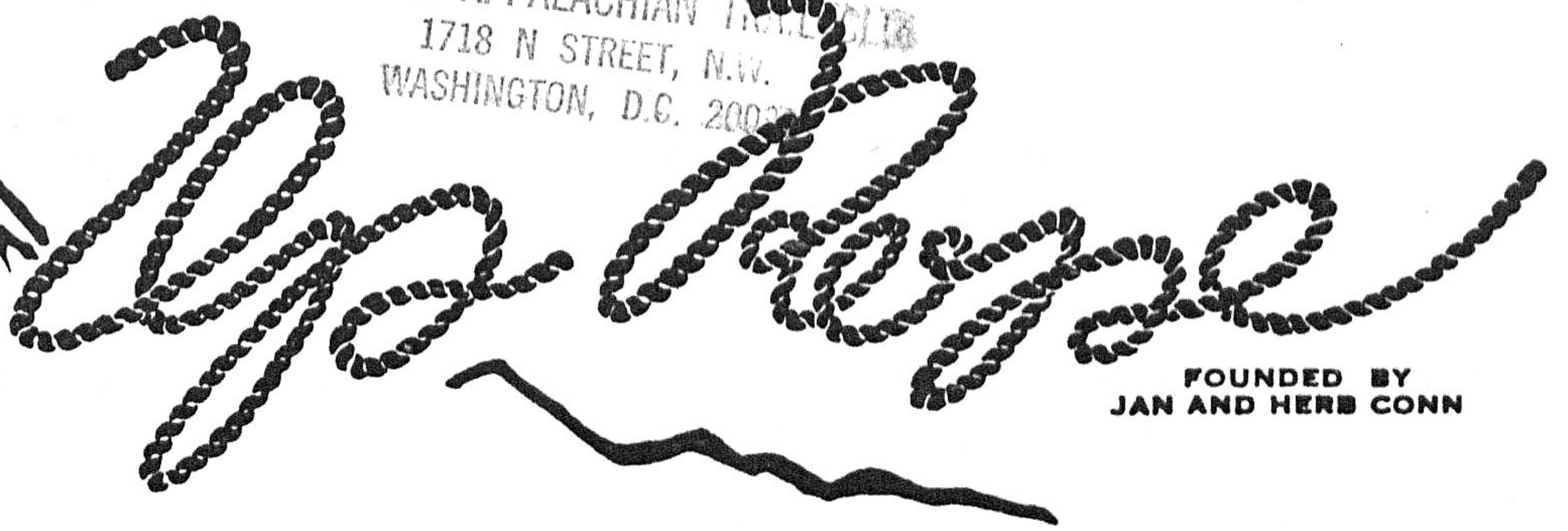




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NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

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May, 1980

THE SALATHÉ WALL

by Lotus Steele

For a week I had trouble sleeping. It was only a few days until we were to begin the 35-pitch route up the massive face of El Capitan in Yosemite Valley. I would lie awake at night, being too gripped to sleep, thinking about being up on that headwall—looking down 3,000 feet with only air between me and the ground—only an 11mm rope keeping me among the living.

There was much preparation. What should we eat? Where can we get more water bottles? Neither Paul Clark nor I had done a big wall before. We spent a whole afternoon getting together all our gear: 60 carabiners, Jumars, food, double rack of nuts—triple of the big guys, pegs, Friends—you name it, we wanted to take it. The problem was fitting it all into one haul sack and my day pack.

D-Day, October 18, 1979. We got up early and drove to the base of El Cap with the intention

Lotus Steele was Washington's best woman rock climber, until she moved away last fall. She now climbs and skis out of Billings, Montana.

of climbing the first ten pitches and fixing five ropes from Heart Ledge to the base of Little John. We knew we were in trouble when a Winnebago full of Italians pulled up beside us. They marched off for the base of "our route"! Paul took off like a bolt of lightning while I hastily pulled our gear together. When I arrived at the base of the climb, Paul was half way up the first pitch dragging a rope. I asked him if he wanted a rack, since it was 5.10a. Looking on were six Italian climbers, dressed in brightly colored clothes and wearing big smiles. Since they could speak no English our communication was limited. It seems that they had come all the way from Italy (they were guides in the Alps) to make a movie of the Salathé Wall using San Marco climbing shoes. They figured it would take them eight days—boy, was I glad they were behind us.

