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

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

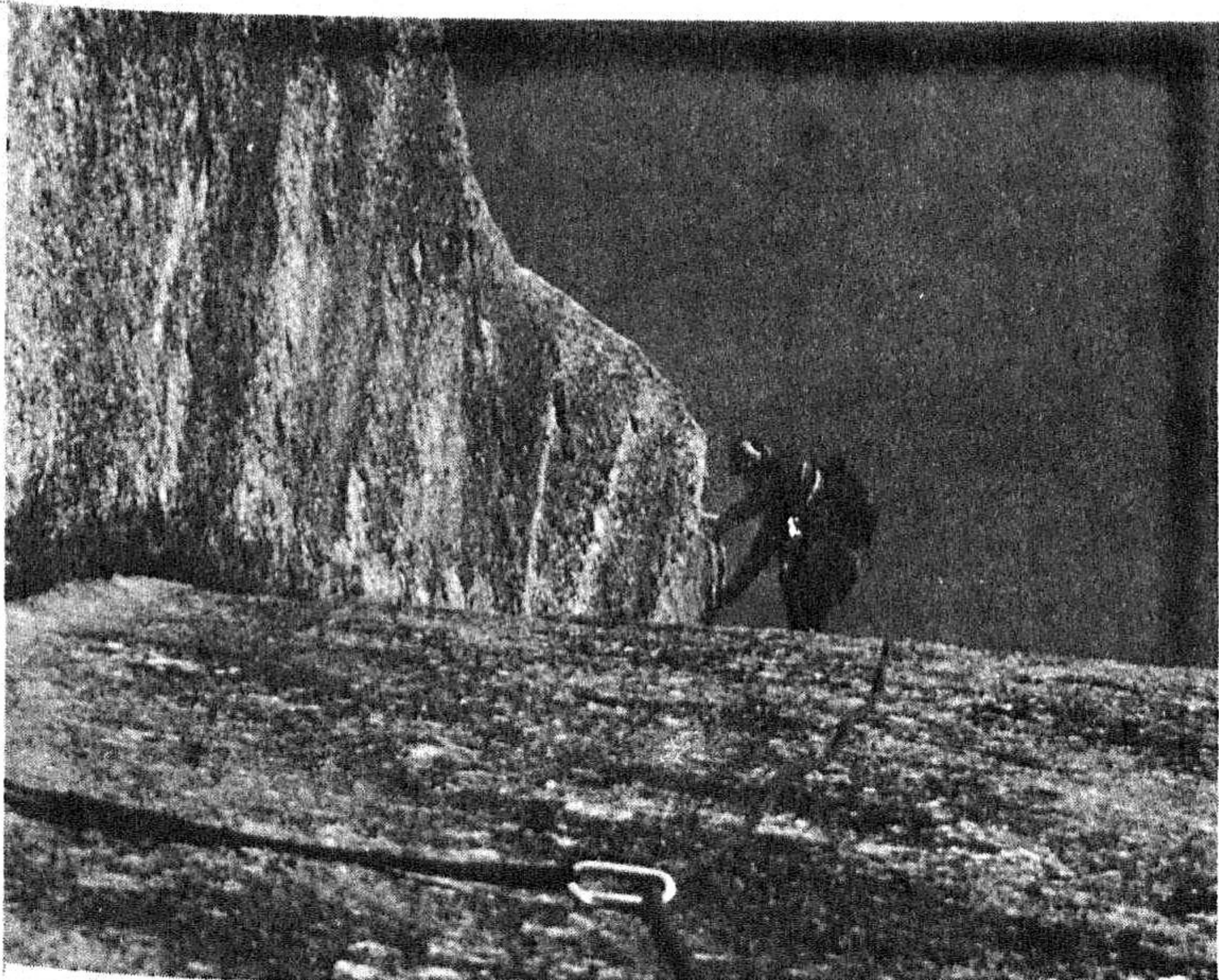
Volume 35, Number 3

March 1980

### PSYCHOLOGICAL STONE MOUNTAIN

by Lin Murphy

Stone Mountain is a granite dome in the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains near Elkins, N.C. Eight D.C.-area climbers made a three-day trip there early last December. We had crisp, clear weather. The south-facing rock reflected the sun and was warm, while the mountain's north side bore a number of ice-filled channels.



