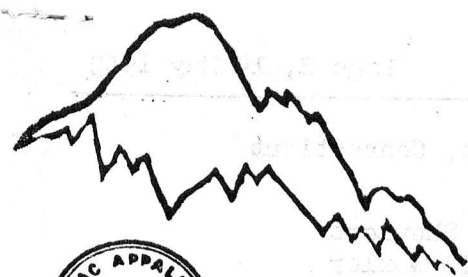


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Johnnie Reed

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

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

FOUNDED BY
JAN AND HERB CONN

PRICE
5 CENTS PER COPY

Volume X

14 May 1953

Number 3

SPECIAL ACCOUNCEMENT

There has been increasingly frequent disregard of safety precautions lately, and in view of this, our Chairman has seen fit to make the following announcement:

In the past we have carried on our activities with a minimum of rules and regulations. It has been traditional in our group that certain rules were always followed even though they were never formally written out. In the past few months I have become increasingly concerned about the disregard for these rules among many of the newer members of the group. There seems to be a feeling developing that the unexpected never happens, and that since we have never had a serious accident, there is no reason to believe that we will have. Within the last several years the number of relatively new climbers in our group has increased tremendously and it has become difficult to keep an eye on everybody. For this reason I have decided, after talking it over with several of the older members of the group, to set forth the following rules:

1. No one will take a team on any climb under any circumstances unless he has the permission of the trip leader. The leader of the team may not necessarily be the first man on the rope, but he will be the one who is responsible for the safety of his team.
2. No one will untie and descend or go on alone. The team must remain intact at all times.
3. There will be no climbing of any kind without a safety rope. No matter how easy a climb may be, or how competent the climber, it sets an extremely bad example for beginners to see people climbing without a rope.

Johnnie Reed
Chairman

Rock Climbing Safety Conference, New Haven, Connecticut
2-3 May 1953

Paul Bradt
Peg Keister
Johnnie Reed

Jane Showacre
Arnold Wexler

In spite of the occurrence of a tragic accident of the type which it was designed to prevent the Rock Climbing Safety Conference was extremely instructive to the members of our group who participated. The conference was sponsored by the Connecticut Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club and was attended by groups from Boston, New York, Yale, Harvard and Princeton as well as Washington. The program included demonstrations of rescue techniques, rappelling, and belaying and discussions of care of equipment, leadership training, and first aid. I think that as far as the Washington group was concerned the greatest value was the discussion which stimulated among ourselves on the attitude among our climbers as contrasted to that which seems to prevail among the other groups that participated. We found that most of the other groups were amazed at the informality with which we have operated and the perfect safety record which we have maintained.

I think that a brief description of the accident which occurred during the conference would not be out of place here; it can probably serve all of us as an object lesson. John Ewing, a member of the Princeton group was leading a team on what was considered a relatively easy climb. The weather was rather cold and the rocks were wet. He was not familiar with the route, although it had been pointed out to him from below. He led the first pitch of forty feet or so without using pitons for protection, although members of the Yale group who climb the route regularly use four or five, as they told me afterwards. He brought up his second man, who was apparently not an experienced climber. The belay position was good and whether any pitons were used to tie in the second I don't know, but at least he was firmly placed. I did not see the progress of the climb on the next pitch, but according to the second man the leader had been on the pitch for about fifteen minutes and was obviously becoming tired. He had used no pitons for protection, although just before the fall occurred he tried to place one and apparently felt that it was not sound (the Yale people say that three pitons are normally used up to this point). After abandoning the attempt to place this piton he tried to reach another crack but slipped and fell. He was between twenty and thirty feet above his belayer without any pitons, although the rope was running over a projection of rock about five feet from the belayer. I first caught sight of the fall when he was fifteen or twenty feet above the belayer. He fell free to the end of his rope and was stopped about 10 feet above ground by an essentially static belay since the rope was running over the rock projection. Were it not for the rock, I doubt if the fall could have been stopped at all by an inexperienced belayer. Sometime during the progress of his fall a rock several feet in diameter was dislodged. While he was hanging limp at the end of the rope this rock struck him on the back of his head after falling free for almost forty feet.

Jane and I helped in the rescue operations. It was a job that neither of us ever want to have to do again. In spite of the help of a large group of people, all of whom were eager to help, and the availability of a large amount of equipment, it took almost an hour after the accident happened to get the man down to the road. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

It seems to me that this accident was the direct result of poor judgment by the leader. He did not use the proper amount of protection. Even though the

climb was supposed to be rather easy, he was not familiar with it, the weather was bad, and the rock was wet. The belayer was in no way at fault. He did the best he could considering the circumstances of the fall and his training. Although the falling rock was probably the cause of the fatal injuries I think that serious damage was probably done by the relatively static belay. Had the leader used proper protection the fall could have been reduced to only a very few feet. The rock might never have been dislodged, but even if it had struck him it seems unlikely that such serious damage would have been done.

