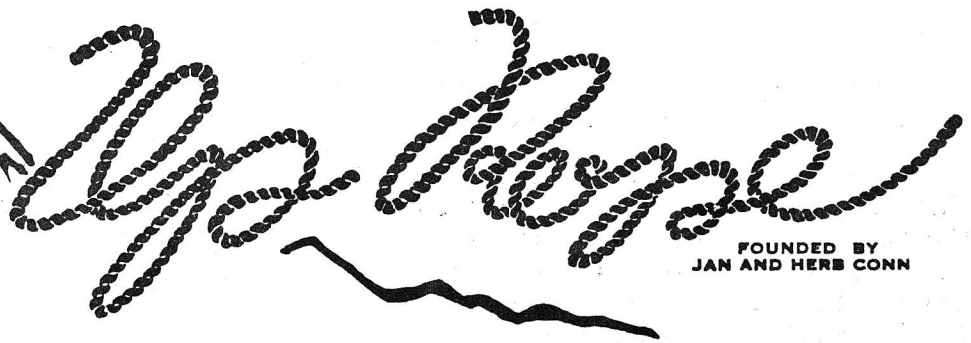


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WHAT'S NEW* IN THE FROZEN WATER GAME

by Neil Arsenault

Yvon Chouinard wrote in Climbing Ice, "The revolution is still continuing, but I feel most of the existing techniques will still be in use ten years from now.... There will be great changes in the equipment, however, particularly in the hardware tools."

Chouinard rigids have gone the way of the buffalo and the Edsel. No more. They have been replaced by Chouinard's new fully adjustable flexible crampon a la Salewa. Good, but for serious stuff the SMC rigid is still the item. Following the success of the Messner Habeler series of axes last year, Chouinard Piolets, Zeros, and Northwalls will also sport fiber-glass-graphite shafts instead of laminated bamboo. Ever the fly fisherman, it would seem Yvon is the interface for technology between two industries.

More good news. Once more super gaiters will be available, a new design worked out by Peter Carmen (Up-town Sewing) that will semi-permanently attach. No more straps and velcro. You get in and out via zippers. The bad news: about \$70. That is less than \$10 a toe the way Steve Komito looks at things.

Lowe Alpine Systems introduced their new "Big Bird" this winter, a

50cm space age broad-spectrum tool with a tubular pick (after the successful Hummingbird hammer) and a tubular adze! The adze is removable, converting Big Bird axes into North Wall hammers. The tubular pick may be replaced with a blade-style alpine pick for dirty ice. (Summer in the Tetons.) Rumor in Lafayette, Co., has it that the prototypes are so successful that a scaled-down version may replace the Hummingbird. Problems obtaining 5/8" tubular chrome moly for the picks have kept Big Birds a rare bird for this winter.

Forrest Mountaineering has had exactly the same problem with their new tubular pick for the Mjollnir hammers. (Their tube pick is plastic-coated inside to help relieve ice build up.) Forrest has come out with several new toys to go along with their very good Verglas and Neve axes, namely a metal-shafted (like all Forrest axes) North Wall hammer. Obtainable in any length, it is best in its 50-55cm lengths as a mate to a short Verglas. Also new: Serac Sabres, Terrordactyl-like hammer and adze models. Like the Terrordactyl, these are most useful in the 40-45cm range, although any length is available. The Sabres do represent a sophistication of the Terrordactyl and are beautiful tools

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