



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

1718 N St N W Washington, D. C. 20036

Vol. 36

No. 3

Mar. 1971

Page 1

Aiguille Du Midi Northwest Face

Chamonix - August, 1970

Roger E. Birch

Tom McCrumm and I arrived in Chamonix the afternoon of the eighth of August after a trip down from Frankfurt that can only be described as interesting or, perhaps educational. The journey basically altered my views on the U. S. Forces abroad (not all, most) and brought to the surface dormant feelings as regards the natives. It was raining as we left the train at Mecca (I realize, that statement may not be shared by some of my American friends) and the weather, normal, was wet, overcast; the tourists hidden in colored plastic coats. Our packs did little to damage a mood of despondency (myself at least) as Tom and I made our way to the campsite. This seemed to me at least ten miles, but of course back packing has for a long time been one of my pet hates.

Chamonix's weather really was glorious. The next four days gave us four fabulous days of boozing weather, old friends, the latest news, but also the danger of that creeping inertia which can tempt all but the mighty into believing that really this is what climbing is all about. But alas the joy ends, with Hamish McGinnis presenting me with a partner (Now what would he want to do a thing like that for?) to whom in my advanced state of inebriation, I instructed to call me at 5:30 the following morning. Firmly believing that the weather next day would bring to me the salvation of hidden hills and the freedom to again race to the Bar National for breakfast, I ordered another round.

But the gods, rather than smiling at me the following morning, damn well laughed. My alarm that morning consisted of the call of a voice that was eventually recognized as belonging to my proposed partner of the evening before (damn McGinnis). Really though, we are seldom shown days as that one on European hills, the mountains revealing themselves, covered in morning light. The mist and cloud of the day before had vanished, just pink sunlight creeping down the eastern walls. We packed the gear, or should I say crammed some odds and ends into the packs. That most wondrous of man's abuses of nature, the telefrique, eased the three of us (yes, would you mind if my French friend Alain ...) in ten minutes, over three hours of torture to the halfway point of the telefrique, the Plan d'Aiguille.

Nature can, when placing us in the front row stalls, deceive unaccustomed eyes, viewing the scene; surely it cannot be any more than, what would you say, to the base of those walls, ten, fifteen minutes? On that spot, high on sunshine, the general changed the basic plan, with interesting results. The initial plan, a moderate rock route, 2000 ft., was shelved in favor of another, which to me at least promised fascinating possibilities, 3500 ft. mixed. (I really should attack all my hills from the armchair.) Are all idiots conceived on

mountainsides? The ten to fifteen minute dream effectively eased itself into an hour and a half before we donned the crampons for the initial snow slope leading across and up to the first rock band. On later reflection, I wonder at the absence in my mind of inquiries as to the absence of the expected new snow, after all, hadn't it been raining in Chamonix for four days? Perhaps a little more soul searching at this juncture would have resulted in once again taking note of the plan in a rather different light. But, of course, the denial to ourselves of the type of memory that is found to stimulate and enrich on each successive reflection.

The initial rocks proved rather simple, and the party, climbing solo, made fair progress. But vain dreams vanish as a call for a strategy conference below drew things to a halt. Points discussed initially proved unknown to me as the partners consulted in French. Alain's demands, quickly transferred into English, were simple, "I want a rope."-- the French are always demanding something. My first reaction, one of annoyance, vanished quickly, and we made good progress. The party, bound now in more or less harmony (myself not knowing the French for "slack," "come on," etc.) and the route made its way up a series of cracks, grooves, and chimneys, eventually placing us on the crest of a ridge.

The time was 3:30. Our eyes feasted on the view of a great beauty. Cloudless sky, a warm sun, encouraged a sense of inertia (after all wasn't that the summit up there, can't be more than four or five rope lengths -- all the time in the world). To the east the great west faces of the Aiguilles, now touched with the afternoon sun rose shining, the Plan, Blatier, more rock than we could use in ten lifetimes. Silent faces in a sea of stone, falling into the void to their beds of eternal ice.

The last of the drinking water vanished here as our eyes ranged across the horrifying ice sweep of the Frendo Spur. To try to hold, just for a moment, to remember for tomorrow, the great massive bulk of rock and ice that holds together the huge glaring mass of sterile matter, the north face of the Aiguille Du Midi. A call from John, a warning, yet unrecognized as such, was shrugged away. "Just a few minutes kid, plenty of time." With the summer sun warming my face, I closed my eyes, this is really heaven, priceless moments made to last forever.

