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JAN AND HERB CONN

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

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Some Thoughts on the Condition & the Future of the Mountaineering Section

by Donald Schaefer

### Part IV The Activities & Health of the Section

In the previous part of this article the impact of the Section's activities upon the crowding of the mountains was examined. But what about their impact upon the Section itself? I think the Section has two major goals. First it wishes to survive. Second it wishes to attain and maintain a high standard of climbing.

What constitutes a high standard of climbing? I think that there are at least four components. First, there is the ability to handle technical difficulty. Second, there is the capacity to handle climbs of overall difficulty (perhaps due to length or objective dangers). Third, one should be able to minimize the chance that trouble will occur and be able to cope with it if it does. Last, but not least, there is the skill and confidence to handle unknown climbing situations (such as variations on new routes, new routes, and first ascents).

It is my opinion that the Section is adequate only in the area of technical difficulty. And only barely. We are still subpar in aid climbing as well as snow and ice climbing (perhaps not entirely due to our own shortcomings). When considering eastern rockclimbing, the Section on the average does a respectable job. We are not adequate when it comes to climbs of great overall difficulty (Grade IV and higher). While it is true that nature has not been overly generous in supplying us with big walls locally, it is also true that there is no emphasis in the Section on the physical conditioning or speed of climbing necessary to do these more difficult climbs.

At one time the Section would have been quite adequate in keeping people out of danger and rescuing them if they did manage to get in trouble. No longer. The Safety Committee and Rescue Committee have not been active in over three years. I doubt if on short notice the Section could perform a stokes litter rescue of an injured climber on a ledge. The last discussion of first aid at a business meeting (April 1969) was cancelled ostensibly due to the late hour. In the face of a bad accident there is no reason to expect that the Section could make any positive contribution. As far as keeping people out of trouble we have had members climbing on glaciers who not only had no idea how to perform a crevasse rescue but probably couldn't even prussik or even perform a self-arrest. The only reason that we probably will not have an accident similar in magnitude to the AMC Otter Body tragedy in the Tetons (1962) is that we travel in smaller groups.

The ability (and willingness) of Section members to place themselves in unknown climbing situations is uncertain. Only a handful of members have been involved in new routes locally. The Section's contribution to the development of Greenland Gap and Kline Gap is mainly the work of about 5 or 6 climbers.

Other than local rockclimbing perhaps 3 or 4 members have attempted new mountain routes or first ascents. Perhaps this is an average performance for a climbing club. But it does not, in my opinion, seem to be adequate.

Setting aside the question of climbing standards, how is the Section faring? While there are many possible measures of the Section's health, I have chosen for this article the measure "number of local Section members." This measures the potential active strength of the Section. The table below shows the data as I have gathered it from UP ROPE. I think the data show that the Section has not grown locally and may even be declining in strength.

| Date         | Number of Local Club Members |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| March 1967   | 63                           |
| March 1969   | 69                           |
| October 1970 | 60                           |

Bob Robinson noted the same decline in his October 1969 UP ROPE article.

Both Bob and I feel that such a decline is unfortunate. If the Section is to play an active role in the preservation of the wilderness then it must continue to take in new members to replace those who drop out. The success of groups such as the PATC and Sierra Club would seem to indicate that collective action rather than individual is the preferred means to make our wishes known.

If it is conceded that the Section should continue to exist and remain strong so as to further the goals of climbing then it is important to try to analyze why the club is declining.

From UP ROPE I have gathered some other information that might have a bearing on the growth of the Section. These are shown in the following table.

| Year | Membership Nominations | Carderock Trips | Training Trips | One Day Trips |
|------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1965 | 19                     | 11              | 11             | 35            |
| 1966 | 16                     | 7               | 7              | 37            |
| 1967 | 10                     | 13              | 13             | 39            |
| 1968 | 17                     | 4               | 5              | 36            |
| 1969 | 5                      | 6               | 8              | 29            |
| 1970 | 6                      | 5               | 6              | 29            |

Note: All data are from UP ROPE. Training trips were considered to be all Carderock trips plus any others explicitly stated as training trips (i.e. dynamic belay practice).

