



## NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING COMMITTEE

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### A Few Shadows of Things to Come

- March 9 - Arnold Wexler will show slides and give a talk on last summer's Wind River trip for the Mountain Club of Maryland. In Baltimore, at the Central Enoch Pratt Free Library, at 8:00 P.M. in case you haven't caught up with this act so far this year.
- March 10 - ALASKA! Johnny Reed shows the slides he collected on several summer trips. We've been waiting a long time for these. At Johnny's, 6637 Barnaby St., N.W., Wash., D.C. Phone: WOODLEY 4268.
- March 16 - "Land of the Standing Rocks". By Ray Garner. At the National Geographic. 8:15 P.M. Better start hunting up your tickets now.
- March 17.- Ray Garner's motion picture of climbing on the Grand Teton. Place still evasive. If you have a nice big living room and don't want to go out that evening, why not volunteer to have the gang in?
- March 18 - Sugarloaf Mtn. Hosts to Mtn. Club of Md. for some rock climbing teaching and practising. Leader: Art Lembeck.
- March 31 - Schoolhouse Cave. Plans are being made so hold this week-end open if you want to visit this famous hole in the ground for the first time or for the nth time. Leaders: Arnold Wexler and Ray Moore.
- April 1

### NEPTUNE AND SOME LESSER GODS

by Arnold Wexler

Conclusion

Trudging up Mist Glacier, in the soft light of the early morning sun, even with full packs, was routine and uneventful. Beyond a vertical expanse of black ice that confined the glacier on the true right, we swerved sharply to the left to attain the neve connecting up with the main divide. Alec carved over forty bucket-steps in a patch of ice, then skillfully led through a network of crevasses and eventually brought the party to the col on the ridge north of Neptune. The ridge continued southward until it butted-up against the north face of the mountain: tier upon tier of ominous gray rock, bulging and overhanging in places, without a chimney, gully or break that could be misconstrued as a route. One other possibility presented itself. A sixty-degree snow slope at the left edge of the face rose two hundred feet to a narrow gap between two gendarmes. We had to get closer to

determine its feasibility. Leaving the packs at the col, we worked our way along the ridge. The rock was a thoroughly weathered mica-schist that disintegrated with the least bit of pressure. Several technically interesting pitches combined with the rottenness of the rock to slow us down, but we finally reached the snow. We might just as well have remained at the col! The snow was a decoy. Underneath a superficial veneer of snow was hard ice. The ice axe bounced back from our blows, leaving only nicks in the surface. Cutting steps would be a fatiguing and endless task. Once we were out of contact with the rock there would be no sound belay, and the steady downward sweep of the ice for another 500 feet gave assurance that even if we could not go up, we certainly could go down without undo hesitation.

Once again the mountain had evaded us. Back to the col we went and from there northward along the ridge over broken and shattered rock to the summit of Rhea (ca. 10,000). We entertained some hope of traversing the entire ridge to Mt. Dolphin (ca. 10,100), the southeastern outlier of the Trident massif, but this project had to be abandoned. The arête was a hopeless accumulation of extremely friable detritus lying at the angle of repose. Every step dislodged tons of material. Late that afternoon we regained our Trident campsite and set up the tents.

On Aug. 6 and 7, a spell of Selkirk weather interfered with everything but eating and sleeping. We had one more day at our disposal. If the weather improved we intended to make a final attempt at climbing Neptune. When we crawled into our sleeping bags, the prospects appeared very dismal. Sometime during the night we were awakened by ecstatic exclamations emanating from one of our more impressionable companions. We soon learned that the cause of this monosyllabic monologue was a magnificent display of northern lights. Equally important, we observed that the sky was clear: a promising omen for the morrow!