Mike Chaney on the Great Arch

Climbing at Stone is a psychological experience. With few exceptions, the routes are all friction. In general, the only protection is sparsely spaced bolts. On a few routes there are lonely, little trees and solitary, weary pitons. The 30-40 foot run-outs were thought-provoking, especially for people used to protecting their leads at the Gunks and Seneca. For example, Mercury's Lead is a 5.9 route with the first bolt 40 feet up. The second bolt is 80 feet away -- two chances to hit the ground. Local climbers are reportedly prepared to use a running belay, which means that during a leader fall the belayer runs away from the rock or jumps down into the bushes to take up rope quickly.

In addition to that long run-out feeling, one is always aware that if he slips there is no chance to recover -- there is nothing to grab for. A local remarked that in this situation a falling leader should turn around and run downhill fast.

(concluded on page 3)



## Equipment Notes

### ROPES

I wrote this article because I have been surprised by the great differences in the handling qualities of ropes which I have used. These results are subjective, based on my experience in 1979. Other climbers who have used these ropes seem to be in general agreement. I hope this information is useful to anyone contemplating the purchase of a rope.

\*Chouinard Super Rope. Unnoticeable stretch under body weight. High friction. The stiffest climbing rope I have ever used. My choice for a day of mixed top-roping and leading.

\*Edelrid Dynaloc. This soft, easy-handling rope is the most knottable one I have used. If pulled down through a tree, can tie itself to a branch. High friction. Noticeable stretch under body weight. Use it where you want room to fall and want the load applied gently.

The following rope is UIAA-approved for double-strand use on high-angle rock and ice:

\*Edelreid Classic 9mm. Handling properties similar to Edelrid Dynaloc. Use 9mm rope single-strand to save weight on low-angle work or for hauling.

\*Edelweiss Extrem. Unnoticeable stretch under body weight. Medium (just right) knottability. Waterproof. Low friction sheath requires alertness when belaying or lowering.

The following ropes are not UIAA-approved for lead climbing due to lack of stretch:

\*Blue Water II and III. Unnoticeable stretch under body weight. Medium friction. Low cost. The II is very stiff, but the III is not quite so stiff and has a little less friction.

