



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

Founded by
Jan and Herb Conn

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

September 26 - Second Annual Spaghetti Supper at the Grosses'. See last issue for details and directions. Please bring utensils; if you haven't mailed card, **

October 7 - 8 P.M. in the Board Room of the District Building, 14th and Penn., Arnold Wexler will present a talk and Kodachrome show entitled FIRST ASCENTS IN THE MONA-SHEE MOUNTAINS, under the auspices of PATC. All rock climbers, mountaineers and their friends are invited.

October 18-19. Old Rag - Leader: Gerry Morgan. Plan to camp at or near the Leanto. Commissary individual or by cars. For rides or riders, call Gerry, WO 1381 or ext. 608 at the Bureau of Standards.

October 26. Echo Cliffs, weather permitting. Leader: Jane Showacre.

November 9. Bull Run Mountain. Leader: Peg Keister.

November 15-16. Wolf Gap Shelter, climbing at Devil's Gardens and/or Big Schloss --
we hope. Leader: Betty Muollo.

** call Phyllis at office:
ME 3200, ext. 263-264

ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CAMP 1952 -- ASSINIBOINE

by Arthur C. Lembeck

The Annual Camps of the ACC are known for many things, their ability to collect members and guests from far places, the provision of instruction for tyros in ice, snow and rock climbing, as well as climbs of technical difficulty, from a well located base. Because the camp is operated on a plane quite above minimum comfort --tents for dining, drying, tea and recreation, camp boys to do all the serving and dish washing, competent rope leaders--it serves as an annual reunion for many experienced and emeritus climbers of the club. It is an added pleasure after a day's climbing to hear A.H.McCarthy tell of his first ascent of Mt. Logan, Sir Oliver Wheeler relate the tribulations of the Everest Reconnaissance, Henry Hall talk of current Himalayan and other high mountain expeditions, or Rex Gibson sing praises of new areas for "next year's camp." So, for these various reasons, PATCers from Washington and California met in this year's ACC Camp. George Kamm, Jerry Jankowitz and Sioux Hughes made the jaunt from the east while I came up from China Lake with Sierra Club members Ray VanAken, Harry Hoyt and Phil Lamson. Both groups spent a night in the ACC Clubhouse in Banff, but the Cal. group went in two days earlier, seemingly to test rainshirts and boot seams.

The camp was located near Lake Magog in the best possible spot for the 175+ people who were there at one time. Even a tree-line (Hendricks type) camp would have been only 30 minutes closer to Assiniboine. From the main camp at 7200 ft, Wedgewood (9800), Sturlee (10,330), Terrapin (9500), Naiset (9300), Tower (9337), and Magog (10,050) were within moderate one day climbing distance. Assiniboine (11,870) this year was a different

story, to be considered later.

It was a new and very welcome luxury to be greeted at the end of the 16 mile walk from Spray Canyon Dam with hot soup or tea and to have tents already up and 40 lb of duffle packed in by horse. With such an introduction, the California group was motivated to explore a low traverse of the Assiniboine-Magog-Terrapin icefield, passing under the beetling magog hanging glacier enroute. They came back soaked from snow and rain after an interesting bit of ice step cutting and crevasse dodging. Undaunted they set out next day to look over the cliff approaches to the Assiniboine-Wedgewood snowfield. Late in the afternoon they retreated through the 7" of new snow, gaining the tea tent before all the tea was gone. To this pleasant spot came Jerry, advance guard of the D.C. group while the Californians were feasting and thawing before the blessed wood stove. George and Sioux travelled more leisurely so the "welcoming committee" had tents located and duffle in hand when they sloshed into their 2-week-homo.

Monday the crews joined forces, except for Sioux who did whatever girls do in camp the day after a hard hike, and scrambled up the rotten rock slopes of Naiset. In general the rock in this area is poor. The slopes and summit of Naiset are right in the bank of worst rock. As one climber said, "How anything so loose can be so steep, I'll never know." The lower slopes are a shambles of talus and the ridge a series of slate and shale "dinner plates" piled one on another. A high wind would induce flying saucer stories all over British Columbia.

Since we were on top early, we decided to traverse the ridge to the Terrapin Col, or as far as the route might go. An unapparent ledge on the west side of the ridge was the key to this traverse, even though one spot was 4th Class, and another required 2-piton protection for the belayer. In the late afternoon sun, the snow chute looked rather steep for Jerry, George and some others of the party to have their first instruction in ice axe arrests and glissading; but such was the spirit of the party that the downward swoop was interesting to all.