Briefly, the data in the above table show that membership  
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## P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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768-6485

## VICE CHAIRMAN

Tom McCrumm  
527-6272

## SECRETARY

Maren Stewart

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## UP ROPE STAFF

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Sallie Greenwood  
683-5091

## PRINTER'S DEVIL

Tink Peters

## BUSINESS MANAGER

Chuck Sproull

Anneliese Matzen

A 6370 Josef Pirschstrasse 40  
Kitzbühel, Austria

Peter Sprouse

7409 Rebecca Drive  
Alexandria, Va. 22307

Stephen Davis

7905 Wellington Drive  
Alexandria, Va. 22308

Jim Ryan

11147 Byrd Dr.  
Fairfax, Va. 22030  
phone: 591-5734

Peter Lackler

1804 Tildon Dr.  
Silver Spring, Md. 20902

Ben Ocampo

128 Doremus Ave.  
Ridgewood, N.J. 07450

Max Grosshauser

Gartenstadtstrasse 2  
8 München 82  
West Germany

## Hanging Around

Cupid's Bower  
Dec. 20

Bob Adams - Reporting  
Scott Bush  
Don Hubbard

Mike Bush  
Al Goldberg

This was the first good, cold day of the Winter, and the water was waist deep going across to Cupid's Bower. We turned a beautiful pink, but pretended to enjoy our dip. Once across, we set up the usual climbs. Since there were only three of us (1 Adams and 2 Bushes), we finished everything by noon, and then went exploring for new climbs upstream. As luck would have it, we turned up a delightful 25-foot face and an overhanging outside corner. Try it next time!

Purple Horse  
Jan. 17

Bob Adams - Trip Leader  
The Goldbergs  
Michele Levelle  
Dean Mills  
John Anderson  
Fred Kitchell

Kate Adams  
The Templetons  
John Lawson  
John Christian  
Ken Sanford

A delightfully crisp day with occasional snow showers. We did the pleasant little climbs around the fire and then struck out for the Barn Roof and Western Overhang. The Barn Roof defied everyone, with a foot of water below and an ice-covered roof above. Just as things were beginning to jump, the Trip Leader went home to watch the Colts and Bowboys.

## The Climber

Poised in time above the valley floor,  
Hands curled about a flake of rock,  
Feet flat against the face,  
He looks up past the summit,  
Past that seething gas amalgam called the sun,  
Scans the unreachable edge of infinity  
And winks a wink at fate.  
There's no need for him to be.  
He is.

Dave Templeton

## Belay Ledge

## Married:

Tom Blevins to Janet Slater on December 26 on Mercer Island, Washington.

## Address changes and new UP ROPE subscribers:

Craig Bennett 101 W. 29th St.  
Baltimore, Md. 21218

## Dynamic belay practice:

Bill Thomas would like those people interested in participating in the dynamic belay practice at Cupid's Bower on February 14 to contact him. 536-7948.

## Carpenter hospitality:

Mark Carpenter has invited persons interested in ice climbing in northern New England to use his house in Cabot, Vt. as a base camp. He lives within easy driving distance of Mt. Washington, Crawford Notch, Smugglers Notch and several other areas. For directions go the General Store in Cabot and ask. Mark offers plenty of floor space and wood.

Villard and Glacier Peaks from Granite Peak, the highest point in Montana (12,850 feet).



Bob Adams took these pictures last summer while in the Beartooth Wilderness area which is in Southern Montana and Northwestern Wyoming. Bob said that it was a pleasure to be in the Beartooths after the Tetons--fewer people.

*Up Rope*

UP ROPE is the Newsletter of the PATC Mountaineering Section, founded by Jan and Herb Conn in 1944. Publication is on the last Wednesday of each calendar month at PATC Headquarters. Deadline for submitted material is the next to last Wednesday of the month preceding an issue. Material for inclusion, comments or questions on editorial policy should be directed to EDITOR, UP ROPE, c/o PATC, 1718 N Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036. Subscription rates are \$1.50 per year. New subscriptions and changes of address should be directed to Business Manager, UP ROPE, etc.