True misgivings, the first that day was to bring, came to me now on observation of the next steps we had to take. Snow, firmly believed earlier to be of that variety that delights in absorbing the firm kick, in holding firmly the step

Continued on page 3

P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

OFFICERSCHAIRMAN

Terry Robinson
768-6485

VICE CHAIRMAN

Tom McCrumm
527-6272

SECRETARY

Maren Stewart

TREASURER

Chuck Sproull

UP ROPE STAFFEDITOR

Sallie Greenwood
683-5091

PRINTER'S DEVIL

Tink Peters

BUSINESS MANAGER

Chuck Sproull



Editor:

I have been reading Don Schaefer's two part article on the condition and future of the Mountaineering Section with considerable interest in the January and February issues. He has made what seems to an outsider to be some excellent points. But, being an outsider, I don't want to argue or agree with his thesis.

I do want to add my own comments about the Mountaineering Section as I see it. When I first joined PATC fifteen years ago, the Mountaineering Section (then usually called the Rock-Climbers) had a national reputation as an active, effective mountaineering unit. Its members had made contributions to the literature of the field, to the technology, and to the skills. Whether the Section still has this reputation today, I don't know -- but there is no reason why it couldn't again have it, if it doesn't now. A number of the people who originally made that reputation are still around -- in PATC, if not the Section, even though they are older. The knowledge is still there to be passed on, if the energy and enthusiasm for climbing everything in sight has flagged a little.

Back then, the Section occasionally extended its activities to include the club proper. I hope it will again. Serious hikers need to know some of the basics of ropes, of ice- and snow-climbing, and of rock scrambling. The Section could teach PATC members that while they taught themselves as well.

Many members of the Section are active in PATC committees. All are welcome. I'd like personally to see most of the Section members also members of PATC, but I realize money only stretches so far, and so -- maybe -- does interest. Try, please, when planning the Section's future, to plan it so it runs parallel with the Club's -- Club and Section have much in common, and will gain more from working together than from keeping separate.

Paula M. Strain
President, PATC

Editor's Note: Of the 218 UP ROPE subscriptions 48 belong to PATC members.

Belay Ledge

Membership nomination:

Tink Peters. Sponsored by Don Schaefer and Sallie Greenwood. The nominee should be present at the next scheduled business meeting so that the application may be voted on.

FitzRoy film:

The film which was to be shown last month got tied up in the mails. This time we'll have better luck. Again, the film -- "FitzRoy: Ascent of the SW Buttress" will be shown at the Department of Commerce Auditorium on 14th Street between E and Constitution Ave. at 8:00 p.m., March 31.

Swap Night:

Boots for a dime? Right. An old mountain tent with character.

PATC Headquarters, March 23 at 8:00 p.m.

Address Changes and new UP Rope subscribers:

Robin Craft

Apt. 208
4939 Americana Drive
Annandale, Va. 22003

Chris Buckingham

2264 Pimmit Drive
Falls Church, Va.

George Rawlins

12316 Avery Road
Fairfax, Va. 22030

William W. Garner

431 7th St. SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Everett Staples

Naval Medical School
National Naval Medical Center
Bethesda, Md. 20014

Al and Jeanne Klov Dahl

Apt. 12
2170 Cram Place
Ann Arbor, Mich. 48105

Chesapeake Bay Rediscovery Fleet:

This new group is having a membership drive. Pete Seeger and other folksingers are planning an anti-pollution campaign like the Hudson River Sloop activity. Membership, donations, and information -- contact Kathy Glucas at 387-1300 ext. 63 or write to Chesapeake Bay Rediscovery Fleet, Inc., P.O. Box 9844, Chevy Chase, Md. 20015. Terry Robinson is on the steering committee of this energetic new group.

Conservation

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WILDERNESS ACT OF 1964

Mike Hill

In 1964, Congress officially recognized the need to preserve at least some of the American wilderness. It established the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) the purpose of which is to preserve certain designated federally owned lands in a wilderness state.

The details are briefly these. All Forest Service lands formerly classified as "wilderness," "wild," or "canoe" areas are automatically included in the NWPS. Between 1964 and 1974, the Department of Agriculture must review all Forest Service lands classified as "primitive," and the Department of the Interior must review all national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges, and game ranges, for possible inclusion in the NWPS.

