



Top of the P.A.T.C.

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

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FOUNDED BY
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Coming Events:

November 6. There will be a gathering of the clan come Friday evening, November 6 at 8:15 P.M. at Sterling Hendrick's place, 1118 Dale Drive, Silver Spring, Md. Feature event of the evening is to be an illustrated talk by "Old Dad" Wexler on the trip last summer to the Coast Range. Directions: Drive out Colesville Road from Silver Spring to Mrs. K's Toll House. Turn left on Dale Drive and proceed about one block.

Explorations in Suicide Cave - 3-4 October 1953

Huntley Ingalls
Ray Moore
Gerry Morgan

Tony Soler
Bill Youden

The purpose of this trip was to explore as far as possible a new section in this cave which had been discovered on Labor Day Weekend by a party in which the writer participated. The new section is reached by a low, muddy crawlway, about 50' long, at the end of the Grotto Passage. About 1,000' of new passages had been discovered, some with beautiful formations. Air currents and the skeleton of what seemed to be an opossum indicated that there might be another entrance.

Tony, Bill, and the writer were quickly lowered to the bottom of the big drop and were soon at the crawlway. Ray and Gerry agreed to meet us in 10 hours and left for the surface where they planned to spend the day looking around for another entrance to the cave.

The main passage soon pinched out beyond the limit of previous explorations, so we looked for leads through some of the pits in the floor. One of them led down to a lower passage which carried us to a stream passage. Here we saw sticks and leaves, and Bill found a bone from a large animal. Since this looked encouraging, we followed the passage upstream. More sticks and leaves, larger ones. Then a tin can. We were getting hot! More tin cans. We began to have visions of

emerging in a fine October afternoon. Then we came to a fork. One branch lead to impassable breakdown, the other to an earthbank and a siphon. This was quite a disappointment, but we had discovered about 1500' more of new passage. The extent of known passages in Suicide Cave is now twice as great as that previously known, totaling about one mile. The new stream passage runs parallel to the main passage in which the big room is located. The whole cave is shaped like a U. The new sections would be worth a visit if they were easy to reach, but since they are not as interesting as the old and quite difficult to get to, they are not recommended. We did not, however, explore all leads.

On arrival back at the ladder after an elapsed time of 11 hours, Bill set up his equipment to take a picture of Tony ascending. We had trouble with the apparatus and only 7 of the 12 No. 3 bulbs fired, but Bill got a very good shot with his camera. Back at the top, Gerry ruefully showed us the result of a cave rat's prank. He had left his helmet just inside the entrance and returned to find the wire cable to his headlamp bit through as neatly as if it had been done by shears.

On the surface we looked at the topographic map and found a sink with a house beside it which seemed to be just where we had been stopped by the siphon. It seems quite possible that this is the source of the tin cans. Gerry and Ray also found a sink on their hike which looked promising. Now we had supper and prepared for bed. But what was Gerry doing? Patiently he was mending his mouse gnawed plastic air mattress.

H.I.

* * * * *

Carderock, Maryland - 3-4 October 1953

Pittsburg, Pa. people - Gert Christie
Ben Nelson
Marian Nelson

Sayre Rodman
Dick Scott
Jean Winnie

The Washington Rock climbers were hosts to the above Pittsburg climbers for this weekend. The Pittsburgers arrived Saturday morning and were taken out to Carderock for some belay practice with Oscar and for some climbing. Oscar was hauled and dropped umpteen times and all those catching him agreed that there was more to this belaying than just theory. After lunch they got a little climbing in on the Beginner's Crack and Ronnie's Leap. We were even honored by the presence of (Ahem!) Dr. Donald Hubbard, who has had his dignity trampled on by the boys he brings out. They call him "Lughead Hubbard". Perhaps we should use such tactics with Don. Dinner was a grand affair served at Frank Sauber's apartment with everyone helping.

There was a business meeting scheduled at Betty and Andy Kauffman's house for Saturday and so over we went. Nearly everyone was there. Our Chairman proposed a nominating committee of three for the election of a new Chairman in Jan. This was agreed upon and the committee will be announced at the next business meeting. Following this little piece of business, Johnnie was to show pictures of the Tetons, only he showed some pictures of activities around Washington first. After several roars of laughter over unposed shots of local climbing and threats of bodily harm, he got around to the Tetons. The wait was very rewarding and some of the views magnificent. Refreshments of home made cookies, cider and good coffee were greatly appreciated by those attending and our thanks again to Betty and Andy.

Several Washington climbers stayed with the Pittsburg people at Carderock Saturday night and the climbing continued the next morning. There was activity all over the place, with people climbing everything. Jean Winne put all the men

to shame by climbing the Spiderwalk. Dick Scott and Gert Christie got a tour over the ChrisWexDon. Sayre Rodman was a little hesitant about the Wexler's Worst traverse but after he got going he had a fine time, even to the Stretch. Sterling's Twin Cracks were given a going over. Dick Scott and Sayre did the Nubble Face, but there was no one for Jan's Face.

