

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

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MOUNTAINEERING IN ECUADOR:

The North Peak of Illiniza

by
Don Schaefer

Six of us (my wife Betsy, Chuck Sproull, Art Wilder, Sallie Jordan, and my cousin Charles Head) were in Ecuador this past August on a mountaineering trip. One of our goals was to climb the twin peaks of Illiniza. The South Peak of Illiniza is covered with steep snow and ice. Rising to 17,300 feet, it harbors two glaciers and a modest number of crevasses. The North Peak of Illiniza, about 17,000 feet high, is less snowy and has exposed rock in many places.

Upon arriving in Ecuador we were met by members of Nuevos Horizontes, the largest climbing club in Ecuador. The next day, in the company of this club, we went to Illiniza. Travelling by bus we reached about 13,500 feet. We then backpacked for three hours (the last one in darkness) to the hut in the saddle between the twin peaks. We soon felt the effects of going from sea level to 15,600 feet in 36 hours. Our appetites were greatly reduced and during the night we became nauseated and awoke in the morning with splitting headaches. Excedrin and dry bread gave us the strength to get out of our sleeping bags after an hour. Gazing at the peaks we all wondered if we would ever physically be able to conquer them.

Two weeks passed and we gained experience on Pichincha (15,600 feet) and Cotopaxi (19,700 feet). We acclimatized to the altitude to varying degrees and added to our mountaineering experience. We decided to return to Illiniza for two days during our last week in Ecuador. We hoped to conquer both peaks.

At four in the morning the five of us (Charles had already left Ecuador) along with Jose Berge, a French chef, and a driver piled into a car and headed toward Illiniza. At the base of the mountain our hopes of doing both peaks received a severe blow. The car, overloaded with people and equipment, could not manage the steep grades. We had to backpack from the base of the mountain. This took an extra two hours and scuttled any chance of a peak that day.

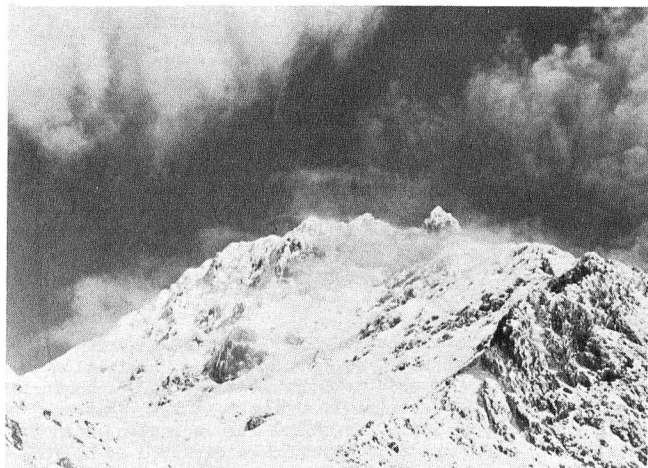
For two of our party the extra backpacking had even more severe effects. Sallie, unbeknownst to us, was suffering from amoebic dysentery and after two hours of backpacking was unable to continue. Art Wilder, who had rounded into good condition, sacrificed his chance for the summit and bivouacked with Sallie at a lower elevation.

The four of us remaining (me, Chuck, Jose, and Betsy) continued to the hut. Betsy elected to go no further than the hut having decided that her snow climbing experience was not sufficient for either peak. Then there were three.

We decided to attempt the North Peak on the grounds that it offered a greater chance for success.

At four o'clock the next morning we were awakened by a mouse rattling our pots and pans. We dressed hurriedly, gulped down a few bites of food, and tea with Kendall mint cake. As we stepped out of the hut we saw that we were in luck. The early morning was perfectly clear. We proceeded up to the ridge, climbing easy rock and snow. On the ridge crest we were privileged to see a most glorious sunrise. All the major peaks (Cotopaxi, Cayambe and Antisanna) were clearly visible. With Jose leading the way, we moved quickly along the ridge until we arrived at the first technical obstacle: a step in the ridge. This forced us to climb out onto a 60° snow slope. Donning our crampons and the climbing rope we proceeded cautiously and soon regained the ridge. We were then at the most challenging point on the climb: the traverse of the big tooth on the ridge crest. After a brief discussion of the route (Jose wanted to traverse left; Chuck and I wanted to go right) we traversed right, descending perhaps one hundred feet. Challenging route finding and climbing among steep snow gullies and rocky ledges requiring 4th class technique ate up about two hours. Then we were back on the ridge. Fifteen minutes later we were on one of the summits of the peak.

