



Sp. Regal

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

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FOUNDED BY
JAN AND HERB CONN

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 5-9. Joel Gross has reserved the Hermitage for this period. You are all cordially invited to join him at any time during his occupancy. Remember, there's excellent climbing at Shaffer Rocks just a stone's throw from the door.

Dec. 7-8. Johnny Reed is taking a group of Johns Hopkins geologists to Pocosin for the weekend. He would be very pleased if some climbers would join them. Contact Johnny if you can be present to help initiate the geologists in rock climbing.

Dec. 14. Program Meeting - 8:00 P.M. at the home of Johnny Reed, 6637 Barnaby St., N.W., (WO 4268). Johnny and George Kamm will give us the word (with Kodachromes) on Alaska. We will again have a musical prelude, this time of Joel's folk songs, as tape-recorded by Charlie Gallant. Barnaby St. is located east of Pinehurst Circle (on Western Ave.) and runs north from Utah Avenue. Perhaps the easiest approach from town is via Conn., Nebraska and Utah Avenues. Or from Chevy Chase Circle, go north on Western Avenue, to Pinehurst Circle, go 2/3 around circle to Worthington St., which runs into Barnaby. If you're now hopelessly lost, call Johnny.

COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

Those of you who attended the last meeting at Sterling Hendrick's house know how good Jan's favorite climbing songs sound on Charlie's tape recordings. We would like to make these available on records to all of you at a reasonable cost, but we can't go ahead with it until we know that enough people are interested. The group comprises the following: Three Little Climbers; Don't Hold Me Down; Three Little Dopes; AMC Rock Climbing Song; Gory, Gory; Blotter Song; and part of Jam Crack Joe. If you'd like to be the proud owner of these rare items, drop a card or a word to Peg Keister (4607 Rosedale Ave., Bethesda 14, Md.). This will not commit you to anything, as we will inquire into costs and publish same before having records made.

The Conns' present address:

Silver Spur Ranch
Dos Cabezas
Arizona

REPORT OF 38 HOURS' EXPLORATION IN HIGGENBOTHAM CAVE

- by Charles Fort -

Future explorers of Higgenbotham Cave may wonder how a small hay loft arrived in the Big Room, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the entrance. This is by courtesy of Jack Reccius of Louisville, who, along with four other N.S.S. members, visited the cave Oct. 14 and 15. The others, watching Jack struggle with his Santa Claus sized pack over ledges and through tortuous crawlways, wondered if he were bringing enough provisions to take up permanent residence in the cave. However, more than half the bulk was found to be straw, the work of carrying which, Jack explained, would be more than compensated for by his added sleeping comfort.

Jack, Bill Lawson, Bert Denton, Jim Neil and I drove Saturday night to the cave's entrance on the slopes of Mt. Cardwell, five miles east of McMinnville, Tenn. Pushing immediately into the cave, it was an exhausted bunch of explorers who at six o'clock Sunday morning finally reached the level, 1500-ft. long, 5-acre room that was to be our base camp of operations for the next day and a half.

After six hours of fitful slumber, we were finally routed out of our sleeping bags by Bill Lawson's harmonica. Bill, a harmonica enthusiast, claims that harmonicas sound twice as good in caves due to the added resonance. Of course, if you don't like Lawson's harmonica music, following this line of reasoning, they sound twice as bad.

We ate a hearty Sunday dinner of pork and beans and were ready for the day's project. This was a descent into the black void beneath the jumping off place behind Monument Pillar in the New Discovery. After half an hour's hard scramble from the Big Room, through the Devil's Quarry, and into the New Discovery, we arrived at our location. We let down Bert's 100 ft. of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. manila, and Bert was first down. He rappelled to a small ledge 90 ft. down the 60° slope and reported that he was resting and safe but did not have enough rope to go further. In reply to our questions, he said that he could not see much from where he was, but that the bottom really dropped out of things beneath him. Bill and I then joined him, taking along my 120 ft. of nylon. We found ourselves midway on the sheer walls of a giant well. We looked up at least 60 ft. to the top of the dome, while the pit beneath our feet dropped into a seemingly bottomless abyss.