Don Barnett



#### UP ROPE

UP ROPE is the monthly newsletter of the Mountaineering Section (MS) of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) of Washington, D.C. Climbing articles, letters, and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Lin Murphy, 2314 N. Harrison Street, Arlington, Va. 22205. Deadline is the 20th of each month. Subscriptions for MS members are included in the dues. The annual subscription price for nonmembers is \$4. Current PATC members interested in receiving UP ROPE may obtain a subscription at no charge. MS members must belong to PATC. Applicants for membership and PATC members can join the MS by obtaining sponsorship from a current MS member. Send subscription and address changes to Mountaineering Section-Secretary, 1718 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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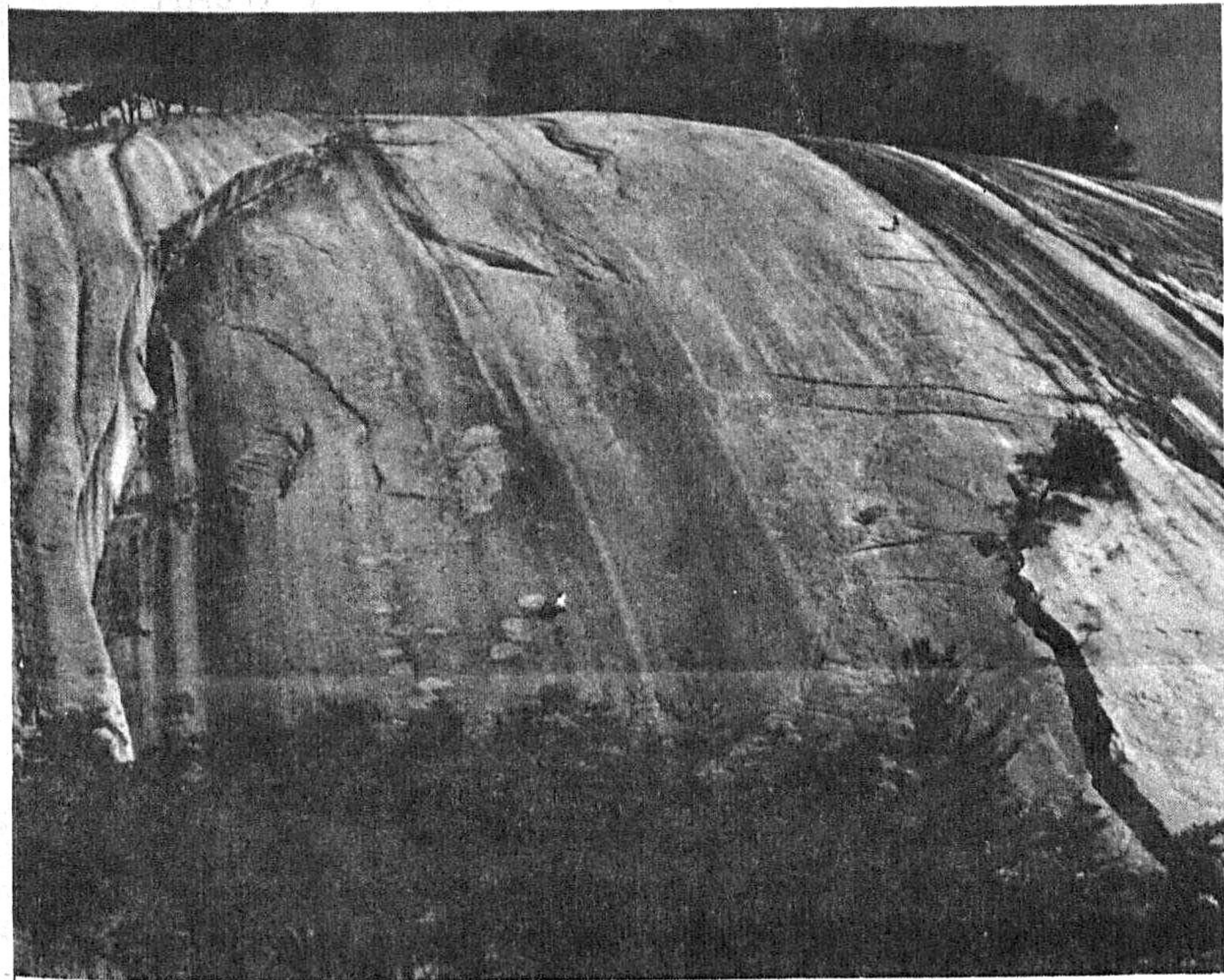
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#### MOUNTAINEERING SECTION ACTIVITIES

The MS holds meetings at PATC headquarters (1718 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.) the second Wednesday of each month except August. There is a brief business session followed by a slide show, film, 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 climber's calendar for scheduled trips.

Beginning and intermediate training are offered once a month. Anyone is welcome to participate in MS activities, although some restrictions may be placed on participation in club trips. The Sunday trips are usually to areas where there is a complete range of top rope climbs. However, we ask that you have some experience or training prior to the trip. The weekend trips are usually for lead climbers only, and you are expected to find your own climbing partner. For information on training, call Rick Todd, 431-2236.