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Lost:

Diamond engagement ring. Please call Mike Hill at
336-1471. There is a reward for finding the ring.

Ecuador at Christmas:

Al Klov Dahl would like to get together a trip to Ecuador
during Christmas vacation. Contact Al at 832 East University
Avenue, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104.

Chairman's Corner

Everyone in the United States seems to be jumping on the ecology bandwagon. As climbers and lovers of the outdoors we should all have been conscious of the environment years ago as our parks have been getting more crowded, our trails more littered, and our mountain views more obstructed.

For a number of years I have been aware that the problem was growing. But not until last fall did I decide that I should and can do something about it. What really set my mind to action was my first trip through Switzerland last October. For years I had been dreaming about beautiful, mountainous Switzerland and had seen hundreds of beautiful mountain scenes in climbing books and on travel posters. But last fall I was severely disappointed because most of the Swiss mountain valleys I passed through were rimmed with a layer of haze like a ring of scum around a bathtub.

This summer I again noticed the same problem, but I also noticed that no one seemed to care. The campground where we stayed in Chamonix was, at one time, a beautiful alpine field surrounded by large conifers with a glacial stream on one side. Today this campground looks like it had just held the annual meeting of Litterbugs International. The field is littered with trash: rusty cans, wine bottles, non-returnable "Bluet" gas cartridges (which seem to be everywhere in the Alps), pin cushioned with tent pegs that campers could not get out, and makeshift shelters of plastic and corrugated steel. The nearby auto graveyard has supplied many campers and climbers with front seats of old cars -- which add to the litter. The campground's outhouse is a prime example of apathy -- it sits on a small dock which juts into and over a glacial stream which flows right through the center of Chamonix just a mile downstream and probably ends up as a source of the public water supply. I was most impressed one night by a beautiful fiery red sunset against the impressive West Face of the Dru only to be as equally nauseated by the view of a pile of burning tires belching black sooty smoke out of the woods from the auto dump.

"Though American scenery is destitute of many of those circumstances that give value to the European," wrote Thomas Cole, "still it has features, and glorious ones, unknown to Europe...the most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wilderness." In America we still have a lot of this wilderness and it may well be the job of those of us who value and enjoy this wilderness to preserve it. We must realize, as Thoreau did over one hundred years ago, that, "In wilderness is the preservation of the world."

Tom McCrumb

Belay Ledge

Mexico at Christmas:

Ronald Adler is interested in a climbing trip to Mexico over the Christmas vacation. Those who may be interested should contact Ron at 338-3458.

Hanging Around

Edes Fort, W. Va.
August 16

Dave Templeton - reporting
Janet Gladfelter

Joan Templeton and Mone
(alias White Fang)

6:00 a.m. Sunday: day of climbing, no reporting to office or doing household chores. Jumped out of bed.

6:30 a.m. Phoned Janet to arrange meeting. Decided on Edes Fort.

7:00 a.m. Breakfast; then on our way.

9:15 a.m. Edes Fort. No tents. No climbers. Road to rocks has a chain across it. Attached to chain is sign saying "NO TRESPASSING." Ensuing conversation contained remarks such as: "Why the hell wasn't there something about this in UP ROPE? I bet the trip leader doesn't even come! I just can't understand why.... Oh, Dave, why don't you shut up! Well, I'm not going to sit here; we'll get Janet and go to Caudy's."

9:30 a.m. Bridge near Great Cacapon. More of the above.

10:00 a.m. Janet intercepted. Agreeable to Caudy's.

10:30 a.m. Caudy's Castle Rocks.

