

FOUNDED BY  
JAN AND HERB CONN

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

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### At Base Camp

A topic of recent and future discussion is the alarming degree of erosion of the river bank in the immediate vicinity of Carderock. Reportedly, sections of the cliff are now, or soon will be, inaccessible, except possibly by boat. There are numerous courses of action. An imperative one is to find out exactly how bad the situation is and how it got that way. The question of what we do about it has legal and ethical ramifications as well as the practical effects. Rivers have been washing away their banks since God parted the dry land from the seas. We may have accelerated this natural process by trampling the vegetation and destroying the ground cover that protected the soil. Some blame this effect on dogs which have been observed to scramble unleashed up and down the river bank. The feasibility of "repairing" the bank should be investigated by those technically trained in those matters; I don't know a damn thing about rivers. Even if the bank can be rebuilt, there are still the legal questions of who owns the space formerly occupied by land, but now claimed by river.

Finally, there are the philosophical questions which were elegantly addressed in the lead article of the April 1 issue of the NEW YORKER.

In the short term and the long term, we must confront the possibility of limited, restricted, or even no access to the affected areas.

What have you been up to lately? Send reports of activities that are suitable for publication in a family-type newsletter like UP ROPE to the Editor. Don't be intimidated: we can't all write like E. B. White. The deadline for contributions is pretty flexible, depending on how desperate the situation is. Try to send the material by the fourth Wednesday of the month.

A number of people have mumbled something about going away this summer for some real mountaineering. The following is a list of people who would like to go places if they can get a trip together; Stan Halpin (Cascades), James Eakin (Wind Rivers), Mike McGuire (Cascades), Doug Howard (Bugaboos), Greg Christopoulos (Switzerland). Go for it!

UP ROPE is the monthly newsletter of the Mountaineering Section (MS) of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) of Washington, D. C. Editorial contributions, letters and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Vivian Goldberg, 4425 South First Road, Arlington, VA 22204. Deadline is the 20th of each month. Subscriptions for MS members are included in the dues. Annual subscription for non members is \$3.50. Current PATC members interested in receiving UP ROPE may obtain a subscription at no charge. MS membership is restricted to PATC members; new applicants and current members of PATC can join the MS by obtaining the sponsorship of a current member of the MS. Send subscription and address changes to Circulation Manager, UP ROPE, 1718 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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MOUNTAINEERING SECTION Activities - The MS holds monthly meetings at PATC Headquarters (1718 N St. N.W., D.C.) to conduct a brief business session and to present a slide show, movie or other form of entertainment. Sunday trips to nearby climbing areas and/or weekend trips to more distant areas are sponsored every weekend; check the schedule on the back page for details on planned trips. Beginning and intermediate training is offered once each month. Any interested individual is welcome to participate in MS activities, although some restrictions are placed on those wishing to join MS climbing trips. The Sunday trips are usually to areas where there is a complete range of top-rope climbs, from easy to difficult; however, we ask that you have some instruction or experience prior to the trip. Check with the trip leader. The weekend trips are usually for lead-climbers only, and you are expected to find your own climbing partner. For more information on trips, call Joe Wagner (966-6379), Chairman of the Trips and Expeditions Committee, or call the listed trip leader. For information on training, call Rick Todd, 439-0672.

The annual Mountaineering Section picnic **will be** held June 3 at the National Geographic Headquarters grounds in Gaithersburg, MD. Come around 4 PM and bring your own food and beer. There is a softball diamond and tennis court there too.

Also in the NEW YORKER is an excellent two part article about trekking in Nepal. The objective was to observe the mating behaviour of the Himalayan blue sheep, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the rare snow leopard. The first installment appeared in the March 25 issue and the conclusion is in the April 1 magazine.

### From the Editor's Chimney

Ah, spring is here at last. The two male cardinals who had disputed their territory, which happens to be superimposed on our territory, have resolved their differences. For a period of several days they would follow each other from tree to fencepost to tree and each would lustily sing of his pride of possession. Then we noticed that there was only one male bird. My sympathies lie with the dispossessed; I hope he has found a land to call his own. With the return of the first robin, (actually, my resident ornithologist says they were back for at least a week before I noticed them), I've accepted the inevitability of the end of winter. With an audible sigh of regret, I filed my crampon points one last time, and I've polished and sharpened Barbara's ice axe.