Sky-Top Lakes from Granite Peak

Schaefer, concluded

nominations have fallen sharply during the past two years. During the same period the number of one day trips has also fallen. During the last three years the number of Carderock/training trips has also fallen.

It would be foolhardy to state that the above table proves the impact of training and local trips. It doesn't. However, the data do suggest that the decline in membership nominations (and thus local membership) might be partially explained by the decline in training and one day trips as these are useful vehicles for interesting beginners in climbing. Other factors that might have a bearing on the Section's lack of growth would include the formation of other clubs (such as the Ledge Rats in Baltimore), the general growth of climbing in the area (so that the Section is no longer the main source of climbing partners), and the unwillingness of the Section to offer anything of importance to members that is not also offered to the general public. On the whole, the Section is stagnating quantitatively and in terms of the quality of its climbers.

#### Part V Suggestions for the Future

Having expended so many words criticizing the status quo it is only fair that I use a few more to suggest changes that I feel will be beneficial to both the Section as a whole and to individual members. The suggestions fall under three areas: training, trips, and facilities. Each suggestion that I will make is independent of any of the other suggestions and can be considered on its own merits.

**Training:** (1) Training, perpetually a sore point within the Section, should be reoriented. I don't feel the Section should spend time and energy turning out hordes of insufficiently trained climbers (both members and non-members) while claiming that no time is available to train members.

I suggest that the Section offer no training to non-members other than how to tie into a rope and some elements of rock climbing. If a person becomes interested in rock climbing and in the Section, then that person can apply for membership in the Section.

(2) Every time an improperly trained member endangers himself or other or otherwise makes a spectacle of himself, it reflects upon the entire Section and upon the sport of climbing. Such actions lead to the closing of climbing areas and excessive regulation of the sport. Further, such a person is more likely to cause specific crowding in the mountains

as he lacks the initiative and know how to progress beyond the familiar and known routes. I suggest that advanced training should not only be provided for members but should be made obligatory.

I suggest that advanced training should not only be provided for members but should be made obligatory. Every member should be required to take a course in basic mountaineering. In addition each member should take at least one or two more advanced courses such as:

- Leader Techniques for Rock Climbing
- Advanced Artificial Climbing
- Alpine Mountaineering
- Expedition Mountaineering
- Big Wall Techniques
- Technical Snow and Ice Climbing
- Mountaineering Safety and Rescue Techniques

Before completion of these courses associate membership could be granted with a time limit such as 12-18 months.

It is important to recognize what this suggestion does and does not imply. It does not imply that all members must be "super climbers." It does not imply that the Section must have different classes of climbers ("rope leaders," etc.). It does imply that any person who is accepted as a member will be exposed to a basic core of climbing knowledge.

It would not be fair to leave the discussion of training without suggesting how such a training program would be implemented. To the greatest possible extent the teachers should come from within the Section. Each teacher might once or twice a year teach a specific subject (such as rappelling or piton placement). The burden would be fairly light and the person who was teaching would probably know the climbers he was teaching. There would also be the knowledge that the people being trained would probably use the skills being learned. This is not at all certain presently.

If the required skills were not present within the section then outsiders might be asked to donate their time or could even be paid to pass their knowledge on to trainees or to members who would do the actual training. It is anticipated that the use of outsiders would be infrequent and would diminish over time.

(As a postscript I might note that the training policy I am proposing is diametrically opposed to that supported by Bob Robinson in his UP ROPE article.)

**Trips:** (1) Section trips are open to the public, local and are generally to the same old places.

I suggest that a certain number of trips should be for members only. These trips might make use of PATC cabins or other such facilities.

(2) Another suggestion for trips is that a certain number each year might be strictly exploratory trips into areas that have not been climbed before. This possibly would help alleviate crowding in the hills and perhaps would cultivate a sense of originality and adventure in some of the members.

(3) I suggest that the club could take longer trips outside of the local area. For example expeditions to South America or Alaska are not unreasonable. Given enough members, group fares could be arranged although the entire group need not and probably would not climb together.