Janet and I do four pitch rappel to base of cliffs. Blazing sun. Keep coming up ten feet short of decent rappel points. First time had a chance to practice retrieving webbing from the rappel point. Felt like we were hanging off a sky hook. Every time the rope moved half the cliff would fall down. Good way to clean Caudy's. Thirty or forty teams rappelling down in parallel. Then it would probably topple over. Caudy's Castle rocks. Stream of consciousness. Stein. Stein of beer. Wish I had a drink. Last rappel ended on a ledge above a ten-foot down climb. As Janet comes down, rocks the size of watermelons carom off the ledge on each side of me. As long as they alternate one can dodge 'em.

We take the climb to the far left. I need a piton at the beginning of the jam crack. Removing it wears Janet out and causes her to fall off. She finds an escape route to the left and comes up. We forget the route to the right because the ledges are heavy with briars. Short leads give Janet practice in rope work and piton extraction, but slows us up. The sun bakes us out. Joan met us at the bottom with a canteen. It is D.C. tap water: hot and brackish. We eye the Cacapon forlornly until we get between the flake and the main wall and out of the

Up Rope

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sun. This revives us. A scramble up some rubble, a traverse to the chimney, up the chimney, and a hundred-foot lead to the top by Janet finishes the climb. When I come up this last pitch, three Wanderbirds, two of whom are PATC'ers, graciously give us each a can of cold beer. GLUG-GLUG-GLUG-glug-glg.

6:00 p.m. Swimming. Hippies have found Caudy's. Vandals have found the cabin. Dial soap allows us to leave in good odor. Hippies manage to let us know they are skinny-dipping. Morals are one thing; aesthetics another. Hugh Hefner needs to form a vigilante squad.

7:00 p.m. We depart. Joan has had fun sunning herself and swimming. White Fang has spent the day attempting to terrorize hikers. Janet has removed pitons placed in various inaccessible spots, has removed slings from chockstones, has done a good job at seconding, and in addition, has lead a lengthy pitch and put the knowledge gained on the lower pitches into practice, and I have had the pleasure of both leading an interesting and challenging climb and observing Janet go from practice to lead climber in one day. It was well worth the discomfiture at Edes Fort.

Caudy's Castle
September 13

Dave Templeton - reporting
Andre Kaufman
Noel Grove and family
Daphne

Janet Gladfelter
Arnold Wexler
Joan Templeton and White
Fang (alias Moné)

Jolly Roger Birch is gang away to England (Will ye no come home again?) I seized upon this second opportunity to get my name in print zealously.

Janet, Joan, Moné and I arrived about 10:00 a.m. to find Daphne, Andre, and Arnold already there. While readying ourselves for a climb, Noel and his family arrived. After pointing out the rocks to them, Janet and I proceeded to the base of the cliffs to re-do the leftmost climb, having done it a couple of weeks before. We made the climb more difficult by doing some harder pitches than we had done previously. Janet found she was negotiating the pitches in better form than before. Not so with yours truly. On the second pitch I suddenly found myself a ding-a-ling in space for a brief moment. The piton, an old, previously placed knifeblade, held wonderfully and the Goldline gave me a nice braking ride to the ledge while being held statically by Janet. I managed to kick her in the belay arm on the way down; she was gracious enough to hold me anyway. Two morals were learned: don't assume you can trot up a pitch just because you've done it before and don't belay in the path of a possible fall trajectory, if you can avoid it. The leader must take responsibility for both lapses in climbing technique.

Climbing was hot and sticky as it usually is here in the summer, spring, and fall. When we reached the peak we hurried to the car for a cool one. There, in addition to Joan and Moné, were Daphne, Andre and Arnold. Andre had bruised the big toe on his left foot while jogging the day before and was unable to climb in comfort. While we were dying of thirst on the climb, these four had been engaged in a discussion of the subtle art of wine-tasting.

While the augmented group downed canned tea, Instant Replay, and beer, Noel and his family came up from the river. By this time it was mid-afternoon and late for climbing. The group broke up and became homeward bound.