The free climbing was magnificent. But by the fifth pitch, nasty storm clouds were dumping rain on us, so we decided to fix ropes to the ground and return when the weather cleared. I think the rain was a blessing because it enabled us to become

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SALATHÉ WALL (continued)

good friends with the Italians, who turned out to be exceptionally nice and considerate people, besides being incredible climbers.

October 21 the rain let up and we ascended our fixed ropes to finish the first ten pitches. Arriving on Mammoth Terraces, we rappelled to Heart Ledge and began to fix from there, thus making hauling a lot easier. We had been informed that we needed five ropes—what they didn't tell us was that we needed a 165-foot rope on the fourth rappel. Paul was hanging in the middle of a 600-foot blank wall looking for an anchor that turned out to be 15 feet below the end of his rope. After some serious bitching and rope maneuverings we made it to the ground by the time the sky got pitch black.

The next day we made numerous mistakes with hauling and decided once again to return to the valley (via the Italians' ropes), having only reached a pitch above Heart Ledge. On October 23, Paul and I decided to go for it. Gulp! Paul nearly died in the infamous Hollow

Flake. (A horrible off-width crack, out of sight of the belayer, and reached only by a pendulum. It's a hundred feet without protection, 5.8 or 5.10, depending on which way you're facing. It took Paul three hours to lead and chewed up his EBs.)

It was almost dark and we had done only six pitches—we were climbing too slowly. Hanging from a belay on top of the Ear, we stared up at the Double Cracks... we were definitely in trouble. Brainstorm! By taping our pocket flashlights to our heads, we were able to climb the Double Cracks (A2) in the dark and reach the Alcove by 12:30 that night.

Five more pitches the next day to the bivouac called "The Block." We had a fitful night's rest because we were so thirsty. The dawn brought a dark, stormy sky. Three hard aid pitches brought us face to face with the Roof and the Headwall. By now it

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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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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.

SALATHÉ WALL (continued)

was pouring. As we hung in our belay seats under that huge roof (it was my lead), I skillfully bribed Paul into leading the Roof and Headwall pitches by offering him much beer when we got back to Camp 4. Two hours later I was regretting that move. It turned out to be just as scary to Jumar the roof...and hanging in the middle of an overhanging wall in a belay seat freezing to death was not much fun. Fears of hypothermia ran through my head...why is he taking so long?...I wish I were up there...god, am I thirsty...I must be totally out of my mind to be up here. I longed to be down on that valley floor—I was so miserable. We reached Long Ledge by dusk and rejoiced when we

spotted some water that had collected in a depression. I lay down and sucked it up.

After what seemed to be four endless pitches, we pulled our weary bodies up to the summit the next day at 2:30pm. Every part of my body ached. I felt weak. And we still had to carry all our gear down to Camp 4—way down there! The stress was finally over, but I was too tired to feel ecstatic at reaching the top—all I wanted was to get down. As we crawled off into the sunset, I realized that my friend was right when he said, "It's a lot of hard work, but it's worth it!"

Meeting Report

April 9

MS members will wash PATC headquarters windows on April 19. Project chief Dorian promised to take pictures.

Don McIntyre has returned from a five-week detail to Death Valley. Call him to volunteer for trip leading.

Steve Jensen distributed equipment purchased for the MS Peru expedition. Expedition members will leave June 21 and return in mid-July.

Picnic plans were developed and discussed. People offered to give rides to pioneering climbers who don't want to drive.

Ian Cruickshank and Rick Todd will give a slide show on April 16 of the February N.H. winter week.

Ian and Rick are planning an early June trip to Cannon and invite interested climbers.

Entertainment was a dramatic but under-narrated film about climbing the east ridge of Mt. Huntington.

Equipment Notes

FRIENDS

Friends, with four cams on a shaft, hold easily in parallel-sided cracks in ceilings. In a test reported in a recent Off Belay, the Friend bent and held while its doubled sling broke. Friends may hold when the rock is wet, soft, flakey, or flaring. Beware of combinations of undesirable conditions.

My favorite use of Friends is resting. With a Friend slung from your tie-in, you just shove it in, sit down, and ignore the hissing from your audience.

Friends are cumbersome to carry: Bulky with right-angled protrusions. Of the four sizes, I find #2 and #3 the most useful. With large cams on a short shaft, #4 seems misproportioned. The one time I used #4, it twisted.

Don Barnett

DE LANO REPORTS

Dear UP ROPE readers,

My trip across country was rather ho-hum until I rolled into the Grand Canyon. The snow was streaming down and created one of those sights that knock the vibrams right off your boots. Met lots of people there—Aussies, Kiwis, Brits, even some Yanks, and hiked down into the canyon on two successive days. The snow disappears before reaching the canyon floor, making it a walk through seasons...