The weather continued to improve with a night which was clear but a bit too warm for proper snow consolidation. Our late starts--breakfast at 7 and on the trail about 7:30--gave the snow even more time to soften. But Wednesday we were out again, bound for the most distant peak [Ed. Sturdee?] of those accessible from camp without bivouac. We went up the steep, cruddy rock and snow approach cliff to the Assiniboine-Wedgewood snowfield and over it to the col. The softening snow slowed us down somewhat after we crossed the Assiniboine-Wedgewood Col. Avalanche tracks, sweeping far out on the glacier from Assiniboine, were traversed enroute to the Assiniboine-Sturdee Col and at the col we were exposed to an icy wind. We were glad to deviate from the usual route which turns the N.E. buttress of Sturdee to the left, and follow instead the tracks of another party, led by Don Woods (AAC and ACC), to the right, avoiding the chilly blasts. Not having to kick steps was a help, and we caught up with the other party as they topped the shoulder of the buttress. Here we had a chance to thank Matteotti, former Italian mountain trooper, for the steps up the 51° (clinometer) snow, and to search for nonexistent shelter from the wind which seemed to have added strength at 10,000 ft. It was rather a surprise to find that two interesting 3rd Class rock pitches connected by a narrow ridge separated us from the summit. We lunched and waited a long 2 hours as the 1st party tied back in to their ropes and slowly ascended the moderately good rock. We conservatively belayed our one beginner up the first traversing 75 ft. pitch. The rest climbed unroped and passed most of the first party above the traffic jam on the narrow rib. We didn't stay long at the summit cairn, but did have a look at Assiniboine's impressive west arete and the north arete and west face of Aye, an airline mile and most of a day away. Romping back down to the rib below the top pitch, we found rappel school in progress, and, indeed, had to perform the same service for two of our party. It was with somewhat chilled relief that I, as last man, slipped off my ice axe belay and started down just after six P.M.--not the best time to be still at 10,000 ft. The steps, after 16 people had gone up and come down, were not much good, but the soft wet snow lying on solid ice was too near avalanching to chance another track down the steep narrow slope. We moved one, and then two, at a time, belaying all the way down the 700 ft slope, though it took until 7:40. We reached the top of the cliffs above the final detrital slopes just before dark. For greater speed in the dark, we skirted the cliffs and descended a 1000 ft snow tongue, hardening now enough for "heeling in" steps. We planned to glissade the previously tested lower slopes. The first man was already at the bottom when the second started out, then slipped. His ice axe arrest was too high and didn't catch at once so he dug in his toes

--flip!--he somersaulted and went pinwheeling down, gathering speed as he dropped. He hit the final runoff minus his axe and--lucky boy--stopped just before the talus. It was a great relief to see our victim scramble to his feet and to find him quite uninjured except for minor bruises and rarin' to try more snow slopes. A half mile out of camp we were met by a "rescue party"--Sioux and the Canfield Beatties (he the official camp doctor). Our midnight supper was extra delicious, spiced by six hours' waiting. It was even better to wake next morning to the drumming of rain on the tent and think how fortunate not to have listened to that suggestion to bivouac.

Saturday, while the Washingtonians attended snow and ice school under Edmond Petrig, the California four joined a group led by Brad Gilman (Sec. AAC) to traverse Magog. Dor Woods and Polly Prescott (also AAC) were with us as were Canfield Beattie and Matteotti. With such a strong party we were soon over the Terrapin-Magog Col and down the other side, traversing west into an area of tan-colored rotten shale called the "Golden Stairs". The route was not obvious here and at least one rope wandered off to endure a touch of the lower regions before reaching the Golden Stairs. About 200 ft of this sort of rock led to several interconnected snow fields and the party gained the ridge at about 9800 ft with minimum trouble. Above this point the snow steepened and then fell away, exposing familiar cruddy shale for the last 75 ft to the summit. Since we planned to traverse the mountain we continued along the ridge for some distance and then climbed down loose rock partially cemented by ice to gain a gentle snow slope which led to Magog's hanging glacier. Ropes were used in crossing numerous visible and probably some invisible minor crevasses. Beyond the glacier we traversed a shoulder of Assiniboine on rough ice necessitating a few steps, admiring what seemed an easy rock route up the king of the region. From our foreshortened view point none of the snow, which we had seen from greater distances, was visible, and the mountain "leaned back" in a most enticing manner. Some distance below this shoulder, our party split up, some taking the steep snow chute and others using the Wedgewood-Assiniboine cliff route back to camp.

