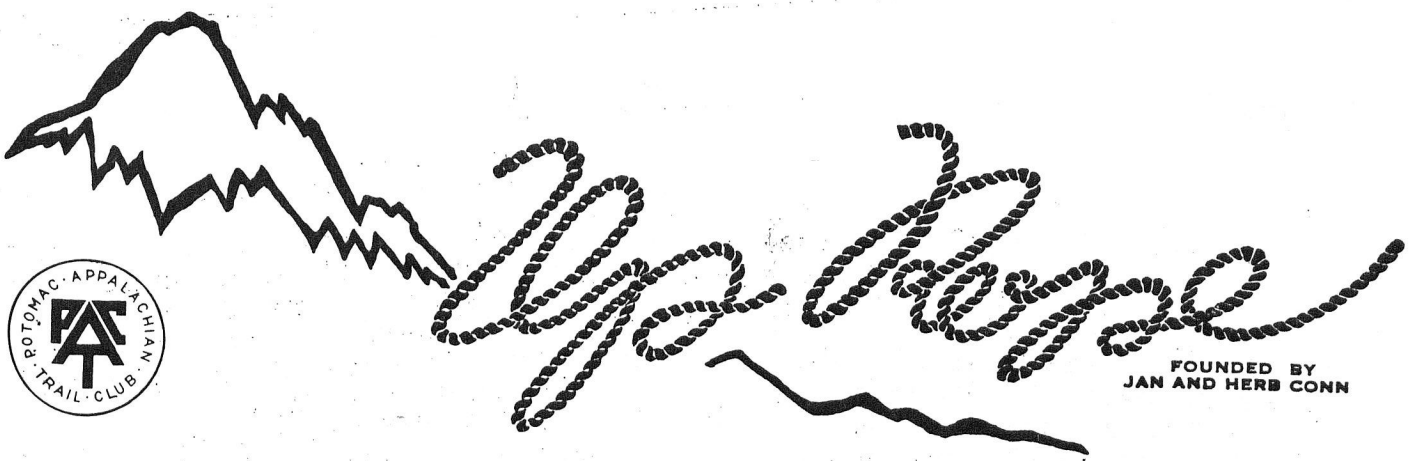

NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING COMMITTEE

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

Volume XV Number 9 September 1960

COMING EVENTS

The Mountaineering Committee meets each Sunday morning at Howard Johnsons restaurant, Western and Wisconsin Avenues, at 8 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and sneakers for climbing. A note is left behind the south east drain pipe so latecomers may know where we have gone. There will usually be a Sunday trip on the out of town weekends. Please do not phone the restaurant.

September	2 - 5	Labor Day. No scheduled trip. Too many still away on vacations. Come out Sunday as usual.
September	11	CARDEROCK, Maryland -- Belay practice with our dummy, Oscar.
September	18	OPEN. To be decided Sunday morning
September	25	BULL RUN MOUNTAINS, Virginia.
October	2	CARDEROCK, Maryland. Belay practice

MEETING OCTOBER 9

Our first meeting in the fall will be held at the PATC Clubhouse, second floor lounge. Pete Peterson will show his pictures and talk on "Mica Creek Revisited", or according to Don Hubbard, "Mt. Chapman Reclimbed." All you that have seen Petes slides know what a treat this will be. Don't forget, this is on a Sunday night and will start at 7:30 p.m.

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As everyone knows by now, Art Lembeck has left Washington for Maine. This is a real loss to the club and to the mountaineering Committee and UP ROPE in particular. Most of you will remember when Win Lembeck used to type UP ROPE for the present editor. We will miss them.

THE HAMMOCK CLIMB

(The Italian Scene, Aug-Sept.)

The world of Alpinists is buzzing with controversy concerning the climb of the Roda di Vael mountain in the Trentino, accomplished by Cesare Maestri otherwise known as the "Spider of the Dolomites".

This mountain presents a 400-meter (1300-foot) face of overhanging rock which, up to now, only flies could have climbed, except that Roda is too long a climb for the lifetime of a fly.

It took Cesare Maestri and Claudio Baldessari, his companion, eight days, at an average of 30 to 50-meter progress each 10-hour climbing day, to reach the top of Roda.

There are no ledges on Roda's face. As evening approached, the climbers dropped a nylon cord to helpers camped below and hoisted food and a couple of hammocks. In these they spent the night, lowering them to the foot of the cliff before starting off again in the morning.