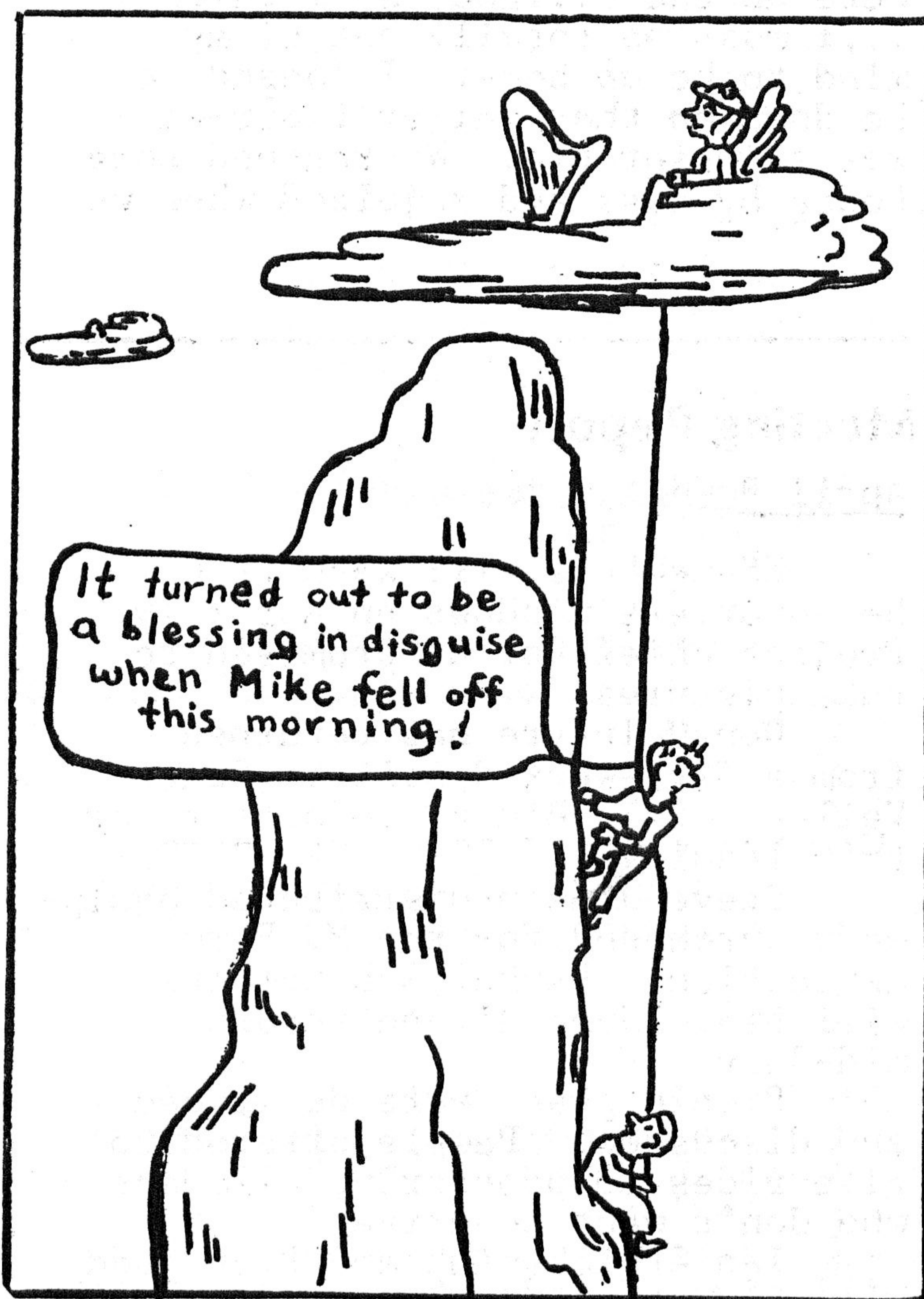
I've returned to running in a big way. You'd love the trails around here. With foothills rolling down to my doorstep, I just pop out the door and into winding, narrow mountain trails. On these trails I usually see deer and other animals, and for me this is proving to be a real incentive to keep fit.