STONE MOUNTAIN (continued)

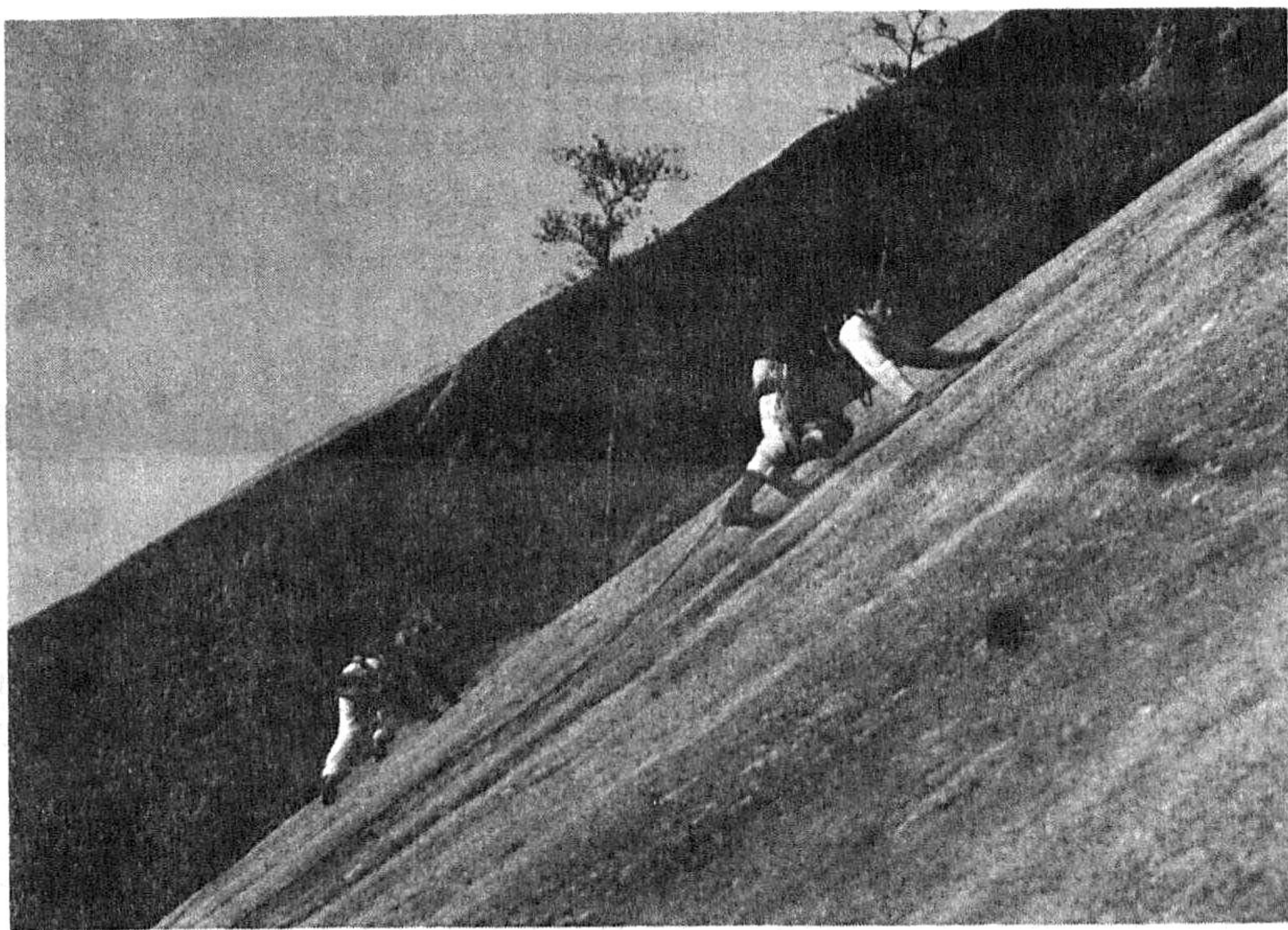
Stone Mountain, South Face

We found the climbs to be generally overrated technically but hard psychologically. On our last day there, after leading a 5.8, which he found harder than the 5.9 Mercury's Lead (?), John Rayner chose to hike to Stone Mountain Falls rather than squeeze in another climb. "I just got tired of scaring myself," he explained. "And besides, after a while the climbs all seem pretty much the same."

We also found that friction technique takes a while to develop. I felt that our first routes were done as thin - very thin-face climbs. But after a while we started using friction, and, according to Mike Chaney, seconding Stone Mountain climbs then became easy. And, as I discovered 30 feet above a bolt on Pulpit, friction will hold you on even when the flake you're lay-backing chips off. There's rotten rock on Yardarm too.