At 2 A.M. I got up to start breakfast. We were high on Trident Glacier before the sun shot its first shaft of light over the Rockies to bathe our peaks in alpenglow. When we topped the crest of Dolphin Col, our elation at the fine weather was immediately quenched. Approaching from the southwest were the black clouds and general overcast of an impending storm. If anyone thought of turning back, he hid his counsel to himself. Storm or not, we were going to continue. It did not take long to go down Mist Glacier, cross below the black cliff and reach the terraces at the foot of Neptune's S.E. hanging glacier. This was familiar territory. We moved steadily, cutting steps up the tongue of the hanging glacier, crossing several crevasses, and attaining the upper neve in the basin north of the spur from Cronus. It was now snowing persistently, but with a lack of intensity that encouraged us to persist. We were now at the bergschrund. Above was the long slope which we had scrutinized from Cronus and about which we had been so dubious. Would it be icy? Could we venture on it with safety? A narrow, uncertain bridge took us across the schrund and onto the slope. Luck was with us, at least so far. The snow was firm and without underlying ice. The ice axes went in up to the hilt, furnishing good support. Up we went, Alex leading and kicking fine steps. The storm increased in intensity. I was last on the rope, and half of the time I could not see Alex. Slowly and methodically, he kicked over 400 steps. At last we reached the base of the rock tower. Would the rocks go? We reversed the rope and I went on ahead, circling toward the left along the base, behind a wind-blown snow depression, until a narrow gully was reached. There was verglas on the rocks, but otherwise the gully offered no problem. After ascending about 40', we swung out onto the open sixty-degree slope. The climbing was straight-forward. I must have been ascending rapidly, for I heard an anguished cry from behind to slow down. Another 100 feet and the peak was ours. That we couldn't see beyond fifty to one hundred feet did not perturb us in the least. We were on top of Neptune, god of the seas, and that was sufficient recompense for our efforts.

Hastily, we erected a cairn, deposited a register, ate some lunch, and prepared to descend. Then came one of those inexplicable breaks in the clouds. The

snow and fog seemed to dissolve and vanish, and for a few brief moments, we could see our alpine domain of peaks and glacier in all its wondrous glory. When we had regained the base of the tower, we tried to locate our old steps in the long snow slope, but they were completely obliterated by fresh snow. Once more Alex kicked new ones, navigating by dead reckoning, and we followed. Below the bergschrund we quickened our pace.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day we ploughed into the bush. The less said about that, the better. We couldn't hurry, yet we didn't tarry! At fifteen minutes to five we reached the shore of Kinbasket Lake. Sid spotted our smoke signal, crossed over and picked us up. We were homeward bound. Neptune was conquered.

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In the February 5 issue of the Sierra Club Yodeler, we notice a squib to the effect that "four ski mountaineers, Al Steck, Jim Wilson, Bill Dunmire and Norman Goldstein, recently completed a two-week expedition cross-country from Giant Forest in Sequoia National Park through the Kern-Kaweah region to Whitney Portal. We hope to have the full story in our next issue".

In almost the same mail, we received a letter from the above-mentioned Norman and find he will be in Washington sometime in March and will bring along "all the pictures I've taken". That's a threat, but a promising one. Maybe we will get a first-hand account of the skiing trip. To quote further from the letter, "Upon getting to San Francisco, I started climbing with the Sierra Club, locally and in Pinnacles, Yosemite, Marin County, etc. But best of all, and one of the reasons for sticking around California, was to get in some ski-mountaineering. Several of us skied for 11 days from Giant Forest..... We had a great time and saw some beautiful winter scenery." When we can pin Norman down, we will try to make some arrangements to have all of us see his slides and photographs.

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#### UPS AND DOWNS

February 10-11, 1951. Shaffer Rocks, Pennsylvania.

Sam Brown    Jim Bullard    Peg Koister    Art Lembeck    Betty Muolo    Arnold Wexler

The first car left Washington early Saturday and arrived at Swift Run Road to find it covered with snow and ice. Abandoning all possibilities of driving up to the parking area, Sam, Betty and Arnold packed up and walked the remaining distance, getting to the Hermitage at noon. After reaching the shelter, they ate lunch and chopped and sawed wood. Later they all negotiated the Monument Chimney, Arnold leading, Betty second and Sam bringing up the rear.