Directly across from us was a small hole in the wall of the well which seemed to be a passage leading on. Bert found hand- and foot-holds across to it, while Lawson belayed him. He reported that after about 8 ft., the bottom dropped out into another well. It seemed that we had entered a system of vast interconnecting wells, and we soon found that we were at the other end of an already known but unexplored system which drops from a passage beneath the Waterfall Room. Acting on a hunch, Jim Neil, at the top of the slope, had made his way to the jumping off place there. Ten minutes later we heard his voice loud and clear coming to us through the wells. We could not see his light, but we judged him to be about 150 ft. away and on the same level. It would have been interesting to traverse through the wells to Jim and the Waterfall Room, but we lacked pitons and expansion bolts and probably the rock-climbing experience to attempt it.

In the hope of finding a lower level passage, I rappelled 70 ft. from our ledge to the bottom of the well. From there I was able to scramble into the bottoms of two other wells, but was unable to find any other outlet. There was no place to go except back up, and I began the long ascent of the fixed rope on Prusik knots. On the way up I ran into some difficulty, as I spun like a top on a good part of the ascent. Furthermore, mud on the rope made it difficult to push up the knots. It was with a great deal of relief that an hour later I rejoined Lawson and Denton on the ledge. We three then used the manila rope as direct aid to climb the 90 ft. to rejoin Jim and Jack. This reconnaissance of the New Discovery's inner wells had taken all day, and it was then 10 P.M. We returned to the Big Room and turned in.

The next morning, Jim and Bert guided us on a trip in an older partially explored section of the cave, which I had not yet visited. As we proceeded in an easterly direction from the north end of the Big Room, I began to suspect that until now I had missed some of the most beautiful and spectacular parts of Higgenbotham Cave. After walking about a quarter of a mile, we entered an immense gallery ex-

Higgenbotham (cont.)

pansion and stood at the foot of an underground mountain, which had been formed by the partial collapse of the passage roof eons ago. On the rock breakdown slopes of this mountain, onyx pillars growing to heights of 15 and 20 ft. reminded us of the petrified stumps of a giant primeval forest. While the rest of the party remained at the foot, I ascended to the top, lighting magnesium flares on the way to illuminate this vast expanse. They estimated the height to be 150 ft. After everyone had ascended to the peak, we passed over the top and continued down the gallery beyond.

Wonders did not cease as we left the Mountain Room behind. The next gallery expansion we named the Roundhouse. This huge chamber, completely circular, was by conservative estimate over 300 ft. in diameter, with a flat unsupported ceiling 40 ft. high. Along one whole side we viewed a massive ornamentation of draperies and columns growing from ceiling to floor.

After following this known gallery system for perhaps $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from the Big Room, we were temporarily stopped by a breakdown extending from floor to ceiling. Bert found a way through, and we jumped off into virgin cave. As we proceeded, the gallery gradually dried out, and we were soon passing glittering incrustations and gypsum flowers on the 50-ft. walls. We were finally brought to an abrupt halt after $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile by a dirt fill. What lay beyond, whether the surface of Mt. Cardwell or more cave, was a matter of speculation. It was now 12M Monday, and we had to be back, so we returned to the Big Room and packed our gear and headed out.

Since my last visit, I had noticed one change in the cave. A cedar pole ladder up a 20-ft. ledge $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from the entrance had been pulled down and chopped up. Bert explained that he and Bert had done this to discourage the type of person who writes his name on walls and breaks formations from penetrating further into the cave. A fairly difficult rock climb must now be made at this point.

This cavern is of immense proportions. Bert Denton, with 300 hr. in 17 trips to his credit there, estimates that he has covered or explored 10 running miles of passage and is not yet running out of projects. After visiting the most famous commercial caves and favorite wild ones of rock climbers and speleologists in Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia, I have seen nothing that appeals to me so much, and I regard it as an unknown wonder of the world.