The recommendations are to be sent via the President to Congress where they must go through the regular legislative

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.

process (bill to law). Wilderness Areas (areas in the NWPS) must be at least 5,000 acres in size, except islands. The administration of an area does not change with inclusion in the NWPS (i.e. Forest Service lands are still under the Forest Service, etc.). With exceptions (some of which are major), no motorized land or air vehicles, roads, commercialization, or human settlement is allowed. Hiking and camping reign supreme in these areas. Examples of these areas are the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area in Colorado and the Bridger Wilderness Area (Wind River Range) in Wyoming.

Many problems, however, are weakening the spirit of the Wilderness Act. The worst one is that the Mining Law of 1872 is in effect until 1984 in Wilderness Areas. This means that mining can still be done in any Wilderness Area as long as the claim (but not necessarily the mining) is filed prior to 1984. Needless to say, a Wilderness Area is little better than a city garbage dump if it can be completely torn up by mining--even strip mining is allowed.

The timber industry is also a thorn in the side as it often tries to buy and cut a possible Wilderness Area candidate before it has been reviewed and considered for inclusion in the NWPS. Another problem is the strict definition of "wilderness" that candidates must meet. The word "primeval" excludes such areas as Dolly Sods, because, although now wild, it was once logged.

The slowness of Congressional action is another problem. Representative John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania came up with the idea of "omnibus wilderness bills," including twenty or thirty areas in one bill, which is an improvement, but it is still difficult to get such a relatively unimportant (and non-publicized) bill through Congress with the S.E. Asian war, inflation,

pollution, crime, and drug problems consuming most of the time.

There is also no provision for acquiring private lands that satisfy the provisions of the Act. Many potential Wilderness Areas are in the ownership of large companies, such as the railroads. Although most of the people of the U.S. are in the East, most of the possible Wilderness Areas are in the West. They are not doing the most good for the most people. We need to be able to "create" Wilderness Areas by letting land revert to its wild state through the passage of time.

It is hoped that this brief introduction to the Wilderness Act and its problems will help you to understand and to enter actively the legislative fights for the National Wilderness Preservation System.

SST VOTE

The Senate will be taking up the SST (supersonic transport) vote again this month. About \$700 millions of public funds have been given to private aircraft industry to nurse this environmental and economic disaster along. Write your senators--express your opinion to them. Maryland: Senators J. Glenn Beall, Jr. and Charles McC. Mathias and for Virginia residents Senators Harry F. Byrd, Jr. and William B. Spong, Jr., U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

The man of wisdom delights in water; the man of humanity delights in mountains.

Confucius, Analects VI, 20

Tale, concluded

Roger Birch's

of the trespasser, had as if knowing, left the high country and raced down to join the Arne, to the Rhone, on to the sea. Days of warm bright sun, hidden cunningly above the curtain that delighted us with National days only yesterday, had gleaned the snow from its bed, leaving myself (I shall not speak for my firends) gazing in apprehension at the blue ice. In places the ice lay covered with perhaps half an inch of frozen hail. "God! That wall looks steep, do you have any screws, John?" His expression, amply saving him the use of his vocal ability. My gaze turned to Alain, uselessly -- I don't think Alain had ever even seen one.

The young Frenchman's face, a stare of mute faith, sent my thoughts racing back to the gods lying at peace with Maurice in the National, "Hell, what am I doing here?" My mind dreaming of warm beer, with a view of the open door to gaze smilingly at the passing by of the true glories of France.

The preview, enclosing me in a flimsy but by now almost non-existent security ran out ... a moment's pause. "Tie on the other rope, John ..." "Yes, I think I am okay here..."

I never wish to lead a pitch like that again. There have been harder, yes, but the ceaseless demands on my nerves; I hope I never have to repeat. A rock island in that sea of ice gave my left hand a hold that sent a feeling into me the likes of which I could never explain. Reaching up with my aching right arm to join its brother, I let go the axe. Of course, this procedure is standard but in this situation the result was far from it. A small screw, long cursing in its chain, and now strengthened by a coating of rust, at last broke free. In amazement my eyes followed the axe (Innsbruck S7) on its journey to freedom, sliding slowly at first, then faster down the ice, to disappear far over the North face.

Belayed, I bring up first Alain, then John. Then a conference, two plans, me with gone axe so you can lead, an age passes, okay John leads, I follow. I watch his baptism, more scared than below, Hell for some screws, (perhaps its hell without them) a postponement, John reaches a belay point. It was a tight rope for me, very tight, my makeshift axe, a three-quarter inch angle stamped "c". My left crampon's loose, God! Wish I could kick the damn thing off, Sallie would be mad I

guess. Tight rope for christ sake (the mild pleasantry of "up rope" rather inadequate). I sweat a little, get scared a lot, I make the next belay point. We soon realize our hopeless mistake in estimating, the rope lengths go on and on, I am very tired. The thought of not making the last telefrigue down dawns on me. I refuse to accept it, when is the last one anyway, perhaps it is not 6:30, perhaps 8:00, can't be -- it's dark at eight.