Gripped hand and foot to the overhanging rock face, it took the two climbers each evening three hours to hammer into the rock steel expansion pitons and then hoist and fix the hammocks. The fact that the rock was overhanging gave the climbers, however, a free swinging berth once the hammocks were secured. Only one night, after the wind had been swinging the hammocks rather more than usual, Maestri felt for a piton in the dark and noticed that it was coming loose. That was a night to remember.

The climb, catalogued in the Alpinistic difficulty scale as "Sixth degree, artificial 3 ascent", presented one favorable feature: though several storms raged during the eight days the climbers spent on the face of Roda, they were never touched by rain. That is one advantage of hanging practically like a sloth from an overhanging wall of granite.

Now, of course, Maestri and his companion are being accused of violating the spirit of Alpinism by using too many artificial devices. Expansible pitons, (nails which, once hammered into a crack in the rock, lock themselves in automatically) have by this time been grudgingly accepted. But that business of the hammocks hoisted for the night is what really gets under the skin of most old-timers. On the other hand, it is impossible to think of anyone living and climbing for eight days without sleep. The face of Roda could not have been climbed by human beings in any other way.

"There are no laws for climbing" says Maestri. "If some one wants to climb Mt. Blanc naked, in mid-winter, stopping every 100 yards to pour a bucket of water over his head to see the icicles form, he is free to do it. As long as I don't hide my methods, I can choose the ones best suited for the job ...Let some one else now climb Roda as we have done, and then criticize...".

The above was sent in by John Christian. The Italian Scene is a bulletin of information published by the "Centro per Giornalisti Esteri" in order to spread"information and understanding" between Italy and other countries.

John will be with us again in September. His address will be Apt. 409, 2401 H St. NW.

Being editor has certain advantages. One of the more interesting is that of being kept informed. We have recieved cards from Fred Barker in Norway, Sam Goldin in Scotland, Bob and Kate Adams and Alan Talbert out west. (What a climbing trip this one must have been!) Kay and Hal Blinn write to say hello and that they are very anxious to see their climbing friends at 2882 So. Race, Denver 10, Colorado.

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NEW(GIRL)CLIMBER!

Barbara and Karl Edler are the proud parents of a baby girl born Sunday, August 21. The name is Hilde Melena.

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Karl Edler has also been named by the PATC president as the new Chairman of the Equipment Committee, replacing Art Lembeck. As most of you know this means lots of work, so lets all give him all the help we can. This also means that the editor is looking for a new business manager, or someone to help out until January when she hopes that there will be a new editor. So, don't be bashful -- come forward!

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Rock-climbers and Cloud-watchers are reminded that their photographs of these activities are useful to the PATC BULLETIN and for publicity for PATC. When you take your pictures, let the BULLETIN Editor (Paula Strain) or the Chairman of the Photography Committee (Victor Hasenoehrl) see them.

Black and white photographs are preferable but the BULLETIN can convert color slides into usable black-and-white prints if all you take is color. Negatives and slides are returned to you.

Paula Strain

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The Dartmouth Mountaineering Club puts out an excellent Bulletin on climbing. Their 1960 issue contains many fine pictures and an article by our own Tom Marshall on BATTLE RANGE EXPLORATION. This is a little known area in the Selkirks. The price, including the map of the Battle Range in the back pocket is $2.00. Write to the Dartmouth Mountaineering club, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

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Gretchen Andraitis has volunteered to help out with the mechanical aspects of our programs until January. Let Gretchen know if you are interested in helping with the refreshments. A card to the club care of UP ROPE will reach her.

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A RING PITON FAILURE DURING A RAPPEL

Art Lembeck

Protection of the climber at all times is essential to safe climbing, and this includes rappelling. A spare rope primarily for rappels, but also available for emergencies, can repay many times over the effort of carrying it. A 5/16" diameter rope 200 ft. long was an old standard for rappels because the usual 120 foot 7/16" climbing rope could be used to belay during the full length of the rappel. A smooth, even sedate abseil, strains the belay point the least and is less likely to flip loose stones down onto the party, even though, with a bomb-proof belay, the joy of zipping down free rappels is hard to resist. A method for protection of the last man if the rappel rope does not fail, i.e., if the rappeller becomes helpless, was described in the Sierra Club Bulletin.* In recent years the spelunkers in particular have improved long free-rappel techniques and prusik-type ascents. Protection has usually involved variations of prusik slings and therefore precludes rope breakage. If the rappel rope doesfail the problem is the same as protecting the ascending leader.

