward. Evidently bad weather followed all the climbers this year, for Gerry described his Kodachromes as few in number because of lack of cooperation from that unpredictable quantity. However, the transparencies of the Navaho Peak area were a fine addition to the evening.

The equipment which Gerry and his wife carried totalled exactly fifty pounds and included food, tent with stakes and poles, gasoline stove and fuel, and 8.5 pounds of climbing rope and hardware. His food lists allowed an average of 1.3 pounds per man per day, which included a breakfast and supper ration compounded by Gerry and described as a balanced diet in pre-cooked form, requiring only heating to furnish a palatable, easily prepared meal. A most useful part of the evening was spent examining the actual equipment carried on the trip. Packs were built to maintain a center of gravity which would make for comfortable load carrying. Niceties of design and finish were evident in all of the articles exhibited. Use of nylon twill in the body of all packs, of stainless steel wire for pack frames, and of non-rusting fittings was noted. A packboard which substituted a loose nylon panel for the usually tightly laced canvas, thus cradling the wearer's back, was pronounced very comfortable by many of those who tested it in the Board Room. It was described as an improved modification of the frame carried by one member on last summer's Cariboo trip.

After the formal meeting, it is understood that several of the climbers and Gerry were up until 1:30 in the morning discussing the design of rock-climbing hardware and of two-man tents. It is hoped that this midnight conference will result in some prototypes of improved equipment for eventual field testing on local climbs.

- A. C. Lembeck -