All the way down we wondered why we hadn't seen the party which was coming up from the easier reverse direction. Once in camp we found out. In traversing the top edge of a snow patch on the cliff route the third man in a rope of four had fallen, dragging the rest of the rope with him. The snow patch was shaped like an inverted triangle 100 ft high and ended in a narrow chute between two large rocks. The four men tangled in their rope as they fell becoming such a lump that they luckily jammed in the outlet and were saved from a probable fall of about 600 ft. to the rocks below. One man had broken ribs and severe contusions but the others escaped with minor abrasions.

Every evening we had gathered to study the image in our picture window--Assiniboine, the "Matterhorn of the Rockies." It was an impressive sight with the late afternoon sun slanting over the hills onto the snowy triangle more than 1800 ft above its nearest neighbors. In these sessions, we picked out routes and reviewed our impressions of the mountain from surrounding peaks. Excerpts from Palmer and Thorington's "The Rock Mountains of Canada" were rehashed for the newcomers, and the "when we were here in 1935" boys contributed their bit. Actually, the easy routes, the ridge which faced camp and the SW face (original route), are Class 3 with a few easy Class 4 pitches in a good year. But this was not a good year, and the Climbing Committee was properly reluctant to permit anyone on the mountain until conditions improved. Every day the impatient ones grew ever more agile at leaping over the steeper shoulders and crossing the 'schrund in jig-time--verbally. Finally the Committee decided to send a reconnaissance party of three to see what the chances were of success on the upper slopes. The Swiss guide, Edmond Petrig, was a natural choice. For some unknown reason I was chosen as a member, and the third was Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith of the (British) Alpine Club who had had a fair amount of experience in the Alps and had spent a year with the British Graham Land Expedition in the Antarctic. The idea of the recon was not announced until Sunday evening, so we had to make our plans quickly and turn in for the early rising.

The usual late breakfast was not our idea of how to start up the biggest one, so we were up by 3:15 and left camp with double lunches in our packs and a good breakfast inside us. We were well up the cliffs by daylight and on top of them soon after 5 a.m. At 5:40 the glacier was below us and we were ascending patchy ice and rock slopes covered with enough snow for good footing at this early hour. Usually we moved together; once in a while exposed ice or loose rock reduced us to belaying. Higher up, the ridge we were following began to steepen and we were sometimes forced into chutes or onto the NW face

to turn vertical or icy bits. These instances were few except on the two prominent "steps" visible from camp, which were tricky because the rock was steep and loose. On the upper of these steps the leader got into difficulties while forcing a pitch without traversing into the chute, barely managing to surmount a small overhang of loose rock and powder snow. However, his belayer was tied in and a disciple of the dynamic school, so only dignity would probably have been lost.

Assiniboine has two summits, a false rock one visible from Lake Magog, and a snow summit slightly beyond. Nearing the rock peak, we were actually on hard snow which blended into the heavily corniced east face. We travelled in intermittent mists, probing carefully for cornices and staying just on the edge of them where the snow was best. Many times our axes plunged to the head through the powdery heart of a cornice, and oft where a cornice lip was missing we caught wonderful glimpses down the east face, apparently a couple of thousand vertical feet, just beyond our boot tips. The summit cairn, on the rock peak, was reached at 9:30 and served as our first real resting place while we searched for the register. All we found was an aluminum cigar tube containing the names of the three parties which made the ascent in 1951--the first successful parties since 1947. A chocolate bar later we shrugged on the packs and continued up the curving ridge to the true summit just 10 minutes away. The snow ridge became wider and covered with beautiful scale-like frost feathers, some half as broad as ones palm. The actual top was just a place where the various ridges joined, unmarked because of the extensive snow which was continuous on all sides, except the east face, for several hundred feet below the summit. The wind and mist were not conducive to stopping, so we paused only long enough to select a route down. We had made good time, so felt like more than just retracing our steps. A traverse was in order and we decided on the ridge which leads directly to Sturdee.