Pitons with rings are convenient as rappel belays because the rope can be pulled down through the ring without rigging a sling or abandoning a carabiner. Many angle pitons have a ring, although the 10th edition of HIKING, CAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING EQUIPMENT (to be published in August) lists numerous angle pitons without rings. Add to the annoyance of the loose ring interfering with driving this type piton, is the below article's tests, which show a wide spread of strengths under slow loading. The probability of failure is even greater under shock loading, as when a fall is arrested other than with a smooth, dynamic belay. (It is noted, however, that in one series of tests we found it very difficult to exceed 600 lbs on a spring dynamometer even on the most violently jerky rappels. Possi the use of..."a (ring) piton already in place"...which was possibly weakened by weathering, was another factor in the accident reported below).

In any event it would be wise to heed the advice of the Bri committee and look with a very jaundiced eye on ring pitons until further tests of our own stocks can be made. Specifications for U.S. Army angle and wafer pitons, incidentally, call for rings testing to 3000 lbs. I recall at least one ring failure which o occurred on our local climbs; the guilty piton was a Swiss angle otherwise unknown source and make. The following article is reprinted from MOUNTAINEERING III:7, p. 30, 31 March 1960 by permission of its Hon. Editor, Peter Pirie, Esq.

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*Sierra Club Bulletin XXV:96, Feb. 1940

From MOUNTAINEERING 111, 7, p. 30, 31 March 1960

A Piton Failure.

In August, 1957, a party of two traversing the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey had reached the point where it is necessary to descend to the Col de Peuterey. The cliff below was heavily iced so the party decided to abseil from a piton already in place. This appeared to be in good condition, with a substantial ring through its head. As the party had no spare abseil rope, they untied and threaded their climbing rope through the piton ring and the leader started down carefully, walking down the cliff and looking for a landing. This he found after about 50 ft. and called the second to join him. The second started down "in a series of jumps and jerks," and then fell for about 500 ft., being killed instantly. The leader climbed with difficulty back to the piton and found that the ring was missing and remembered that he had heard it fall. It was clear that the death of the second had been caused by failure of the ring.

Through the courtesy of Jackson & Warr, Ltd. and Robert Lawrie, Ltd. specimen ring-type pitons were obtained for test and two further specimens were purchased elsewhere. Each consisted of a steel or wrought-iron shank with an eye through which a welded-up ring was passed. The rings of the Simond and Cassin pitons were much lighter than the others, being 0.210 in. and 0.231 in. diameter compared with 0.275 in. to 0.285 in. The rings were tested in a tensile testing machine with the welds at 90 degrees from the loading points, with the following results: --

Specimen number	Maker or other identification	Test result
1.	F. Simond Chamonix	Weld failed at 900 lb.
2.	Cassin	Weld began to fail at 1,200 lb. Total failure at 1,400 lb.
3.	Made in Austria	Weld failed at 1,500 lb.
4.	" "	No failure at 3,000 lb.
5.	" "	Weld started to move at 3,000 lb. Still held at 5,000 lb.
6.	" "	Still held at 5,000 lb.

The last three specimens suffered severe distortion, but without actual failure.

Discussion of Test Results.-- The test figures obtained show a very wide variation in strength of the six pitons tested. While the last three are clearly strong enough to meet any emergency, the others are dangerously weak. The appearance of the first two, with their slender rings, had not given confidence and low test loads were expected. It is notable, however, that the failures occurred at the welds which had been imperfect and in which there had been

some unseen corrosion which probably still further weakened the welds. The low value for No. 3 was not expected as it appeared before test to be of the same standard as 4,5, and 6. Here again the low strength was due to an imperfect weld, bu there was nothing in the appearance of the weld to suggest that it might be weak.

It might be thought, from the figures obtained, that even the weakest of the rings tested would be strong enough to withstand the loads imposed during an abseil. In fact, the load in an abseil rope may rise momentarily to several times the weight of the abseiler, and the maximum load will be greatly increased if the abseiler descends "in a series of jumps and jerks." It is notable that in the accident reported above, the piton remained secure while the leader descended carefully, but failed under the increased loads resulting from the more exuberant descent of second.

It is clearly possible to manufacture ring-type pitons of adequate strength for any purpose, though such pitons are relatively heavy. It is equally clear that, under the present conditions of manufacture and without the safeguard of X-ray inspection of the welds (which would substantially increase the cost) ring pitons can be dangerously weak. It is most probable that the death on the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey was caused by a weld failure.

Ring-type pitons must be counted unreliable at present, and climbers are warned not to use them.

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PRODUCTION: Al Demott

ADDITONAL HELP: Alan Talbert, Hal Kramer, Joe Nolte (Printer's Devils)