The only reason for giving such a detailed account of this accident is that it illustrates the fact that good judgment, above all else, is necessary for a leader, and that no amount of climbing ability entitles a person to rope leadership if there is the slightest doubt about his judgment. I hope that this will bring home to our climbers the fact that serious accidents can be the result of even a little carelessness, but that with proper training and judgment on the part of everyone who climbs, accidents don't have to happen at all. I don't think that an accident like this could have occurred to any of our group. If it did it would probably spell the end of all climbing in the Washington area. I know it would as far as I'm concerned.

I hope that sometime in the near future we will have a chance to devote part of a meeting to a discussion of some of the ideas that occurred to those of us who attended this conference. We all felt that the Connecticut people did a wonderful job in arranging this get-together and that the idea of such a conference is very good. Although some of us questioned a lot of the opinions that were expressed, and were not too happy about some of the techniques that were demonstrated, we all felt that the contact with the other climbing groups was extremely worth while. If nothing else, we made a number of new friends whom we hope we may see in Washington from time to time.

Johnnie Reed

26 April 1953 - Carderock, Md. (again, and again and yet again!!!)

Betty Alley	Shirley Jackson	Jim Moses	Frank Sauber
Doloras Alley	Ken Karcher	Bernie Nebel	Chris Scoredos
Paul Bradt	Pim Karcher	Sven Nissen-Meyer	& Family
& Family	Peg Keister	Jo Pino	Jane Showacre
John Brehm	Bill Kemper	Bunny Powell	John Sopka
Jimmy Bullard	Alice Marshall	Earl Reed	& Family
Tony Bullard	Tommy Marshall	Johnnie Reed	Arnold Wexler
Randolph Freeman	Wade Marshall	Ann Remington	Bill Walker
Walter Freeman	Ronnie Mason	Gayle Remington	Gorden Zewllner
Jerry Jankowitz	John Meenahan	Karen Roby	Dan (a dog)

Back to dear old Carderock again for what we hope the last time for filming purposes. Oscar, of course, was hauled and dropped with various people catching him, and many old ropes were broken by Oscar's falls for the benefit of the camera. A very effective example of why not to use the shoulder belay was given by Bill Kemper and John Meenahan. Perhaps the hardest climb of the film was done by Jimmy Bullard. It seems that John Meenahan wanted a scene of a leader putting in a piton, caribiner, tying himself in, and then belaying his second man up. So it would be easier to film, he decided on a two-foot-off-the-ground ledge by Sterling's Crack. Johnnie Reed, as "leader", pounded in the piton, put in the

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

Subscription: \$1.00 for 20 issues.
Please send new subscriptions, renewals,
and address changes to:

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caribiner, tied himself in and then got set to belay up his second man, Jimmy Bullard. Jimmy had to climb approximately four feet up from a prone position, groping for a handhold and making it look tremendously difficult. How Johnnie and Jimmy did it without cracking a smile or grin is anybody's guess. As for the "crew" and "cameraman" we all but split our sides laughing.

As usual your reporter could not keep tabs on all the climbs that were done by the various people out today. Paul Bradt reported that the ChrisWexDon was done by Ronnie Mason, Paul, and Bill Walker. Ronnie, a newcomer to rockclimbing, led the climb, coached by Paul of course. Perhaps the most revealing climb was done by Bill Kemper on the Triple A. He started out climbing fully clothed and ended up shoeless and pantless. (He had on a pair of walking shorts underneath) And as if he wasn't satisfied he also took off the only available handhold on the climb. Earl Reed also tried it without his shoes, but on reaching a part of the ChrisWexDon, asked that his shoes be thrown up to him. Ann Remington obliged with the first one, but the second ended up in the river. Whereupon Earl "Barefoot Boy with Cheek" Reed plodded back to the car sans shoes.

A hilarious time was had by all and along about evening people, kids, dogs, and squirrels (squirrel-brained, at any rate) trooped back to their cars for home and dinner.

S.J.

May 30-31, 1953

The PATC starts reconstruction of the Corbin Cabin in the Shenandoah National Park. This is to be a shelter which the Rock Climbers will use so let's go down and help. The truck will leave at the rear of PATC Headquarters, 1916 Sunderland Place., NW at 7:00 AM on the 30th. Bring camping equipment, including tent, and lunch for Saturday. Price of \$6.50 will include all other meals. Mail check and reservation to Fitzhugh Clark, RFD 3, Gaithersburg, Maryland, to reach him no later than Tuesday, 26 May. If necessary to get further information call Fitz at EM-2-4040 (Code 154), Extension 7487.

May 29 - 8:00 PM -- Jim Bullard's house.

Program: Jimmy's slides of his summer trip to the Dolomites.

Directions: Go through Rockville center; 3 blocks beyond traffic light at Post Office and Bank, turn left at little church. Continue 1/2 mile to Rose Hill which is on the right.