

T. Davis



2200

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

1916 Sunderland Place N. W. Washington 6, D. C.

PRICE
5 CENTS PER COPY

FOUNDED BY
JAN AND HERB CONN

Volume 8

November 12, 1951

Number 12

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- Nov. 16. Program Meeting, 7:45 P.M. at the home of Sterling Hendricks, 1118 Dale Dr., Silver Spring, Md. (SH 4603). Festivities will start with a short program of Jan Conn's songs recorded by Charlie Gallant. Pièce de résistance: Arnold Wexler's Kodachromes of this summer's Canadian Rockies trip. From Silver Spring take the Colesville Road to Mrs. K's Toll House. Turn left on Dale Drive. Sterling's house is about a block from the highway.
- Nov. 24-25. Exploration of new cave near Baker, W. Va. Sterling King has again invited us to use his cabin as base camp. He reports that this cave has big rooms and fine formations and should be worth exploring. Dot has offered to procure hot dogs and rolls, and would like some volunteers to make potato salad. Anyone who can cooperate is asked to call her (LO 5-4338).

THREE YEARS' EXPLORATION IN THE NEW DISCOVERY OF HIGGENBOTHAM CAVE

- by Charles Fort -

In 1948, Tom Barr, Jr., of Nashville, and Tom Barnes, retired mail carrier and local historian of the McMinnville area of Tennessee, were the first to enter a vast unknown section of Higgenbotham Cave. The entrance passage to this New Discovery opens from beneath the breakdown at the end of the "Devil's Quarry", an immense underground chamber 2 miles from the cave's entrance. This room was then thought to be the cave's end. Barnes and Barr followed this passage to a large room with an underground waterfall tumbling from high in the ceiling. In a nearby passage they viewed a 20-ft. high beautifully contoured pillar of nearly snow-white onyx, encrusted with glittering calcite crystals. Barr, after considerable caving experience, describes this formation as the most beautiful single pillar formation he has yet seen. They traveled a short distance in two branches of the passageway beyond this pillar to where they terminated in 70-ft. vertical drops to continue in vast galleries at a lower level. To this date, no one has made either of these descents.

In September, 1950, Tom Barr, Burt Denton and I entered the New Discovery. After taking several Kodachromes of Monument Pillar, we concentrated on the exploration of a large passage leading from the Waterfall Room. We proceeded 200 yds. after difficult climbing over ledges and through rough breakdown, to be stopped finally by a 40-ft. drop-off into a lower level gallery. Gazing from our high ledge, we saw a beautiful grotto, extending into the darkness of the passage's lower level. There was no time for further exploration, but I observed then that a descent into this grotto seemed possible only by use of rock climbing techniques. I determined that a descent

NEW DISCOVERY (cont.)

and exploration of this passage would be my project on my next visit to Higgenbotham.

In December, 1950, I returned to the New Discovery with three other soldiers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. (See N.N.S. News, Feb. '51.) We succeeded in chimneying down into the lower level of the passage described above and found ourselves in virgin cave. Traveling with comparative ease for nearly half a mile, we viewed onyx formations in a variety and profusion greater than we had found in any other section of the cave. We were finally stopped by a small hole at a narrows of the passageway, too small to permit passage of our bodies, but through which we could look into another large grotto beyond. It was here that we first suspected our proximity to an unknown new entrance to the cave. There was dung on the floor, and from a small underground lake raccoon tracks led through the hole into the grotto beyond. Two other indications of our nearness to the surface were the exceptionally heavy out-blowing draft and small tree roots protruding through the ceiling.

I communicated my information to Burt Denton in Nashville regarding a possible back door to the cave, nearly 3 miles from the old entrance, and gave him specific directions for retracing my route. He is of a slender build and has since been through the hole which stopped my party. The following is quoted from his letter to me of Sept. 26, '51: "Jim Neil and another fellow and I were at Higgenbotham about 4 weeks ago - my 14th trip - and ventured back to the small hole you talked about blasting cut. I have been through this hole once before, along with Don Maynard, at which time we found the carcass of a dog. This time, however, I was the only member of the crowd able to pass through said hole. Stocking myself with carbide, I crawled in a very tight squeeze between ceiling and floor for about 10 to 15 minutes when I reached a large passageway. Upon exploration of this passage, I found that it was about 100 to 150 feet long and petered out; however, I discovered several separate piles of hickory and walnut shells; also to my surprise a live tree root in the left wall, about 6 or 7 inches in diameter. Thus there is an entrance, yet where? I have four sticks of 60% and three electric detonators; also about 5 feet of slow-burning fuse?"