Peg left Washington about 11:30 and upon arrival at Swift Run Road also decided to park at the bottom and made her passengers hike in. The climbers were on the rocks when they arrived. After a fine dinner, they spent the evening reading aloud from Irving's "Ten Great Mountains" and popping corn over the coals in the fireplace.

Since one purpose of the trip was to get pictures of the rocks, and since the sun is on them only early in the morning, everyone was up about eight. After breakfast, Art and Arnold took pictures while the others washed dishes. (Hummmmm!) The rest of the morning was spent accumulating a week's supply of wood. (Did they expect the snow to melt in? Ed.) After lunch, Peg and Betty decided to tidy the shelter while the others climbed. Art spent most of the afternoon leading the Swiss Guide Climb which had been turned from an easy Class 4 to a maximum 5 by cold rock, and ice which obliterated most of the handholds. A courtie gshellie was used by all on the initial overhang -- Sam had his first experience as low-man in this maneuver and was, no doubt, quite impressed -- especially by Art's tricouni's.

The clean-up squad came up to watch and enjoy the last of the sun before the

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#### UPS AND DOWNS (continued)

freeze-up squad finished the climb. Packing down to the cars was easy with light packs and the setting sun to light the way. Only casualty of the trip was Betty. She fell off of a 12" stool, sat in some hot water, and burned her hand on the stove.  
J.B. & A.C.L.

February 17-18, 1951. Poorfarm Cave, West Virginia.

Paul Bradt	Richard Cutlip	Hank George	Ted Schad	Leo Scott
Jim Bullard	Roland Cutlip	George Kamm	Jane Showacre	Arnold Wexler
Jean Burnstad	Walter Downs	Jo Knaggs*	Sylvia Shulman*	Laura Williamson*
E.T. Cutlip		Wayne Houston		Donald Woolley*
Arlene Cutlip		Bill Richardson		Harold Woolley*

Those marked with an asterisk were the definitely non-climbing participants who, on this trip took advantage of the scouting of the Speleological Society and the care of the Mountaineering Committee to see a really big and open cave. Poorfarm is no Carlsbad or Mammoth, but has approximately a mile of open passages to delight young people between the ages of Jimmy Moore and Gus Gambs, inclusively.

Ted and Wayne found an extensive passage leading to a room full of stalactites as wax-white as indian pipes. Arnold took a preliminary look at the way down to the watercourse. In all, we didn't have time to really finish the cave, let alone visit Patton's, as scheduled. History will remember this trip as only the preliminary to the big family trip taking form for this summer.  
P.B.

Mary Sturgeon has gotten herself a job with the Fish & Wildlife Conservation and is leaving for Juneau, Alaska on Feb. 19. We wish you luck, Mary, and hope you will write frequently and come back once in awhile to visit us.

Mary's departure leaves a void on the UP ROPE staff. She has been helping to run this wonderful publication off on the mimeograph and stapling it together. If anyone is interested in taking her place, we would appreciate a call. Oliver 8322.

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Jim Maxwell and Lillian Diana Harding have announced their forthcoming marriage on March 3rd. Best wishes to you both.

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A letter from Marian Harvey arrived, complete with \$1.00 for a renewal of her subscription. She says "UP ROPE made me homesick for the old Potomac Cliffs. I find it a bit chilly up here (Minneapolis-ED.) to do much in the way of climbing, so I have taken a stab at learning to ski - not too successfully as yet. I love the snow up here and almost like the weather. Unfortunately, they seem to expect me to work.....will certainly be around some next summer although my plans are not definite yet. Please give my best to all the gang."

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The just-published 4th edition of Guide to Paths in the Blue Ridge is available at headquarters. \$4.25 in loose-leaf binder.

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