We camped in a pleasant, well-maintained state park. From the excellent tent site it is a short walk or drive to the parking lot at the base of the climbing area. The service at Fred's Cafe 10 miles down the road was polite and attentive. Fred's has no liquor license, and we had to drink our beer in the parking lot. Unfortunately, the food was insipid and the only washbowl is located right in the dining area.

The Stone Mountain climbing guide published in UP ROPE last April proved to be of uneven assistance. The local climbers found it interesting because it indicated more routes than a commercial guidebook, yet it wasn't too accurate in describing at least two climbs, Yardarm and Pulpit.



Climbers on Rainy Day Women and Mercury's Lead

Everyone enjoyed the chance to climb in a new area. Seems we should plan some trips this year to Linville Gorge and Looking Glass.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Publications

The Challenge, By Reinhold Messner  
Oxford University Press, N.Y. 1977  
205pp.

Of those who achieve greatness few escape the temptations of narcissism. Reinhold Messner is no exception. But an egocentric, and therefore subjective, approach can be a good device to explain why some people do strange and unusual things. Thus while The Challenge suffers from its author's ego, its merit is that it tells us something about his motivation.

The book is in two parts with a brief, restful interlude between. The first deals with a major "classic" expedition's attempt and failure to scale Lhotse's formidable south face. The second tells how a new era of Himalayan mountaineering began with a successful two-man alpine-style ascent of Hidden Peak, one of the world's 14-8,000 meter summits and this by a new and relatively difficult route. As for the interlude, well into the book, it provides an insight into the author's dualism, his mental struggle between love of wife and love of mountains - and self. By the time this occurs, Messner is so preoccupied with Messner that his decision, when it comes is hardly a surprise.

Viewed as a whole the work is uneven. Part I, perhaps deliberately, but more likely not, is confused, chaotic, disjointed. Again and again we must guess Messner's whereabouts: is he dreaming (he has more dreams than Freud's patients), is he in Base Camp, at Camp III, dangling from a fixed rope below Camp I, forging a route into what he morbidly likes to call the "Death Zone," or about to be swept away by an avalanche? When, however, this last event finally overcomes the party, thereby awakening author and reader alike, Messner's description matches the best in alpine literature.

Yet here again there is confusion. When the first, and lesser, of two avalanches occurs, Messner dismisses its effect by saying, "Nobody seemed unduly alarmed." Two line later comes his contradiction when, of a companion, Messner observes, "He was very upset." In short, throughout the first part of the work Messner fails to speak coherently. This is a pity, for many of us may put the book down as a hopeless exercise just before the story and its telling begin to show improvement.

By contrast Part II is clear, straightforward and builds to a fitting climax. From the outset we know where the narrative will lead us, but are kept enough in the dark to want to find out how we shall get there. Here, step by step, is the progress of the mini-expedition conducted by two brave, audacious, and skillful climbers, Messner and Habeler, from its outset in Austria to its successful conclusion with the ascent of the world's eleventh highest peak, and a remarkable, safe descent to base camp. Curiously it is here, where its use might for once be justified, that Messner's ego fails to dominate the action; and this is to his credit. Only incidentally does he note that the exploit opened a new era in which it will be possible for enterprising alpinists to scale the world's highest summits at modest cost. When they do, they will have Messner's and Habeler's pioneering work to thank.

But even at his best, Messner cannot avoid error. In Skardu and beyond he imagines first the Indus and then the Shigar rivers to be the Braldo. His comments that the Braldo Baltis "enjoy a modest prosperity" as a result of visits by climbing expeditions are not in accordance with fact. They tend to brand the author's character as insensitive, for anyone who has travelled through this region knows that its inhabitants are among the



## Publications (continued)

poorest, most destitute and disease-ridden in the world. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that the passage of large parties through the frail Balti ecosystem in time disrupts rather than enhances the local economy, something Messner conveniently ignores.