Now I'm hauling out my rock gear, fingering the hexes and stoppers, and I dream of clear skies and warm rocks and moving, moving smoothly upward. Then I remember the terrible moments when I was truly stuck; when my only alternatives appeared to be a (rapid) descent or a wait for the buzzards. Then I check all the knots, count all the pieces, count my blessings and wait for the weekend.

## Chairman's Corner

The Carderock problem addressed elsewhere in this issue provides another uncomfortable reminder of the potential conflict between our beliefs and our actions. I imagine that many climbers, indeed most climbers, would agree that preservation of the environment is an important goal. Most would agree, in the abstract, that an area that is seriously being damaged because of climbing activity should be protected from climbers. Many will agree that it is appropriate to close a section of cliffs to protect the nesting sites of rare birds. But mention the possibility of closing Seneca to protect a nest of peregrine falcons, and we stir uneasily in our chairs (that's not some anonymous cliff he's talking about; that's our turf!) Mention the possibility of closing Carderock to reduce erosion of the riverbank and we become not only very vocal in our outrage, but remarkably adept at finding alternatives. I don't mean to imply that our personal responses to such conflicts reflect in any way our personal moral or ethical standards; reasonable persons (even climbers) can disagree about the interpretation of data and about the best course of action to solve a problem. I do want to ask you to reflect a bit on your reactions to a potential conflict between your freedom to climb and your beliefs about such things as environmental protection. Such conflicts are going to occur more frequently with the increases in the populations of climbers and other users of the mountains. The clean climbing "ethic" has bought us some time, but we need to begin serious thought about our future reaction as individuals and as members of the Mountaineering Section.

## Hanging Around

In his pursuit of the ultimate overhang, James Eakin has explored several nearby, but seldom visited, climbing areas.

On one recent trip, James, Ron Yockim, and Ian Cruikshank went to Bull Run Mountain where they reconnoitered the rocks north of the "main" climbing area. (These are the first rocks you reach on the approach trail.) The down-climb is reported to be "um, easy... not desperate". (As a survivor of a number of James' "easy" down climbs, this evaluation is taken with a grain of salt; but I'm faint-hearted and trembly-kneed on the Metro escalator at Rosslyn.) Bull Run North has a lot of "Double Feature" type climbs— you know the kind— one easy move for an orangutang, as well as do-able climbs for ordinary mortals. James found the overhang of his dreams on which a thin vertical crack forms the only handholds. Though it was early in the season and raining, a contingent of beer-can throwers showed up at the usual time.

Another area of exploration was Crescent Rocks which are located along the Appalachian Trail (AT) in Northern Virginia, about 2 mile north of the AT- VA Rt 601 junction. (Directions: Rt & to Rt 601 (near the Shenandoah River; if you cross it, turn back); North on 601 which is also the route of the AT. When the trail leaves the road, start walking uphill (about 45 minutes).) There are a lot of climbs and a lot of variety.

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A Third area is Big Devil's Stairs in Shenandoah National Park (see the PATC map). James and Leith went there in the winter to check out the ice climbing. The ice was thinner than at White Oak because of the southern exposure. There are a lot more climbs, and some are quite long and steep. The access trail has the advantage of a downhill return (as opposed to the White Oak Canyon fire road) and there are splendid views along the way. James and Leith noticed some neat looking rocks at Big Devil's Stairs which will be the object of a future club trip (see the Climber's Calendar).

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Ryan Pierson is the new Nelson House Committee chairman. Call him at 869-6271 to get the combination for the lock. User fees should be sent to him as well.

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Shawangunks, NY

March 25-26

James and Leith go to the Gunks the way some people go to parties: they are always the first to arrive and the last to leave (remember their December trip?). Saturday was a good day with clear skies and warm rocks. Ron Yokim and James warmed up on Simple Ceilings. James stayed on route with only a minimum of prompting. Ron: You know, that corner you're rigging up to do is a 5.8. James: Oh. By the time they climbed V-3, they had worked out most of the kinks in the rope, if not themselves.

