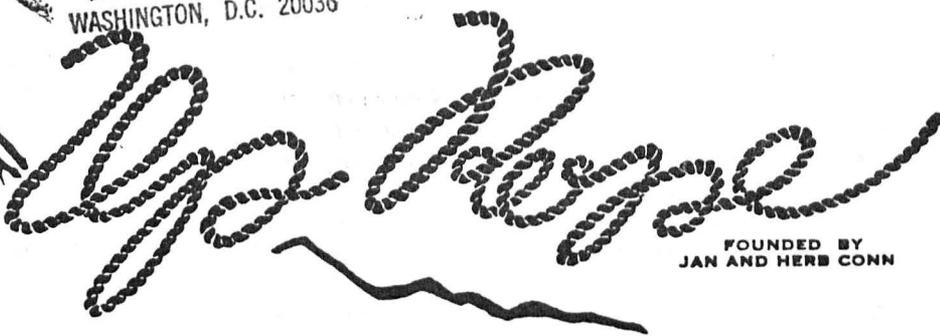




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NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

Volume 36, Number 6

June 1981

GORGE DISCOVERY WEEKEND

POTOMAC GORGE, VA - May 9

Arnold Wexler and Don Hubbard had agreed to show us the classic climbs on the Virginia side. Since Donalds' Ducks, with the Big Toe Traverse a close second, had provoked the most curiosity, we set off downstream immediately with the intention of visiting other areas on our way back. Smiling, Arnold showed us the classic routes. Most of us had never before been to Echo Cliff and were delighted with the prospect of being able to try Socrates' Downfall and Cowhoof Crack in the shade and smoother, though not always easier, sunny climbs nearer the river's edge. We were not alone. Splashes and hoots as young persons jumped from Spitzbergen across the river to emerge pink and fresh from the spring Potomac. And friendly paddlers with a wide range of skills: One performed Wet Exit, an alternative existentialist drama.

Displaying a wide range of flailing styles, most of us managed at least one "qualifying climb." Smiling again, Arnold pointed out the Big Toe Traverse. The Toe is negotiable in EBs. The lovely orange pin at the crux is not yet completely rusted out. The rock just downstream of the Toe is downsloping, lichen-covered, and brittle, taking only small wire, which pops out. Echo Cliff is a very appropriate name. The leader could not communicate her situation of not being able to move on or up because the rope was caught on the traverse. Only her handholds pulling off and crashing into the river let the belayer know she was still awake and moving around, somewhere,

downstream. The 1981 direct finish cannot be repeated as Don Barnett pulled off the block containing the essential two-finger layback. This part of the route carries objective danger for both climbers and paddlers.

When the traversers finally returned, it was too late to discover anything more that afternoon, but Arnold and Don are ready whenever we are. Discoverers were Pete Grant and daughters, John Teasdale and family, Margaret and Chuck Wettling, Brian Rennex, Charlie Dorian, Gianni Battimelli, Marjorie Prochaska, Jeff Brown, Patty Lemon, Don Barnett, Sallie Greenwood, Joe Farness, Janet Young and Lin Murphy

POTOMAC GORGE, MD - May 10

The heavy low clouds were beginning to carry out their threat as we assembled in the Carderock lot. But we knew things would be all right when Pete pulled in with a canoe on top of his truck and the beer inside. Paddling from Carderock... The poison ivy on Herzog Island is not as overwhelming as was first reported. We rigged three or four face climbs on the riverside rock slabs. Chris Scordos, our Sunday climbing mentor, located and rigged Chairman's Chimney, where most of Herzog's poison ivy seemed to be growing. The rain intensified, and people crowded under the overhanging slabs that

(Continued on next page)

GORGE DISCOVERY WEEKEND

form the chimney. Joe's was the first successful effort. Others struggled and repeated his feat. Finally, rain forced us to abandon our plans, which had included Cupid's Bower, Jam Box, Easter Egg, Camp Lewis, and the rocks upstream. Some other

time, we hope. Jane paddled us back to Carderock, where we milled around until the picnic began. Pete Grant, Don and Mike Kocher, Frank Ieradi, Jane Showacre, Chuck and Margaret Wettling, Gianni Battimelli, Joe Ney, Don Barnett, Jeff Brown, Patty Lemon, Joe Farness, and Lin Murphy

Equipment NotesPILE

The Mountaineers' new Trekking In Nepal recommends pile clothing for visitors to this land of rain forests and high mountains. On my midmonsoon trip last summer I found that this is good advice. The peculiar circumstances of this trip denied the expected wool, down, and water-proof gear, yet with one pile jacket I was more or less adequately equipped for a six-week trek from valley rice paddys to 18,500 feet.