There is also exaggeration. "In 1975," Messner writes, "one tenth of the climbers in Nepal died." True, but misleading. In deference to accuracy Messner should compare his statistics with the fatality rates among those who climbed high in the 1930s and 1950s, when a greater percentage perished. And surely, when the party reached Chapko there was less, rather than more, than "two weeks" approach march left" to the foot of Hidden Peak. After all, the far heavier 1958 American Karakoram Expedition made it from that point to Base Camp in eleven days, including one of rest. Nor can most persons who have been up in the Braldo recall any spot where the risk of stonefall was nearly as serious as Messner intimates. So by the time he starts to talk about route difficulties, we wonder whether the climbing was really that hard after all. In fact, technical problems were minimal: the real impediment was the length and sustained steepness of the slopes between the first and second bivouacs and the absence of resting places. These factors,

combined with the need for speed, the problems of altitude and the weariness of the climbers on the descent, are what transformed the route into an exceedingly dangerous one during the return.

The American version suffers from the ineptness of its English translators. There are too many British climbing and other terms which readers in this country will fail to understand. But the translators' real fault is their appalling ignorance of basic English grammar. Some examples (errors underlined): p. 56 "...who had come up with Mario and I...;" p. 99 "...a very old friend of Peter and I...;" p. 112 "...I had been told of other climbing parties who had experienced great difficulties...;" and an incredible sentence on p. 198, which contains a mixed arithmetical salad of avoirdupois pounds and decimal kilograms. To this may be added many typographical errors, poor punctuation, and occasional failure to translate obscure Teutonic technical terms into English. What, we may ask, is an abitur?

For all its flaws this book makes good reading. It provides an insight into a complex, self-centered yet remarkably honest mentality, and its second part tells a good story. Still, if I had a choice, I would rather re-read Annapurna, for its author is a human being and not a god.

reviewed by Andrew J. Kauffman.

Everest "by fair means" -- the first ascent without artificial oxygen.

Everest: Expedition to the Ultimate, Reinhold Messner, Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1979, 253pp., \$16.95.

The Lonely Victory, by Peter Habeler, Simon & Schuster, 1978, 224pp., \$10.95.

What Andy Kauffman said about Messner's ego in The Challenge holds true for Everest. Messner's recital

of achievements, dreams, and conquests is almost overwhelming. Habeler's book is also very personal. Both men focus on themselves: these books seem part of their continuing effort to discover and explain why they climb.

You need to read both Everest and The Lonely Victory for an impression of the first "fair" ascent of Everest. Messner's book gives good maps, charts, and historical

(continued on next page)



## Publications (continued)

context. Habeler's recounts a non-Messiah climber's experience of a dangerous undertaking.

Messner implies that he alone remained steadfast to the goal of an attempt without artificial oxygen. Habeler vacillated and had to be reminded and encouraged to go through with the plan. Habeler explains his wavering resolve by his duty to his wife and son and his fear of brain damage due to oxygen deprivation. In Victory one reads that Habeler saved Messner's life when the latter's snowblindness made him helpless on the descent.

Everest begins with passages from Norton's and Odell's accounts of the British 1924 Everest Expedition. Norton climbed to more than 28,100 feet and believed that Everest could be climbed without oxygen. Odell suggests that Mallory and Irvine got a late start because of oxygen equipment failure, that they made it to the top but were benighted and lost while descending.

Thus some feasible basis for the attempt is established. And the

desire for it is not necessarily the inevitable goal of a relentless superego. Anyone who reads about Everest expeditions learns that oxygen equipment is awkward, heavy, and undependable. All too often equipment failure prevents summit attempts. So the reader of Everest climbs also comes to wish that the summit be possible without the hassle of oxygen equipment.

Messner's book contains remarkable photographs, informative charts, and appendices on Everest climbing history. Photos in The Lonely Victory are bad. Habeler's prose suffers from a clumsy, inept translation that makes him appear inconsistent. The words "conquest" and "conquer" appear many times, yet Habeler says, "Everest was neither conquered nor overcome by us -- it simply tolerated us."