The route was straightforward and rapid at first. As soon as we were protected from the wind we halted for a second breakfast and fine views of Lunette, Aye and the top of Eon--the mists were now clouds above us. Soon after starting again we ran into heavier going. The rope was put on again and worn until we were entirely off the mountain. Our problems were essentially two--soft snow and loose rock. The ridge was much steeper than the one we had ascended and the pitches were longer. The rappel rope came into play on bare stretches to make better time. Our 175 ft of 5/16" manila was a help until it became wedged below the sling rope and could not be retrieved. We saved a good proportion, but decided to abandon the ridge in favor of a high level traverse on the SW face. Our "easier" route didn't get that way. Pitch after pitch we had to move one at a time instead of rambling as we had expected. Apparent snow slopes were sometimes ice, or even rock cliffs foreshortened from above to continuous snow. We several times moved rapidly under cliffs dripping water from an upper coating of avalanchy snow, or started apprehensively when an actual avalanche rumbled off somewhere else on the peak. Once we were forced into a very steep narrow chute of at least 55°, moving two at a time from an axe belay. Several rope lengths from the top we heard the hiss of a snow slide above. We dug in deep and the snow swept down and around us, peeling off a six inch surface layer, the slide continuing down out of sight around a bend in the curving chute. We heard it go over an overhang and drop to the glacier below. A healthier route seemed necessary, so we took to the first break in the walls of the chute, climbing delicately on unbelievably rotten rock but of not too high an angle. A cul-de-sac of smooth wet cliff on the true shoulder leading toward Sturdee sent us back paralleling our snow chute on its rotten rock sides. The mountain had done about all it could, though, and at 6:15 we were wolfing the food we had saved for an emergency in the security of Sturdee Col. The rest of the way was old stuff, and we breezed into camp just before 8 p.m. Dry clothes and boots, after the soaking by the wet snow, and the soup and beef stew the cook had saved for us were wonderful.

Before the Assiniboine party was chosen, I was to lead a group on a traverse of Wedgewood. Ray volunteered to take over. From what I heard, the jaunt was quite exciting. Jerry, George, the California group and several Canadians made up the party. Ray found the only band of good rock in the area to build up spirits at the start and continued over rock and snow to below the main ridge. Here he passed over rock described as the "Cubist's Nightmare" in ascending a rotten chimney, the key pitch to the easy snow ridge semi-circle which goes down to Assiniboine glacier.

Tuesday, while I stayed in camp, the Washingtonians joined two of the Californians

and several Canadians in attempting Magog under Harry Hoyt's leadership. An hour below the summit, the first rope was above the second. A sizable rock was knocked loose and dropped, striking the second man on the lower rope full in the face. He fell into the rope, unconscious, but securely held by his belayer. His rescue was effected and when he was rational once more his injuries were found to be essentially superficial abrasions and two lost teeth. He was adamant about recovering the teeth before descending. The teeth were found and turned out to be from the victim's expensive denture--lots cheaper, he said, just to have 'em fastened in again. He was a rather sick fellow, though, and the climb had to be abandoned.

Wednesday we decided to move over to the flycamp which had been set up in the Eon-Aye area on Aurora Creek. We carried our sleeping bags and such gear as we would need to go on out to Banff without returning to the main camp. We were in pretty good condition, but we soon discovered that packing 14 miles is a bit long for a 1:40 p.m. start. When we finally arrived, our satisfaction was somewhat spoiled by the news that the high party, led by Petrig and including Jerry, was still out. They had left Lake Magog before 6 a.m. and had sent four girls, including Polly and Kay Prescott, in via an easier route. Nothing could be done at night, but neither could we climb next day until we knew they were safe. Don Woods and his party had been forced down from Eon by the late hour and soft snow, so any start after 3 a.m. would probably fail. That meant that if the lost party wasn't in by 3 a.m. there would be no climbing from flycamp, which was to be broken on Friday. Knowing this we turned in. An hour after daybreak welcome voices were heard--they had been close by and unhurt. No problems except a chilly night and an extra notch in their belts for the missed meal.

Our schedule was now a day ahead. There was no reason for remaining in flycamp, so we packed out, remaining overnight at the half-way camp on Bryant Creek. Next day we hiked out to Spray Canyon Dam, hitched a ride to Banff, spent the night at the ACC Clubhouse, and then back to the salt mines.

UPS AND DOWNS

or -- Ancient History

Aug. 31. Potomac Gorge, Virginia.

Billy Alley
Dolores Alley

Ann Green
Bill Hayes

Kim Massie
Earl Mosburg

The insistent ringing of the phone aroused your reporter from bed and sent him scurrying to the Hot Shoppe. They said they needed my expert leadership. Conclusion: they were actually short of a rope and hardware.