Pile is tougher and more versatile than wool or down, and kept me warm in wet cold weather. In our Chulu West high camp, when the foam pads (kindly supplied by an expedition led by an internationally known woman mountaineer) transmitted cold melted

snow from the rented tent's floor, my pile jacket became the insulation that made the night tolerable. Additional testimony to pile's wet coziness is its use by cold water kayakers.

I've tried several brands of pile jackets and have decided that Chouinard's Patagonia best suits my needs. Patagonia pile is less thick than Chuck Roast's which makes it less bulky to store and easier to climb in. Patagonia also produces less pilling. I would rather have a double zipper, however. Chouinard makes a range of pile items, from balaclavas to booties. The mitts, which extend halfway to the elbow, are great for skiing in a snow storm, when Dachsteins tend to get wet and cold.

-Lin Murphy

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.



Standing left to right: Don Hubbard, John Meenehan, Chuck Wettling, Bob and Kate Adams, Gianni Battimelli, Joe Wagner and family, Andy Kauffman, Vivian Mendenhall, Joe Farness, Bert and Elizabeth Vos, Maxine Haller, the Edlers, Ray Moore, George Merriam, Art Karp, Joan Templeton, Marcy Logan, Jack Wilson, Phil Eddy, Sam Moore, Tony Soler, Jane Showacre, Susy Moore, Merv Oleson and family; in front Chris Scordos, Arnold Wexler, Lin Murphy, Tom Marshall, Margaret Wettling. Photo by Charlie Dorian. Sallie Greenwood was also taking pictures, which explains where some people were looking.

It was a good turn-out--a real reunion--despite the rain and its being Mother's Day. We knew it was going to be a good picnic when lots of people we didn't know started arriving and were met with great smiles and greetings by those we did know.

Merv Oleson explained how his famous climb was originally dubbed Merv's Nerves by June Lehman. Those who tried to repeat the ascent later shortened it to one Nerve.

Jane Showacre and Tony Soler represented Devils Tower climbers. Jane teamed with Jan Conn to do the first woman's ascent. Tony put up his 5.9 route in 1959 with Art Lembeck, Herb Conn, and Ray Moore. This inspired Tommy Marshall, who was there as a kid. There was talk of showing old climbing movies and of more reunions, as well as improbable stories about fish with frying pans. Elizabeth Vos, Chuck Wettling, Charlie and Sallie showed slides of their climbing friends.

Nelson House

NELSON HOUSE GETS A NEW PORCH

April 1: I am ordering what seems a huge amount of lumber from Central Tie Petersburg, WV. Will they deliver it to Nelson House, 35 miles away? "Glad to." Well, I have to tell you that the last half mile is steep, rutted, half a lane wide, and impassable when it rains. "Hey, that sounds like a neat little West Virginia place." Well, actually, it is.

April 3, midnight: Were they really able to deliver that lumber? A lot of people will be mad at me if they didn't. Sure enough, there it is--and not lying in the cow pies either, but tidily stacked on the porch.

April 4, 7am: I am just becoming aware that it's morning. Crash...crash. James is pounding props under the porch roof. We adjourn to the lawn for breakfast.

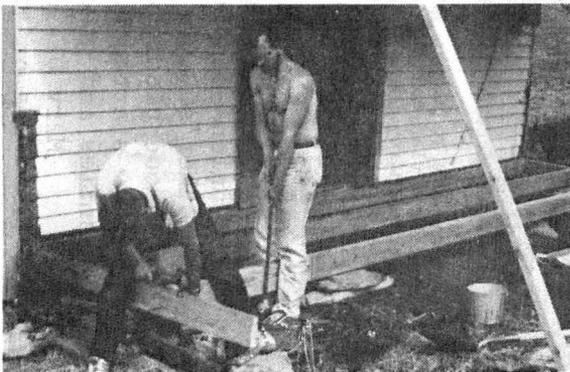
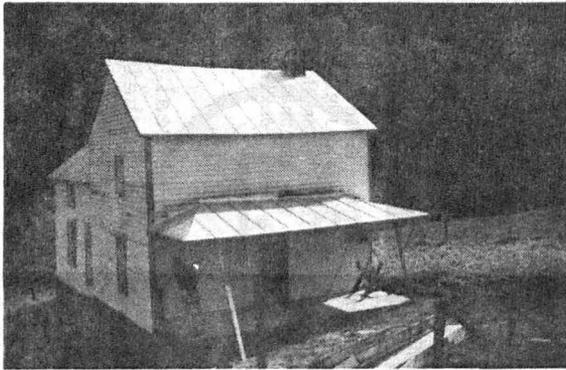
9am: The balustrades on which we have set many a dinner, and have sat to argue topics from nuclear power to the merits of a self-belay, have been heaved onto the grass. We tackle the porch itself.