Along about 4 PM the pore, ole, tired people from Pittsburg (and Washington too) climbed back into their cars and drove home. Sure hope we see them back in Washington soon for more climbing.

S.J.

New Lead on Seneca Permits Instruction on New Belay Technique

(The "Ye Gods and Little Fishes" climb)

by J. Reed

Anyone who is familiar with the Skyline Traverse on Seneca Rocks will recall the deep chimney on the south end which offers the first really "interesting" pitch of the climb. This chimney is reached by a delicate traverse from the top of a partially detached flake about one hundred and fifty feet above the talus on the southeast corner of the rock. Below the point where it is normally entered on the Skyline Traverse this chimney widens out into a partially overhanging and forbidding looking inside corner which extends vertically downward to the talus about a hundred feet west of the standard beginning of the Skyline Traverse.

On Labor Day Weekend Arnold selected this corner to introduce Earl Mosburg and me to a technique of double-rope climbing, which he says is standard practice among other groups, especially the New York Group, for long difficult leads which offer no intermediate belay positions. Instead of a single rope the leader is tied into two ropes and has two belayers. He leads as he would on any other climb, putting only one rope through a karabiner. When the drag through several karabiners becomes excessive he begins snapping the other rope in and is safetied on it. He may then pull up the first rope, freeing it from all the karabiners below, and drop it back to the belayer. If the climb is extremely difficult he may want to put the second rope through a karabiner without freeing the first rope from the karabiners. When the climb is of a type to warrant use of this technique the lead is alternated often, and the leader removes the ropes from the lower karabiners one by one while descending. This system also has the psychological advantage that the leader does not have all his eggs in one basket - he knows that if a fall occurs he has a better chance of being caught with two ropes than he does with one. It also permits use of tension to help the leader, if necessary.

On Sunday afternoon Arnold began the climb on a single rope and advanced to a shelf about thirty feet above the ground on the left side of the inside corner. Below this point the rock was full of Army pitons, but they ended with a channel iron on this shelf. He placed a piton in an awkward semi-chimney about ten feet above this shelf, and then retreated. I took over the lead but was unable to advance further than his highest piton and descended in disgrace after replacing the upper karabiner with a sling rope and retrieved the others on the way down.

Monday morning Arnold, Earl and I, supported by Peg Keister and Shirley Jackson returned to the base of the climb. Arnold quickly repeated the lead to his upper piton and replaced the karabiner. With practically an upper belay from Arnold's piton I returned to the first ledge with two ropes and instead of continuing up the awkward chimney which he had used I was able to use a lay-back crack in the corner about six feet to the right. A few feet above Arnold's piton this crack widens into a shallow semi-chimney. Here I drove two channel irons and placed the second rope through them before returning to terra firma and relinquishing the lead to Earl, removing the first rope from all but the upper karabiner on the way down.

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Earl pushed the lead another fifteen or twenty feet up this semi-chimney to a very narrow ledge below an overhang on top of which were some large, rather precariously balanced, loose blocks. Arnold resumed the lead and contributed a channel iron part way up the overhang five or six feet above Earl's high point. Through this he placed the first rope which was then cleared all the way to the belayer, by this time some sixty or seventy feet below. On the next lead I was able to by-pass the overhang by moving to the left. Climbing six or eight feet up a series of projections on the left wall I placed a piton. From here I could reach the loose blocks above the overhang with my right toe and push them off, after everybody had taken shelter below. This cleared a small stance in the inside corner, about thirty feet from the top, but I was not up to making the delicate step over to it. I returned to the ground and turned the lead over to Earl.

His lead of the upper portion of the climb was one of the best displays of climbing that I have ever seen. The last twenty-five feet of the climb are very similar to Sterling's Crack at Carderock and not a great deal easier. Earl did this entire section in one lead using five or six pitons. In one or two places he had to resort to tension on one of the belay ropes while driving a piton. His lead ended on a large ledge about a hundred feet above the ground, the only possible belay stance on the climb. Arnold and I followed with a rope from above. From Earl's belay position, thirty feet or so of easy scrambling brought us out on top of the flake on the Skyline Traverse.

In all about fifteen pitons were used, of which only three were recovered. The lead was changed about eight times and about seven hours were required to complete the hundred foot pitch to the large belay platform.

Your Editor was quite startled when someone out climbing a couple weeks ago asked him where to send a writeup that was being submitted for UP ROPE.

In the unlikely event that this question should arise again, articles should be mailed to Gerry H. Morgan, 3908 Morrison Street, N.W., Washington 15, D. C.

The Wolf Gap Shelter trip scheduled for November 21 and 22 has been cancelled. There will be no substitute trip.