These are not the best-written Everest books, but the story they tell makes them important and worth reading.

reviewed by Lin Murphy

## February 13

## Meeting Report

Nelson House. Martha announced that the Nelson House will be used by the De La Salle Vocational School June 11-June 30 and July 22-August 12. If necessary, small groups of MS members (five people or fewer) may use Nelson House on weekends during these dates, however, there will not be a scheduled trip to Seneca Rocks during these periods.

Bull Run Mt. Sallie Greenwood, Conservation & Use Committee, reported that Virginia Outdoors Foundation has rejected PATC-MS's formal request to climb at Bull Run Mt. She read from VOF Director Van Auken's letter: "I certainly agree that your members would be the last to abuse the area, however, it is necessary to apply policy uniformly." (However, as UP ROPE later learned, a secret source observed a number of beer-

drinking, blaring-radio-toting teenagers at the quartzite outcropping on Feb. 18. They were ignoring the unenforced "no trespassing" signs and littering the area as usual. The source also reported that they had surmounted the earthen mound (inadequately erected to bar entry to the parking area.) Mr. Van Auken indicated that MS climbing privileges could perhaps later be arranged on a "written permission basis before the end of the two-year study."

New Ney. Stevie and Joe's baby was born February 2, 1980. Michael Christopher weighed in at 5 lbs, 13 oz.

Please tell Martha or Lin about about additions or corrections to the membership list.

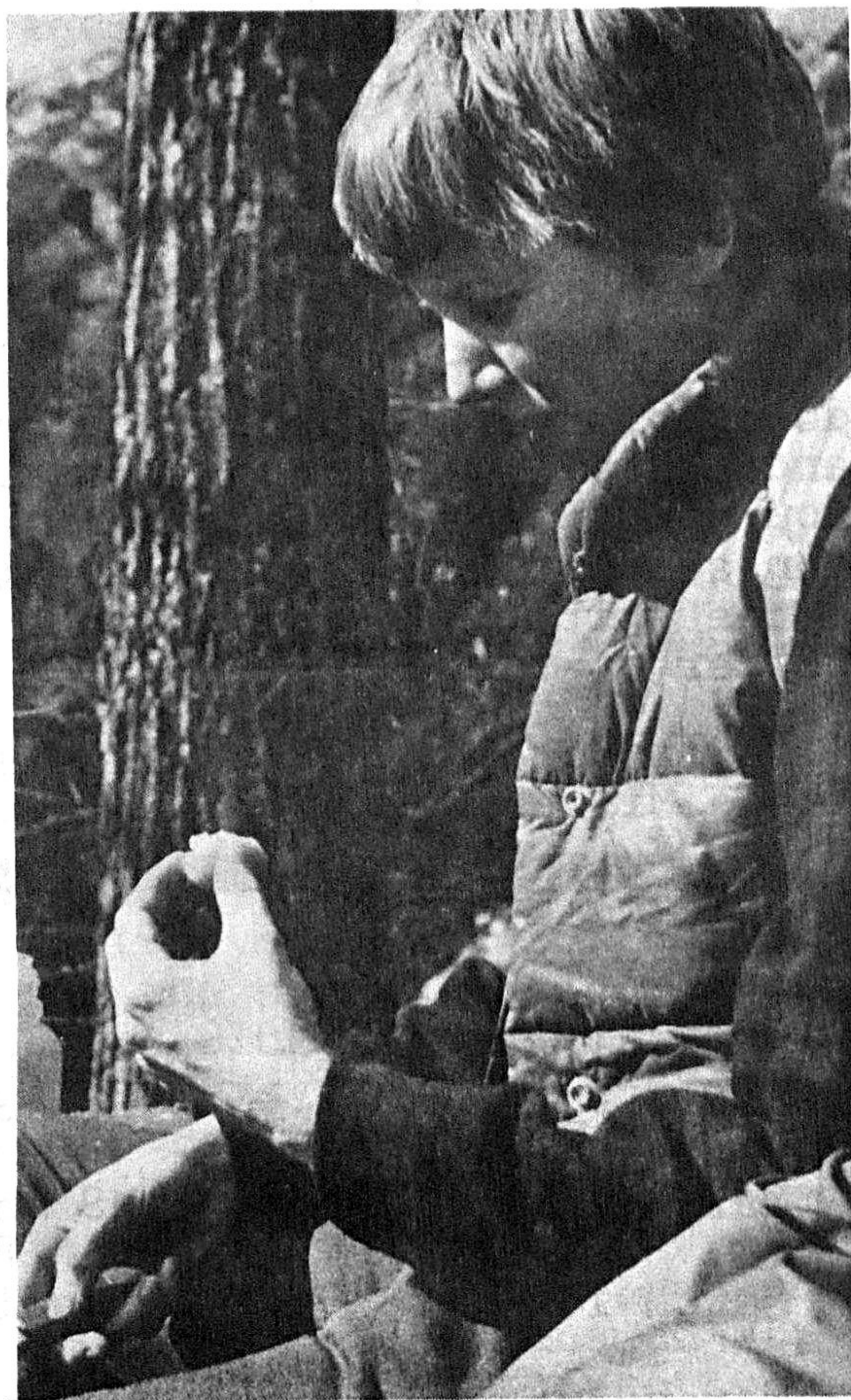
Don McIntyre showed slides of his 1979 expedition to Yerupajá.