The above summary is intended for background to a series of reports to be forthcoming of new findings in this section. Two main projects for the future are the finding or opening of a new entrance and the descent into and exploration of the lower level galleries beyond Monument Pillar.

The proportions of the New Discovery alone already are immense. In this writer's opinion the known volume and length are now comparable to those of the well-publicized Schoolhouse Cave in Pendleton County, W. Va. As for the whole of Higgenbotham Cave, nearly 150 years of unorganized exploration have produced no survey, map or real knowledge of the true extent of this cave system. Many older sections remain unexplored and are difficult and dangerous to visit. The tragic death of Edward D. Ball, Jr., of Nashville, in December, 1950, as a result of a fall in the attempted exploration of a lower level gallery in the remote region of the cave, gives evidence of the fact that much exploration in the cave can be safely conducted only by mountaineers and spelunkers thoroughly experienced in rock climbing and rigging techniques.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - JEAN BURNSTAD is our new Business Manager. Please send new subscriptions, renewals and address changes to her in the future. Address: 204 E. Capitol St., Washington 2, D.C. Tel.: AT 7429. We thank Sally Goldman for her long and faithful service, not only as business manager but also in helping to put out nearly every issue since she took the job. She was ably assisted by Dick. We'll expect you both back on the staff after a well-earned rest.

Thanks to a rainy Sunday morning, Vol. 8, No. 11 was mimeographed by a large crew of climbers, whose help was not acknowledged in that issue: Arnold Wexler, Dick Meyer, Ray Moore and Tony Soler got the paper out in jig time. Thanks, boys, come again.

The Editor's backlog of feature articles is running rather low. How about contributions from some of the rest of you summer travelers, theoretical experts, cartoonists and humorists?

UPS AND DOWNSOct. 28. Great Falls, Virginia

John Brehm	Jerry Jankowitz	Dick Meyer	Chris Scoredos
Susie Broome	Walt Kane	Ray Moore	Tony Soler
Marion Harvey	Peg Keister	Gary Morgan	Bob Stevens
Don Hubbard			Arnold Wexler

Early rain inspired a visit to PATC headquarters, where Ray sold equipment, Chris checked checks for the annual dinner, and Peg drafted some volunteers to mimeograph UP ROPE. By then the sky was clearing, so we headed for Great Falls.

Ray, Tony, Don and Jerry detoured to the Potholes to exploit the good practice belay spot previously described. After preliminary jumps with warning to the belayer, they worked up to unannounced falls into a slack rope. We think they probably did some climbing in this area also.

The rest of us made our first stop at the Corkscrew, which nearly everyone climbed as a warmer-up. Around the upstream corner, a difficult climb (name?) occupied the fanatics while we lazy people watched. Walt, John, Arnold, Marion and Dick made it with varying degrees of grace and finesse. During lunch, Spike Zywicki and friend dropped in, and the former climbed the corkscrew just to assure himself that he hadn't forgotten how to climb.

Two good leads upstream next challenged us. Arnold set Walt, Dick and John on Lawrence's Last, then led Peg and Marion on the Inclined Plane. Having survived the hazards of tin cans and rifle bullets from above, this team retired to watch the struggles on the Last. After much surveying and tentative foot extending, Walt found that his oversized sneaker just wouldn't stay on the airy outside foothold that was essential to the climb. So Dick took over the lead, a feat complicated by the fact that he was still tied into the middle of the rope and had stepped out to the next piton crack without hardware or hammer. Eventually, however, all these difficulties were resolved, and Dick, Walt and John completed the climb.

After supper in Georgetown, we descended on the Moores in Alexandria, where we were treated to a preview of Ray's and Tony's Kodachromes and Ray's movies of this summer's trip to the Needles, Devil's Tower and the Tetons.