10:30am: The floor boards are surprisingly tenacious, for things that you couldn't step on safely, but most have been pried up one way or another. The beams underneath are spongy with rot. Mr. Nelson drives up. He tells us some stories of bygone days and then wields a crowbar with effectiveness that gives no evidence of the weakness he reports still feeling in his injured wrist.

1pm: Lying on our backs admiring the clouds and letting lunch settle. We have to excavate several cubic yards of dirt from under one end of the porch (so the structure can rest on rock footing instead of mud), but we have only a dishpan in which to move it. Should we go up the hollow to one of the farms and try to borrow a wheelbarrow? At this precise moment Pete Grant drives up in his pickup with a wheelbarrow.

2pm: "Vivi-yan, do we really have to move all this dirt?" Yes indeed... groundwater...footings...gradient...anyway, John Christian said so.

3:30pm: The beams have been laid and levelled, the stone pillars adjusted under them, and Sallie and James are laying the deck boards while Pete, assisted by Helen, saws them. Nailing is being done with a fancy flooring machine, which periodically jams and is mysteriously un-jammed by James. Pete has contributed the carpentry expertise that has made our lively progress possible.



James and Pete make a porch, and Charles Nelson visits. Photo by Vivian Mendenhall

6pm. The last floor board has been laid! We set off to the New Frontier in Franklin for dinner. And for their famous pie.

April 24, 11pm. A wild ride up the road in the rain. I probably stay on it only because my wheels are locked in the ruts. What, no lumber? Luckily it turns out to be in the living room.

April 25, 11am: A dusting of snow on the hilltops. James and Martha arrive. We light the stove to have a nice warm living room to retreat to. We install the new columns under the roof and debate how to construct the balustrade. We poke at the old one and conclude that not much can be salvaged. We pull out hundreds of nails and add the wood to our now-enormous woodpile.

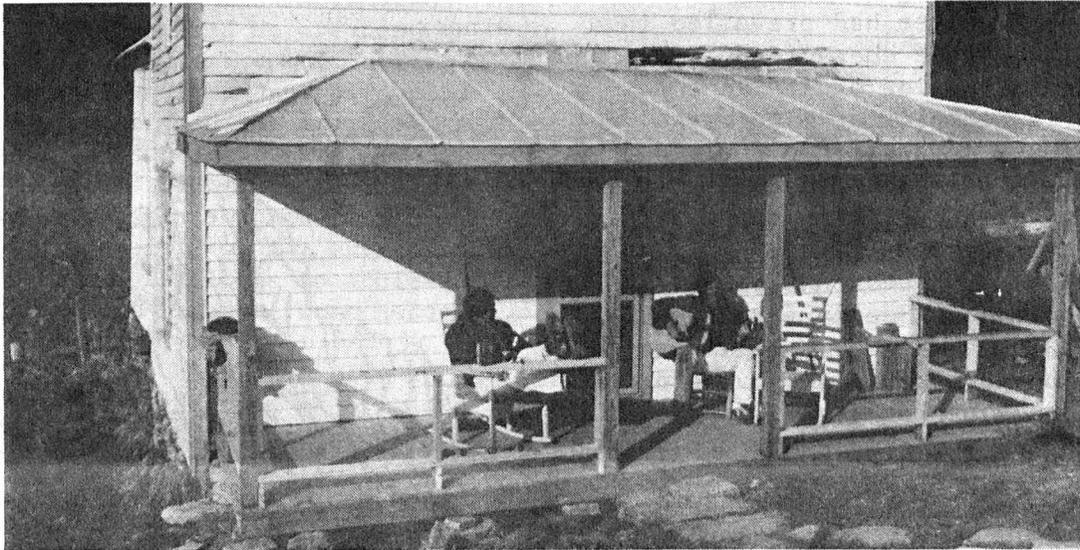
5pm: The new balustrade is complete, except for the facing, and we can put that in using mostly leftover floorboards. The clutter of wood fragments, tools, and sawdust is quickly cleared away; rocking chairs are set out, beers are opened; and we prop our feet on the railing. We bask in the spring sunlight slanting down the hillside and listen to the piping of meadowlarks carried across the pasture on the breeze. James strums his guitar.