Ah, I have the best bouldering site in the San Francisco bay area 15 minutes away too—Castle Rock and Goat Rock. Last weekend was my first trip to the Pinnacles National Monument, approximately 115 miles south of Cupertino on U.S. 101. That's where California's climbers go when Yosemite is wintry. I first hiked through it with one of my neighbors, and we watched many climbers winding their way up the long flat or domed faces. The place is a friction climb paradise on a conglomerate rock of volcanic origin. Hand holds are known to pop off, but I think it's good stuff.

...I've also been in two earthquakes. The first quake caught me in my office in our big office overlooking SF bay. I was talking to my boss, and all of a

sudden it hit. No damage, but for 25 seconds everything shook, me included, although it really didn't scare me. It was rated at 5.8. The quake threat seems to be the drawback to this area, although it is something one can live with.

Cheers,
Bill



Drawing by Tom Culverwell,
UP ROPE, volume 1, 1944

Hangin' Around

GREAT FALLS, VA. - March 23

The Potomac was brown, fast, and high. We couldn't get to the rocks we'd climbed the week before—all under water. We ended up at the rock Bob Norris used to teach aid climbing, just upstream from the George Washington canal. About five ropes were rigged: the aid route, a layback crack, an open book/chimney, a hard armsy diagonal crack, and an easier crack around the corner. James explained how Norris taught the aid course and then freed the route. Bravo!

Martha Hale, James Eakin, Ian Cruickshank, Larry Lempert, Nelson Lichtenstein, Jeff Grove, Diane Yokel, Charlie Dorian, Don Barnett, Sallie Greenwood.

Lin Murphy

SHAWANGUNKS - April 4, 5, 6, 7

It was the last of climbs; it was the first of climbs. About 5pm Saturday James Eakin decided to lead Pink Laurel. When Sallie Greenwood joined us on the belay ledge at the Classic Tree, New Paltz was turning on its lights. We were pleased to be up there, just the three of us in the quiet and cool, and we agreed it was good to practice night time rappells in a familiar place. But after off-rappelling, Sallie declared that her venerable Gunks Guide was missing. We patted around in the dirt and bushes without finding it and had to hope it was still up there at the Classic Tree. Easter Morning about 5am: our approach and preparations woke an unbelieving troll person who had been sleeping in the rock cave to the left of Jackie. The Guide was waiting at the Tree, and we got to see an April sunrise over New Paltz. After rapping off again, Bunny distributed Easter goodies.

The van people, Stan Halpin, Ian Cruickshank, Martha Hale, Sue Neel, and Rick Todd, had been busy also. Arriving Thursday night, they and James Eakin got in impressive (e.g., Son of Easy 0) climbs for the start of the season, after waiting for the Friday morning rain to stop. Martha stepped up to lead Classic; Sue led Stan and Rick up Gelsa. Stan and Linda Roubik were spotted running around the rocks as well as up them.

The Mercedes people, Don Barnett and Charlie Dorian, kept calling down to us from different perches, "Have you found your climb?" as we wandered about looking for routes on James' list that were free. Charlie and Don racked up four climbs on Saturday (including Don's direct finish of Three Pines) and participated in the six-person climb-in of High Exposure before doing Bunny on Easter (Charlie's second lead on rock!).

Chuck and Margaret Wettling were on High E too and next followed Ian, inspired in his canary yellow "It's better on top" t-shirt, up City Lights. James would like to protest the "A" protection rating of Grand Central, whose thin-faced second pitch is poorly protected at the crux. He and I stayed on through Monday, doing Retribution mountaineer style and Silhouette in a terrific wind.

Lin Murphy

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, STIMMIE

H. F. Stimson, aka Stimmie, celebrated his 90th birthday on April 1. A physicist, Stimmie came to the Bureau of Standards from Massachusetts in 1916. He has been a constant figure in hiking, climbing, and caving activities.

MS PICNIC IS SATURDAY, MAY 10

We have the Garderock Pavilion (turn left after the Canal underpass) for the whole day. Talking, games, drinking, and cooking will begin in earnest at 4pm. Bring your own food and charcoal for cooking it in the park grills. Steve Jensen (972-1341-h; 921-3838-w) is arranging

for a keg of beer—pay him \$2. There is a big area in front of the pavilion for frisbees and ball games (N.B. Get Margaret Wettling on your team if soccer is undertaken). We hope that most of the D.C. area's pioneering climbers will be there.

