



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

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Page 1

MORE YOSEMITE TALES

by Tom McCrumm

TOM EVANS' tales of Yosemite [UP ROPE, Oct./Nov. 1973] end with Chips Janger and Pat Milligan doing the East Buttress of Middle Cathedral Rock. This climb, a grade IV, 5.9 AI or 5.10, is indeed a classic of the Valley. At the end of September of last year, Tink Peters and I did this climb as the last climb of a two-month vacation that took us through the Wind Rivers, the Tétens, the Wasach Range, the Utah desert and canyons and finally to Yosemite.

Having never done a grade IV before, an early start seemed a must -- and a hard thing for me to do because I'm so used to being awakened by the sun on my tent when I am staying in the Valley. After a few 4th class pitches, 7 am found us roping up at the start of the East Buttress -- early morning starts are bad enough for me, but this climb had an awkward 5.7 overhang to get over as its first move off the ledge; it was obvious I'd better get warmed up right now and get into the swing of things soon. Tink romped up the first pitch after me, and got a stance sitting in the limbs of a shaky tree. The next two pitches were up inside corners and flakes involving 5.7 laybacks. I had been warned of the laybacking on the flakes; "they're thin as soda crackers, an' freaky as 'ell" said Eddie Birch, Roger's brother. He was too correct -- the climbing involved laybacking up a series of half-inch thick flakes about 2-4 feet around; and I hadn't the slightest idea how they were attached to the rock because they all squeaked and moved when pressure was put on them. These first three pitches brought us up to the base of the 30-foot bolt ladder. This is the AI section which can also be climbed as 5.10 face climbing ("real 5.10," to quote Steve Wunsch!). A short-lived vain attempt at getting up a few feet free quickly prompted me to climb the bolt ladder. At the top of the bolt ladder were a few hard moves leading up to the 5.9 ceiling. Having been weaned on Shawangunk ceilings, I expected to see something stick out about 4 feet over which I had to climb 5.9. The "ceiling" as it turned out was only 18 inches, and a few strenuous moves got my hands into some good jams overhead. Another short pitch with some 5.8 brought us to the easy pitch of the climb, an 80-foot 5.5 traverse around to the north side of the buttress. As I led out this improbable exposed traverse I uttered my usual gripe when I'm faced with traverses on rock "God, I hate traverses". Fixed pins in all the right places helped me keep (cont'd. on p. 3)

PATC MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

Chairman: Joe Jensen (301--233-0253)

Vice Chairman: Chuck Sproull (894-4463)

Secretary:

Treasurer: John Birch (633-3668)

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Chairman's Corner

BECOMING Chairman of the Mountaineering Section required only a willingness to serve. There was no campaign, no speeches, no platform. Accordingly, this is my first opportunity to discuss my vision of the MS and my goals for the coming year.

In the past, the MS has enjoyed a reputation as the Mountain Club in the Washington area. The MS assumes the responsibility for overseeing climbing activities at Seneca and all other climbing areas within range of the District of Columbia. In negotiations with the U.S. Park Service or Forest Service regarding conservation issues or the future of climbing areas, the MS is accepted as representing the interests and opinions of climbers in this area. I feel that my major obligation as Chairman will be to strengthen and reinforce the Section's role as the spokesman for mountaineering interests in the DC area.

During the three years I have been with the MS, I have often listened to tales of "how it used to be". I have also seen a rapid increase in the number of very fine climbers in this area who have limited or no connections with the MS. Explanations for this range from harsh criticisms of snobbery in the MS to a description of climbers as individualists, who are not club people. Some say this has always been the situation of the MS.

Whatever the reason (and I believe that the answer is a combination of the above extremes, along with all the explanations in between), I feel that this situation weakens the Section's future as the representative of climbers in the DC area. Further, our Section is the poorer without the personalities, ideals, contributions and experiences of those climbers outside the Section.

During the next year, I intend to reinforce the image of the Mountaineering Section as actively welcoming the participation of all mountaineers in the DC area. The Section should be a major source of information about climbing. The MS should enjoy a reputation as "where you go to meet climbers".

I do not mean to promote climbing. I think that most of us feel that there are too many climbers and we certainly agree that it is not the club's function to convert the rest of the world to climbing. But a policy of ignoring those who are already climbers, or those who are determined to become climbers, weakens the Mountaineering Section and threatens its continuity.

Joe Jensen

EDITORIAL NOTE: Our original plan to publish an additional February issue suffered with the editor under a surgeon's scalpel. Thank you very much for your kind wishes and see you soon on the rocks. Deadline for the UP ROPE April issue is April 3. Joe Wagner

YOSEMITE TALES (cont'd. from p. 1)

my composure until I once again felt secure in a nice easy 5.7 inside corner leading up to two belay bolts.

The seventh pitch was up a very steep dihedral, but with bombproof jamming and a few nicely placed ledges it went about 5.7, although appearing a lot harder from below. Belaying Tink up from three shaky nuts I suddenly realized just how insignificant we were, exposed midway up this 2000-foot nose of rock. My only link with the valley floor below was the route up, which would eventually get us back down. Except for an occasional obscene yell to the Curry Co. Tourbus-ripcoff mobile on the road below, our conservation was limited to what a beautiful climb this was -- not an unpleasant pitch yet and still a lot of the difficulty yet to go.