Participants were James Eakin, Sallie Greenwood, Martha Hale, Rosemary Boiko, Pete and Helen Grant, and

Vivian Mendenhall

COMBINATION CHANGE

During the latter half of June we will change the combination on the lock at Nelson House. Thereafter, check with Martha Hale, James Eakin, or Vivian Mendenhall for the new one. We do this periodically to insure that only members and their guests use the house.



Martha and James test the porch -- Vivian's photo

Hanging Around

GREAT FALLS, VA.— April 26

This was a pleasant trip that saw a growing number of climbers join us throughout the morning. We started climbing at the Aid Box and ended rigging Romeo's Ladder, Armbuster, Z-slash, Two Lane Highway and the impossible looking overhang nearby, which someone claimed had been climbed. About 10 of us adjourned to the Vos home in McLean

where Elizabeth and Bert had prepared welcome snacks, fruits, beer, and homemade raspberry juice.

Climber-guests were Mike Silke, another Mike and a friend, Sallie Greenwood, Charlie Dorian, Jeff Grove, Jeff Brown, Patty Lemon, Gianni Battimelli, and

Lin Murphy

Hanging Around

SHAWANGUNKS - variously, April 17,18,19,20

The first trip of the season for many of us was a sunny weekend. The ledges were warm, and the wasps were busy looking for building sites.

Changes while we were gone. A metal rail now patches the stone retaining wall on the hairpin turn below Shockley's Ceiling. In February a busload of vacationing New Jersey policemen had proceeded across the turnout and crashed partway through the wall. The honey lady thought she'd bought it. The bus came to rest with the front end dangling over the cliff. Passengers and driver all moved to the rear and jumped out the emergency windows. Distracted Sunday climbers proposed a new route to commemorate the accident.

For the benefit of those who would otherwise drive by unaware, signs large enough to block the overlook announced "scenic view." We thought their presence evidenced that Marriott had prevailed in its plan to change the character of the area through the construction of its enormous condo-convention complex at Minnewaska. Not so...yet, anyway. A petition circulated asking the state to remove these signs. Clandestine efforts partially toppled them. (They were later removed.)

We briefly met Boston AMC people on their way to climb at Seneca for a week--our guests at Nelson House. MS climbers now have permission to use the AMC campground. A caution: locals broke into a campground user's car that was parked along the road. (Later a police stake-out trapped the thieves as they were pulling another night job.)

We noted several places where there is a real danger due to loose rock at the top of the cliff: Fetus, Anguish, and Morning After. Climbers were Sallie Greenwood, John Stannard, Charlie Dorian, Hernando Vera, Jeff Brown, Jeff Grove, Patty Lemon, James Eakin, Gianni Battimelli, and Lin Murphy.

VINING WORK TRIP/OLD RAG - May 16, 17

The work trip to PATC's Vining property began leisurely and ended with high-paced drama. After parking in a dogwood bower near Swift Run Gap, Maxine Haller,

Joe Farness, Don Hubbard, Bob Stahlbush, Arnold Wexler, and I wandered over the Club's 180-acre tract, checking out several cabins, cows, and the spring water-filled bathtub for chilling beer. Several hours after lunch, Phil Pascall and Bob Humphries, recovering from the shock of seeing MS members on a PATC work trip, assigned beam and log toting chores. Next we dug four 28-inch holes for a log-dressing shed foundation. Our finale was the wood salvaging operation on a mostly collapsed cabin. Combining finesse and Farness, large weathered timbers were pulled from walls and stacked nearby. The floor collapsed under Joe disturbing a group of black snakes who observed for a while the ongoing ruin around them. But the demolition continued, this time mainly by Don Hubbard who pulled apart the northwest wall. The snakes finally left. After supper we looked for the Vining rocks, but they must have been obscured by the foliage and were out of reach in any event due to a spaghetti dinner.



The summit crown of Old Rag, reprinted from UP ROPE, January 15, 1948.

On Sunday we climbed Old Rag from the Syria side. There werewild azalea in full bloom and buds on the mountain laurel. Don discovered a large patch of lady slippers. Arnold showed us, smiling again, the south face of the summit crown. We climbed the practice area near "L." Gianni appeared and led a crack near "M." His softly murmured Italian phrases gave no clue of the difficulty of the jam crack. Those who need to practice this technique were too pressed to develop much perspective on what was required, and Joe noted that practicing jams on Old Rag granite was an effective way to remove his forearm tattoo.

-Lin Murphy

Publications

The Last Step: The American Ascent of K2., by Rick Ridgeway. The Mountaineers, 301 pp. \$19.95.