(((((())))))

Letter to the Editor:

"Just got back from the Smokies.... With the southern trip still in mind, it occurs to me that it's been a 'long time between climbs' in that area. Nothing, in fact, since that southern high-land fling we took at Chimney Rock in North Carolina these many years ago. It is probably remembered only by the participants: Jackson, Lembeck, Daniels, Bradt, Hubbard, Scott and Culverwell. At that time, we were more or less thrown for a loss by Chimney Rock, and our Newsreel pictures probably wound up on the cutting room floor.

"There are other rocks, however, as Stell and I discovered in our rambles. One in particular, Looking Glass Rock, is only a day-and-a-half drive from Washington, near Asheville -- a huge dome-shaped affair that looks as tho it might have all the resistance of Devil's Tower.

"Even closer to Washington is Grandfather Mountain. We climbed over only a small portion of it, and took a lot of Kodachromes -- enough to show that there is material here for a perfect 2- or 3-day trip along the crest line -- walking, rock-climbing and camping. Even the trail goes up and down on ladders, and the more repulsive looking cliffs range up to 300 feet in height. October, I think, would be the best time to try it.

"I wouldn't have mentioned this if Higgenbotham Cave, Tennessee, hadn't been dangled in front of our noses, very temptingly, in the last issue of Up Rope. Bracketing it with Schoolhouse Cave should arouse some interest. Grandfather Mountain and Higgenbotham Cave (what a brace of names!) could both be done in a week or so. Volunteers? And think of the illustrations! We could cut a lot of stencils after a trip like that.

Sincerely,
Tom (Culverwell)"

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UPS AND DOWNS

Nov. 11. Carderock, Md.

David Coates
Robert Coates
Donald Hubbard

Bill Schlecht
Ingrid Schlecht
Chris Scoredos

Eric Scoredos
Helen Scoredos
John Scoredos

- plus on-lookers -

The purpose of this trip was for Helen to climb the Chairman's Chimney (on Herzog). However, the river being high, we went hiking and ended up at Carderock. Helen climbed Leonard's Lunacy and the Spiderwalk. All day Don with occasional aid from Chris taught the small fry the essentials of sound rock-climbing. C.G.S.

Nov. 18. Sugarloaf Mountain, Md.

Paul Bradt
John Brehm
Susie Broome
Jim Bullard

Fitz and Gerry Clark
Four small Clarks
Marion Harvey
Mrs. Harvey
Don Hubbard

Jerry Jankowitz
Walt Kane
Peg Keister
Gerry Morgan
Frank Sauber

Hans Scheltema
Chris Scoredos
Bob Stevens
Arnold Wexler

Shivering in anticipation of exposure in two senses of the word, we headed for the rocks of Sugarloaf. A fine gale was blowing as we approached the top, and as our usual climbing area in the Butterfinger region was still very much in shade, we sort what sun we could find on the summit rocks to the left of the trail. Here some of us indulged in "warm-up" climbs that left us without fingers. John, Hans and Paul made a traverse across a face, dislodging a few holds on the way to add interest to the climb for future parties. Don put Walt on a tension lead around an overhanging corner, where his persistence was wonderful to see. After many almost successful attempts, during which the spectators wondered what he was using for hands, Arnold arrived to point out a hitherto invisible hold around the corner that put him in. He was then followed by Jerry and Jim.

Being so numb by this time that we hardly noticed the cold, we went down to our old stamping ground to the right of the trail. This was a record day -- no one tried the Butterfinger. Paul, Arnold and Don all led climbs, in, out or around the cave and on adjacent corners. The general impression was one of terrific struggle and the grace of elephants. In fact, so great were the struggles of some of the "youngsters", that "oldster" Don declared he was losing his self-confidence and beginning to think that these climbs were difficult. Peg led Marion and Jim on the Little Traverse. After Peg had struggled over with stiff fingers, Marion strolled over wearing gloves to show just how easy the climb was.

With apparently detached arms, legs and heads appearing everywhere from caves, cracks, and around corners, and with Paul spread horizontally on a rock face coaching hesitant climbers, Mrs. Harvey was moved to remark that the situation and the characters were strictly from Charles Addams.

Having dreamed all day of a cozy fireplace and hot drinks, we invited ourselves to Susie's house for a huge supper, and a chance to catch up on our comics and radio programs.