Nov. 4. Carderock, Maryland

John Brehm	Marion Harvey	Alice Marshall	Ted Schad
Susie Broome	Don Hubbard	Tommy Marshall	Chris Scoredos
Jim Bullard	Jerry Jankowitz	Wade Marshall	Eric Scoredos
Tony Bullard	George Kamm	John Meenehan	Jane Showacre
Dick Goldman	Walt Kane	Gary Morgan	Bob Stevens
Sally Goldman	Peg Keister	Felix Peckham	Arnold Wexler
Arthur Grantz	Margaret Lewis	John Reed	Jim Willard

Dropping off Dick, Sally and Margaret at Cabin John to join the PATC hikers, we took the familiar path to Carderock on a brilliant, snappy day. There we found Jim and Tony Bullard and their boxer Jinny shivering over a fire after a chilly night camping out. The rocks were discouragingly cold at first, but soon either they or the climbers had warmed up enough to produce a lot of activity. Professor Hubbard took the beginners in hand, while the experts - and others - worked on Meenehan's Stairs, the Stretch (and Unstretch), the ChrisWexDon, etc.

The Billy Goat Trailers joined us at lunch, full of enthusiasm for Paul's hike along the Potomac, the brisk air and the still-brilliant fall coloring. We found a few temporary recruits among them. Robbin Brant, Marjorie Baden and Walter Goodhue climbed the Beginner's Crack, and Walter Downes did Ronnie's Leap. Don managed to get the oldest, Mr. Gaddis, and the youngest, Betty Chew and Jerilyn Noffzinger, roped up. The two little girls did the first pitch of the Golden Stairs, and learned how to rappel down. (over)

UP ROPE, published semi-monthly by the Mountaineering Committee of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1916 Sunderland Place, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

Subscription: \$1.00 for 20 issues
Send new subscriptions and renewals to:
Miss Jean Burnstad
204 E. Capitol Street
Washington 2, D.C.

UP ROPE STAFF

Editor: Peg Keister
Business Manager: Jean Burnstad
Feature Writer: Charles Fort
Crankers and Stuffers: Frank Sauber,
Jerry Jankowitz, Jean Burnstad
Spike Shaknov
Heading Designer: Tom Culverwell
Heading Printers: Lowell and Ellen
Bennett

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Later, Sterling's Crack was worked over by Jim, Arnold, Walt and Marion. Then we moved upstream to the Jackknife, the Lazy Daisy and the Crossover, with the normal distribution of falls and successes. On the Lazy Daisy, Susie gave us a demonstration of the value of folk dancing as training for rock climbing, while Walt demonstrated the effects of Saturday night dissipation.

As usual, the homeless waifs prolonged the day with dinner in Georgetown.

Nov. 11. Bull Run Mountain, Virginia

Joan Ascher	Don Hubbard	Dot King	Dick Meyer
Paul Bradt	Jerry Jankowitz	David King	Blondie Neuhaus
Peter Bradt	Andy Kauffman	Jack King	John Reed
Robbin Brant	Betty Kauffman	Alice Marshall	Frank Sauber
Mr. and Mrs. Brant	Peg Keister	Tommy Marshall	Chris Scoredos
Jim Bullard	Sterling King	Wade Marshall	Spike Shaknov
Tony Bullard			Arnold Wexler

With tears in their eyes, Don and Chris saw us off to take advantage of the unseasonably mild weather. The hike to the crest of Bull Run left some of us puffing and panting, but the view from there gave us an excuse to sit and recuperate. Jim Bullard and Johnny Reed each took a team on a tour of Zeus' Throne, while Dick, Frank and Jerry worked on the crack opposite.

Most of the rest of the day was concentrated on a few A climbs, which not only provided strenuous exercise for the aspiring climbers, but also gave some of us plenty of practice in catching falls. The Bull Run Overhang was conquered by Johnny, Jim, Jerry and Arnold, and almost by Peg. Paul says the latter holds some sort of record for the length of time she clung to the top after doing the hard part of the climb, and succeeded in exhausting her audience as well as herself before riding down.

Charlie's Crack as usual challenged and rebuffed many. Arnold and Paul both got high enough to give their belayer hope of saving some skin. Perhaps the outstanding effort was made by Tony, the youngest contestant, who made good progress before swinging off.

The last ounces of energy were expended on Two Inches More. Arnold, Paul, Jim and Jerry stretched the requisite number of extra inches to make it, while Tony, Joan, Peg and Frank made valiant attempts.

We overheard many vows to come back in the near future and lick those infuriating climbs we almost made.

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Changes of Address

Dick Meyer - 5200 Quincy St., Bladensburg, Md.
Oliver Westfall - 5506 Connecticut Ave., N.W. - EM 5064
Lowell and Ellen Bennett - R.F.D., Derwood, Md.
Charles Daniels - c/o Karban, 7011 Harwick Rd., Washington 16, D.C.