The next three pitches were all about 5.8, and by the tenth pitch we had been climbing for 8 hours and were pretty well beat out. The details of this part of the climb pretty much escape me now except that I remember a wild, unprotected mantle move up to a ledge expecting to find a belay stance; and finding nothing by a small groove into which I placed a #2 wired stopper and swung back into the crack in the corner and belayed a bit higher in a bush. That was an interesting stance, with Tink and I and 165 feet of rope all tied into four nuts and standing on the same small bush in the corner.

The last 5.8 lead looked desperate from there -- the choices were a 200-foot flared chimney on the right; or some steep and tricky face climbing on the left. I was plenty damned tired after leading all day and the thrutch up the chimney, 25 feet to the first fixed pin, didn't look at all appealing to me. Traversing out onto the face to look around, a decision was made for me. Stretching at full arms reach was a small ledge which I could mantle up on -- maybe from there I could find a place to go -- this was probably the most demanding pitch for me because I was dog-tired, and for the first 40 feet or so all I had for protection was a wired stopper and a number 1 and number 2 hex -- not really what I would want to take a hard fall on.

My tensions eased when I could finally get in a good chock and I worked my way slowly up the face and into a water slicked trough to a belay stance. The rock above eased off and I realized we had done it. Tink came up, about as tired as I; and two more pitches of easy 5th and some 4th class brought us to the Kat Walk where we unroped and bushwhacked over to Cathedral Chimney, the route down. Boulder hopping and a few rappels brought us within sight of the road -- and I ran the last 50 yards to the car. While pleasing my cramped feet by walking barefoot on the cool pavement and simultaneously inhaling an ice cold Coors, I thought -- just for a moment -- that maybe there was something better than sex.

At Base Camp

YOUR MOUNTAINEERING SECTION AT WORK: A short business meeting was held, Sunday, Feb. 17 at Trav's Inn. Present were Joe Jensen, Chuck Sproull, Joan Gardner, John Birch, Maren Stewart, Greg Christopulos and Joan Templeton. JB presented a report from a contractor on a prefabricated log cabin. The possibility of establishing a single meeting point for club trips was discussed. The feeling of those present was favorable. Reaction and suggestions from the membership is needed. Chuck reported that personnel turnover in the Park Service is slowing down our Carderock preservation plans. Proposed constitution and by-law changes (unfinished business from Dec. 12) were postponed. Neil Arsenault is selecting climbing books to be available for sale at PATC headquarters. He is also selecting climbing books to be ordered for the PATC library. Sallie Greenwood is preparing a summer calendar of expeditions and climbing trips being organized by climbing clubs throughout the country (962-4087). Pat Lane has offered to go through

AT BASE CAMP (cont'd.): old MS records. This will include old UP ROPE issues, minutes of meetings and correspondence. Hopefully, Pat will be able to organize the material to prepare for a published history of the Section. MS is planning to offer the mountaineering medicine course again in April.

Climber's Calendar

March 24	Black Rocks MD (rock climbing)	*
March 30-31 & 31	Old Rag VA (rock climbing)	John ANDERSON (836-1692)
April 3	Business meeting: Please come! 8pm	John CHRISTIAN's home (229-2792)
April 6	Carderock MD: MS work party	Chuck SPROULL (894-4463)
April 7	Buzzard Rocks VA (rock climbing)	*
April 10	Meeting, PATC Hq, 8 pm.	Program to be announced
April 14	Training & Practice Climbing	Joe JENSEN (301--233-0253)
**APRIL 20	SPRING PARTY	c a n c e l l e d
April 20-21	Baker Rocks WV (rock climbing)	*
April 21	Big Devils Stair Case VA (rock cl.)	*
April 27-28	Linville Gorge NC (rock climbing)	Neil ARSENAULT (681-6187)
April 28	Annapolis Rocks MD (rock climbing)	*
May 4-5 & 5	Bull Run Mountain VA (rock climbing)	*
May 8	Meeting, PATC Hq, 8 pm	Program to be announced
May 12	Training & Practice Climbing	Joe JENSEN (301--233-0253)
May 18-19 & 19	Rocky Gap MD (rock climbing)	*

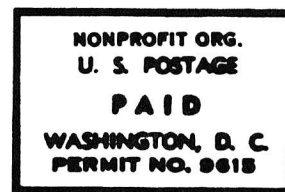
* Volunteer now to lead the trip (call Joe Wagner, 966-6379, for confirmation).

** Bill and Doris Thomas regretfully inform us that the scheduled Spring Party at their home is cancelled since Doris will undergo minor surgery and be staying at a hospital for a week. We wish you good luck and speedy recovery, Doris!

Climbing and Expeditions: If you would like to lead a trip or suggest that we go climbing in a special area or arrange for a mountaineering workshop, practice or special instruction, call Joe Wagner (966-6379).

Up Rope

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DATED MATTER