## Hanging Around



Above — The First Tree.  
Right — Almost Omnivorous, Sallie Questions the Kumquat. Photos by Charlie Dorian



### WHITE OAK CANYON - January 20

Despite less appealing forecasts, a warm, sunny day arrived to fuel our enthusiasm for sawing and removing the trees (blown down by fall storms) on the White Oak Canyon trail. There were many, but after this trip and a previous one, the trail is mostly in very good condition. We entered from the bottom, at a new and well-marked parking area on Berry Hollow Road. The first half mile or so has no definite trail, but will be blazed soon. Until then, the best route is to go straight from the steel bridge, cross the creek on a log, and continue uphill to the original trail where it stops at the park boundary. After lunching on kumquats, the serious sawing began. We cleared several impenetrable fallen trees and blocked the improvised detours with the sawed up remains. The energetic crew consisted of Vivian Mendenhall, Lin Murphy, Sallie Greenwood, Charlie Dorian, Ryan Pierson, Ed Cummings, Diane Yokel, and

Jeff Grove

### SUGARLOAF - January 20

A chilling wind offset by the warming sun made a pleasant day for climbing at Sugarloaf. After several climbs, some hard, some easy, most of the group headed for their television sets to see the Super Bowl. Those present were Doug Imiig, Dave Newsom, Mike Bader, Fred Batschelet, Steve Jensen, Andy Koper, Parker Hill, Ian Cruickshank, Don Barnett, George Merriam, Hernando Vera, Bob Berger, Ute Christoph, Rick Todd, Charles Ganote, Cliff, Patricia, and

Martha Hale



DHAULAGIRI FUND-RAISER

Vera Komarkova, leader of the American Women's Expeditions 1980 Dhaulagiri I climb will present a slide lecture on March 17. She is visiting selected East Coast cities to gather support and financial backing for the expedition. The AWE climb is sponsored by the American Alpine Club, which makes donations deductible for federal and state income tax purposes. If you don't need the deduction, you can support the climb by buying a tee shirt that says, "It's better on top." \*

In October 1978, Vera and Irene Miller became the first

Americans to reach the summit of Annapurna I. Vera is known also for her ascent of the Grade VI face of Mt. Dickey in Alaska.

Her show will be about these climbs and the Dhaulagiri expedition. It should be a good chance to learn how a major expedition develops and become a part of it through moral and money support. Call Martha Hale or Lin Murphy for place and time.

\*See the editor about deducting part of the tee shirt price.

### Climber's Calendar

March 1, 2	Cranberry Backcountry Ski Touring	Lin Murphy(533-8412)
March 12	MS meeting - 8pm PATC Hd	Ski Mountaineering Ian Cruickshank
March 17	Dhaulagiri Fund-raiser	
March 30	Camp Lewis	Barbara Llewellyn (871-6197)
For trip information call the leader or Don McIntyre (536-6122).		

Snowmobilers think they can do it sitting down.

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