AMERICANS WILL CLIMB IN CHINA

The People's Republic of China recently granted permission to the following American expeditions: two fall 1980 expeditions to MinykaKonka (24,900ft), led by Lance Owens and Leo LeBon (Mt. Travel); Shisha Pangma (26,290ft) in 1981 led by Phil Trimble; Everest from Tibet in 1981—Lou Reichardt, climbing leader; and two trips, details unknown, led by Ned Gillette and Galen Rowell and by someone from REI. Americans haven't climbed in China since the early 1930s. In addition, Mt. Travel is offering 1980 treks to the Gobi Desert and to Yunan and Chungking.

AAC WILL MEET IN WASHINGTON

The Blue Ridge Section will host the American Alpine Club's annual meeting on December 5 and 6, 1980. The meeting will consist of slide presentations and a dinner. Speakers will probably include members of AAC-endorsed expeditions (Dhaulagiri, Makalu Baruntse, Gasherbaum IV, as of March 1980) as well as representatives of other major climbs. Andy Kauffman is chairman of the annual meeting committee and is assisted by Sallie Greenwood, Vivian Mendenhall, Joe Wagner, John Christian, and Lin Murphy.

NEW GUNKS GUIDE

Author Dick Williams says the new edition of the Shawangunks climbing guide will be ready May 9.



Culverwell, UP ROPE 1944

ROCKS BOUGHT

Phil Pascall of the Land Acquisitions Committee says that there are rocks on PATC's recently acquired Vining property. Let's check them out the weekend we go to (nearby) Old Rag. Phil says we can camp on the Vining tract near or in some old buildings.

ROCK CLIMBING NEAR NAIROBI

BY Dick Loudis

Most people who consider climbing in Kenya probably have some technical routes on Mount Kenya in mind or, short of that, the pillars and chimneys on the 600 foot fluted wall of Hell's Gate. Somewhat less prodigious are two outcrops in the Nairobi area: Lukenia and Embarabal, which offer a wide variety of single and double pitch climbs, plenty of scope for putting in new routes and second ascents, and a panoramic game viewing of giraffes, impala, baboons, and eagles.

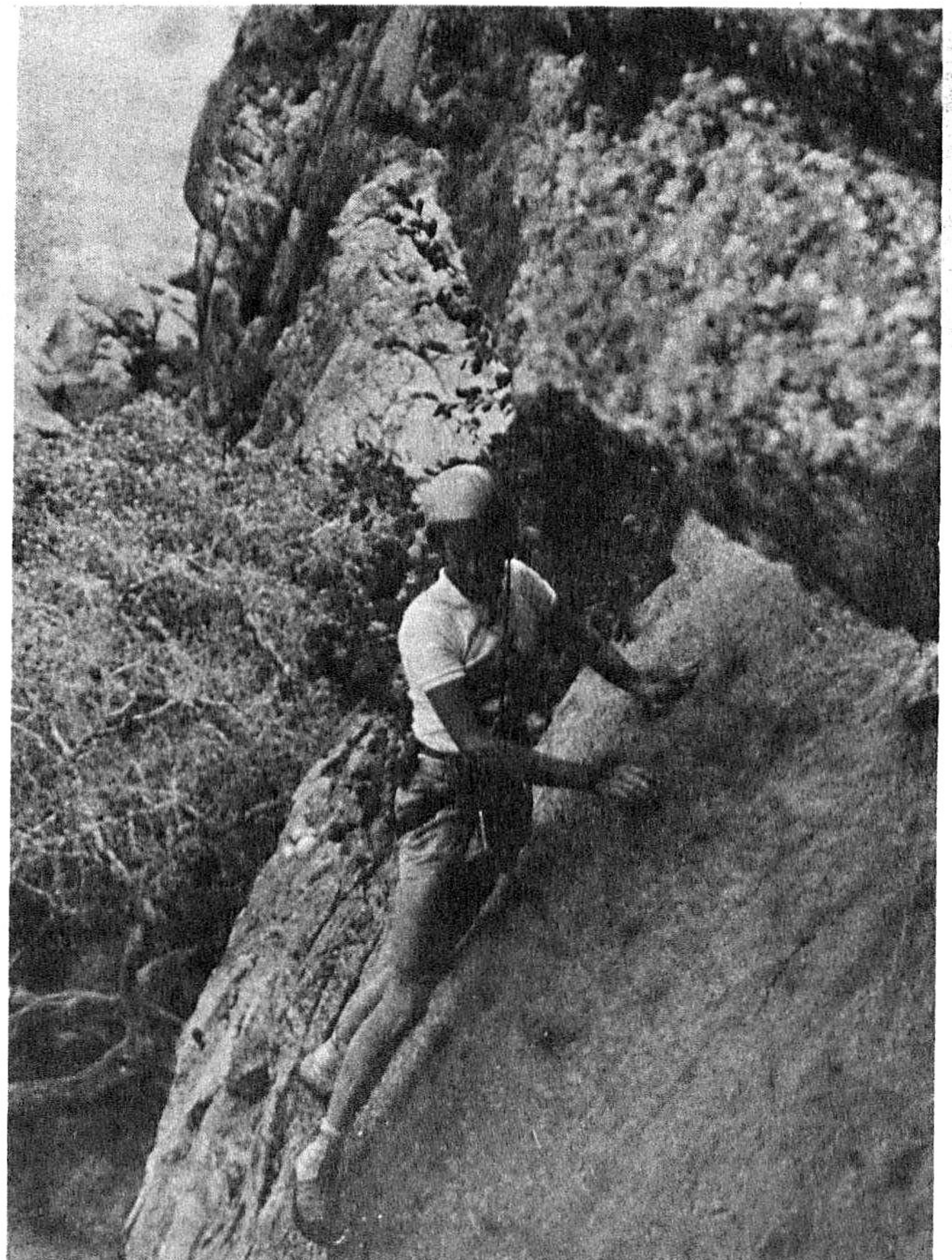
The better known of the two is Lukenia, a gneiss ridge purchased some years back by the Mountain Club of Kenya (MCK), and situated along the main Mombassa road 24 miles from Nairobi. A 1973 guidebook published by the MCK catalogues over 250 climbs ranging from "Difficult" (5.3) to "Hard Very Severe" (5.8), but since its publication many of the older aid routes have been climbed at "Extreme" grades. The accompanying photograph shows a case in point: Mark Savage about to do the crux overhang of Astronaut, which he and Ian Allen first freed in 1978.