We watch it glide by from a rock rib under the summit, now the acceptance forces itself home. The last chance to avoid an open bivi is a series of cracks up a rock bluff to the telefrigue station. John belays me as I start, but it is almost dark. The crack calls for jamming but my hand, badly cut and swollen with my fist constantly hammering at the ice to induce a little support with the peg, just won't take it, place a pin and abseil, it's dark now.

My knickers, wet with the constant ice chips and my knees lying against the ice, are now frozen like a board. The last rays of the sunset die in the west as we place pins for belays.

It's got to be at least 3:00, I figure -- "What time is it, John?" It's 11:20. No matter which way I turn I freeze. I rub my knees constantly to ease the ache. But time passes slowly, then with joyful realization that the east is becoming a little brighter. That dawn was the most beautiful of my life, slowly, very slowly the sun breaks over the Aiguille Du Plan, I warm, move in the spirit really but the dawn does that after a night like that. It's a little after six, strange faces, fresh from warm beds, stare in disbelief from the windows of the first telefrigue. The three of us abseil back down the wall to the ice, I come last. The rope takes me down to the ice. Away from the friendly clean warmth of the rock on to the ice, I am in their hands again.

It takes three of their hands to put a beer in my hand. The effect of a couple of beers at almost 13,000, after almost two foodless days is quite an experience. Instantly plastered! John, Alain and I step out of the station for a last look. What a glorious day that was. How often do we see days like that? The eyes wander over the view, the Plan-Midi-Arete, over the Aiguilles to the distant Verte. Over the Valley Blanche, the eyes drawn to that magnificent wall, the North Face of the Grandes Jorasses. It was hard to go, yet the next car took us away, down to the valley. We lay on the warm grass, the three of us with our eyes lifting into the high sunlight.

CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

Date	Place	Leader
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)
Mar. 23	SWAP NIGHT, PATC Headqtrs., 8:00 p.m.	
Mar. 27-28	Seneca Rock	Bill Thomas (536-7948)
Mar. 31	Dept. of Commerce Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.	"FitzRoy: Ascent of the Southwest Buttress"
Apr. 4	Carderock	Sallie Greenwood (683-5091)
Apr. 10-11	Linville Gorge or Kline Gap	Chuck Sproull (894-4463)
Apr. 14	Meeting, PATC Headquarters, 8:00 p.m.	
Apr. 18	Big Devil's Stairs	Chuck Sproull (894-4463)

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.

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 Waterlink (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.

Seneca Rock, W.Va.

Take I-66 to Gainesville, Va. and bear right onto Va. 55. Follow 55 through Front Royal 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.

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.

Linville Gorge, N.C.

Talk to Chuck Sproull.

Kline Gap, W. Va.

Drive through Winchester, Va. on U.S. 50; continue to New Creek, W. Va. Follow Rte. 42 through Maysville to Maysville Road. Turn right onto Rte. 42/5 and go 3.8 mi. to "T" intersection. Right at the intersection for 1 mile. Bear left at fork of road past a quarry. Cross bridge and park. Walk through barnyard and along stream's right bank. Cliffs are across the stream. (Camping area is on the left bank.)

Big Devil's Stairs, Va.

Go into Washington, Va. on U.S. 211. Where 211 takes a sharp left in the center of town, go right onto a secondary road. 100 yards to Rte. 622; left on 622 for 4.5 miles. Park and follow blue-blazed trail to the rocks (about .6 miles).

Hanging Around

Sugarloaf, Md.

Jan. 24

Maren Stewart - Trip Leader
Ron Adler

Mike Hill
Nellie Widmayer

Ron and I showed up bright and early at 11:00 only to find the road to the top chained closed. A sign stated that the road was closed to cars and people. Undaunted, we walked up through the woods. We reached the summit in the midst of a raging blizzard that lasted for five minutes. We met Mike and Nellie on the way back down.

Editor's Note: Due to lack of space (a first in the annals of UP ROPE) the trip reports from February will have to appear in the April issue.

Up Rope

1718 N St N W

Washington, D. C. 20036

NONPROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE

PAID

WASHINGTON, D. C.
PERMIT NO. 9615

DATED MATTER