We've problems of a sort at Caudy's. The path down to the usual swimming spot was posted with "No Trespassing" signs. Accompanying this warning was small print stating that entrance could be made only with written permission from the owner, a Mr. Duncan. Mr. Duncan not being in evidence, we decided to make a small sortie to assess the reasons for the signs. They were soon in evidence. The same things we saw when we were there before. The cabin has suffered apparent vandalism. All the effluvia of man's think-tank were made flesh in the form of tin cans, bottles, paper, and so forth. We did Mr. Duncan a good deed as much as we could by gathering up as much trash as we could and by piling it up in a central location. It would be well, to preserve our welcome as members of the PATC and of the Mountaineering Section, to contact Mr. Duncan and the owner of Caudy's and give them a statement of our good intentions.

I'm willing to follow Roger's example at Cupid's Bower and lead a party to Caudy's to help Duncan clean up the mess if that will keep us in his good graces. It would be nice to be able to show my PATC membership card to an irate landowner and gain his favor on the basis on an established reputation.

Seneca Rock
September 19-20

Bill Thomas - Trip Leader
June Lehman
Tom Presson
Maron Stewart
Don Schaefer
Chuck Sproull
Nellie Widmayer
George, Sandy, Mike and
Mathew Sweazey

Doris, Jeff and Sue Thomas
Lynda Harris
Dave and Joan Templeton
Lee Travers
Pete Gardiner
Mike Hill
Bob and Kate Adams
Cathey Goldman

After being bluffed by a rainy drive Friday night, we were blessed with two beautiful days. The popular climbs were a bit congested. Your Trip Leader got his favorite girl friend (Doris) to the top of Humphrey. Mike Hill led Maron and Lee to the top of the Gendarme. Dave, June, and Lynda did Le Gourmet, Ecstasy, and Thais to the accompaniment of Dave's ballads and yodeling. George and young Jeff made it to the South Summit for the first time. Chuck led Cathey on Tony's Nightmare but bypassed the deep chimney full of feathers and bird crap that terrified your Trip Leader two weeks ago (He would still be in there clinging to the piton if he had not been successful in rigging a self belay for the traverse out of the chimney.).

Tom Presson lubricated the campfire with Cold Duck Saturday night and we listened to a program of classical music by Peter Gardiner.

The Rain-thing at Chamonix Tom McCrumm, reporting

I had always heard that the Alps were notorious for their bad weather, especially the Mt. Blanc Massif in Chamonix; but I found it hard to imagine after a half year of good climbing in perfect, warm, sunny weather. Roger Birch and I arrived in Chamonix in the rain in early August full of vigor and plans for great alpine routes. We were met there by Tink Peters who was planning to climb with us there. On the average we had about one good day per week -- with rain or heavy overcast the remainder of the time. Roger was able to get in one good route on the only two consecutive days of nice weather that we had. He and two others (I was nursing two sore feet) did the Northwest face of the Aiguille du Midi, a 2,500-foot mixed rock, ice and snow climb. They were benighted at about 13,000 feet, just a few pitches from the top, which they completed after a bivouac in a luckily clear night.

The majority of the bad weather time was, of course, spent in the Bar National, the local Touhey's. Serving only drinks, they are nice enough to permit the climbers to bring in their own food to eat.

The next good day we had was the day Roger had to leave for home. A few days later Al and Julie Weis joined Tink and me in the rain for a three-day wait for good weather. The one day that we had to climb, we spent on the Mer de Glace and on the Midi-Plan ridge. Both Al and I got severely altitude sick and spent a miserable night in the guides' room on top of the Aiguille du Midi because we had missed the last téléphérique down by mere minutes. A few days later we left Chamonix in search of better weather.

To those people who are interested in climbing in the Alps, please don't be too discouraged by this report of foul weather. The best weather in Chamonix is mid-June through July. I learned that it is usually bad in August. The Alps to the south, near Grenoble, and to the east, in Switzerland, have much more dependable weather. English guidebooks to all the alpine areas are available from the British Alpine Club.

If you are a newcomer to the Alps a good place to start would be Leysin, Switzerland. We spent a week there at a place called Club Vagabond which is a chalet (very inexpensive) for vagabond types and climbers. It is only a few hours from Chamonix, Zermatt, and from the Bernese Oberland. In addition to being an excellent place to find other climbers, it is the home of Dougal Haston's International School of Mountaineering. There are local limestone quarries for climbing as well as 800-foot high cliffs less than a mile away.

CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

Date	Place	Leader
Oct. 10-11	Seneca Rock	Bill Thomas (KE6-7948)
Oct. 14	Meeting, PATC Headquarters, 8:00 p.m.	Bob Waldrop. Slides of Alaska's Brooks Range
Oct. 17-18	Shawangunks	Tom McCrumm (527-6272)
Oct. 24-25	Wolf Gap	Mike Hill (336-1471)
Nov. 1	Annapolis Rocks	Peter Gardiner (894-4463)
Nov. 11	Meeting, PATC Headquarters, 8:00 p.m.	

Trip leaders are reminded of their responsibility to arrange for a report and, if a leader is unable to make his assigned trip, to appoint a substitute leader.

Seneca Rock, W. Va.

From the Beltway take I-66 to Gainesville, Va. and bear right onto Va. 55 to Moorefield, W. Va. Turn left onto U.S. 220 to Petersburg and right onto W. Va. 4 and 28. Mouth of Seneca is 22 miles from Petersburg on W. Va. 4 and 28.

Shawangunks, N.Y.

From Washington take the Baltimore-Washington Parkway (or U.S. 1 or U.S. 29) to the Baltimore Parkway. West on I-83 to Harrisburg. Follow Interstate signs to Allentown (I-81 and I-78). East on I-78 and U.S. 22 to Pa. 512 North. Get on Pa. 115 North to Wind Gap and onto U.S. 209. Follow U.S. 209 past Ellenville, N.Y. and turn right onto N.Y. 55 and U.S. 44 East. Go approximately 8 miles and turn left onto Traps Road and camp in 1 mile at the Coxing Camp. (75¢ per person per night) The rocks are 2 miles up N.Y. 55.

Annapolis Rocks, Md.

From the Beltway take I 70 S north past Frederick to U.S. 40. At the top of South Mountain, park at the roadside on the left (there is a gas station on the right). Follow U.S. 40 (on the right) to the Appalachian Trail which parallels I 70 for 100 yards. Go right and uphill. In 2 miles turn left at the Annapolis Rocks sign. Go 100 yards to the cliffs.

Wolf Gap, W. Va.

From the Beltway take I 66 to Gainesville. Bear right onto Rte. 55 through Front Royal heading north. Follow 55 to

Strasburg. Go south on U.S. 11 (the Interstate may be an alternative) to Woodstock. At the south end of Woodstock, turn right on Va. Rte. 42. At the sign for Columbia Furnace, turn right and get on secondary road 717. Follow signs to parking area at top of ridge.



Then there were two. Chuck Sproull and Don Schaefer at the summit of Illiniza's North Peak.

Illiniza, concluded from page 1

The summit we had reached was definitely higher than the "tooth" and was covered with pennants of previous parties. However, we looked at the next summit about one hundred feet further along the ridge and decided (rather, Chuck decided) that it was about 10 feet higher. Having come that far we were not about to take a chance that we had missed the highest point on the peak. About 15 minutes of ridge scrambling later we were on the next summit. Betsy, who was sitting down by the hut, let out a shout. We screamed back at her in triumph.

The ascent had taken about 5 or 5½ hours. After many many rounds of hero pictures on the summit, in clear weather, we reluctantly left the summit and retraced our steps to the hut where we were fed cups of hot soup by Betsy. Somewhat revived, we packed up and headed down the mountain, happy but regretful that the entire party had not been able to enjoy the summit with us.

In retrospect, the climb of the North Peak of Illiniza seems to be approximately equivalent to the Exum Ridge on the Grand Teton -- in terms of length of backpacking approach and as well as in terms of time and exertion required to attain the summit. Technically, Illiniza requires more snow climbing technique and less rock climbing skill (there were no 5th Class pitches) than the Exum Ridge. All in all, it was a very enjoyable climb that I can highly recommend to those willing to stray from the more trampled paths of American mountaineering.

Up Rope

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