What kind of person goes on a major expedition? What kind of person does it take to reach the top of a major mountain? While ostensibly an account of the first successful American expedition to K2, the second highest mountain in the world and the most difficult climb, which had seen five previous American attempts, The Last Step offers the reader a chance to probe into the psyche of a mountain climber. Rick Ridgeway has composed a compelling and personal narrative that contains depths not found in a stylized recitation of selecting the team, making preparations, and tasting the sweetness of victory (or the gall of defeat).

Using the technique of expanding on and explaining the pages in his journal, Ridgeway places us in the midst of the expedition. Smooth transitions to and from flashbacks provide background information without disrupting the mood he creates. But the mood, compounded of the minutiae of daily activities and constant psychological soundings, diminishes the drama of the climb and reduces it to anti-drama.

Perhaps this was his goal, for he says, "We had no gallant knights conquering new worlds. Instead we had 14 people overcoming their all-too-human frailties to achieve a goal. In that sense maybe we were heros--modern-day ones--anti-heros."

For all that, the book does give a good look at the inner workings of a major expedition. Each member knows that only two or four members of the team, if it is lucky, will stand on the top, so there is a constant mental soughing--will I be chosen for the summit attempt? The jockeying for position fills the pages and, at times, proves tiresome. In fact the degree of mean-spiritedness soured their triumph and raised the question, "Was it all worth it?"

In K2, The Savage Mountain, Robert Bates, one of the 1954 expedition members, details the characteristics they selected for: first, good personality; second, expedition experience; and third, technical ability, because, "...a mountain expedition...is...a team. It must act cohesively, and there is no place for the brilliant climber who thinks only in terms of personal success." Members of the 1954 expedition had a warm

reunion after 25 years. Will the members of the 1978 expedition be able to? It depends on how fast their memories are.

If you are unfamiliar with the Karakoram area in Pakistan, Galen Rowell's In The Throne Room Of The Mountain Gods, written after the unsuccessful 1975 expedition, provides an excellent feel for the people, places, histories, politics, and philosophies involved--not just near K2, but also in the mountaineering community, which is necessary for a complete understanding of Ridgeway's book.

The driven individuals, the single-minded experts who were chosen for this climb made it to the top. In their wake they left the sea of friendship churning and beaten. This may be why there is a trend toward smaller expeditions of "just friends." Ridgeway feels that the problems of the expedition arose because, "...the expedition was a microcosm of life in a crowded society." If so, it's sad, because they occurred on a mountain so remote it had no native name.

-reviewed by Charlie Dorian

A Guide to Trekking in Nepal, by Stephen Bezruchka. The Mountaineers. 256 pp. \$8.95.

Stephen Bezruchka's new guide is packed with facts and ideas for anyone planning a trip to Nepal. It contains the standard trekking guide information: route descriptions, maps, photos, equipment advice, Nepali for trekkers. It adds a chapter on the people of Nepal written by an anthropologist, an introduction to the area's natural history, and a list of emergency care and rescue facilities. The route descriptions measure distance in minutes: I understand the reason for this, but it looks almost as subjectively uninformative as linear measurement. But Bezruchka, a physician, goes on to help the reader personalize the trek's pace. He explains how to determine maximal heart rate and suggests monitoring one's pulse to find a speed that can be maintained without tiring. The route descriptions are extremely detailed, apparently designed for the visitor who wants to trek alone, without a Sherpa guide. Appendices of Nepal agency addresses, recommended reading, and an index make this a compact reference, as well as a useful trekking guide.

-reviewed by Lin Murphy

Coming Events

AWHE/ '81--WHITE MOUNTAINS

The America Women's Himalayan Expeditions climbing meet will be held at the White Mountain School this summer from August 16th to 22nd. The White Mountain School is in the White Mountain National Forest within easy distance of Cannon Cliff, Cathedral and Whitehorse Ledges, Tuckerman's Ravine, and Huntington Ravine. The weather in August tends to be somewhat more stable than that found in the Rockies, which is one of the reasons that the participants of the last two meets suggested that the gathering be in the East this year. There is a \$7 registration fee. Write Meriby Sweet, AWHE, White Mountain School, Littleton, NH 03561. (603) 444-2928.

Belay Ledge

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Steve Jensen
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Boulder, Colorado 80302
(303)442-1786

Merv Oleson
10032 Woodhill Road
Bethesda, Md. 20034

Climber's Calendar

June 10	MS meeting, 8 p.m. PATC Headquarters	David Atkinson: Climbing in Chile
13,14	Shawangunks, NY	Martha Hale
14	Great Falls, Va.	Charlie Dorian 362-7523
21	Harpers Ferry, WVA	
28	Annapolis Rocks, MD.	Hernando Vera
July 4 weekend	Shawangunks, NY	

For information on trips call the leader or James Eakin(598-6047).

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