**Facilities:** I suggest that the Section purchase a copy of each climbing guide to areas in North America as well as selected guides for other areas. Additionally, files of climbing information would be for the use of members only. It would give us all a more comprehensive view of the climbing opportunities (what had been climbed and what had not).

Some of the above suggestions will be expensive or require much hard work or both. However, I believe that they could return handsome dividends in the future. The road to excellence is not easy or crowded. I don't think many of us would want it any other way.

Editor's Note: Bob Robinson's article, "On the Future of the Section" is in the October 1969 issue of UP ROPE.

# CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

| Date       | Place                                  | Leader                                      |
|------------|--|---|
| Feb. 10    | Meeting, PATC Headquarters, 8:00 p.m.  | Slides of Yosemite by Bob Norris            |
| Feb. 14    | Cupid's Bower (dynamic belay practice) | Linnea Stewart (657-3286)                   |
|            | Mt. Washington                         | Tom McCrumm (527-6272)                      |
| Feb. 20-21 | Old Rag                                | Sallie Greenwood (683-5091)                 |
| Feb. 28    | Bull Run                               | Al Goldberg (593-8124)                      |
| Mar. 7     | Carderock                              | Al Goldberg                                 |
| Mar. 10    | Meeting, PATC headquarters 8:00 p.m.   | Slides of British Columbia by Arnold Wexler |
| Mar. 14    | Buzzard Rocks                          | Dave Templeton (933-2174)                   |
| Mar. 21    | Black Rocks                            | Don Schaefer (521-5326)                     |

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. If directions to climbing areas need revision please note the necessary changes and send them to Editor, UP ROPE.

## Cupid's Bower, Md.

From the Beltway take the Carderock exit (15). Drive past the Carderock exit to the end of the Parkway. Turn left onto MacArthur Blvd. At the Old Angler's Inn turn left into the dirt parking lot. Cross the canal and walk right (upstream) to just below Widewater. Follow the blue-blazed trail to the river. Cupid's Bower is near the foot of the island nearest D.C. (at the downstream end of the island).

## Old Rag, Va.

Follow U.S. 211 west to Sperryville, Va. Turn left on U.S. 522 and south for 1 mile. Right on Va. 231 south for about 8 miles. Right on State route 670 to Nethers. The long way up is the fire road at the end of the parking area (we'll camp at the shelter at the end of the fire road, possibly) and the short, but steep way, is to follow the

blue-blazed trail to the left.

## Bull Run Mountain, Va.

Go to Gainesville, Va. At Gainesville bear right onto Va. 55. About a third of a mile past the junction with U.S. 15 bear right onto a secondary road (note Skyline Caverns sign). Go 3 miles and turn left at T-intersection (Antioch) where the road become dirt. Pass Col. Hugh Socks (Ret.)'s house on left and park at base of steep jeep trail (don't block the road). Hike up the jeep road into an old quarry. Just before reaching an old steam shovel, pick up a white-blazed trail which runs along the right side of the quarry. Just before paralleling a second steam shovel, the trail heads right into the woods. The rocks are about a mile up the trail and 200 yards past a good view partially blocked by a 10-foot high boulder.

## Carderock, Md.

From the Beltway take Carderock exit (15). Go to Carderock Recreation Area. Turn right at first stop sign and go to last parking area. Rocks are 100 yards past comfort station.

## Buzzard Rocks, Va.

Go to Gainesville, Va. Pick up Va. 55 and follow through Front Royal. Six miles past Front Royal (on 55) turn left at Waterlick (note sign for Elizabeth Furnace). Go 3 miles to fish hatchery and park. Trail is on right and  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the hatchery. About one mile (uphill) to top of rocks.

## Black Rocks, Md.

In Frederick, Md. pick up U.S. 40 toward Hagerstown. At the top of South Mountain park at the roadside park on the left (there is a gas station on the right). If you drive under I70 you've gone a tad too far. Pick up the Appalachian Trail on the righthand side of U.S. 40. The trail goes uphill and to the right. The rocks (Black Rocks) are  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles past Annapolis Rocks.



A look into the Beartooth Wilderness area in Montana from Highway 212 between Cooke City and Red Lodge. Picture by Bob Adams.

*Up Rope*

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