The destination was the Virginia side of Great Falls where we first worked on Juliet's Balcony. This was Bill's first climbing. After this, Romeo's Ladder was climbed by Kim and myself. As the Alleys arrived we were setting up a short rappel off the nearby boulder to instruct Bill, but the rains came and found us all huddled under the trees. After it cleared, the rappel was tried by most of us, and several routes up the face of the boulder were made by all but Billy, who was occupied by a dead object floating in the river. Finally a bet was made between him and Kim, and he went down to see what it was. One bet it was an eel or a snake, the other that it was a fish. It turned out to be an eel, but, as was astutely pointed out, an eel is a fish. This confused the issue hopelessly so we retired to the lower end of the gorge and worked on a chimney climb. Bad weather then descended in full force and we retreated to the car and the Hot Shoppe. --ERM--

September 13-14. The Hermitage.

Joan Ascher

Peg Keister

Johnnie Reed

Ted Schad

Hale Bradt

Gerry Morgan

Frank Sauber

Jane Showacre

Jerry Jankowitz

Betty Muollo

Kay Schad

Arnold Wexler

Friday evening saw Arnold's car low in the stern and bulging at the seams with five passengers, their duffel and food for an uncertain number. Pausing for dinner in Frederick, they hurried on, arriving at the Hermitage around nine. Agitation soon started to send the uninitiated, Joan and Gerry, up to the firetower, but by the time

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they were started on their way, spirits were so high that Arnold, Jerry and Peg were with them. This was the first time some of us had climbed the tower without the spur of ice below and an icy gale above.

For some reason, no one was up very early Saturday, but with the rocks just a few yards from the door, we did not feel the need of hurry. In fact, we had just cleaned up the remains of a fine leisurely breakfast, when Johnnie, Hale, Jane and Betty dropped in for a cup of coffee.

Shortly thereafter we straggled up to the rocks. Arnold, with that well-known gleam in his eye, sicced the three J's on the Mezzanine Climb, with the unhelpful statement that it had been led, and the mental reservation -- by Art and Tony. This team provided a little excitement and some excellent propaganda for "Belaying the Leader." Jane first took the front end of the rope, edged out from the mezzanine to the deceptive ledge with the bulge above, and retreated. She then started to repeat the process, but fell while retreating, and was nicely caught by Johnnie. The rope was then reversed, and Jerry then repeated Jane's performance. Johnnie is now wearing gloves for belaying, and Jerry is exhibiting an unfamiliar amount of caution. Johnnie then made the climb with a rope from above and declared he would not lead it under any circumstances. Meanwhile, Arnold took Joan and Gerry up the Swiss Guide Climb, without having to perform the services of said guide. Peg led Hale and Betty on a stroll up the Easy Exposure.

Lunch was now in order, after which we returned to the rocks minus one member. Hale was gently snoring in his bunk. Ted and Kay soon joined us, and Frank joined Hale. The Guide and the Chimney got some attention before we ran out of ambition.

Dinner that evening was fashionably late and unfashionably substantial, especially with the addition of ice cream brought from Waynesboro by Frank and Gerry. What was left of the evening was spent in reading and recitation of such gems as Bowleg Bill, Sam Magee, and the Hermit of Sharktooth Shoal.

Sunday's climbing was largely limited to three things: the face to the left of the gully, which Johnnie has christened Ezyore's Gloomy Climb, the bottom pitch of the Swiss Guide, and the Hoverhang. Johnnie conquered the first. Jane Showacre proved that the second is possible (? it says here) for a person five foot one, using shadows for handholds and imagination for footholds. Frank also gave an interesting exhibition on this pitch. With his right hand on the good handhold, he had just said, "But I don't have what it takes in my arms," when he slipped, swung 90° on that one hand, recovered, and made the climb. Arnold led the Hoverhang, followed by Joan, Jerry, Jane and Johnnie. By then, tummies were clamoring again, and we returned to clean up the last crumbs of available food. Perhaps the somewhat scanty lunch accounts for the alacrity with which the cabin was cleaned up and duffel packed. Then we were off once more to Frederick for those big steaks.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: In line with the policy announced two years ago of having the editorship of UP ROPE rotate every few (?) issues, your editor of a year and a half thinks it's time someone else had a chance. Therefore, we are handing over our stencils and ink to Gerry Morgan for the next few issues. Please help him out by sending in your reports and special articles. We know someone went to Sugarloaf and someone else to Garderock last Sunday, and how about articles on the Monashees, Mummies, Tetons, Devil's Tower, etc.? Don't wait to be coaxed. We want volunteers, YOU, YOU, and YOU!