In general, Lukenia is characterized by delicate face climbing on sound small holds with fairly long runouts, but virtually any type of climbing can be found on these cliffs. Several classic routes feature chimneys and off-widths, and there are some climbs reminiscent of the Shawangunks, like the "Severe" (5.5) Thin Slabs

Gable Finish, which negotiates an overhang that would appear to go at nothing less than 5.8. Another feature of Lukenia is that the cliffs are east facing, allowing good afternoon climbing despite the hot Kenyan sun.

Embarabal is the second noteworthy crag within the Nairobi environs: a basalt outcrop which forms part of the eastern wall to the Great Rift Valley in Masai Tribal Land. This outcrop, referred to as "Unbearable" by local MCK climbers, extends for over a mile, but so far has only about 100 or so recorded climbs and no guidebook whatsoever. Contributing to this is the fact that while the ridge is only 20 odd miles from Nairobi, it takes a Landrover followed by a desperate scramble up scree through thorn bushes just to

(continued on next page)



Dick Loudis travels to exotic places for The Centre for Population Activities and attends MS meetings when he's home in Arlington.

ROCK CLIMBING NEAR NAIROBI (continued)

reach the base. Once there, however, Unbearable becomes a thing of beauty. In my one morning at the ridge we did a first ascent of a "Very Severe" natural line jam crack (5.8), which my mentors Mark Savage and Andrew Wielvchowski decided to name either "Yankee Doodle" in deference to me, or "Friends" in deference to the two number three Friends, which afforded the only protection for the first 40 feet. Following this, Mark led the second ascent of Andrew's Gladiator, a "Hard Very Severe" (5.9) that has it all: a first pitch hand jam crack and

Gunks-like overhang followed by a delicate second pitch face climb.

In short, Lukenia and Embarabal are both outstanding crags: whether it be for the travelling Washingtonian accustomed to Seneca Rocks and the Shawangunks, or for the intrepid locals, who, after Hell's Gate and Mount Kenya, seem to appreciate these bolder problems. Anyone planning a trip to Kenya and desiring more information should write to the Mountain Club of Kenya, P.O. Box 46741, Wilson Airport, Nairobi.

Climber's Calendar

April 26, 27	Seneca Rocks work trip	Don McIntyre (536-6122)
May 4	Great Falls, Va.	Charlie Dorian (362-7523)
May 3, 4	Shawangunks	Martha Hale (762-4769)
May 10	** <u>MS PICNIC</u> **	Carderock Pavilion
May 11	Weaverton Cliffs	Rick Todd (431-2236)
May 14	MS meeting-8pm PATC Hd	film: "Joe Brown" 31 min., color
May 18	Old Rag	Tom Russell (869-8058)
May 24, 25, 26	Shawangunks	Lin Murphy (533-8412)

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