Leith took a Carderock friend on his first lead, but their adventures are unrecorded. Turns out, it was only fun if they soloed.

The next morning the only real decisions were a) are there 3 inches or 4 inches of snow on the ground? and b) do we leave before or after breakfast?

--James Eakin

Old Rag, VA--June 19

We assembled at the trail head on a beautiful summer morning and were in the middle of the usual tedious walk up to the rocks when Ron said "There is some nice top-roping just off the trail here that we can do as a warm-up," and proceeded to bash through the bushes. We followed. Fifteen minutes later we began to wonder. Finally, the followers stopped, the leader reconnoitered and came back lost. Since there were some rocks in the vicinity, everyone roped up and started upwards with varying degrees of heroics. Margaret and Stan Halpin regained the trail after one pitch and some bushwhacking (and traipsed off to the top for sunbathing and top-roped climbs). John and Leith, Ron and Stan Reeves found several additional pitches of dirty slab climbing that occupied them for most of the day. Not an aesthetically pleasing day of climbing, but a good work-out. The participants were: Ron Yokim, the Stans Halpin and Reeves, John Bremer, Margaret Wettling, and Leith Wain.

## Equipment Notes

Climbers who are involved in lead climbing frequently reflect on the utility of a mechanical belaying device. There are certain advantages in the use of such, especially if the belayer is significantly lighter than the leader or when the route is poorly protected and any fall is likely to be a long one. The use of the Sticht belay plate is discussed at length in an article by Bill March in the December 1976 issue of SUMMIT. In this article, the Sticht belay plate is compared to the body belay. The braking force of the Sticht plate can be varied from 460 to 1100 lbs by using it in conjunction with an additional carabiner or body belay. The Sticht plate can also be operated from an independent anchor point which is separate from the belayer's anchor. The Sticht plate anchor should be capable of withstanding multidirectional forces. The author also gives directions for tying off a fallen leader. The operation of the Sticht plate requires that the belayer's braking arm be away from the cliff, and that the belayer keeps his fingers, clothing, and tangles or kinks in the rope away from the plate. This article

is rather more detailed than is possible to describe here. If you are considering the use of this device, you will probably find the article quite informative.

## Belay Ledge

### Turn and Turn About

On 15 June, 1974 Martha and John Christian were married; among the guests at their wedding were June Lehman and Jim Kerr. So it seemed only reasonable that June and Jim Kerr invite the Christians to their wedding celebration 28 December 1977. Actually, the wedding was 27 December, but hardly anybody came, unless you count five kids, nine grandchildren, etc. So along with greetings to all their climbing friends as well as more earth-bound mortals, June and Jim say "Thanks, Martha! Thanks, John!"  
--Jim Kerr

## Climber's Calendar

April 16	*Training, Carderock, MD	Rick Todd	439-0672
April 16	Leader's Choice	Stan Halpin	340-2593
April 22-23	**Seneca Rocks, WV	Ron Yockim	937-2059
April 30	Big Devil's Stairs, VA	James Eakin	598-6047

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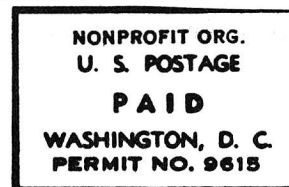
May 2	*Training, PATC Head- quarters, 8 PM	Rick Todd	439-0672
May 3	Executive Committee Meeting, 7:30 PM		
May 7	Annapolis Rocks, MD	Jon Larson	591-6649
May 7	Beginner's Climb	Janet Young	256-7919
May 10	MS Meeting, PATC Head- quarters, 8 PM	program to be announced	
May 14	*Training, Carderock, MD	Rick Todd	439-0672
May 21-22	Seneca Rocks, WV work- trip	Ryan Pierson	869-6271
May 27-29	**Shawangunks, NY	#	
May 28	Leader's choice	#	
June 3	MS Picnic, National Geographic Grounds		

\*All training is by appointment only. Classroom training must precede Carderock training. Carderock training may take place elsewhere, if conditions dictate.

\*\*Experienced leaders and seconds only. Arrange for your partner before departure.

#Your assistance in leading this trip would be appreciated. Call Doug Howard (736-6937) if you can lead it.

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



DATED MATTER

APRIL 1978